

sooner mended. Let us not inquire too closely what he means next. It's not for you and me, I tell you, Pym, to follow such a man as Sydney Chevenix. He knows best himself what he wishes to do, and how he can most fitly accomplish his purpose. Let him go his own wild way untrammelled. His life is wrecked. We know who has wrecked it. Why should you try to keep the miserable hulk of it any longer afloat up here in misery? Better it should sink alone and unpitied in the black abyss, than hamper it now in its blank wretchedness with our petty little unasked-for solicitudes."

Hetty sprang up with a cry of terror from the sofa, where she had hitherto sat silent, her hands clasped hard, and her eyes brimming with the tears that would not fall from the moment when Sydney, pale and haggard, first entered the drawing-room on his errand of mercy; and clinging to her husband's arm in an agony of despair, she cried out aloud:

"Jocelyn, Jocelyn, you don't think, after all, he's going to kill himself for Maimie, do you?"

Jocelyn turned to her with a wondering look of intense compassion.

"Why, Hetty, Hetty, my darling Hetty," he murmured in her ear, with infinite pitying surprise and tenderness, "are you, too, as blind and as deaf as she is? Do you think there is anything else left possible? Did you never observe his voice, his eye, his mouth, his quivering lips, his twitching muscles? What sort of life would you call him back to? Why should you wish to prolong any further his terrible agony of a purposeless sacrifice?"

"I understand," Hetty said, growing paler and paler, and letting her voice sink to an almost inaudible whisper. "He sees at last he has thrown away his whole life for a woman who was utterly and irrepressibly unworthy of it."

"He sees it," Jocelyn echoed. "He sees it. He sees it. And he is ready even so to sacrifice everything on earth for her—if he had anything left still to sacrifice."

Hetty paused, and looked for a moment wonderingly at Maimie, who sat whispering low with Adrian upon the sofa. Then she touched her husband's arm gently with her hand.

"Let us go," she said. "Let us leave them together. We are not wanted here. They must have much now to say to one another." Maimie rose and came forward, with tears in her eyes, but still comparatively calm and quiet.

"How kind of you, Hetty," she said quite simply. "Yes, Adrian and I have many things to talk over by ourselves, dear, this morning. It has been a very terrible day indeed for us. It's so like you to think of leaving us alone now."

And she bent forward, as affectionately as usual, and held up her mouth with pursed-up lips for Hetty to kiss it.

Hetty drew back her own pale lips in horror and wonderment.

"Not now, Maimie," she cried, recoiling inwardly against that fondling caress; "not now—not now. Some other time, perhaps."