

her champion against age and time would day by day be placing one more mark upon her face, one more sorrow in her heart! That he should do this—they both going down the years together!

As he stood there holding his breath, bending to look at her, that slurring swish of the plane-tree branch, flung against and against the window by the autumn wind, seemed filling the whole world. Then her lips moved in one of those little, soft hurrying whispers that unhappy dreamers utter, the words all blurred with their wistful rushing.

And he thought: I, who believe in bravery and kindness; I, who hate cruelty—if I do this cruel thing, what shall I have to live for; how shall I work; how bear myself? If I do it, I am lost—an outcast from my own faith—a renegade from all that I believe in.

And, kneeling there close to that face so sad and lonely, that heart so beaten even in its sleep, he knew that he could not do it—knew it with sudden certainty, and a curious sense of peace. Over!—the long struggle—over at last! Youth with youth, summer to summer, falling leaf with falling leaf! And behind him the fire flickered, and the plane-tree leaves tapped.

He rose, and crept away stealthily downstairs into the drawing-room, and through the window at the far end out into the courtyard, where he had sat that day by the hydrangea, listening to the piano-organ. Very dark and cold and eerie it was there, and he hurried across to his studio. There, too, it was cold, and dark, and eerie, with its ghostly plaster presences, stale scent of