

The Lost World

She had sprung from her chair, as she saw signs that I proposed to demonstrate some of my wants. "You've spoiled everything, Ned," she said. "It's all so beautiful and natural until this kind of thing comes in! It is such a pity! Why can't you control yourself?"

"I didn't invent it," I pleaded. "It's nature. It's love."

"Well, perhaps if both love, it may be different. I have never felt it."

"But you must — you, with your beauty, with your soul! Oh, Gladys, you were made for love! You must love!"

"One must wait till it comes."

"But why can't you love me, Gladys? Is it my appearance, or what?"

She did unbend a little. She put forward a hand — such a gracious, stooping attitude it was — and she pressed back my head. Then she looked into my upturned face with a very wistful smile.

"No, it isn't that," she said at last. "You're not a conceited boy by nature, and so I can safely tell you it is not that. It's deeper."

"My character?"

She nodded severely.

"What can I do to mend it? Do sit down and talk it over. No, really, I won't if you'll only sit down!"

She looked at me with a wondering distrust which was much more to my mind than her wholehearted confidence. How primitive and bestial