

has set me thinking. Suppose—he has not said it—but suppose he says he would like me to stay on—stay for good.”

“You’ll stay, of course.”

“I think so, but it would mean the end of everything—the end of all my dreams, Wren. My ambition—my career——”

“Ah,” said Wren, “your career. Yes—your career. Yes, to be sure,” and his strong voice became soft and low, as if a sad thought or fancy had come unbidden to his mind, and he put his pipe back into his mouth and puffed very hard indeed.

He was a solid, fair man of about thirty-five: a big, strong man; and, as he sat smoking his old pipe, he seemed to be saying with unspoken words: “Careers. Yes. We all begin life with that tale, don’t we? Careers, oh yes! But what do we make of them—even the strongest of us—in the end?”

Stone, improving in health every day, remained at the Lodge for another month, by arrangement; then week after week, indefinitely. Then, one evening after dinner, Mr Burgoyne said the words that his guest had expected to hear.

“I only wish, Stone, that I could keep you here always.”

“You can, sir, if you will.”

“My dear fellow, I should like to, but I doubt if it would be fair to you.”

Then, of a sudden flushing, young Mr Stone spoke with deep enthusiasm. What better work could he hope to do than this—assist Mr Burgoyne in the very slightest degree?

“You have assisted me in the highest degree. But I should not—unless, perhaps, for one consideration—be justified in accepting what might be a sacrifice—of much that is dear to you—the hope of better things, for instance. Every man has his own work to do—not another man’s.”

He looked at his guest very kindly, and his voice was full of kindness, but he seemed to look through the young man as though he could not help doing so; he seemed to be giving words to the young man’s secret thoughts because they were so transparently obvious that unconsciously he gave expression to them. It was as though in a moment he had laid Stone