

"Yours too I hope."

"Well it's pretty rough on me really," he said, "though I am glad in a way to know."

It was the only word he had spoken that evening which showed how hard he himself was hit, and he uttered it quite simply and without an intonation of complaint. "The true music cannot complain." Durrance had learnt his lesson fairly thoroughly. He had indeed opportunities enough wherein to perfect himself by practice. Mrs. Adair, however, understood what of trouble and grief lay beneath the few trivial words. The very simplicity of their utterance caught at her sharply and suddenly so that she could no longer keep silence, however imprudent speech might be. Her voice sank to a whisper.

"Don't you understand?" she said, and all at once she found herself speaking incoherently the things which she had thought. And once she had begun, she could not stop. She stood as it were outside of herself and saw that her speech was madness; yet she went on with it.

"I am a brute. I told you the truth brutally. I did it on purpose. I was so stung because you would not see what was so visible had one the mind to see. I wanted to hurt you. I am a bad, bad woman I suppose. But she never cared for you, more than as a friend, just a mere friend, and what's friendship worth? . . . Especially when it doesn't prevent one shrinking from one's friend."

Durrance flinched, and she saw that he flinched. But her madness had taken hold of her. She was even urged by the knowledge that he flinched.

"Yes, yes," she went on while her voice trembled with passion. "She shrank, your Ethne—the woman of courage who would hold her end up anywhere—wasn't that the phrase? She shrank from you—shall I tell you why? Because you were blind. She was—no, she is afraid. While I—oh I will tell you the truth—I was glad. When the news first came I was glad, when I saw you I was glad, ever since

I have been glad. Because I saw that she shrank. She wrote to you out of pity! Isn't that enough to make one hate her? I think it is. I felt no pity; I was glad;" and though her voice barely rose above a whisper the violence in it increased.

"I am not afraid," she said and repeated. "I am not afraid. . . . I am not afraid."

Durrance stood in front of her with a quite impassive face, but it seemed to him that in all his experience nothing so horrible had occurred as this passionate outburst in that silent moonlit garden by the woman who was Ethne's friend—nothing so horrible, so unforeseen.

"She wrote to you out of pity, and having written she was afraid. And being afraid she had not the courage to say she was afraid. You wouldn't have blamed her if she had admitted that she shrank, so long as she frankly admitted it. You would have forgiven her, you would have remained her friend, and that's all she wishes you to be. But she hadn't the courage. . . . You spoke of cowardice—"

Durrance raised his hand.

"Hush!"

And Mrs. Adair looked at him and was aware of the futility of all that she had said, of her slanders upon Ethne, of her own boastings of courage. Some consciousness of her own degradation came home to her, and she fell to excuses.

"I am a bad woman I suppose," and the more she excused herself the more conscious she was of her degradation. But it was too late for her to recover any ground; and she could not stop midway. So she went on to the end.

"After all, I have not had the best of times. Perhaps there's something to be said. I was married straight from school, and before I knew anything, to a man of whom I knew nothing. It was my mother's doing. He was kind . . . but it was dull. How dull it was! And I got to know as I grew older that there was something more to be won out of life than