

"I don't mean to be unsympathetic," said Daphne of the Cluny garden; and she spoke as one speaks to a stranger to whome one wishes to be polite. "I assure you I am quite interested."

He sighed. But spoke again.

"I deserve everything. You know that silly pose of mine — the charcoal dust and the untidy studio and the bad manners — all that was really ——"

"I see — a danger signal. A gentle warning to friends and admirers and — girls. You are considerate: and I suppose they usually understood?"

"No — they did n't. Nobody did. Why should any one have understood anything so idiotic? People simply thought, I imagine, that I had n't learned how to behave, that I was afraid of cold water and soap. I wanted them to think that I was too absorbed in what I was pleased to call my art, to care about any of the ordinary comforts and joys of life. I wanted them to think that my art *was* my life. I don't suppose anyone ever did think it, except me."

"You did?"

"Oh, I did, right enough. I hypnotized myself into believing the whole silly business. My art! Why, I was in the most deep and deadly earnest about it — like a schoolboy is about his stamp-collection. You see?"

"Yes, indeed," murmured the sympathetic voice of Daphne, whose eyes were occupied with the water of the Roman bath.

"And much more. I was in earnest about it, like an early Christian about the incense and the idols. I thought it was rather fine of me — very fine, let's say, quite out of the way fine. Here I'd got this great talent — genius, I think I used to call it in my modest