

"Take it, my beloved. It is yours. If it were worthier of you, I should be more joyous still in offering it. But, side by side with you, the best and the worst in me will become better. This is my answer to you. This is the answer I longed to give you up at Peer Gynt's stue. Everything that I have been telling you now was in my heart then. But I could not, dared not, tell you then. You knew why I was silent? 'Let us speak of it, dearest. I saw your poor Marianne's face. And that moment, the moment of my life, when the story had been told to the very end, and your barrier had been broken down—that moment was consecrated to her. I shall always feel deeply thankful that I, an impulsive, impetuous woman, was able to be silent then—was able to turn from you then. . . .

"And now, my Clifford, I want to speak to you of Marianne's death. There will come times when you will be assailed by this old wrongful belief that you were responsible for her sad end. You and I will fight those times out together. I have no fear of them; I have no fear of that poor Marianne; I have no fear of anything. You and I will work through those cruel hours. You must and shall learn to be just to yourself. You spoke of Marianne's defenceless state of dreaming. I remember those were your very words. I remember that my heart and mind cried out to you: 'And your own defenceless state of dreaming? May no one plead that to you?'

"I plead it now. I plead it with my heart, my brain, my spirit. My beloved, I entreat of you to give yourself bare justice; nothing more. I would not wish you to sacrifice one inch of the gentle chivalry of your