

He got to his feet and clasped her to his breast. A strength came to him which had eluded him twelve years, and she, womanlike, delighted in that strength, and, with a great gladness, changed eyes and hands with him; keeping her soul still her own, brooding and lofty, as is the soul of every true woman, though, like this one, she labours at a forge, and in a far, untenanted country is faithful friend, ceaseless apothecary to a comrade with a disordered mind; living on savage meats, clothing herself and the other in skins, and, with a divine persistence, keeping a cheerful heart, certain that the intelligence which was frightened from its home would come back one day. It should be hers to watch for the great moment, and give the wanderer loving welcome, lest it should hurry madly away again into the desert, never to return.

She had her reward, yet she wept. She had carried herself before him with the bright ways of an unvexed girl these twelve years past; she had earned the salt of her tears. He was dazed still, but, the doublet of his mind no longer unbraced, he understood what she had been to him, and how she had tended him in absolute loneliness, her companions the wild things of the valley—these and God.

He drew her into the workshop, and put his hand upon the bellows and churned them, so that the fire roared joyously up, and the place was red with the light. In this light he turned her to him and looked at her. The look was as that of one who had come back from the dead—that naked, profound, unconditional gaze which is as deep and honest as the primeval sense. His eyes fell upon her rich, firm, stately body; it lingered for a moment on the brown fulness of her hair; then her look was gathered to his, and they fell into each other's arms.