

"Good God! It is hard to—to——" His hands covered his face in sheer agony.

"John, don't be stupid. Why alarm me in that way? Wealth doesn't bring happiness—far from it. But didn't you and I—discover each other—before—before——"

"But I know, now," he said brokenly, "and it is a mad absurdity to think that a woman of your place in the world should marry a poor engineer. Do you realize that you receive every fortnight more than I earn in twelve months? King Cophetua marrying a beggar-maid sounds excellent in romance, but who ever heard of a queen wedding a pauper?"

"You are describing yourself rather lamely, John."

"Hermione, don't drive me beyond endurance. I can't bear it, I tell you."

She caught his right hand, and imprisoned it lovingly in hers. Her left hand went around his neck, and she drew him closer.

"John," she whispered, and the fragrance of her was intoxicating, "you must not break my poor heart after taking it by storm. I want you and shall keep you if I were ten times as rich and you were in rags. What joy has money brought hitherto in my short life? It killed my mother, and has alienated me from my father. It has driven me to the verge of a folly I now shudder at. It has caused death and suffering