

What a gulf separated him from every other soul on earth! They could not understand, these members of his kin, why he hungered so passionately to confess. They did not perceive the magnitude of the sacrifice they demanded of him; they did not perceive it was any sacrifice at all! They thought it was a mere impulse of emotion which he would live down—this imprudent desire of his to make a scandal in their polite little world! Even St John, who was fond of him, and more than half an idealist, had applauded his wife's attitude with solemn platitudes.

And they were all right! Theirs was the common sense, and his the dreamer's vision now.

They had become his enemies, these people whom he had loved. With their petty aims and ambitions, which were so natural and commendable—he always repeated that—they closed his mouth, and robbed him of his one hope in earth and heaven. Or would she understand? Was the intention enough without the deed? If she lived still in any shape, if the soul she spoke of was not a dream, would she not know how he had tried to keep his word, and what it cost him to break it? And would not the silent God write it down against that other reckoning in the Book?

They called him by-and-by to eat, telling him the funeral guests were. How absurd to eat when she was lying in her new-maiden's bed! It was like stoking a dead fire.

Hours passed. It was quite dark, and then the moon came out, and the smell of the soil entered through the window with the gentle sighing of the tide upon the shore. He stood long looking out upon the bare, undulating country and the shimmering sea. This was his last night at Carnruan. He was going away to-morrow, and he would never come back again.

When the hands of his watch pointed to eleven he went out quietly by one of the drawing-room windows, which he left ajar. Carnruan was long ago sunk in sleep, and not a soul was stirring; he might have left the hall door wide with equal impunity.

His footsteps rang hollowly on the smooth, hard drive, and his shadow fell as black as ink beside him. Down to the cross-