

'Do you still believe the child is yours?'

Sir Theodore clenched his hands.

'I shall not part with the child,' he reiterated, doggedly.

'I will have it!' said Cesare.

A wicked look came into his face.

'She took me and threw me away, as if I and my love were nothing,' he said; and now his voice was shaken as the memory of his wrong boiled up in him. 'If she had lived I don't know what I should have done. It's difficult for a man to fight against a woman. But she's gone, and women are left. Before she went she gave a child to me—to me.' His voice suddenly rose, and he struck his breast violently. 'Not to you. D'you hear? And I'll have what she gave me, what belongs to me.'

He moved forward violently, then stood still.

'Ah!' he said.

He looked down the passage on the right. There was a slight rustling sound and Nurse Jennings appeared, dressed to go away. Before she could speak Cesare was beside her and had seized her by the arm.

'You knew! She told you!' he said. 'Tell him who is the father of the child.'

Nurse Jennings looked at Sir Theodore without speaking.

Under the steady eyes of the woman, eyes that were still red with weeping for his dead wife, something within him seemed to collapse. All the doggedness melted, was swept away, under a torrent of conviction, of humiliation, of despair. He felt impotent, no more a man, incapable of further assertion of any right—if he possessed it—incapable of any struggle, of any further resistance. His head dropped. He looked suddenly years older.

An electric bell sounded. Carlino appeared, staring with his anxious eyes. He went to the front door and opened it. Mechanically Sir Theodore looked up and saw on the threshold Lady Sarah. Slowly he went to her and took her hand. Holding it tightly he turned towards the nurse and Cesare.

'Let her take the child!' he said in a loud, unsteady voice. 'If she will—let her—let her—she has told me—she told me yesterday—she cares very much for little children.'

He dropped Lady Sarah's hand, and left them. He went