

bitterness. "I take care of that for two reasons; because I dread old age—it has no to-morrow; and also because I owe it to myself. Do you know that I shall be forty the day after to-morrow?"

"I knew it, and if I did not know it, I should not believe it," he answered. "I am forty three."

"Yes," she said pensively, "on the 25th of the month." "It isn't a question of years," he reminded her after a moment, "but of living—of experience. Neither of us has been pursued by that harassing care spectre which is so cruel and wicked in its work. I could almost predict that in ten years there will be even as little change."

She shook her head.

"You can never see it," she said, "for I shall be gone."

"Gone where?"

She uplifted her hand towards the grey softness of the far horizon.

"Beyond, then I must know what perplexes now. If I did not believe I should know and be satisfied then; I could not bear myself today, nor any of the interminable days that are coming after."

"From another woman this word would mean unhappiness," he said. "But you are not unhappy. You told me so yourself."

"No, I am not unhappy, but I have missed the best things of life, and you know it as well as I."

What are they?"

"Yes, what are they? I should like to hear your views. We talked on this very subject that April morning of ten years ago."

"I remember our talk. I remember we agreed that the very best thing about life and its most attractive feature was its uncertainty."

"And, I have proved that fallacy, that delusion and snare," she said unexpectedly. "Uncertainty is the one element in life that strains the heart of a woman. She must be secure, or she drops by the way."

He knew enough of the outward circumstances of her lot to grasp her meaning up to a certain point. But he was none the less surprised at her admission. For she had a strong heart, and had always taken

a certain joy in overcoming. It was her courage in untoward circumstances, her sweet serenity that had first attracted him. And he realized that when he told himself yesterday she had not changed a hair's breadth, he had spoken without discernment.

"It was of the best things of life we talked, and I remember we said it was quite possible to be independent of the common thirst for personal happiness, that it was possible to stand on the outside and get a great deal of satisfaction, and from merely looking on. You quoted Emerson as right in saying that life, even though unhappy, is always interesting."

"Interesting, yes, I don't deny it. The trouble is that interest is not enough; that after a time it becomes horrible."

Both were silent, for the bitterness of her tone troubled him, and looking at her face he saw lines where none had been before. And in her eyes dwelt unfathomable shadows.

"You have done well," she said suddenly. "Without effort you seem to have come within measurable distance of the top in India."

"Yes, I had a mind to learn how the air felt at the top."

"And now you have a title and recognition on every hand. Is it enough?"

He shook his head.

"No, it is not enough. The best things of life are not necessarily up there. I begin to think they are lowly, like the violets you picked an hour ago."

"I was like you, I married for ambition. I have what I want, and do not complain. Look you, friend, it is certain that here we get our deserts. Life only gives us back what we bring to it."

"It is so," he answered. "I have proved it."

"Today," she said steadily, with her proud head a little high in the air, "I met a beggar woman with a baby at her breast and I said to myself, 'She is richer than I.' But I am glad I am childless. Children should be the heritage of the happy."

Both knew the mistake that had been made would not bear talking of.