

"I am bound to everything and a part of nothing. Can you imagine a nature that is always questioning, and generally critical? I am so detached that I have not attempted to climb the barriers, and"—he hesitated, then added abruptly—"I built them myself."

Stella gazed at the shore lights. They shone through the dusk, suspended in luminous clarity, like promises, it seemed, of all the waiting world had to offer. Why need this lonely man turn his eyes to the empty sea behind, when there breathed in him so much of proud independence and lofty strength. Had he shut out the world? Could he see nothing but his own isolation?

"Is that nature?" she said, with a touch of sympathy.

"I didn't want to think so." Again he turned to her. "I have tried to be reasonable among unreasonable people—but——" He concluded with a shrug and a quick thrusting of thin lips.

"Don't you think it all comes back to the procession? It needs you for two weeks, then moves on, and you wait for the next one."

His grey eyes caught her own and held them for a moment. She had a glimpse of something that stirred in them. "You are perfectly right, but I don't know how to change it. The sea has her servants. She hates to let them go, and there is a sign mark, too, that goes with them when they do leave her."

Stella was silent. Indecision seemed a strange quality in Blantyre. The man's clear-cut face, the latent strength of form, all flouted the harbouring