

can't judge. Anyhow, he stuck to it up to the very last — the very last," she cried.

"My dear Mrs. Prothero, nobody wanted him to —"

"He did it, though. He did it because he was not what you all thought him."

"We thought him splendid. My brother was saying only the other day he had never seen such pluck."

"Well, then, it's his pluck — his splendour that he's dying of."

"And you hold us, his friends, responsible for that?"

"I don't hold you responsible for anything."

She was trembling on the edge of tears.

"Come, come," he said gently, "you misunderstand. You've been doing too much. You're overstrained."

She smiled. That was so like them. They were sane when they got hold of one stupid fact and flung it at your head. But you were overstrained when you retaliated. When you had made a sober selection from the facts, such a selection as constituted a truth, and presented it to them, you were more overstrained than ever. They could n't stand the truth.

"I don't hold *you* responsible for his perversity," said the poor Doctor.

"You talked as if you did."

"You misunderstood me," he said sadly. "I only asked you to do what you could."

"I have done what I could."

He ordered her some bromide then, for her nerves.

That evening Prothero was so much better that he declared himself well. The wind had changed to the south. She had prayed for a warm wind; and, as it swept through the great room, she flung off her fur-lined coat and tried to persuade herself that the weather was in Owen's favour.

At midnight the warm wind swelled to a gale. Down at the end of the garden the iron gate cried under the menace and torture of its grip. The sound and the rush of it filled Prothero with exultation. Neither he nor Laura slept.