

as indeed nothing can. If you are a man, you have shut your mouth hard and said nothing ; and if you are only a man in the making, you have recognised that yours was quite a special case, and you yourself not guilty of your own pestiferous career.

Granted, and with all my heart. Let us accept these apologies ; let us agree that you are nobody's enemy but your own ; let us agree that you are a sort of moral cripple, impotent for good ; and let us regard you with the unmingled pity due to such a fate. But there is one thing to which, on these terms, we can never agree :— we can never agree to have you marry. What ! you have had one life to manage, and have failed so strangely, and now can see nothing wiser than to conjoin with it the management of some one else's ? Because you have been unfaithful in a very little, you propose yourself to be a ruler over ten cities. You strip yourself by such a step of all remaining consolations and excuses. You are no longer content to be your own enemy ; you must be your wife's also. You have been hitherto in a mere subaltern attitude ; dealing cruel blows about you in life, yet only half responsible, since you came there by no choice or movement of your own. Now, it appears, you must take things on your own authority : God made you, but you marry yourself ; and for all that your wife suffers, no one is responsible but you. A man must be very certain of his knowledge ere he undertake to guide a ticket-of-leave man through a dangerous pass ; you have eternally missed your way in life, with consequences that you still deplore, and yet you masterfully seize your wife's hand, and, blindfold, drag her after you to ruin. And it is your wife, you observe, whom you select. She, whose happiness you most desire, you choose to be your victim.