

myself. And . . . I have just broken it all up. If I had waited for you . . . for you——"

"Never think of that again, dear. I was a brute and a fool. I can't understand why I didn't tell you long ago. I always loved you. But I just let everything slip."

"You—you won't do it any more, Surrey?"

"I hope not. I think not. Wylde and I have talked that out. . . ." He stopped, then said with an effort: "We are going to be better men because we have loved you. Not worse."

"Oh, don't!" cried Peggy, and dropped on the settle in an agony of weeping. "Oh, don't! You couldn't hurt me more, when I know . . . I know——"

Surrey stooped to her and his healthy clean-skinned face was white.

"Don't cry, dear," he said. "God knows you shouldn't cry over anything that has taught me to understand myself . . . or taken the bitterness out of Wylde."

"That wasn't my doing," sobbed Peggy. "And—he hates me now."

Surrey drew a long breath. By Wylde's order his lips were sealed here. Then he straightened, seeing Wylde on the stair beyond Peggy, and knowing quite surely that Wylde had read in the broken voice what he himself had read. For a moment the two men looked at each other full. Then Wylde turned and went up the stairs again, and Surrey brought Peggy back to her poise, cheerfully, tenderly, so that she never knew that one despairing sentence had told two men who loved her what she did not know herself.

Through the next day, by Surrey's help Wylde stiffened himself for the torture that was to come with the night. This big ancient house with its liveried servants, its luxury, its rows of painted ancestors in the Long Gallery, oppressed him as the knowledge that he had only two cents in his pocket had never done. Surrey, the thoroughbred, with the fine physique and that easy dignity which would never be Wylde's, was