

CHAPTER VI

JOAN woke up in the early morning renewed and calmed. Her long sleep under Nature's care, and her communion with her father had strengthened her and given her the courage to go on, in spite of the unexpected repulse which she had met from her husband, and in spite of her realization of her own spiritual failure.

"At least nothing can take from me now the joy of my reunion with my father and my old home," she said. "That remains as my abiding possession out of the wreck I've made of everything. Horace might turn me out a thousand times. But a thousand times the forge would shelter me, and my father's voice welcome me."

Had she not already proved that in the hours of dire distress this consolation would not be denied her? In the garden of the new smithy: in New York on the first night of her sojourn with Miss Byrne: in California, in Crazy Crank's death chamber: and on the moor here within a mile or two of her husband's house now barred against her, this message of reassuring support had been borne to her from the spiritual world, the only true world.

She knew she could count on it forever more, wherever her path lay, over the waters, over the mountains — everywhere. And her thoughts turned to the woman at the new smithy who would always be linked up with her memories of her old home, not as a stranger, not of alien influence, but as one merged, as she herself wished it, in the very spirit of the place. Again the words she had quoted, echoed back to Joan: