

"True! — T—r—u—e! T—r—u—e!" roared the engine. "Quite so! Quite so!" chimed the bell. But the brakes set up a hissing and a sneering that roused Mr. Walton from his reverie, and made the train stand still. They had come to the first junction, and the headlights of other panting and belching engines glared in through the windows at them. He shoved back his cap from his eyes and wheeled his chair about. Then the door of the coach was opened; a lady came in. The color deepened in his dark strong face, and with an amazement and embarrassment unusual in him, stood up to greet her. There were snowflakes glistening in her hair and on her shoulders, and he inhaled the delicious coolness she diffused, when she held out her hand to him, almost greedily. He was not too confused to see how pink her cheeks and ears were from old Rime's rude caresses, and how bright her naturally sad grey eyes looked under the fringe of wind-tossed hair sparkling with frosty jewels. He was a dreamer, a poet, a fool, if you will, this far-seeing, deep-feeling handsome muscular man of five-and-thirty; but he was the sort of dreamer, poet, fool, a woman singles out by instinct from the maddening crowd as a fit and safe depository for her choicest gifts. "This is a delightful surprise Miss Marcia!" he said. He was never afraid to let a woman see when she was pleasing to him.

"Thank you," said Miss Marcia, growing a shade graver and more like her natural self. Then he took her furs and chose a seat for her—beside his own—if he might have that privilege?

She did not answer, but sat in it, withal. She was a slender, graceful girl, with the "pale cast of thought," not only over her fine and even features, but about her whole appearance. Her dress, her manner, her hand, her foot, the tone of her voice, suggested it. She had outlived the first fervors of young maidenhood, if she had ever known

them. But it was a swifter and defter touch than time's, that had sobered her still youthful face and stamped the hall mark of some sacred sorrow upon it. Mr. Walton had known her for some years and was familiar with a portion of her life's sad story. He knew from outside sources, because he could never have gathered from herself, how full of want and pain and harassing humiliations her lot had been. Her gentle birth, her temperament and her profound culture, had made her abnormally sensitive to suffering, and destiny saw to it that she had no dearth of it in her young life. But it was the millstone of a speechless grief which had been hung about her neck. Sad secrets of the hearth which preyed upon the winsome spirit, until all its gladness was absorbed. And still her spartan courage defied the pity of those who knew or guessed her fate. Mr. Walton had been attracted to her from the first, but it was the homage of the hero-worshipper that he had proffered—admiration and esteem. Later he used to sit behind her in the little church at C—, where they both lived, and somehow from long looking at her there, until the waving outline of her soft dark hair, and the pensive cast of her oval, creamy face, and the unflinching forbearance in her pure, clear eyes, and the sometimes troubled heaving of her breast, and deepening of the line between her brows were as familiar to him as his own reflection. He had developed a tender interest in her, and began to lend her books, and to walk with her on summer Sundays, and drink tea on the garden-seats of her sombre dwelling, and talk with her about his hopes and fears and private belief about the world and men and things in general. But still, he did not love her; he was sure of that. It never even occurred to him that his visits and attentions might be misunderstood by the watchful gossips of the small town. He only knew that life in so circumscribed a sphere was very dull and lonely, and that Miss Marcia, with her wide,