

DISJECTA MEMBRA POETAE

She was thinking a dreadful thought. "Is Horace selfish? Is Horace selfish?" a little voice kept calling at the back of her brain and would not be quiet. At last she answered it to her own satisfaction. "No, he is not selfish, he is only ill."

And presently, as if on mature consideration, she rose and went into the house.

His eyes followed, well pleased, the delicate undulations of her figure.

Horace Jewdwine was the most exacting, the most fastidious of men. His entire nature was dominated by the critical faculty in him; and Lucia satisfied its most difficult demands. Try as he would, there was really nothing in her which he could take exception to, barring her absurd adoration of his uncle Frederick; and even that, when you came to think of it, flowed from the innocence which was more than half her charm. He could not say positively wherein her beauty consisted, therefore he was always tempted to look at her in the hope of finding out. There was nothing insistent and nothing obvious about it. Some women, for instance, irritated your admiration by the capricious prettiness of one or two features, or fatigued it by the monotonous regularity of all. The beauty of others was vulgarized by the flamboyance of some irrelevant detail, such as hair. Lucia's hair was merely dark; and it made, as hair should make, the simplest adornment for her head, the most perfect setting for her face. As for her features, (though it was impossible to think of them, or anything about her as incorrect) they eluded while they fascinated him by their subtlety. Lucia's beauty, in short, appealed to him, because it did not commit him to any irretrievable opinion.

But nothing, not even her beauty, pleased him better than the way in which she managed her intellect, divining by some infallible instinct how much of it was wanted by any given listener at a given time. She had none of the nasty tricks that clever women have, always on the look out to go one better, and to catch you tripping. Her lucidity was remarkable; but it served to show up other people's strong points rather than her own. Lucia did not impress you as being clever, and Jewdwine, who had a clever