

"For I know her motive. She told it me a long while ago at Glenalla when I first returned from the Soudan. She said two lives should not be spoiled because of her."

Mrs. Adair might smile her disbelief, but Durrance had no doubts. She wished to keep him in the dark, she wished him never to suspect that she retained any thought of Harry Feversham. That very callousness of which he had accused her in his thoughts was, after all, only a sign that she was on her guard lest he should suspect. She had not told him of Willoughby's coming and she wished him not to know.

Durrance stood undecided whether to hear more, or whether to cut these disclosures short, and to put even what she had disclosed altogether from his thoughts. Loyalty to Ethne, a sense of treachery in listening to stories told behind her back, bade him halt here, at this point. He wondered a little even that he had allowed Mrs. Adair to go so far, but she had begun cleverly with a hint at ill health and he had fallen into the trap.

On the other hand, however, there was his own theory and belief. Marriage was not right between a man crippled like himself, and a woman active and vigorous like Ethne, unless upon both sides there was love. He walked once or twice up and down the terrace, and a new road out of the tangle began to glimmer in front of him.

Willoughby had brought good news of Feversham, news which had given to her a buoyancy and a light heart.

"Did she make a mistake five years ago?" he asked himself. "And has she to-day learnt of her mistake? There was some distinct wrong that Harry did her, there was undoubtedly disgrace to follow. But was there really more misunderstanding than wrong? Had she misjudged him all these years? Has she only learnt to-day that she misjudged him? Because if that is so, and some day Calder's telegram arrives, telling me Harry Feversham lives and is at Omdurman, something might, perhaps, be done. Yes, some-

thing might be done—from Suakin or from Assouan."

He came back to his seat with a definite conviction that somehow or other he must find out precisely what had occurred on the night of the ball at Lennon House, five years ago. "A misunderstanding, perhaps," he repeated to himself. He was very far from the truth, but he had grown quicker of perception these last months. A hint or two and he might jump to it.

"Well, what did Captain Willoughby say?"

"Of the message which he brought from Mr. Feversham, naturally nothing. But he brought a message and he gave her a token. She carried it back to the house as though there was nothing half so precious in all the world."

"A token?" asked Durrance.

"Yes, a little white feather, soiled and speckled with dust."

Durrance sat with his forehead pressed upon his hand, and was silent.

"Can you read that riddle?" asked Mrs. Adair.

"Wait a moment, please," said Durrance. "Did Willoughby mention a Colonel Trench?"

"No."

"Or a Major Castleton?"

"No."

Of both these men Ethne had spoken. She was frankly glad in a barbaric way that Castleton was dead. She had connected Feversham's departure into the desert south of Wadi Halfa with Trench's captivity in Omdurman—immediately. Yet with neither Trench nor Castleton was she acquainted. Willoughby, Trench, Castleton—here were three names, the names of three persons somehow concerned in Harry Feversham's disgrace. Moreover, Ethne had been very curious as to the possibility of an escape from Omdurman—not Feversham's escape, but Trench's. He had been surprised at her curiosity at the time; he began now to see a glimmering of the truth. He had explained the difficulty to lie in the untrustworthiness