

too solitarily. Others had sympathetically tried to get into his heart, and he had shut them out. It was a place which only one could enter, and she was not there. He knew that she would never be there.

That was the final mockery of his fate. At the time when he loved her most, when he needed her most, when before God, he deserved her most, she was most irrevocably lost. The pang of this, the awful inevitableness of it, broke him like a reed. From time to time he sighed heavily, but now a dry sob shivered in his breast. His shoulders shook, and then his legs crumpled under him; he was on his knees and sinking lower and lower, like a man beaten down, blow upon blow, until at length he lies prostrate before his foes.

"Not that, O God," he sobbed; "not that! I cannot — I cannot lose her. Leave me, oh, leave me this thing! I ask nothing more! Nothing more."

There was silence for an interval and then the pleadings began more earnestly, more piteously. "O God, give me her! Give me love! Give me completeness! Give me that without which no man is strong, the undoubted love of an unwavering woman! Give me that and I will face anything — endure anything!"

For a moment his hands, virile and outstretched, grasped convulsively the far edges of the Indian rug under which he had fallen, and thrust themselves through the stoutly woven fabric as if it had been wet paper. Scalding drops had begun to flow from his eyes like rivers. He seized the fabric of the rug in his teeth and bit it. He forced the thick folds against his eyes as if to dam the flooding tears.

"It is too much! It is too much!" he moaned. "O God," he reproached, "you have left me; you have left me alone and far. I have stood, but I am tottering." He dropped into a sort of vernacular in his blind pleading.