

After this there had come days, weeks, months, when at each sudden word, at each opening of the door, he had started, half sickened, by fear of the discovery which he knew must come. His nerves had quivered and given way under the pressure; he had grown morose, irritable, silent; and in some half-insane frenzy, he had imagined that his friends, his family, his wife, even his young children, had begun to regard him with terror and suspicion. But at last the hour had come, and in the strength with which he had risen to meet it, he had won back almost his old self—for courage, not patience, was the particular virtue of his temperament. He had stood his trial bravely, had heard his sentence without a tremor, and had borne his punishment without complaint. The world and he were quits now, and he felt that it owed him at least the room for a fair fight.

The prison, he had said once, had squared him with his destiny, yet to-day each act of his past appeared to rivet, not itself, but its result upon his life. Though he told himself that he was free, he knew that, in the reality of things, he was still a prisoner. From the lowest depths that he had touched he was reached even now by the agony of his most terrible moment when, at the end of his first hopeless month, he had found awaiting him one day a letter from his wife. It was her final good-bye, she had written; on the morrow she would leave with her two children for his father's home in Virginia; and the single condition upon which the old man had consented to provide