

glanced at him with furtive wistfulness. She was able to enjoy the summer weather. She was not quite dead to the common phenomena of the roadside. But the last resistances of departing youthfulness and vivacity against the narcotic of a dull, unlovely domesticity were taking place. In a year or two she would be the typical matron of the lower middle-class.

When Richard had made these observations, he reflected: "Laura will be like that — soon." Mentally he compared the two faces, and he could, as it were, see Laura's changing. . . .

Then followed a reverie which embraced the whole of his past life. He recognised that, while he bore all the aspect of prosperity, he had failed. Why had nature deprived him of strength of purpose? Why could not he, like other men, bend circumstances to his own ends? He sought for a reason, and he found it in his father, that mysterious, dead transmitter of traits, of whom he knew so little, and on whose name lay a blot of some kind which was hidden from him. He had been born in the shadow, and after a fitful struggle towards emergence, into the shadow he must again retire. Fate was his enemy. Mary had died; Mary would have helped him to be strong. Mr. Aked had died; Mr. Aked's inspiring influence would have incited and