

"Well, very possibly you were right. At any rate, you have the consolation of knowing that it's too late to help it now."

"Yes, it's too late," said Isabel; and her thoughts went back to her meeting with the young girl whom she had liked so much, and whose after history had interested her so painfully. It seemed to her a hard world that could come to nothing better than that for the girl whom she had seen in her first glimpse of it that night. Where was she now? What had become of her? If she had married that man, would she have been any happier? Marriage was not the poetic dream of perfect union that a girl imagines it; she herself had found that out. It was a state of trial, of probation; it was an ordeal, not an ecstasy. If she and Basil had broken each other's hearts and parted, would not the fragments of their lives have been on a much finer, much higher plane? Had not the commonplace, every-day experiences of marriage vulgarized them both? To be sure, there were the children; but if they had never had the children, she would never have missed them; and if Basil had, for example, died just before they were married — She started from this wicked reverie, and ran towards her husband, whose broad, honest back, with no visible neck or shirt-collar, was turned towards her, as he stood, with his head thrown up, studying a time-table on the wall; she passed her arm convulsively through his, and pulled him away.