"I know by the way he talks and looks."

"If he takes after his mother, that's no sign," Edwin retorted, without considering what he said.

"What do you mean—'if he takes after his mother'?" She seemed puzzled.

"Could anyone tell *your* real preferences from the way *you* talked and looked?" His audacious rashness astounded him. Nevertheless he stared her in the eyes, and her glance fell.

"No one but you could have said a thing like that," she observed mildly, yieldingly.

And what he had said suddenly acquired a mysterious and wise significance and became oracular. She alone had the power of inspiring him to be profound. He had noticed that before, years ago, and first at their first meeting. Or was it that she saw in him an oracle, and caused him to see with her?

Slowly her face coloured, and she walked away to the fireplace, and cautiously tended it. Constraint had seized him again, and his heart was loud.

"Edwin," she summoned him, from the fireplace.

He rose, shaking with emotion, and crossed the undiscovered spaces of the room to where she was. He had the illusion that they were by themselves not in the room but in the universe. She was leaning with one hand on the mantelpiece.

"I must tell you something," she said, "that nobody at all knows except George's father, and probably nobody ever will know. His sister knew, but she's dead."

"Yes!" he muttered, in an exquisite rush of happiness. After all, it was not with Charlie, nor even with Janet, that she was most intimate; it was with himself!

"George's father was put in prison for bigamy. George is illegitimate." She spoke with her characteristic extreme clearness of enunciation, in a voice that showed no emotion.

"You don't mean it!" He gasped foolishly.

She nodded. "I'm not a married woman. I once thought I was, but I wasn't. That's all."

"But——"

"But what?"

"You—you said six or seven years, didn't you? Surely they don't give that long for bigamy?"