

"My God!" he whispered, in a whisper that seemed to echo through the room.

"Harry! Are you unhappy?" In an instant she was by him. "What is it? I don't understand. You tell me you're engaged, and you look so unhappy. Why do you marry her if you don't love her? Are you giving her all this—and yourself—you yourself—without loving her? Dear Harry—yes, you've been very good to me—dear Harry, why?"

"Go back," he said. "Go back to your chair. Go and sit there."

With wonder in her eyes, and a smile fresh-born on her lips, she obeyed him.

"Well?" she said. "You're very odd. But—why?"

"I'm marrying her for Blent's sake—and I think she's marrying me for Blent's sake."

"I call that horrible."

"No." He sprang to his feet. "If Blent was yours, what would you do to keep it."

"Everything," she answered. "Everything—except sell myself, Harry."

She was superb. By a natural instinct, all affectation forgotten, she had thrown herself into Addie Tristram's attitude. There was the head on the bend of the arm, there was the dainty foot stuck out. There was all the defiance of a world insensate to love, greedy to find sin, dull to see grace and beauty, blind to a woman's self while it cavilled at a woman's deeds.

"Everything except sell yourself?" he repeated, his eyes set on her face.

"Yes—'Per Ensem Justitia!'" she laughed. "But not lies, and not buying and selling, Harry."

"My word is given. I must marry her now."

"Better fling Blent away!" she flashed out in a brilliant indignation.

"And if I did that?"

"A woman would love you for yourself," she cried, leaning forward to him with hands clasped.