

first saw her. She was standing bare-armed among the grape-vines by a wall of rock, the dew of rich life on her lip and forehead, her grey eyes swimming with a soft light; and looking at her he had loved her at once, as he had loved, on the instant, the little child that came to him later; as he had loved the girl into which the child grew, till she left him and came back no more. Why had he never gone in search of her?

He got to his feet involuntarily and stepped towards the door, looking down into the valley. As his eyes rested on the little city his face grew dark, but his eyes were troubled and presently grew bewildered, for out of a green covert near there stepped a pretty boy, who came to him with frank, unabashed face and a half-shy smile.

Felion did not speak at first, but stood looking, and presently the child said: "I have come to fetch you."

"To fetch me where, little man?" asked Felion, a light coming into his face, his heart beating faster.

"To my mother. She is sick."

"Where is your mother?"

"She's in the village down there," answered the boy, pointing.

In spite of himself, Felion smiled in a sour sort of way, for the boy had called the place a village, and he relished the unconscious irony.

"What is the matter with her?" asked Felion, beckoning the lad inside.

The lad came and stood in the doorway, gazing round curiously, while the old man sat down and looked at him, moved, he knew not why.

The bright steel of Felion's axe, standing in the corner, caught the lad's eye and held it. Felion saw, and said: "What are you thinking of?"