

coming. Every sound seemed to agitate him: the stupor was varied by fits of feverish restlessness, in which he murmured a name that was not that of his young wife. He had learned, perhaps, to love Molly; but he loved Valencia, as he had said, in a very different way.

She was with him at last. Her face came out of the mists and smiled bravely upon him. She was always courageous, and she had made up her mind that she would not distress him by lamentations. He was vaguely glad that she did not cry—as Molly did.

"Val," he said with a faint smile of welcome. "The end has come, you see."

"Not by your own seeking, Jack," she answered. She had knelt down beside the bed and was pillowing his head upon her arm. A sort of instinct told her what was best to be done for him.

"No, not by my own seeking. I was trying to do what you told me."

She suppressed a cry of agony. "As it has turned out in this way, and you were trying to do right, Jack," she said, "I think that we must conclude that—that it was God's will."

"For me to die?" said Jack, with a smile. "Well, I told you that it was the best way out of our difficulties. I want to say something to you, Val: hold my hand: don't let me go—don't let me die—until I have said it."

"No, Jack," she answered softly but firmly. "You shall not die until you have said all that you want to say!"

"You make me feel strong, Val. With you—with you—I should have been a better man. We are alone, are we not?"

"Yes, dear."

"Tell me that you love me, Val."

"I have always loved you—all my life. I shall love you till I die—and after death, to all eternity."

"And I—you, Val."

Then quite easily and naturally, he began to speak of Molly.

"I would have been a better husband, if I had lived, to that poor child. She loves me, and I could have loved her and the child too. You will be a friend to them, will you not, Val? I leave them to you."

"Yes, Jack. I will do all I can."