

A silence, during which the two friends walked slowly along, in the crisp, keen air. Willard suddenly slipped his arm into that of Reginald. 'Describe to me,' he said, 'your feelings towards her whom you say that you love with the heart.'

'They are not complicated,' was the deliberative answer, touched with a sort of dignified melancholy. 'When we are together I am simply very much pleased. A strong attractive force has me in its grasp. If I attempt to find a reason for this charm I usually finish by profound and regretful self-contempt. There is between us no congeniality of intellect. I will even admit to you that the woman is common-place, whimsical, of a small nature. I am like one bewitched, yet fully cognizant of the spell-power binding him. If I marry this woman my happiness must last, only so long as that spell-power continues unchanged. Should it cease, there will be no barrier against myself—contempt assuming wider than personal limits. Only, I believe that it *will* last. I believe that the influence of this woman over me is an indestructible fact, and founded upon no fleeting impression of the senses. I can safely tell you that satiety will never make headway against it, though on this point you will probably feel like presenting objections.'

Willard offered no reply for some little space, as the two men still walked onward. His head remained meditatively drooped, while Reginald turned more than one swift inquiring glance at his half-hidden face.

'And the other?' he at length questioned.

Reginald's voice had loudened when his prompt answer now found utterance, and its melancholy of tone had deepened likewise. Through all that he said there seemed to surge a steady undercurrent of self-reproach, even of confessional self-abasement.

'She is a woman in ten thousand—clever, capable, courageous, brimming

with the sweetest charities, looking at life with the broad-sightedness of some deeply thoughtful man, yet mingling with her view a sympathetic intuition exquisitely feminine. I feel that if I married her I should be a wretch not to become the happiest of men! And yet —'

'And yet you would probably be the most miserable.'

'No, no! I did not say that. I do not think it.'

Before answering, Willard brought his friend to a dead stand still. There was a half-smile on his lean, worldly-wise sort of face, and a few tiny wrinkles seemed, in the bluish dimness where he stood, to have come into sudden view beneath either eye. He drew his arm from Reginald's and began to speak, with placid distinctness.

'It is fair to suppose, my dear fellow, that you have not put this confidence in me without a certain feeling that my advice may be of some value. But if I am wrong, here, at least this advice can do no harm, and I am going to give it. The woman of these two whom you love is evidently she whom you mentioned first. What you described to me regarding your sentiments toward her was undoubtedly the description of a passion. To gratify this passion may be an imprudence which your after-life will heartily repent; I don't pretend, on such a point, to prophesy affirmatively or negatively. I have seen too many marriages of this sort turn out well, and too many turn out ill, not to confess that the dissimilarity of both temperament and intellect between a wedded pair is one of those questions as yet quite defiant of inductive reasoning. The accumulation of instances does not seem to give much help of an *a posteriori* kind to the social observer. Perhaps when pure science has made more psychological headway we shall be able to match men and women one with another as accurately as we now match certain meats and certain sauces.