

lay watching it moodily. No one spoke for a long time. It seemed as if none of them could. Hugh was choking. Argela Latham was crying.

At last Stephen spoke, taking up again the sorry parable of his tragedy. "I waited on Aunt Caroline; she waited on you — and I — I wanted a little mothering so. I worked like a navvy, and won prizes at Harrow and Oxford. Uncle Dick said, 'Creditable, Stephen, quite creditable,' and gave me a fiver — and I — I wanted the feel of his hand on my shoulder. You played the silly goat at Harrow and at Magdalen, and Uncle Dick said, 'Tut-tut,' and bought you a hunter, and coddled you generally. I was driven in on myself, I tell you, at every point. I wanted human affection, and I was left alone to browse on my own canker. Well — I did — I lived alone. There wasn't a beast on the place, or a servant either, that didn't come at your whistle and fawn on you, and run from me, if it dared. I lived alone — and was lonely. I lay in the woods as a boy. I worked at that bench when I was older. I dreamed and I planned and I schemed to do a big thing, a damned fine thing too — a bigger thing than you ever could have understood. But Richard Bransby could have understood; he had brains. If you'd wanted to fly on a contrivance of dragon-flies to the moon, he'd have considered whether he couldn't gratify you, and have turned you down in the end, kindly and generously — but me — it wasn't the flying and the aircraft I cared about really in the first place; it was the dreaming, and something to take the place of people — the people I wanted and couldn't have —" Mrs. Latham was sobbing. "Then, pres-