

But what if the soul were quite ordinary? Such a soul, for example, as his own? He liked to be faithful to himself, but he wanted to place Tessa in the more favourable light. Generosity was his finest virtue, and it was all the finer because he never suspected its force or its action in his mind.

"I'll go straight to her and say all I think. I'll speak out," he said to himself.

He met her on the staircase coming down to the library. She was serious, but she was dressed in rose-coloured muslin; she wore in her bodice some fresh roses, which gave a fragrance to the air; her large hazel eyes were dewy with the tears which spring from agitation.

"I was just looking for you," she said. So he turned, and they went into the library together.

She had received Firmalden's letter with its account of Nannie Cloots and the lies she had told. But although they were lies, taken at their blackness they had a tinge of truth. And the truth was that Marlesford had a great affection for Sophy Burghwallis. It is only the woman who is herself subtle in friendship who feels any especial jealousy of her husband's women friends—so long as they are friends only and not to be even imagined as lovers. Tessa had learnt that where an attraction between two people is very strong any calm relationship is out of the question. Where there is no surrender or any possibility of it, there must be all the same an incessant exhausting struggle between fixed principles and instincts which, although they can