

"Did you mean to go alone?" she asked, "to live there—quite alone?"

"There would be some one to help you look after it," said I.

"Yes—but—otherwise, alone."

"Who else is there that you know?" I asked.

She shook her head.

"No one?"

"I don't know anybody."

"But if you feel what you do about the country," said I. "I don't think you'd be lonely. And if ever you wanted me—at any time—I could come down. There'd be some inn at the village where I could put up."

"Where you could put up?"

"Yes—where I could sleep."

She gazed at me quite strangely, and so direct were her eyes that I remember wondering was she forgetting how repulsive I was. I believe that thought would have grown upon me. I believe, had she looked at me thus a moment longer, I should have taken the bull of fortune by the horns. I should have tried my luck, risking that refusal which I believed to be inevitable, whereby it would have been thrown back at me once more the eternal knowledge of myself. But at that moment two things occurred. I, who will have no mirror in my room, was suddenly confronted by my reflection in a little handglass of Clarissa's that leant against the back of an empty chair. She had been arranging herself, no doubt, before I came into the room; for it is ever the way with women that