

As I stood in my old position on the plain, whose green was now tinged with autumnal splendor, and again watched the betrothed on the river's bank, I felt, with a strong conviction, that the hour of my testing was at hand. How that force strove within me, urged me, almost compelled me to snatch Geraldine away for my very own; and then how the spirit of altruism flamed up and intervened, appealing to the better part of my nature. All night I was in a turmoil, in a slough of despair, as I was tossed about between two waves. The following day they were happily married, but still I hovered near.

Swiftly for them the months chased by, and blissfully too, for soon they were to realize the height of their aspirations. The noblest ambition of their lives was to materialize, with crowning glory, in parenthood. For Bob there was not a doubt of his future happiness. He seemed to live among fleecy clouds of rapture, like one instilled with the nectar of the gods. His enthusiasm influenced Geraldine too, and, coupled with her own, it filled her soul with a feeling of happiness that all but drove away the sense of dread which kept continually recurring within her. Later, however, as the appointed time approached, this fear grew in size, like a large, ugly weed in a garden of beautiful flowers.

As for me, my interest and my passions had not abated in the least, but altruism was succeeding magnificently. For a long time I thought the old fires were quenched forever, and that peace would always be manifest in my soul. Then, suddenly, in a sorry moment, an evil thought took possession of me. Jealousy showed me my chance and my means and forced me to proceed. Continually, within me, the evil force stirred up my mind and kept the overpowering passion alive, while I bided the time that intervened. With the eagerness of a zealot I would have hastened the slowly passing days, if my power had been such. Twice did the rapidly dying spirit of unselfishness flame up, but this only tended to incense me further. Thus I watched and waited until the time was ripe. At length the hour came.

Could I perform this terrible deed? Could I stoop to such baseness? In a moment the question was answered. Passion gripped me, and in its grasp, what could I do but obey?