CHAPTER THE NINTH

THE LAST DAYS OF SIR RICHMOND HARDY

Section 1

The Majority and Minority Reports of the Fuel Commission were received on their first publication with much heat and disputation, but there is already a fairly general agreement that they are great and significant documents, broadly conceived and historically important. They do lift the questions of fuel supply and distribution high above the level of parochial jealousies and above the petty and destructive profiteering of private owners and traders, to a view of a general human welfare. They form an important link in a series of private and public documents that are slowly opening out a prospect of new economic methods, methods conceived in the generous spirit of scientific work, that may yet arrest the drift of our western civilization towards financial and commercial squalor and the social collapse that must ensue inevitably on that.
In view of the composition of the Committee, the Majority Report is in itself an amazing triumph of Sir Richmond's views; it is astonishing that he was able to drive his opponents so far and then leave them there securely advanced while he carried on the adherents he had altogether won, including, of course, the labour representatives, to the further altitudes of the Minority Report.

After the Summer recess the Majority Report was discussed and adopted.

Sir Richmond had shown signs of flagging energy in June, but he had come back in September in a state of exceptional vigour; for a time he completely dominated the Committee by the passionate force of his convictions and the illuminating scorn he brought to bear on the various subterfuges and weakening amendments by which the meaner interests sought to save themselves in whole or in part from the common duty of sacrifice. But toward the end he fell ill. He had worked to the pitch of exhaustion. He neglected a cold that settled on his chest. He began to cough persistently and betray an increasingly irritable temper. In the last fights in the Committee his face was bright with fever and he spoke in a voiceless whisper, often a vast angry whisper. His place at table was marked with scattered lozenges and scraps of paper torn to the minutest shreds. Such good manners as had hitherto mitigated his behaviour on the Committee departed from him, He carried his last points, gesticulating and coughing and wheezing rather than speaking. But he had so hammered his ideas into the Committee that they took the effect of what he was trying to say.

He died of pneumonia at his own house three days after the passing of the Majority Report. The Minority Report, his own especial creation, he never signed. It was completed by Wast and Carmichael....

After their parting at Salisbury station Dr. Martineau heard very little of Sir Richmond for a time except through the newspapers, which contained frequent allusions to the Committee. Someone told him that Sir Richmond had been staying at Ruan in Cornwall where Martin Leeds had a

cottage, and someone else had met him at Bath on his way, he said, in his car from Cornwall to a conference with Sir Peter Davies in Glamorganshire.

But in the interim Dr. Martineau had the pleasure of meeting Lady Hardy at a luncheon party. He was seated next to her and he found her a very pleasing and sympathetic person indeed. She talked to him freely and simply of her husband and of the journey the two men had taken together. Either she knew nothing of the circumstances of their parting or if she did she did not betray her knowledge. "That holiday did him a world of good," she said. "He came back to his work like a giant. I feel very grateful to you."

Dr. Martineau said it was a pleasure to have helped Sir Richmond's work in any way. He believed in him thoroughly. Sir Richmond was inspired by great modern creative ideas.

"Forgive me if I keep you talking about him," said Lady Hardy. "I wish I could feel as sure that I had been of use to him."

Dr. Martineau insisted. "I know very well that you are."

"I do what I can to help him carry his enormous burthen of toil," she said. "I try to smooth his path. But he is a strange silent creature at times."

Her eyes scrutinized the doctor's face.

It was not the doctor's business to supplement Sir Richmond's silences. Yet he wished to meet the requirements of this lady if he could. "He is one of those men," he said, "who are driven by forces they do not fully understand. A man of genius."

"Yes," she said in an undertone of intimacy. "Genius.... A great irresponsible genius.... Difficult to help.... I wish I could do more for him."

A very sweet and charming lady. It was with great regret that the doctor found the time had come to turn to his left-hand neighbour.

Section 2

It was with some surprise that Dr. Martineau received a fresh appeal for aid from Sir Richmond. It was late in October and Sir Richmond was already seriously ill. But he was still going about his business as though he was perfectly well. He had not mistaken his man. Dr. Martineau received him as though there had never been a shadow of offence between them.

He came straight to the point. "Martineau," he said, "I must have those drugs I asked you for when first I came to you now. I must be bolstered up. I can't last out unless I am. I'm at the end of my energy. I come to

you because you will understand. The Commission can't go on now for more than another three weeks. Whatever happens afterwards I must keep going until then."

The doctor did understand. He made no vain objections. He did what he could to patch up his friend for his last struggles with the opposition in the Committee. "Pro forma," he said, stethoscope in hand, "I must order you to bed. You won't go. But I order you. You must know that what you are doing is risking your life. Your lungs are congested, the bronchial tubes already. That may spread at any time. If this open weather lasts you may go about and still pull through. But at any time this may pass into pneumonia. And there's not much in you just now to stand up against pneumonia...."

"I'll take all reasonable care."

"Is your wife at home!"

"She is in Wales with her people. But the household is well trained. I can manage."

"Go in a closed car from door to door. Wrap up like a mummy. I wish the Committee room wasn't down those abominable House of Commons corridors...."

They parted with an affectionate handshake.

Section 3

Death approved of Sir Richmond's determination to see the Committee through. Our universal creditor gave this particular debtor grace to the very last meeting. Then he brushed a gust of chilly rain across the face of Sir Richmond as he stood waiting for his car outside the strangers' entrance to the House. For a couple of days Sir Richmond felt almost intolerably tired, but scarcely noted the changed timbre of the wheezy notes in his throat. He rose later each day and with ebbing vigour, jotted down notes and corrections upon the proofs of the Minority Report. He found it increasingly difficult to make decisions; he would correct and alter back and then repeat the correction, perhaps half a dozen times. On the evening of the second day his lungs became painful and his breathing difficult. His head ached and a sense of some great impending evil came upon him. His skin was suddenly a detestable garment to wear. He took his temperature with a little clinical thermometer he kept by him and found it was a hundred and one. He telephoned hastily for Dr. Martineau and without waiting for his arrival took a hot bath and got into bed. He was already thoroughly ill when the doctor arrived.

"Forgive my sending for you," he said. "Not your line. I know.... My wife's G.P.--an exasperating sort of ass. Can't stand him. No one else."

He was lying on a narrow little bed with a hard pillow that the doctor replaced by one from Lady Hardy's room. He had twisted the bed-clothes

into a hopeless muddle, the sheet was on the floor.

Sir Richmond's bedroom was a large apartment in which sleep seemed to have been an admitted necessity rather than a principal purpose. On one hand it opened into a business-like dressing and bath room, on the other into the day study. It bore witness to the nocturnal habits of a man who had long lived a life of irregular impulses to activity and dislocated hours and habits. There was a desk and reading lamp for night work near the fireplace, an electric kettle for making tea at night, a silver biscuit tin; all the apparatus for the lonely intent industry of the small hours. There was a bookcase of bluebooks, books of reference and suchlike material, and some files. Over the mantelpiece was an enlarged photograph of Lady Hardy and a plain office calendar. The desk was littered with the galley proofs of the Minority Report upon which Sir Richmond had been working up to the moment of his hasty retreat to bed. And lying among the proofs, as though it had been taken out and looked at quite recently was the photograph of a girl. For a moment Dr. Martineau's mind hung in doubt and then he knew it for the young American of Stonehenge. How that affair had ended he did not know. And now it was not his business to know.

These various observations printed themselves on Dr. Martineau's mind after his first cursory examination of his patient and while he cast about for anything that would give this large industrious apartment a little more of the restfulness and comfort of a sick room. "I must get in a night nurse at once," he said. "We must find a small table

somewhere to put near the bed.

"I am afraid you are very ill," he said, returning to the bedside. "This is not, as you say, my sort of work. Will you let me call in another man, a man we can trust thoroughly, to consult?"

"I'm in your hands, said Sir Richmond. I want to pull through."

"He will know better where to get the right sort of nurse for the case--and everything."

The second doctor presently came, with the right sort of nurse hard on his heels. Sir Richmond submitted almost silently to his expert handling and was sounded and looked to and listened at.

"H'm," said the second doctor, and then encouragingly to Sir Richmond: "We've got to take care of you.

"There's a lot about this I don't like," said the second doctor and drew Dr. Martineau by the arm towards the study. For a moment or so Sir Richmond listened to the low murmur of their voices, but he did not feel very deeply interested in what they were saying. He began to think what a decent chap Dr. Martineau was, how helpful and fine and forgiving his professional training had made him, how completely he had ignored the smothered incivilities of their parting at Salisbury. All men ought to have some such training, Not a bad idea to put every boy and girl

through a year or so of hospital service.... Sir Richmond must have dozed, for his next perception was of Dr. Martineau standing over him and saying "I am afraid, my dear Hardy, that you are very ill indeed. Much more so than I thought you were at first."

Sir Richmond's raised eyebrows conveyed that he accepted this fact.

"I think Lady Hardy ought to be sent for."

Sir Richmond shook his head with unexpected vigour.

"Don't want her about," he said, and after a pause, "Don't want anybody about."

"But if anything happens-?"

"Send then."

An expression of obstinate calm overspread Sir Richmond's face. He seemed to regard the matter as settled. He closed his eyes.

For a time Dr. Martineau desisted. He went to the window and turned to look again at the impassive figure on the bed. Did Sir Richmond fully understand? He made a step towards his patient and hesitated. Then he brought a chair and sat down at the bedside.

Sir Richmond opened his eyes and regarded him with a slight frown.

"A case of pneumonia," said the doctor, "after great exertion and fatigue, may take very rapid and unexpected turns."

Sir Richmond, cheek on pillow, seemed to assent.

"I think if you want to be sure that Lady Hardy sees you again--... If you don't want to take risks about that--... One never knows in these cases. Probably there is a night train."

Sir Richmond manifested no surprise at the warning. But he stuck to his point. His voice was faint but firm. "Couldn't make up anything to say to her. Anything she'd like."

Dr. Martineau rested on that for a little while. Then he said: "If there is anyone else?"

"Not possible," said Sir Richmond, with his eyes on the ceiling.

"But to see?"

Sir Richmond turned his head to Dr. Martineau. His face puckered like a peevish child's. "They'd want things said to them...Things to remember...I CAN'T. I'm tired out."

"Don't trouble," whispered Dr. Martineau, suddenly remorseful.

But Sir Richmond was also remorseful. "Give them my love," he said. "Best love...Old Martin. Love."

Dr. Martineau was turning away when Sir Richmond spoke again in a whisper. "Best love...Poor at the best...." He dozed for a time. Then he made a great effort. "I can't see them, Martineau, until I've something to say. It's like that. Perhaps I shall think of some kind things to say--after a sleep. But if they came now...I'd say something wrong. Be cross perhaps. Hurt someone. I've hurt so many. People exaggerate...People exaggerate--importance these occasions."

"Yes, yes," whispered Dr. Martineau. "I quite understand."

Section 4

For a time Sir Richmond dozed. Then he stirred and muttered. "Second rate... Poor at the best... Love... Work. All..."

"It had been splendid work," said Dr. Martineau, and was not sure that Sir Richmond heard.

"Those last few days... lost my grip... Always lose my damned grip.

"Ragged them.... Put their backs up....Silly....

"Never.... Never done anything--WELL....

"It's done. Done. Well or ill....

"Done."

His voice sank to the faintest whisper. "Done for ever and ever... and ever... and ever."

Again he seemed to doze.

Dr. Martineau stood up softly. Something beyond reason told him that this was certainly a dying man. He was reluctant to go and he had an absurd desire that someone, someone for whom Sir Richmond cared, should come and say good-bye to him, and for Sir Richmond to say good-bye to someone. He hated this lonely launching from the shores of life of one who had sought intimacy so persistently and vainly. It was extraordinary--he saw it now for the first time--he loved this man. If it had been in his power, he would at that moment have anointed him with kindness.

The doctor found himself standing in front of the untidy writing desk, littered like a recent battlefield. The photograph of the American girl drew his eyes. What had happened? Was there not perhaps some word for her? He turned about as if to enquire of the dying man and found Sir

Richmond's eyes open and regarding him. In them he saw an expression he had seen there once or twice before, a faint but excessively irritating gleam of amusement.

"Oh!--WELL!" said Dr. Martineau and turned away. He went to the window and stared out as his habit was.

Sir Richmond continued to smile dimly at the doctor's back until his eyes closed again.

It was their last exchange. Sir Richmond died that night in the small hours, so quietly that for some time the night nurse did not observe what had happened. She was indeed roused to that realization by the ringing of the telephone bell in the adjacent study.

Section 5

For a long time that night Dr. Martineau had lain awake unable to sleep. He was haunted by the figure of Sir Richmond lying on his uncomfortable little bed in his big bedroom and by the curious effect of loneliness produced by the nocturnal desk and by the evident dread felt by Sir Richmond of any death-bed partings. He realized how much this man, who had once sought so feverishly for intimacies, had shrunken back upon himself, how solitary his motives had become, how rarely he had taken counsel with anyone in his later years. His mind now dwelt apart. Even if people came about him he would still be facing death alone.

And so it seemed he meant to slip out of life, as a man might slip out of a crowded assembly, unobserved. Even now he might be going. The doctor recalled how he and Sir Richmond had talked of the rage of life in a young baby, how we drove into life in a sort of fury, how that rage impelled us to do this and that, how we fought and struggled until the rage spent itself and was gone. That eddy of rage that was Sir Richmond was now perhaps very near its end. Presently it would fade and cease, and the stream that had made it and borne it would know it no more.

Dr. Martineau's thoughts relaxed and passed into the picture land of dreams. He saw the figure of Sir Richmond, going as it were away from him along a narrow path, a path that followed the crest of a ridge, between great darknesses, enormous cloudy darknesses, above him and below. He was going along this path without looking back, without a thought for those he left behind, without a single word to cheer him on his way, walking as Dr. Martineau had sometimes watched him walking, without haste or avidity, walking as a man might along some great picture gallery with which he was perhaps even over familiar. His hands would be in his pockets, his indifferent eyes upon the clouds about him. And as he strolled along that path, the darkness closed in upon him. His figure became dim and dimmer.

Whither did that figure go? Did that enveloping darkness hide the beginnings of some strange long journey or would it just dissolve that figure into itself?

Was that indeed the end?

Dr. Martineau was one of that large class of people who can neither imagine nor disbelieve in immortality. Dimmer and dimmer grew the figure but still it remained visible. As one can continue to see a star at dawn until one turns away. Or one blinks or nods and it is gone.

Vanished now are the beliefs that held our race for countless generations. Where now was that Path of the Dead, mapped so clearly, faced with such certainty, in which the heliolithic peoples believed from Avebury to Polynesia? Not always have we had to go alone and unprepared into uncharted darknesses. For a time the dream artist used a palette of the doctor's vague memories of things Egyptian, he painted a new roll of the Book of the Dead, at a copy of which the doctor had been looking a day or so before. Sir Richmond became a brown naked figure, crossing a bridge of danger, passing between terrific monsters, ferrying a dark and dreadful stream. He came to the scales of judgment before the very throne of Osiris and stood waiting while dogheaded Anubis weighed his conscience and that evil monster, the Devourer of the Dead, crouched ready if the judgment went against him. The doctor's attention concentrated upon the scales. A memory of Swedengorg's Heaven and Hell mingled with the Egyptian fantasy. Now at last it was possible to know something real about this man's soul, now at last one could look into the Secret Places of his Heart. Anubis and Thoth, the god with the ibis head, were reading the heart as if it were a book, reading aloud from it

to the supreme judge.

Suddenly the doctor found himself in his own dreams. His anxiety to plead for his friend had brought him in. He too had become a little painted figure and he was bearing a book in his hand. He wanted to show that the laws of the new world could not be the same as those of the old, and the book he was bringing as evidence was his own Psychology of a New Age.

The clear thought of that book broke up his dream by releasing a train of waking troubles.... You have been six months on Chapter Ten; will it ever be ready for Osiris?... will it ever be ready for print?...

Dream and waking thoughts were mingled like sky and cloud upon a windy day in April. Suddenly he saw again that lonely figure on the narrow way with darknesses above and darknesses below and darknesses on every hand. But this time it was not Sir Richmond.... Who was it? Surely it was Everyman. Everyman had to travel at last along that selfsame road, leaving love, leaving every task and every desire. But was it Everyman?... A great fear and horror came upon the doctor. That little figure was himself! And the book which was his particular task in life was still undone. He himself stood in his turn upon that lonely path with the engulfing darknesses about him....

He seemed to wrench himself awake.

He lay very still for some moments and then he sat up in bed. An overwhelming conviction had arisen--in his mind that Sir Richmond was dead. He felt he must know for certain. He switched on his electric light, mutely interrogated his round face reflected in the looking glass, got out of bed, shuffled on his slippers and went along the passage to the telephone. He hesitated for some seconds and then lifted the receiver. It was his call which aroused the nurse to the fact of Sir Richmond's death.

Section 6

Lady Hardy arrived home in response to Dr. Martineau's telegram late on the following evening. He was with her next morning, comforting and sympathetic. Her big blue eyes, bright with tears, met his very wistfully; her little body seemed very small and pathetic in its simple black dress. And yet there was a sort of bravery about her. When he came into the drawing-room she was in one of the window recesses talking to a serious-looking woman of the dressmaker type. She left her business at once to come to him. "Why did I not know in time?" she cried.

"No one, dear lady, had any idea until late last night," he said, taking both her hands in his for a long friendly sympathetic pressure.

"I might have known that if it had been possible you would have told me," she said.

"You know," she added, "I don't believe it yet. I don't realize it. I go about these formalities--"

"I think I can understand that."

"He was always, you know, not quite here.... It is as if he were a little more not quite here.... I can't believe it is over...."

She asked a number of questions and took the doctor's advice upon various details of the arrangements. "My daughter Helen comes home to-morrow afternoon," she explained. "She is in Paris. But our son is far, far away in the Punjab. I have sent him a telegram.... It is so kind of you to come in to me."

Dr. Martineau went more than half way to meet Lady Hardy's disposition to treat him as a friend of the family. He had conceived a curious, half maternal affection for Sir Richmond that had survived even the trying incident of the Salisbury parting and revived very rapidly during the last few weeks. This affection extended itself now to Lady Hardy. Hers was a type that had always appealed to him. He could understand so well the perplexed loyalty with which she was now setting herself to gather together some preservative and reassuring evidences of this man who had always been; as she put it, "never quite here." It was as if she felt that now it was at last possible to make a definite reality of him. He could be fixed. And as he was fixed he would stay. Never more would he be able to come in and with an almost expressionless glance wither the

interpretation she had imposed upon him. She was finding much comfort in this task of reconstruction. She had gathered together in the drawingroom every presentable portrait she had been able to find of him. He had never, she said, sat to a painter, but there was an early pencil sketch done within a couple of years of their marriage; there was a number of photographs, several of which--she wanted the doctor's advice upon this point--she thought might be enlarged; there was a statuette done by some woman artist who had once beguiled him into a sitting. There was also a painting she had had worked up from a photograph and some notes. She flitted among these memorials, going from one to the other, undecided which to make the standard portrait. "That painting, I think, is most like," she said: "as he was before the war. But the war and the Commission changed him,--worried him and aged him.... I grudged him to that Commission. He let it worry him frightfully."

"It meant very much to him," said Dr. Martineau.

"It meant too much to him. But of course his ideas were splendid. You know it is one of my hopes to get some sort of book done, explaining his ideas. He would never write. He despised it--unreasonably. A real thing done, he said, was better than a thousand books. Nobody read books, he said, but women, parsons and idle people. But there must be books. And I want one. Something a little more real than the ordinary official biography.... I have thought of young Leighton, the secretary of the Commission. He seems thoroughly intelligent and sympathetic and really anxious to reconcile Richmond's views with those of the big business men

on the Committee. He might do.... Or perhaps I might be able to persuade two or three people to write down their impressions of him. A sort of memorial volume.... But he was shy of friends. There was no man he talked to very intimately about his ideas unless it was to you... I wish I had the writer's gift, doctor."

Section 7

It was on the second afternoon that Lady Hardy summoned Dr. Martineau by telephone. "Something rather disagreeable," she said. "If you could spare the time. If you could come round.

"It is frightfully distressing," she said when he got round to her, and for a time she could tell him nothing more. She was having tea and she gave him some. She fussed about with cream and cakes and biscuits. He noted a crumpled letter thrust under the edge of the silver tray.

"He talked, I know, very intimately with you," she said, coming to it at last. "He probably went into things with you that he never talked about with anyone else. Usually he was very reserved, Even with me there were things about which he said nothing."

"We did," said Dr. Martineau with discretion, "deal a little with his private life.

"There was someone--"

Dr. Martineau nodded and then, not to be too portentous, took and bit a biscuit.

"Did he by any chance ever mention someone called Martin Leeds?"

Dr. Martineau seemed to reflect. Then realizing that this was a mistake, he said: "He told me the essential facts."

The poor lady breathed a sigh of relief. "I'm glad," she said simply.
She repeated, "Yes, I'm glad. It makes things easier now."

Dr. Martineau looked his enquiry.

"She wants to come and see him."

"Here?"

"Here! And Helen here! And the servants noticing everything! I've never met her. Never set eyes on her. For all I know she may want to make a scene." There was infinite dismay in her voice.

Dr. Martineau was grave. "You would rather not receive her?"

"I don't want to refuse her. I don't want even to seem heartless.
I understand, of course, she has a sort of claim." She sobbed her

reluctant admission. "I know it. I know.... There was much between them."

Dr. Martineau pressed the limp hand upon the little tea table. "I understand, dear lady," he said. "I understand. Now ... suppose I were to write to her and arrange--I do not see that you need be put to the pain of meeting her. Suppose I were to meet her here myself?

"If you COULD!"

The doctor was quite prepared to save the lady any further distresses, no matter at what trouble to himself. "You are so good to me," she said, letting the tears have their way with her.

"I am silly to cry," she said, dabbing her eyes.

"We will get it over to-morrow," he reassured her. "You need not think of it again."

He took over Martin's brief note to Lady Hardy and set to work by telegram to arrange for her visit. She was in London at her Chelsea flat and easily accessible. She was to come to the house at mid-day on the morrow, and to ask not for Lady Hardy but for him. He would stay by her while she was in the house, and it would be quite easy for Lady Hardy to keep herself and her daughter out of the way. They could, for example, go out quietly to the dressmakers in the closed car, for many little

things about the mourning still remained to be seen to.

Section 8

Miss Martin Leeds arrived punctually, but the doctor was well ahead of his time and ready to receive her. She was ushered into the drawing room where he awaited her. As she came forward the doctor first perceived that she had a very sad and handsome face, the face of a sensitive youth rather than the face of a woman. She had fine grey eyes under very fine brows; they were eyes that at other times might have laughed very agreeably, but which were now full of an unrestrained sadness. Her brown hair was very untidy and parted at the side like a man's. Then he noted that she seemed to be very untidily dressed as if she was that rare and, to him, very offensive thing, a woman careless of her beauty. She was short in proportion to her broad figure and her broad forehead.

"You are Dr. Martineau?" she said. "He talked of you." As she spoke her glance went from him to the pictures that stood about the room. She walked up to the painting and stood in front of it with her distressed gaze wandering about her. "Horrible!" she said. "Absolutely horrible!... Did SHE do this?"

Her question disconcerted the doctor very much. "You mean Lady Hardy?" he asked. "She doesn't paint."

"No, no. I mean, did she get all these things together?"

"Naturally," said Dr. Martineau.

"None of them are a bit like him. They are like blows aimed at his memory. Not one has his life in it. How could she do it? Look at that idiot statuette!... He was extraordinarily difficult to get. I have burnt every photograph I had of him. For fear that this would happen; that he would go stiff and formal--just as you have got him here. I have been trying to sketch him almost all the time since he died. But I can't get him back. He's gone."

She turned to the doctor again. She spoke to him, not as if she expected him to understand her, but because she had to say these things which burthened her mind to someone. "I have done hundreds of sketches. My room is littered with them. When you turn them over he seems to be lurking among them. But not one of them is like him."

She was trying to express something beyond her power. "It is as if someone had suddenly turned out the light."

She followed the doctor upstairs. "This was his study," the doctor explained.

"I know it. I came here once," she said.

They entered the big bedroom in which the coffined body lay. Dr.

Martineau, struck by a sudden memory, glanced nervously at the desk, but someone had made it quite tidy and the portrait of Aliss Grammont had disappeared. Miss Leeds walked straight across to the coffin and stood looking down on the waxen inexpressive dignity of the dead. Sir Richmond's brows and nose had become sharper and more clear-cut than they had ever been in life and his lips had set into a faint inane smile. She stood quite still for a long time. At length she sighed deeply.

She spoke, a little as though she thought aloud, a little as though she talked at that silent presence in the coffin. "I think he loved," she said. "Sometimes I think he loved me. But it is hard to tell. He was kind. He could be intensely kind and yet he didn't seem to care for you. He could be intensely selfish and yet he certainly did not care for himself.... Anyhow, I loved HIM.... There is nothing left in me now to love anyone else--for ever...."

She put her hands behind her back and looked at the dead man with her head a little on one side. "Too kind," she said very softly.

"There was a sort of dishonesty in his kindness. He would not let you have the bitter truth. He would not say he did not love you....

"He was too kind to life ever to call it the foolish thing it is. He took it seriously because it takes itself seriously. He worked for it and killed himself with work for it...."

She turned to Dr. Martineau and her face was streaming with tears. "And life, you know, isn't to be taken seriously. It is a joke--a bad joke--made by some cruel little god who has caught a neglected planet.... Like torturing a stray cat.... But he took it seriously and he gave up his life for it.

"There was much happiness he might have had. He was very capable of happiness. But he never seemed happy. This work of his came before it. He overworked and fretted our happiness away. He sacrificed his happiness and mine."

She held out her hands towards the doctor. "What am I to do now with the rest of my life? Who is there to laugh with me now and jest?

"I don't complain of him. I don't blame him. He did his best--to be kind.

"But all my days now I shall mourn for him and long for him...."

She turned back to the coffin. Suddenly she lost every vestige of self-control. She sank down on her knees beside the trestle. "Why have you left me!" she cried.

"Oh! Speak to me, my darling! Speak to me, I TELL YOU! Speak to me!"

It was a storm of passion, monstrously childish and dreadful. She beat her hands upon the coffin. She wept loudly and fiercely as a child does....

Dr. Martineau drifted feebly to the window.

He wished he had locked the door. The servants might hear and wonder what it was all about. Always he had feared love for the cruel thing it was, but now it seemed to him for the first time that he realized its monstrous cruelty.

THE END