

terrors to the almost intolerable weight of anxiety. Suddenly, but as if with effort, he broke the silence.

"You were right, Arthur."

"About what, Winthrop?"

"About—about life—society—ambition—everything," evasively answered my cousin. "They are empty as a bubble."

"Ah! Have you weighed them all this afternoon, dear Winthrop, and found them wanting? Have love and art such remarkable powers of divination and wisdom, that in one short afternoon, which I have frittered away in a wildwood ramble, they have enabled you to explore the depths of life, its sorrows and joys, its silent tragedies and its loud ha-ha's? Or have you found such unspeakable delight that you are lifted above the dead level of mortal life? Pray tell me how I, too, can solve this riddle so easily."

"I have not reasoned it out, Arthur, it has just come to me as light comes from yonder moon."

"Oh, yes, by simple reflection."

"You always banter when one speaks of profound subjects. I mean simply that the truth has dawned upon me without any volition of my own. I know it without knowing how."

"I understand. It is one of those conclusions which spring up periodically in the hot soil of a young man's blasted hopes. That is a species of growth familiar to philosophers, but the warmth of its habitat soon scorches it up. But is this all? I thought you were going to tell me something new and strange about life."

"So I shall, if you will listen. But let us go over there and sit down on one of those graves. It is a comfort to be assured by their ghostly presence that there are some who are at peace with the world at least."

We had reached the outskirts of the village. On a slightly rolling eminence sloping to the westward there gleamed the modest tombstones marking the resting places of the town's departed generations. We climbed the fence in default of a convenient gateway, and soon found a pleasant seat far enough from the highway to avoid interruption. After a moment's silence, Winthrop began—

"Did you ever see a human being without a soul?"

"Yes, hundreds of them," was what I wanted to answer, but I respected my cousin's mood, and so I merely said, "Seriously, no, I never have; but that is a very strange question with which to begin a symposium on the problems of modern life."

"Well," Winthrop went on in a strange tone, "I have. It came to my room this afternoon."

"What did?"

"That thing, that animal, that beautiful body which we call Olive."

"Olive!" I exclaimed. "My God, Winthrop, what do you mean?"

"Just what I say," he replied calmly, and with the faint tinge of a sneer in his voice. "I mean to say that she whom we call Olive has no soul; that the creature whose breath and touch and beauty enlaved me from the moment I looked into her eyes possesses that power despite the absence of all that we have been taught to worship as the soul." His words breathed scorn and contempt, and he spoke deliberately as though he wished to flay his spirit and enfold it in their furious abasement. I was too profoundly moved to interrupt him and he continued his narration: "Every day for weeks I have studied her in every possible mood in order to paint her portrait. I wrote you that I loved her from the moment I saw her; and so I did; but I soon discovered a most singular flaw in her nature; hence, during those sittings I compelled love to be the slave of art, permitting its presence only as an aid to greater depth of insight, and to call forth the apparently dormant spiritual endowments of the subject. I worked rapidly and more satisfactorily than ever before, for she was a fine subject; and when, shortly before you came, I had finished all but a few details, Olive pronounced it faultless, as indeed it was to her eyes, and even to my own in point of execution. But I saw there was no light from heaven in her eyes, no gleam of spiritual beauty illuminated the face. Still, that did not dishearten me; it was a labor of love, and I returned to it again and worked dilligently and with a holy awe. Yet again I was destined to fail, for when I showed it to an art connoisseur who happened to be passing through the town, telling him it was the work of a friend, he declared it made his flesh creep to look at it; asked if it was painted from life—that he would give anything to see so strange a subject; 'a mate for Hawthorn's faun,' he said. I told him it was an ideal sketch. Thereupon I blotted out the mocking eyes, and plied myself to the task again. I 'wreaked my soul upon expression.' I made Olive sit for hours, and I sought in untold ways to extort expression from her large inconstant orbs, or rather, to find a soulbeam in them; for I felt that if I could see it there but one instant I could transfer it to the canvas. But alas, my next effort was criticised for having a man's expression in the delicate outlines of a woman's face. Once more with redoubled energy I returned to my self-imposed task. I lavished the most patient care and all my skill upon the preparation of my colors; I spent the intermediate hours in exalted meditation and searching self-analysis in order to put myself *en rapport* if possible with the instinct or consciousness of my subject. For many days I scarcely slept or tasted food. But the curse