His Fate.
A REMINISCENCE WITH A MORAL.

E was twenty-two, and in the last half of his life had tried almost everything offered in the career of a twentieth century young man, and had somehow found them all wanting. He had taken a brief fling at athletics, and could show one medal as well as a long scar as a memento of a game of football in which he had played the role of hero of the hour. He had dabbled on his own hook in the sciences, and had gone far enough to find out that amateur electricity was very expensive, amateur chemistry very destructive, and amateur photography a snare and a delusion. Amateur dramatics, too, had been given a good opportunity to cast life-long charms over the histrionic side of his nature, but that, like the rest, had fallen by the wayside. He had tried authorship, but found it rather a bore.

He knew political economy, and felt disgusted with all the methods of social reform. He had studied comparative religion, strayed deeper into general sociology, and gone from there to a close and startling study of self. In the ego, he found a subject of absorbing interest for about three months, then he bought a revolver.

Realizing that self-destruction wasn't what he really was longing for, he mentally drew a blue pencil over his life-history up to that point, and decided to try again. He tasted philosophy, and thought that at last he had found his Fate. He pondered over volumes, and was even moved to make one or two rather clever marginal notes; but it was no use—he knew it wasn't the thing.

What "the thing" was, he could not discover. There was something, a kind of miserable, mental weed that grew up in him and crowded everything else out of the way, and blossomed into a consuming, intangible desire for an unusual something:—something whose lack was ever felt, but whose identity was unknown.

He tried late nights, but that wouldn't do. He tried cards, billiards, then lotteries and raffles; but these, while entertaining, weren't absorbing; and what he wanted was something absorbing, long-drawn, intense, always new.

One day, it came—an inspiration—and he knew what it was he had wanted so long and wanted still. It was love,—deep, thrilling, intense, longing, absorbing love. He was eating supper when it hit him, and he laid down his fork with the untasted salad on it, arose, took his hat, and sallied forth into the world to look for the lady.

Two theatres and a concert hall, where there were lots of friends but no success, occupied the evening. Still he sought. The next night he was at the house of a friend, and there it was that he met her. She was the one; he knew it, and she knew it. The evening flew with the wings of happiness, and was gone. He called regularly, sent flowers daily and invitations without end. Now, he was satisfied.

It was summer, and one evening they walked together in her garden. Every word of hers was a song, and every sentence of his a revelation. He was a king, and she his queen. He was the one man, and she the only God.

She sat in a rustic settee, under a grape-vine, laughing and blushing as he whispered to her the old quotations. He stood by her side, leaning over her, and as she looked up to his face, he bowed down to touch her lips. And then, suddenly, he thought. It was there again; that old feeling,—that same, unsatisfied, unsettled want.

This was not the thing, after all. All was changed back; the garden was weed-grown, the settee mud-splattered, the vine untrimmed, she a girl, and he—a fool. He straightened, apologized absently, and left.

He realized that he was now just where he had been before, only with two more pages to his biography to erase, and forget. Drearily, he reached over to his table, and raised from it a package, an unopened gift from a friend. He took off the paper, glanced at the card, opened the box, and found a pipe. He looked at it wonderingly; a pipe, he had n't tried that. It was at least something new: and there was some tobacco ready and waiting. He filled, lit, puffed, and smoked. He remembered that the natural thing for him now was to be sick; but he wasn't sick, he was simply happy,—supremely happy.

It had come; he had at last found his missing component, and he knew it. The old feeling never