

CHAPTER XLVIII

AND when Delilah, assiduously "cub-hunting," sat out too long with one at a dance, caught influenza and died, there was no longer any word of a girl with a candle.

"Poor soul; she would not be young in her youth, and made pretence of being so when it was too late. I think I understand."

For this was the second woman John had understood when it was too late; and for the others, he had understood them just so much and no more than it is given to any man to understand women.

"I have just blundered on; for all my success, I have just blundered on."

John wondered if he were weakening, as in his youth he had despised the weakening of the old men of his time; if he, too, were beginning to think of the hope of a future life because he had so little left of this.

"No, damn it; I don't hope so; too much on the debit side of the ledger, if reckoning is to be made in spiritual values by priestly minds."

He laughed, rather brokenly, and Wallington poured him out some of the *Normandy* '75 brandy, so cherished by Diane of New Orleans; for there was still much left of that, though but one of the *Napoleon* for another special occasion.

Wallington thought he had been affected by the loss of his daughter. He had only regrets, however, lest he had not in her life given her quite "a square deal." He was grateful, too, that this time had come no girl with a candle. Grateful also to Lizzie Bonvill, spirit, memory, phantasm,

call it what he willed, who had at long last left him in peace.

“A wonderful drink, brandy, Wallington.”

“Magnificent, my lord.”

“Yes, I expect you know, Wallington, for you have the key of the wine-cellars. . . . Pour me out some more, and let me be thankful that I am alive to drink it. . . . I am too old, Wallington, to think overmuch about people dying—much too old—” He drained the glass.

“A little more, my lord?”

“No, Wallington. You may now go and bring me the 1900 port.”