

Assignment 40

[A well-written passage, if well-read, conveys a lot. Apart from conveying the current intent, it tells something of the background upon which it stands and to an extent it anticipates what is to come next.]

Read the passage below and answer the following questions.

He laid his hand on my head as he uttered the last words. He had spoken earnestly, mildly: his look was not, indeed, that of a lover beholding his mistress, but it was that of a pastor recalling his wandering sheep – or better, of a guardian angel watching the soul for which he is responsible. All men of talent, whether they be men of feeling or not; whether they be zealots, or aspirants, or despots – provided only they be sincere – have their sublime moments, when they subdue and rule. I felt veneration for St. John – veneration so strong that its impetus thrust me at once to the point I had so long shunned. I was tempted to cease struggling with him – to rush down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence, and there lose my own. I was almost as hard beset by him now as I had been once before, in a different way, by another. I was a fool both times. To have yielded then would have been an error of principle; to have yielded now would have been

an error of judgment. So I think at this hour, when I look back to the crisis through the quiet medium of time: I was unconscious of folly at the instant.

I stood motionless under my hierophant's touch. My refusals were forgotten – my fears overcome – my wrestlings paralysed. The Impossible – i.e., my marriage with St. John – was fast becoming the Possible. All was changing utterly with a sudden sweep. Religion called – Angels beckoned – God commanded – life rolled together like a scroll – death's gates opening, showed eternity beyond: it seemed, that for safety and bliss there, all here might be sacrificed in a second. The dim room was full of visions.

1. Before this particular dramatic moment in the story, what was the general background of the relationship between the author and St. John?
2. During this present event, what change takes place?
3. In the story continuing after this event, does the author marry St. John? How do you know that from this passage?
4. In the author's opinion, what is the common feature in the lives of all talented people?