

Belle        It matters little; to you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve.

Young Eb. What idol has displaced you?

Belle        A golden one.

Young Eb. This, then, is the even-handed dealing of the world. There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty, and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth.

Belle        You fear the world too much. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master passion, Gain, engrosses you.

Young Eb. What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed toward you. Am I?

Belle        Our contract is an old one. When it was made, you were another man.

Young Eb. I was a boy.

Belle        Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I have thought of it, and can release you.

Young Eb. Have I ever sought release?

Belle        In words? No. Never.

Young Eb. In what then?

Belle        In a changed nature, in an altered spirit. If this had never been between us, tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now?

Young Eb. You think not.