## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAP.</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. — &quot;The Old Order Changes!&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. — &quot;The One Little Woman!&quot;</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III — The Ghost of What Might Have Been!</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. — &quot;For the Last Time!&quot;</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. — &quot;The Lights of London!&quot;</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. — In which Bee is Faithful</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. — Across the Years!</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A ROMANCE OF MODERN LONDON.

CHAPTER I.

"THE OLD ORDER CHANGES!"

"Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
   And the little less, and what worlds away!
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
   Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this! . . . . .
If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
   They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
One near one is too far."

—Robert Browning.

Had Fay's married life disappointed her then, after all? It almost seemed so.

And yet neither she nor her husband was materially to blame. Perhaps she had expected too much. Perhaps he gave too little. Nevertheless, no husband could have been tenderer, gentler, more thoughtful of his..."
wife's well-being and comfort in every way, than Douglas Conrath had been. Perhaps if he had loved her more he might have considered her less. And she? Well—if she had loved him less she might have considered him more.

But her love for him was of that volcanic order which demands the constant dramatic action of exciting quarrels and equally exciting reconciliations. Now Douglas was not a subject for this sort of thing. He did not want to be a participant in violent scenes of any kind. He desired to be uniformly kind to his wife, and he wanted her to be happy and contented. Above all things he desired peace, and immunity from "scenes."

Fay's now often-recurring fits of temper, her unreasoning reproaches, her tears and sulks, followed by her inevitable fits of passionate remorse, wearied him inexpressibly, and it must be confessed, irritated him. It cost him a good deal to suppress his irritation at times. Now and then—very rarely it must be confessed—it got the better of him.
One grey January morning, for instance, they were sitting at breakfast. Douglas was knitting his brows over a couple of pages of Max Fenwicke's almost undecipherable penmanship, and it so happened that his wife addressed him twice before he answered.

"I beg your pardon, dear," he said, looking up from the letter he held. "I didn't hear what you said."

"No, I suppose not," was the sarcastic answer. "That is one of the consequences of marrying an author. One must submit to neglect and indifference in silence, I suppose."

Douglas looked across at her in some surprise.

"My dear Fay," he said—"what on earth do you mean?"

"Oh, I mean what I say, I suppose," she replied hysterically.

As a matter of fact she had got up that morning feeling tired and depressed and out of sorts; and, not being accustomed to govern her temper or moods, felt an unspoken necessity to quarrel with the nearest
available subject. It was not the first time that Douglas had had a glimpse of his wife's temper; for, as I have hinted, she had been a spoiled child all her life. He knew this, and was quite disposed to make allowance for her. Besides, she was in delicate health at this time; and physical weakness and suffering always appealed to the best and tenderest part of his nature. Unfortunately, however, he too was in an irritable mood this morning. Fenwicke's letter had contained sufficiently disquieting information regarding the mines at Poldornalupe; and further, had suggested a considerable outlay in new and costly machinery, of which outlay, of course Douglas would be liable for one-third. And just at present, ready money was somewhat scarce with him. His expenses had been heavy during the six or seven months of his married life; for Fay's tastes were somewhat extravagant, and his generous nature could not bear to deny her anything while he had the means of gratifying it.

Presently Fay went on resentfully.
"I don't suppose it matters in the least what I was saying to you?"

"Poor little woman," said her husband, passing up his coffee-cup to be re-filled. "Of course it matters. Say it over again and I will promise to listen."

"No, I won't say it over again," she answered passionately. "I'm tired of being neglected and ignored as if I were a mere cipher in your household. If you don't like to listen to me, I'm not going to repeat all my remarks half-a-dozen times to oblige you."

Douglas helped himself to bacon in silence.

"Oh, it's all very well to sit there coolly eating your breakfast," went on his wife excitedly. "But do you think I haven't noticed, of late, how you avoid me, and show me in every possible way that you don't care for me any more—if, indeed, you ever cared for me at all, which I am beginning to doubt."

Still Douglas did not speak.

"It is a shame! Oh, it is a shame," con-
tinued his wife, sobbing wildly. "Why did you marry me if you were always going to treat me in this way? Why did you?"

But Douglas could stand no more just then.

"Good God, Fay—what do you mean?" he exclaimed violently. "Treat you in what way? Do you want to drive me mad? God knows I do my best to be kind to you. But you won't let me. What is it that you want? You don't seem to know your own mind two days together."

He rose as he spoke, and walked once the length of the room and back again.

Fay had risen too.

"Of course if you choose to swear at me, and use profane language," she said in a choked voice—"I have nothing more to say."

Douglas sat down at the table again, and with a despairing gesture leaned his head on his hand.

Fay had thrown herself sobbing upon the sofa.
Presently her husband rose, walked over to the fire, and stood resting his arm on the mantelpiece.

"Fay," he said, very gently—"perhaps I have been harsh to you. Forgive me. Don't sob so, my dear. You will make yourself ill. Come here to me."

But seeing how distressed she was, he went over to the sofa, and stifling an impatient sigh, seated himself beside her, and raised her gently in his arms.

"What is it, my dear?" he said. "You know all this agitation is very bad for you. And besides, what is it all about?"

"You don't care for me," she sobbed. "I am nothing in your life. You would be just as happy if I were not here at all."

Her husband winced at these home-truths. But he only said, with the merest touch of his lips on her hair:

"Silly little woman!—you are ill and nervous just now, and imagine things."

"No, I don't imagine things. You don't even make a companion of me," went on his
wife mournfully. "You never tell me what you are thinking of—or let me help you with your writing—or anything."

"But Fay," said Douglas patiently, "have you forgotten that the last time I tried to interest you in what I was writing you said it wearied you, and that you couldn't understand it and didn't want to."

"Oh well, very likely I didn't understand it. If you would write light and amusing things that the people in our set would appreciate and understand, I think it would be much more sensible. I'm sure not three people out of twelve understood your last novel."

"My dear wife, I would do a good many things to oblige you," Douglas answered somewhat ironically, "but I cannot undertake to write down to the intelligence of 'people in our set.' They must get some one else to write light amusing literature for them. And as for my not making a companion of you, Fay—I think you must allow that I have very little opportunity. You
seem to be surrounded by your fashionable friends from morning till night. And of course I can hardly expect a young thing like you to shut yourself up in my study continually."

"Well, but—as mother says—why should you shut yourself up in your study so much?" said his wife, leaning her head caressingly against his shoulder. "People are beginning to wonder why we are so seldom seen together. And sometimes," she added, and her voice grew tremulous again—"sometimes a dreadful fear comes into my mind that—that—" She stopped, and pressed her face against his breast.

"That what, Fay?" he said anxiously.

"That you never really cared for me," she murmured after a minute—"only—only thought you did. Or that perhaps—you married me because you saw—how much—I loved you."

Conrath did not speak. Fay fancied his arm tightened round her.

"Sometimes"—she went on in a passionate
underbreath, "I even dread—that when you married me—you loved some one else better—as I know you could love, Douglas—and as something tells me you never loved me. And last night——"

"Yes—last night?" said her husband, as she paused. His voice sounded far away and strained.

"Last night—while you slept—you said—you said in a voice I never heard before, 'Oh my darling, my darling, are you for ever lost to me!' Oh Douglas, I thought of it all night. I am thinking of it now—and the thought breaks my heart."

Conrath had grown deathly pale.

"Fay," he said huskily—"for God's sake do not torment yourself in this way. It is only making us both miserable."

"Douglas—if you would only tell me there is no one else you love!" the passionate pathetic voice went on. "Or if you would only tell me that you love me. You never do. I know it is foolish of me—and wicked. But I—I love you better than life itself—or
God—or my own soul. I would rather be in hell with you, than in heaven without you. Miserable as I am, I had rather be your wife for a few short months, even though I knew you hated me, than the adored wife of any other man on earth. Ah, my husband!—love me a little! Give me back a little of the deep passionate love I have for you! Perhaps—perhaps it will not be for very long."

She threw her arms round his neck, her slender form trembling with her extreme agitation.

There was a brief silence. I think Douglas had never come so near loving his wife as he did then. He turned her pale little face up to his, and kissed it almost as a lover might have done.

"Why, Fay," he whispered agitatedly—"Why, Fay—my poor little one, do you indeed love me so much?"

She wound her arms more tightly round him.

"It may not be for long," she repeated in a monotonous kind of way.
"Don't, my dear. Don't," he answered unsteadily. "We will try to understand each other better, Fay. I have been to blame, I daresay. You see I have been so long accustomed to keep my thoughts and feelings to myself—that I forget, perhaps, what a taciturn old fellow I must appear sometimes. But you will forgive me—and you won't let these gloomy fancies take possession of you. By and by, my wife, when we—when we have new interests in common—you will be your cheery self again. Just now it is natural, perhaps, that you should be low-spirited and fanciful."

She crimsoned painfully, but did not speak.

He too remained silent for some time. Was he then so far from making his wife happy, after all? he thought sadly. In truth he had done his best. And, as far as was possible to him, he had put Bee's image out of his heart. He saw her very seldom. He thought of her—voluntarily—seldomer still. If he could not love his wife, he could at
least be true to her in thought as well as in deed, he used to think doggedly. Nevertheless the struggle was by no means an easy one, and it told upon him, as it was inevitable it should do. And now that the latent jealousy of his wife's nature was aroused (though indefinitely) his task was likely to prove harder still. For, even to a man who loves her, there is nothing so inexpressibly wearing as a jealous woman. And he—God help him!—realized more fully every day that he never could love this shallow, exacting, though adoring little woman. She had never even attracted him in the remotest degree. They had not a taste or thought in common. And this very fact made him bear with her exacting unreasonable ways as few men would have done. The "mea culpa" in him was always awake and crying. It would not be silenced.

"I must go now, my dear," he said, when some minutes had passed. "I have an appointment at half-past ten, and I am already late. I shall be back to lunch. You
will be a good little woman till then—will you not?"

As he spoke he kissed her.

She returned his kiss silently. Then he went away, somewhat calmed by the belief that he had, for the time being, allayed her suspicions and set her mind at rest.

Carlyle has told us that this world is populated, for the most part, by fools. I suppose Conrath belonged to the majority.

* * * * *

For some time Mr. Chandleur had been in a mood, or a succession of moods, which his wife designated as "raging." This state of matters was now succeeded by one infinitely more alarming, because so utterly unprecedented. The old man seemed to have sunk into a strange silent melancholy. He rarely spoke, and would sit gazing at his wife and grand-daughter in a wistful way that made both seriously uneasy.

One night, about half-an-hour before dinner, he came into the drawing-room, where Bee and Mrs. Chandleur were sitting close to
the fire, talking in a subdued anxious undertone. For the behaviour of the master of the house had that day been stranger than usual.

"Eliza," he said, in a curiously husky voice—"ring the bell, will you—and let us have all the servants in."

"Lor'! Joseph, my dear, what for?" expostulated the old lady.

"Do as I tell you!" was the fierce answer.

A few minutes later the astonished domestics streamed into the room, and their master addressed them as follows:

"My good people," he said in a voice that trembled sadly—"I have summoned you together to dismiss you from my service. No"—in answer to a surprised rustle from the little crowd—"I am not in any way dissatisfied with any of you. But—I am a ruined man—a beggar—and I can no longer afford to keep up an establishment. Grimes"—addressing the politely inscrutable butler—"you can distribute these—these packets. You will all find your wages right, I think,
and paid a month in advance. Now—you may all go."

Hitherto, Mrs. Chandleur had sat in speechless, incredulous silence; but now, as the servants filed slowly out of the room, she broke into noisy tears.

"Oh my dear, my dear—he's gone out of his mind, as his poor father did," she wailed, wringing her hands piteously. "I've been afraid of it for long and long—and now it's come."

"No, Eliza, I've not gone out of my mind," said the old man, coming towards her and laying his hand gently on her shoulder. "But I've sad news for ye—sad news, my lass." He paused, and passed his hand confusedly over his forehead.

"I'm ruined, lass," he said then, hoarsely. "It's all gone—all the money I worked early and late to scrape together—and all the rest too. All gone. All gone!"

"Grandfather—you cannot be in earnest," exclaimed Bee in a hushed shocked voice. "There is some strange mistake, surely."
“Nay, nay—there is no mistake, my girl,” he said, looking at her with dazed heavy eyes. “You’d better have held on to your fine gentleman lover, after all. He’ll not come looking you up now—nor any of your other fine friends. The rats—the rats—what’s the old saying?—the rats desert the sinking ship. Aye—it’s true. It’s true enough. By to-morrow night a heap of folk’ll have forgot they ever knew Joseph Chandleur.”

And still muttering to himself under his breath, he went out of the room, closing the door gently after him.

They heard him go downstairs, and across the hall to the morning-room. Then that door closed also.

“Oh, my dear, my dear,” sobbed the poor old lady, clinging helplessly to her granddaughter’s arm—“what does it all mean? What’s come to my old man?” And she rocked backwards and forwards like one distraught.

Bee sat in bewildered silence, hardly knowing what to think—or to dread.

vol. iii.
An hour passed; and Grimes came to know if he should order dinner to be served. But his mistress waved him impatiently away.

"Granny—don't you think you should go to grandfather?" Bee said gently at last. "Perhaps he will explain things to you. And if anything very serious has happened, it will be terrible for him to bear it all alone. Poor grandfather!"

The girl's face was white, and her lips were trembling.

"Come with me, dear," whispered her grandmother feebly.

Together they went downstairs, and knocked softly at the door of the morning-room; then turned the handle. But the door was locked; and no sound broke the stillness within.

"Joseph—open the door!" cried poor Mrs. Chandleur with chattering teeth. "It's me—Eliza—your own old wife."

But there was no answer.

"Granny—what shall we do?" said Bee in a choked voice.
"Oh, my dear, I don't know—I don't know. If Sir Cyril had been at home, we might have sent for him. Your grandfather thought a great deal of Sir Cyril. Joseph—Joseph!"—the poor thing went on despairingly, putting her lips to the key-hole—"for the love of Heaven open the door!"

"Hush, dear granny," said Bee soothingly. "Don't let the servants hear. Shall we send to ask Douglas—Mr. Conrath—to come? He will perhaps know what will be best to do. We certainly must send for some one. For, oh, granny! I'm afraid something very serious must have happened to make grandfather look and act as—as he did."

Accordingly one of the men was despatched to Kensington with a note, which—having been duly steamed and opened downstairs—eventually found its way to Douglas as he was about half-way through his dinner.

He rose at once, sent for a hansom, and in a comparatively short space of time was listening attentively to Mrs. Chandleur's incoherent and half-hysterical account of her
husband's "queerness" during the past few weeks.

He looked very grave as he listened; for he had heard through Fenwicke that for some time the old man had been speculating wildly, and losing heavily.

"Yes—yes, I will go down, of course," he said reassuringly to the weeping trembling woman who clung to his arm. "Don't look so frightened. No, Bee, you had better remain here."

He went downstairs, and crossed the hall—at one end of which several of the servants stood in a whispering group. Douglas motioned them peremptorily away, with the exception of Grimes, who said in respectfully subdued tones:

"I'm afraid, sir, that there's something very far wrong. I didn't like Mr. Chandleur's looks. And he hasn't been himself at all of late."

Douglas knocked sharply at the door of the morning-room.

No answer.
He knocked more loudly still—knocked continuously for some time.

Still that terrible silence.

"I'm afraid you are right, Grimes," he said hurriedly. "Something is wrong. Your master must be ill. He may have taken a fit. We shall have to get the door open somehow."

A quarter of an hour later Douglas came up to the drawing-room, his face white as death, his voice husky and broken as he said:

"Bee—come here a moment. I want you."

Bee came out on to the landing, and Douglas closed the door.

"What—what is it?" she gasped.

It was only a few words he said in answer; but the hearing of them blanched the girl's face as white as his own.

For Joseph Chandleur had taken the shortest if not the most honourable way out of his troubles—leaving his wife and
granddaughter to bear the grief, and poverty, and shame, as best they might.

It fell to Douglas to break the terrible news to Mrs. Chandleur, for Bee was too unnerved to be of much use.

It was a heartbreaking scene that followed. The clocks had long since struck midnight when Conrath got home. Fay was waiting up for him. She was looking fagged and tired, and said complainingly:

"Well—you have got home at last. It must have been something marvellously important to keep you so late."

He took her within his arm for a minute without speaking. Then as her plaintive reproaches struck his ear again, he said in a shaken voice:

"Hush, my dear, hush. They are in great trouble at Portland Place. Mr. Chandleur is dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed Fay, horrified. "Why, Douglas, I did not even know he was ill!"

"He was not ill," he answered agitatedly. "His death was very sudden."
"Oh how sad — how terrible," Fay whispered, her eyes dark with gathering tears.

After a moment's silence Douglas said:

"It is late, dear, and you must be tired. I think you should go to bed. Besides—I am awfully upset, and I—I can't talk to you just now. I want to be alone."

When she had gone, he sat thinking—thinking—far into the morning. The memory of a certain grey sullen winter's day was present with him—a day when he himself would fain have set out on that dark road which poor old Chandleur had chosen—when he himself had argued drearily that death's chill shadows were preferable to life's cruel burning realities—and when a girl's innocent hand had, all unknowing, saved him.

He shuddered.

Who was he, that he should judge the dead?

*  *  *  *  *  *  *

It is rather a change from a mansion in Portland Place to a small cramped cottage in
Camden Town. It was in the latter district, however, that Bee and her grandmother, after a weary experience of "cheap and nasty" lodgings, came to a final anchor.

Very little had been left out of the wreck—not much more than £100 a year, which had been settled by old Chandleur on his wife in the old Peckham days. Fortunately the cottage I have mentioned had been empty for a long time, and occupied rather an out-of-the-way situation. Conrath, therefore, had managed to secure a ten-years' lease at an almost nominal rent. The cottage was very much out of repair, it was damp and draughty, and its windows and doors betrayed a general tendency to remain open instead of shut. But the windows faced all directions except the north, it possessed a sunny, if somewhat grimy little garden at the back, and it also possessed a roomy old-fashioned kitchen, to which Bee's heart warmed at once.

They soon settled down; and as the weeks went on they were far from unhappy. They
could not afford to keep a regular servant, and therefore Bee—with the assistance of a small and dirty damsel who came for a couple of hours every evening—did all the work of the house herself. And I am inclined to think that this necessity for plain, unromantic hard work was the very best thing that could have happened to her just then. She had but little time, now, to brood over "might-have-beens."

Fay drove over to see her very often. She was amused and interested in the quiet, frugal little household, in the tiny rooms, and in Bee's thousand and one expedients for making money go as far as possible.

"I don't know how you can work so hard, Bee," she said one day when she had driven over, feeling as she said, specially out of sorts, and in need of a tonical rousing up. "When I think of your doing all the work of the house, cooking and everything—not to mention dancing continual attendance on your grandmother—I really do not know how you manage."
Bee laughed softly.

"Well, you know, there isn't much cooking to do. Fortunately my tastes and granny's are simple in that way. And as for the housework—well, we have only three rooms besides this dear old kitchen; so I don't think the regulating of such a tiny domain could have much effect on a strong, able-bodied young woman like me. Besides—I think I like being poor. It reminds me of my early, early childhood. We were poor enough then, Heaven knows. And yet it seems to me now that these were the happiest days of my life."

Fay was silent for a time, looking at the glowing heart of the fire, where the kettle was beginning to sing cheerily. They were in the cosy sunny kitchen, and Bee was toasting bread for tea. Granny was asleep in the parlour. She always had a little nap after their early dinner, from which Bee never awaked her until it was time for tea. (Not five-o'clock tea, as known in fashionable—and unfashionable—drawing-rooms, but six-
o'clock tea as a meal, and in this little household, as supper as well.)

"It seems so strange to me—now," said Fay dreamily, "to think of you and Douglas living alone in that dreary Garth Street. Surely you can't remember much about those days, Bee?"

"Yes I can," Bee made answer, bending her bright head earnestly over the toast she was buttering. "I can remember them quite well. How good he was to me!" she added with a tenderer inflection in her voice than she knew. "No brother could have been kinder or dearer."

"Do you know," Fay went on after a minute—"I have often wondered why Douglas did not fall in love with you, Bee. It would have been quite a romantic ending to your childish companionship."

"Well, you see he never did," said the other, somewhat curtly.

Then she added, rising from her knees, and going over to the table:

"I am almost sure Douglas never gave
a thought to any woman but you—in that way."

"Do you think not?" said the young wife, a wistful look coming into her dark eyes. "Sometimes I have a miserable feeling that he did care for some one very much before—before he married me. And sometimes, too, I think—that he cares for her still."

"Fay! what are you saying?" Bee said, turning round and speaking very earnestly. "Indeed, you were never more mistaken in your life."

"No," Fay answered, with a weary little gesture of her head—"I don't think I am mistaken. There are some things one knows—intuitively. And I know that I am very, very little in Douglas's life. We had not been very long married when I found that out," she added bitterly.

"Poor darling!—you are ill and nervous," Bee said soothingly. "Think how grieved Douglas would be if he knew?"

"Ah yes"—broke in the other passionately—"I am ill and nervous. That is what
Douglas says. But for all that he did not deny what I said—he did not say I was first in his heart—he did not say he loved me. He spared me that, at least. He did not tell me a lie."

"Fay!—you did not accuse him of—that?—You did not——"

"Why not?" was the almost fierce answer. "Oh, of course it is my old jealous wicked temper, I suppose. But I am not a fool. And though he petted me and spoke to me as if I were a naughty child, I saw him wince and turn white, and I felt—*I knew*—that my shot had struck home. Oh, Bee," cried the poor thing hysterically—"do you think that when our baby comes my husband will love me? Will he perhaps love me for its sake, if not for my own?"

And as she spoke she hid her face in her hands, and broke into dry tearless sobs.

Bee's face had become very pale, very pitiful, very tender. She knelt down beside the other's chair, and whispered caressingly:

"Dear Fay—I don't understand. You
don't mean that—that he isn't kind to you?"

"Oh yes, he is kind to me," was the answer with a wan little smile. "He is very, very kind to me. You, who know him so well, do not need to ask that. But—he is kind to me in the careful way in which people are kind when they are afraid of being merely indifferent. And—oh, Bee, I am very, very unhappy!"

Bee, grieved and bewildered, tried silently to comfort her. Neither spoke for quite a quarter of an hour. At the end of that time Mrs. Chandleur's voice was heard calling fretfully from the other room. Bee carried in the tea and toast; and shortly afterwards Fay went home.

The days passed very monotonously in the little cottage at Camden Town. Mrs. Chandleur seemed to have sunk into that apathy which sometimes comes to old age when it has no longer any special object to live for. For years this old-fashioned wife's one desire had been to please her husband.
Now it seemed to her that nothing was left but to wait until death came for her too. Life no longer had any interest for her. She had never quite got over the terrible shock of her husband's death—and the manner of it. She used to wake up in the night sobbing and trembling—and calling for Bee to come to comfort her.

As for Bee herself, it was a lonely enough life she led at this time. She was young—and the young crave something more than unsweetened labour to fill their lives. Above all, youth craves congenial companionship. Mrs. Chandleur, as I have hinted, had reached the level of a human vegetable—and vegetables are apt to be poor company for more active natures.

At first, a few of those fashionable dames who had frequented the house in Portland Place called upon "poor Mrs. Chandleur" in her new and remote abode; but having come to the conclusion that the poverty and surroundings of that abode were quite too dreadful, and that, in fact, no
alternative remained but to drop her gently out of their acquaintance—they came no more.

It was now the end of April. The trees in the little back-garden—where Bee spent most of her afternoons, were beginning to break out into a pale green misty radiance. Birds twittered and sang on the house-tops and among the daily-darkening branches. No less than five crocuses had been born and died in the tiny grass-plot.

Bee was looking pale and thin. The spring weather tried her; she did not sleep well at night; and her once healthy appetite had deserted her.

Don't imagine, however, that my staunch little heroine was allowing her love for Douglas Conrath to materially affect her health and spirits in this way. True, she still loved him—loved him in spite of herself, and with all her heart. Her love had not suddenly shrivelled up and died, you see, as she had hoped it would, and as love between man and woman is supposed to do when the
object of it marries some one else. Real love doesn't, you know.

We are all aware of that, I suppose, though we wilfully shut our eyes to it.

You are shocked, are you not? — you virtuous British matron, and you unmarried British prude? But if neither of you ever entertain a less pure passion than my little Bee's for Douglas, you will have no reason to blush for your chastity.

And it was not a selfish love, I think. For, until Fay's tearful confidences on that memorable evening, the other's greatest consolation had been that Douglas was happy. Now, a vague doubt stirred her. The thought haunted her that on the few occasions when she had seen him since his marriage he had not had that look of full content which ought to belong to a man married to the woman he truly loves. *Was* he unhappy? — as Fay had hinted? *Was* it his fault? *Was* it Fay's?

These thoughts were very present with little Bee one sunny afternoon, when her grandmother, as usual, was asleep in the...
parlour, and the cosy kitchen wore its habitual air of tranquil afternoon calm. Some sparrows were chirping monotonously on the window-sill, the fire was flickering peacefully, and a white cat sat upon the hearthstone, trying to look as if no milk had passed its lips since the morning. Bee was standing at a table by the window rolling paste for to-morrow’s pie.

Suddenly a long loud knock aroused her from her musings. She took off her little white apron, wiped the flour from her hands, and went to open the front door.

A tall young man was standing on the step. With a quick, surprised little cry, Bee held out both her hands to him.

"Cyril!" she exclaimed involuntarily. "Oh—I am very glad to see you!"

He came in, laid down his hat and stick on the tiny shelf that served for a hall table, took her hands in his, and said, just in his old quiet voice:

"My dear little Bee!"

Really it would not have surprised her very
much if he had kissed her. But of course he did not. He followed her into the sun-kissed kitchen, and took up a position with his back to the fire. The cat rose as though in greeting and rubbed itself against his legs.

"Granny is asleep in the parlour," said Bee apologetically. "And she does not like to be disturbed. So will you forgive my bringing you in here?"

He did not answer just immediately. He was looking down anxiously into her pale tired little face, from which the flush of welcome had died away.

"Have you been ill?" he said abruptly.

"No," she answered, "oh no. I have been quite well—I think. But you, Cyril? Are you quite strong again?"

"Oh, I'm all right. Never was better in my life?" he replied lightly. Then he added in a changed voice, "You have had great trouble since I saw you, my poor little Bee. I have just heard. The mother and I only got home yesterday."
“Oh, don’t talk of it,” she said, growing somewhat white.

Then with an effort to speak gaily, she went on:

“Now, do you know I must ask you to excuse me while I finish my baking. I shan’t be a moment.”

As she spoke she tied on her apron again, and went gravely on with her work.

Any other girl, probably—under the circumstances—would have felt embarrassed and disconcerted at this sudden reappearance of her quondam lover. But somehow Bee did not feel at all disconcerted. Sir Cyril’s presence seemed only a welcome glimpse of that old careless life, which, truth to tell, she valued now more than when it had been hers.

As for Cyril, he looked his own tranquil self. But then, as we know, Cyril’s looks were not always an index to his feelings. As a matter of fact he had been deeply shocked by the news of old Chandleur’s death, and was more affected than he would have cared to own at the idea of this little woman whom
he loved spending the rest of her life in what he could not but see was thinly-disguised poverty. What on earth was Debenham about? he wondered with a curious mingling of irritability and relief. Why the devil had he not married her? They were evidently not even engaged; for Cyril's keen eyes had noticed that the pretty white hands were ringless. Had the fellow drawn back because of the poverty and disgrace that had come to the poor child? Confound him!

He sat silently pulling his moustache and frowning at the fire until Bee took off her apron, put away her cooking-things, and sat down opposite him.

The sun had set, and a shadowy twilight was beginning to darken the corners of the kitchen. Suddenly Cyril spoke.

"Bee," he said, his handsome face flushing somewhat—"I thought—I expected to find that you had replaced my ring by another one."

"How—I don't understand?" she answered, looking across at him with her clear, direct eyes.
"I mean"—he went on, meeting her gaze steadily—"that I expected to find you—engaged."

She grew so pale that he was startled.

"Engaged?" she repeated, with a haughty gesture of her little head.

"Have you forgotten?" he said with an odd kind of deliberateness, "that I gave you up because you—cared for some one else?"

The girl hid her face in her hands with an inarticulate cry.

"Cyril!—be generous!" she murmured. "I did not say—that any one else—cared for me!"

There was a dead silence, only broken by the breathing of the fire, and the regular ticking of the tall eight-day clock in the corner.

A curiously determined light flashed for a moment into Cyril's quiet eyes. Then it faded, to be replaced by a look of almost womanly tenderness.

He said nothing, however—only sat absently caressing the cat, who, after subject-
ing him to a long and scrutinizing inspection, had climbed solemnly upon his knee, and now perched there precariously, blinking and purring in sleepy content.

But when Bee raised her head again she met her old lover's eyes bent upon her with such a strange mingling of passion, pity and longing, that she felt her cheeks crimson painfully, and her heart beat fast in a tumult of contradictory sensations.

She rose quickly. There was a ring of passionate appeal in her young voice as she cried:

"Ah! we will not speak of these things, Cyril—never any more. Let us be friends. The love of a true loyal friend is worth all the lover-love in the world."

He had risen too, and stood looking down at her with grave kind eyes from which all the passion, though none of the pity, had died away.

"Is it?" he said, a little half-sad smile creeping round his mouth. "Are you so sure of that, Bee, my dear?"
CHAPTER II.

"THE ONE LITTLE WOMAN!"

"Then the round of weary duties, cold and formal, came to meet her, With the life within departed that had given them each a soul; And her sick heart even slighted gentle words that came to greet her, For grief spread its shadowy pinions like a blight upon the whole."

—A. A. PROCTOR.

"To be observed, when observation is not sympathy Is simply to be tortured."

* * * * * *

CYRIL NORTHBURGH was possessed of a peculiarly dogged and determined disposition. Indolent as he was, there was a good deal of the British bulldog about him. As his cousin Fay had said, he was singularly tenacious of once-harboured ideas.

True, he had relinquished one very deeply-rooted idea. He had convinced himself that
he was bound in honour to give Bee up to happiness and the man he believed she loved. But, finding that the man in question had apparently shown no desire to take her to himself, and finding, too, that she was unhappy, lonely, and in poverty—ah, well! that changed the aspect of things considerably. She might turn to him yet.

Oh yes, he had his pride too, as well as other fellows—perhaps more than some. But honest manly love has a way of pitching pride out of the window upon occasion. Besides, Cyril's pride was too essentially a part of himself to interfere materially with his judgment.

After he had left Bee—on the night mentioned in my last chapter—she sat still for a long time, thinking. It had been very pleasant to see Cyril again—very pleasant. She was glad their old friendship would be renewed—unmarred by any sentimental recollections. How delightful and satisfactory that was, to be sure!

He came very often to the small cottage at
Camden Town after that first day. Old Mrs. Chandleur used quite to look forward to his visits, and grumbled sadly if the intervals between them were longer than usual. Bee looked forward to them too. And he really behaved very well. He never embarrassed the girl by alluding to their former engagement. He never showed in the slightest degree that he regretted what had happened. He schooled his voice and even his eyes, so that Bee felt almost as much at ease with him as she used to do in the old days with Douglas.

Fay had been much disappointed when the engagement was broken off. But now she was beginning to hope that "things might come right" yet. She would willingly have been Cyril's confidante had he given her the chance. But he never did. She rarely spoke to Bee of Cyril, wisely judging that it was best to leave her alone, and let her heart decide for her. And indeed Bee grew very fond of Cyril in these days—though not at all in the way he and Fay wished and hoped. It
was a very changed and quiet little Bee who flitted about the tiny house in Camden Town. The work that had at first been such a pleasure to her, had now become a series of weary and painful tasks. She was always tired, and always felt ready to cry on the slightest provocation. In the first place she never got out—beyond the garden, that is to say; for she did not like to leave her grandmother alone. In the second place her rest was terribly broken; for the old lady insisted on her sharing her room, and kept her getting up and down pretty well all night, on one pretext or another.

One afternoon in May she was feeling particularly tired and down-hearted. She looked it, too; and Sir Cyril, who made his appearance about five o'clock, thought he had never seen her so wan and thin and depressed. A mad passionate longing to take care of her, to take her away from all poverty, and pain, and anxiety, surged up in his heart. But his face showed nothing of all this, and his voice held nothing more than
frank kindliness, as he greeted her and, as usual, followed her into the sunny kitchen.

The window was open; the soft May wind stole in, laden with the scent of wall-flowers. But the fire was out, and the kettle wore a look of black discontent. As Bee stood in the searching sunlight, Cyril saw that she had been crying. Indeed her lips were quivering still.

"Dear child—what is it?" he said involuntarily, taking one of her hands gently in his.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," she answered with a half hysterical gasp. "I—I simply had a fit of the blues. That was all."

"You are looking very ill," he said in a tone of deep concern. "This horrible life is not fit for you. You ought to have some kind of servant, Bee. And you ought to go out for a certain time every day!"

But she interrupted him with quite a gay little smile.

"You are quite mistaken, my dear Sir Cyril. This life suits me very well. You
surprised me in the weakness of a good cry. Now that I have had it, I feel ever so much better. And as I have let the fire out, I shall have to light it again, and give granny her tea. Will you stay to supper, Cyril? Fay and Douglas are coming. I had a note from Fay this morning. Will you?"

"Certainly. With pleasure," he said, throwing to the winds his numerous engagements for the evening. "And about the fire? Can I help you?"

"I think not," was the grave answer. "You would blacken your hands and your cuffs. Don't you remember the last time?—when you lifted bits of coal in your handkerchief?—and I had to lend you one of mine, and you never gave me it back again?"

"Well!—my hands and my handkerchief will wash, won't they?" he said laughing, and ignoring her accusation.

So between them they lighted the fire, made the tea and toast, and carried it into the sitting-room, where Mrs. Chandleur was just waking up from her nap. She was a
little cross to-night, declared that the tea was boiled and the toast burnt, and spoke to Bee several times in a way that made Sir Cyril feel more than savage.

"And so you expect your old friend, Douglas Conrath, and his wife to night, I suppose?" she said, when she had finished her second cup. "He doesn't trouble us much with his visits now-a-days. You see he's gone up in the world, and we've gone down. It makes all the difference."

Bee's lips trembled slightly. She, too, had felt hurt that Douglas so seldom came to see them. She knew it was not, as her grandmother hinted, because they were poor. He had much to occupy his time, of course. But still—Bee could not help thinking he might have spared an hour once in a way, if only for the sake of old times. How could she know the stern sense of duty that kept him away from her? How could she know how hard he strove to put her face—the one little woman's face!—out of his heart and vision? And not knowing, she misjudged him.
After tea Bee left Cyril and Mrs. Chandleur to entertain each other, and went into the kitchen in company with a penny cookery-book, to prepare supper, that she might give all her time to her expected guests. (She never thought of treating Cyril as a guest, you will observe.) Hither, after half an hour or so, she was followed by Cyril himself, he having been dismissed by Mrs. Chandleur with the following candid remarks:

"I know what your coming here so much means, Sir Cyril," she said, as she nodded her head over her knitting. "And I'm quite willing to give my consent. If I'd had my way, she'd have been your wife by now. So go away beside her. I'll do very well. If I want anything I'll let her know."

As he entered the kitchen, Bee looked up, with a slight frown, from her occupation of preparing a large fowl for roasting.

"Now, why didn't you stay with grannie?" she said.

"I came to help you," he answered cheerfully. "What on earth are you doing with
that bird?" he added, surveying the fowl through his eye glass.

"I am going to cook it and have it cold for supper," she replied, with a deliciously important air.

Cyril looked on in silence, while Bee turned and pulled the unhappy bird this way and that, without any apparent object or result.

"What are you trying to do?" he asked at last.

Bee gave the fowl a vicious little poke in the ribs with a long bright skewer.

"I am trying to truss it!" she said desperately. "And to tell you the truth I don't know how."

"To truss it! What's that?" he inquired.

"According to the cookery-book, it means to fasten up its legs and arms in some queer way," she answered, giving it another despairing poke.

"Er—isn't there something inside to come out? Perhaps it means that?" suggested Sir Cyril, eyeing the victim doubtfully.

"Oh no!" in a quick, rather horrified
tone. "They do that in the shops, you know."

"It seems all right," observed Cyril, after a brief and cautious examination. "But doesn't the cookery-book tell you about trussing, or whatever it is? Let us look."

"It's my own fault," said Bee disconsolately. "They asked me in the shop if I'd have it trussed; and I said I only wanted it cleaned and singed. To be honest I didn't know what trussing meant."

"Ah—here you are," said Cyril, who had been overhauling the cookery-book. "'Roast fowl. Skewer the bird firmly.' Skewer it," he repeated, pulling his moustache thoughtfully. "I suppose that means the same as trussing it. But it doesn't say how you do it. 'Flour it well, and cover it with well-greased kitchen-paper.' Kitchen-paper. What's that?"

"I don't know," was the despairing answer.

"Let's ask Mrs. Chandleur," suggested Sir Cyril, pulling the bird gingerly towards him by one leg.
"I did ask her. But she only said, 'Skewer the legs and wings.'"

"Pooh, well—never mind. Leave them alone. I don't suppose it makes much difference."

"I shall just have to," she said. "It's time it was put down to the fire. It has to be basted, you know."

"Basted?" he repeated, looking mystified.

"Yes—the gravy poured over it, you know."

"Oh, I'll do that for you. By the way," he added, with a sudden inspiration, "shouldn't it be stuffed with something? They generally are, aren't they? The same kind of stuffing they put in turkeys, you know," he continued in a vaguely explanatory sort of way.

"Cyril—I may as well confess I don't know how to stuff it either. I don't know what made me get a fowl. We've never had one before, since we came here. And I always thought it would be such an easy thing to cook. You know I never learned cooking; and grannie seems to think I should know everything by intuition."
It ended in the wretched bird being stuffed with such ingredients as were at hand, minus several mentioned in the cookery-book. It was then put down to the fire with half a sheet of buttered letter-paper on its innocent bosom; and Cyril—to such base uses can our manhood come!—basted it profusely and laboriously while Bee went to change her dress.

Half an hour later Fay and Douglas arrived—the former looking brighter than Bee had seen her look for a long time, if a little languid, Douglas grave and somewhat silent as usual. His manner towards Bee had of late been characterised by a certain coldness and constraint, which had hurt her more than she could have believed possible. Could it be, she thought sadly, that this was the same gentle, tender Douglas of her childhood? Was it true—as Fay said—that his married life had disappointed him? Or—worse still—was it true that success had spoilt him?

Just at sunset, when they all went out
into the quiet little garden, she found herself walking down the narrow garden-path beside him. Cyril, Fay, and Mrs. Chandleur were a few paces on in front.

"You are looking very pale and thin, Bee—are you not?" he said, and there was no lack of tender concern in his dark blue eyes now, as he looked down upon her.

"I suppose I must be," she made answer soberly. "Every one is making the most uncomplimentary remarks upon my personal appearance."

"It is a dull miserable life for you, poor child," he said compassionately. Then impelled by an overmastering impulse he added, in somewhat abrupt tones, "Bee—have you never regretted giving Sir Cyril his dismissal?"

For answer she laughed a little.

"He doesn't look very broken-hearted, does he?" she said. "So why should I be?"

"But you know he cares for you still?" he went on steadily, with a certain fierce pleasure in this mode of self-torture. "You
know that he would marry you to-morrow if you would let him."

"Would he?"

"You know he would. And, Bee, he has been very patient—very loyal. Are you so sure you could not be happy as—as his wife?"

"Yes," was the curt, almost harsh answer—"I am very sure I could not be happy as his wife. I told you that once before, Douglas. And that I may not have to tell you again, I had better tell you that I can't care for Cyril because—because I once cared for someone else—some one who never thought of asking me to be his wife. And—if I allowed myself to think it—I'm afraid I care for him still."

She was looking straight before her—her eyes flashing through angry tears. The next moment she had turned and gone into the house.

Douglas walked on, gazing unseeingly at the irregular boxwood borders, at the daisies on the little grass-plot, at the nodding wall-
flowers. A numb kind of jealousy surged about his heart. So she could love—this sweetly-cold little girl—this new-old Bee? It seemed incredible to him that she should love without return. And, if not Sir Cyril, whom did she love? He felt strangely stirred—strangely shaken.

"And so they tell me you've brought out a new book, Mr. Conrath," said Mrs. Chandleur some time later, when they were all sitting at the supper-table, and Douglas was carving the famous fowl. "I hope it's easier to read than the last; for I could neither make head nor tail of it."

"You and I may shake hands, then, Mrs. Chandleur," said Fay laughing. "It was beyond me too. But the reviews have been splendid."

"I have only seen one—in the Standard," said Bee. "And it said the book was clever, but realistic to the verge of brutality."

Douglas smiled slightly. His novel had been a success. He could afford to forgive the accusation of brutality.
"Well," observed Fay, shrugging her shoulders, "I don't mind confessing that I skipped half of it, and shuddered at the other half. I think it was almost brutal—parts of it."

"Real life is apt to be brutal," said her husband quietly—"looked at in certain aspects."

"There is a tendency in the present age to evince a ghoul-like pleasure in digging up, and putting under a public microscope what George Eliot has called 'the invincible remnants of the brute' in mankind," observed Sir Cyril, who was languidly cutting up a brown loaf. "And the public like it. They find in it what they suspect in others, and know in themselves. As for myself, I might almost emulate our friend Max Fenwicke, and say that I never read but two English novels in my life, and that one was Adam Bede, and the other—wasn't."

"Then you are hardly a competent judge, are you?" said Conrath coldly.

"Talking of Mr. Fenwicke," put in Bee,
giving a judicious turn to the conversation, "where is he? I have not heard anything of him for ever so long."

"He is in Africa—enthusiastically prospecting gold-mines," Douglas answered with a half-smile.

"How goes the Cornish mine?" asked Cyril, without much appearance of interest.

"Oh, very well. Debenham and I are alone in it now, you know. Fenwicke made over his share to us just before he left England."

"What! Made you a present of it?" asked Fay, opening her eyes very wide.

"No, my dear," replied her husband, somewhat drily. "We don't live in Utopia—yet."

After supper they had some music; for Bee's piano had been one of the things saved from the sale at Portland Place.

I think I have told you that Fay sang very sweetly? She practised every day with painstaking care; for her singing was the one bond between her and her husband. It
seemed to her the one thing she could do to give him pleasure. To-night she was in specially good voice.

"Won't you sing, Bee?" said Cyril suddenly.

Fay had just risen from the piano, after softly playing the concluding bars of Beethoven's *Adeláide*, which was a particular favourite of Douglas's.

"I think I don't want to sing to-night, Cyril," Bee answered quickly.

"Yes, do," he persisted in his lazy quiet voice. "Sing that quaint little thing you sometimes hum when you are waiting for the kettle to boil," he added after a pause. "'Synnöve's Lied,' I think you said it was. One of Kjerulf's, isn't it?"

Bee went reluctantly to the piano, which stood in a shadowy corner, somewhat out of the lamp-light. She was in no mood for singing to-night, and would rather have sung any other song than poor Synnöve's pathetic lament.

She played the symphony slowly and
lingeringly. Then her fresh young voice, with a half thrill of tears in it, rose and fell through the little room, giving to the weirdly beautiful air an added pathos:

"Oh, to remember the happy hours!—
The pleasant childhood we spent together—
The days of sunlight, and birds and flowers.—
What did we know of wintry weather?—

"We thought our playing must never cease,—
We thought our flowers would bloom for ever.—
Our world was bounded by the garden trees—
Then came the churchyard and the river!

"But now the garden is white with snow,—
At night I wait, I stand and shiver,—
The place is frosty, the cold winds blow,—
Ah love, my love, but you come never."

The sweet voice sank into a shivering half-heard breath. The curious little accompaniment wailed and sobbed itself into silence.

For a few seconds no one spoke.

Cyril was looking intently at Douglas, who was leaning back in his chair with folded arms—his face very pale, his teeth pressed hard upon his under-lip, his eyes bent upon Bee's dimly-seen profile with a look of pas-
sionate intensity that Cyril knew. For it had been in his own eyes many a time.

Fay's voice broke the stillness.

"Why do you sing such sad songs, Bee?" she said plaintively. "You make me want to cry."

Douglas moved slightly, and his eyes met Cyril's. What he saw there told him that his carefully-guarded secret had escaped him. But his face was as haughtily defiant as Cyril's was coldly accusing and resentful.

Shortly afterwards the Conraths took their leave, for the carriage had been waiting some little time. Cyril said good-night also, somewhat curtly negating Fay's suggestion that he should drive so far with them.

Mrs. Chandleur went to bed almost immediately. It was only half-past nine, but the old lady was tired and cross. Bee, having assisted her grandmother as usual, came downstairs again, and turned into the deserted sitting-room. For a few minutes she walked restlessly up and down the room, trying to shut out from her heart the memory
of Douglas's face, his voice, the clasp of his hand. Then she sat down at the table and hid her face in her arms, and prayed—poor lonely child!—that God would take away that strange wicked love from her heart; and that He would give her strength to live the rest of her life without it. And as she prayed, heavy bursting sobs shook her—sobs that would have wrung the heart of any who loved her to see and hear. When a few minutes had passed, she stopped crying, and putting her hand to her neck, drew out a slender ribbon, from which hung a plain gold locket. It held a photograph of Douglas—Douglas as he was ten years ago—a stern, yet boyish face, with a firmly-set mouth, and heavily-lashed dark eyes. It was not Douglas at his best; but it was the only likeness of him Bee had, and one of her greatest treasures. She looked at it tearlessly for a long time. Then, with trembling but deliberate fingers, she took it out of the locket and laid it on the table.

"I will burn it," she whispered with a dry
little sob. "It will be better—far better. Oh, my dear—my dear."

And she pressed a kiss of innocent passion on the pictured eyes that seemed to look at her so tenderly under all their stern gravity.

Then a new storm of grief shook her. She sobbed and cried as she had never sobbed and cried before—burying her head in her hands in a perfect abandonment of hopeless despairing sorrow. She did not hear a gentle knock at the front door—did not hear it open—did not hear a footstep in the passage without.

Then a voice—Cyril's voice—said in a tone of shocked concern:

"Good God, Bee!—what is the matter?"

She sprang up with a little cry.

"Cyril! How you startled me! What is it? Why have you come back?"

"I came back," he said, looking very pale and determined—"because I—couldn't stay away, I suppose. I—had a question to ask you. Did I startle you? Forgive me. I knocked, but you did not hear me; and
finding the door not yet fastened, and the lights not out—I came in. Bee, my dear—are you so unhappy? Can I do nothing?"

"No, no—nothing," she answered inarticulately.

"Won't you let me comfort you, Bee?" he whispered, taking her hand gently in his.

"Won't you let me take your poor sad little heart into my keeping once more—let me protect you and shield you from all grief—as your husband, Bee?"

But she shook her head.

"Never, Bee?" And his voice trembled.

"Never, Cyril."

She put up both her hands to her face; and then—Cyril saw the poor, tear-stained little photograph. He recognized it at once, and drew a quick sharp breath.

"So—it is he who has come between us?" he said harshly.

Bee raised her head, and with a strange little cry, caught up the bit of cardboard, and held it tightly in her shut hand.

There was a short silence. Cyril was
deathly pale. He sat down, and leaning his elbow on the table, pressed one hand over his eyes. Bee—white too with a wild, breathless terror—stood watching him.

He, for his part, felt horribly shocked. He did not try to analyze his feelings further—just then.

"Cyril—Cyril"—wailed the girl with a half-sob in her voice that went straight to his heart—"don't judge me too hardly! Don't despise me! I—I couldn't help it!"

With a violent effort he pulled himself together, and rose to his feet.

"Bee—my poor little Bee," was all he said.

"Go now"—she murmured. "Ah, Cyril—my dear kind friend Cyril—leave me now."

And he left her.

"Damn him!" he muttered, as he walked quickly down the narrow street in the shimmering spring moonlight. "Damn him!"

Cyril only came once more to the small house in Camden Town, and that was to say
good-bye. He was going to join a party of men who intended shooting "big game" in Africa, and the date of his return was uncertain. He looked pale and unlike himself, Bee thought, and he only stayed a few minutes. When he had said good-bye to Mrs. Chandleur, he drew Bee into the quiet sunny kitchen, and said in a hoarse voice:

"Good-bye, Bee. I shall not trouble you again. But remember, my dear, if you should change your mind—or if you should ever want me to do anything for you—one word will bring me to you, wherever I am. I shall never change—I shall never love any other woman. Think of me sometimes, Bee, if only for the sake of—what we once were to each other."

He wrung her hands almost painfully. Then—before she quite realized that he was going—he was gone.

Bee cried herself to sleep that night. It seemed to her that she had lost a dear and valued friend.

* * * * *
On the night before Cyril left England, he went to say good-bye to his cousin Fay. She was alone in the pretty flower-scented drawing-room when he came in, and she was struck by the curiously haggard and dispirited look his usually tranquil features wore. It was a look of set endurance of pain, that seemed to alter the whole character of his personality. Fay felt very sorry for him. She had never seen him look like that before.

"My poor Cyril," she said softly, when the light conversation she had begun flagged hopelessly, "my poor Cyril—you are feeling it very much, I can see."

He made no answer, beyond a slight impatient movement of the arm that rested on the mantelpiece. He did not ask her what she meant; because he knew.

"I know"—she went on—"though you have not told me. I think she has treated you shamefully."

A quick spasm passed over his clear-cut face. Just for a moment he let his head fall on his arm.
"Don't, please"—he said in a choked kind of voice—"unless you want to see me make an utter fool of myself."

It was so unheard of that Cyril should display any manner of emotion, that his evident agitation now, impressed his cousin deeply. And in her heart she judged Bee unsparingly.

It was an intense relief to her when after a minute he raised his head, and spoke in his usual voice.

"I'm afraid you'll find me very dull company to-night, Fay," he said, with rather a poor attempt at a smile. "I only looked in for a few minutes to let you see the last of me."

"The last of you?" she echoed. "Why—how long are you going to stay away?"

"I don't know."

As he spoke he drew a chair near to hers and sat down.

"Where is your husband?" he asked abruptly.

"He will be here directly, I think. He went to lie down just before dinner, because,
he said, he did not feel well enough to eat anything. He has not been at all well lately. The doctors say he is working far too hard. And so he is. He seems to me neither to sleep, nor eat, nor rest."

Her voice faltered. Then she added, with a wistful upward look at her companion:

"Do you think he looks ill, Cyril?"

"Oh, every fellow looks out of sorts at times," he answered shortly. "He seemed all right the last time I saw him."

After a minute he added, with a very gentle inflection in his voice:

"Does he make you happy, my little cousin? Is your married life all you hoped it would be?"

She did not answer immediately. Then she said in a quivering undertone:

"He is very, very kind to me."

"He has not sunk the lover in the husband, then?" he went on, taking one of her hands, and speaking very earnestly.

"He has never changed to me, Cyril. Why do you ask?"
“Because—I wanted to know,” he answered quietly.

“And you?—you love him as you did when you were first engaged to him?” he continued presently.

She grew very white.

“I love him as I always did,” she answered with a kind of anguished cry. “Better than my life; better than my hope of Heaven; better than he will ever love me—God help me!” And she hid her face in her hands.

Cyril muttered something inaudible between his strong white teeth, and rising, he paced once the length of the room and back again.

Fay had risen too, and nervously grasped his arm.

“You must not think that Douglas—that it is his fault,” she said in a quick, agitated voice—“It is only that I—that I—”

“I understand,” he said very quietly. “You need not be afraid of my misunderstanding your husband, Fay.”
Just then the door opened, and Conrath himself entered. Fay rose hurriedly and left the room.

The two men greeted each other with marked constraint. Conrath was really looking ill; and Cyril, surveying him keenly, felt a savage satisfaction in the fact.

"You are leaving to-morrow, Fay tells me?" said Douglas, throwing himself wearily into a chair.

"Yes—I am leaving to-morrow. You are not looking well," he added after a brief pause.

"No—I am not feeling well."

"What is the matter?"

"I don't know."

Cyril leaned his back against the mantelpiece for a few seconds without speaking. Then he said suddenly:

"I am going to ask you a question which I am aware I have not the slightest right to ask. But—for reasons of my own—I wish to be satisfied on the point. Why did you marry my cousin Fay?"
Conrath's face assumed a look of haughty amazement.

"Why did I marry her, Sir Cyril? Why do men usually marry women? I married her because I——" He stopped and bit his lips angrily.

"You did not love her," pursued the other deliberately. "And she knows it. She is a sensitive little creature—quick to feel slights or neglect——"

"Has my wife been complaining to you of my neglect?" said Douglas in a curiously still voice, as Sir Cyril paused.

"No—she has not. Therefore do not visit my unwarrantable interference upon her. But I can see—have seen for some time—that she is not happy——"

Conrath interrupted him.

"Am I wrong in supposing that my wife's happiness is a matter between her and myself?" he said icily.

Cyril's usually colourless face flushed a little.

"I have already told you that I am aware
of that," he said quietly. "Nevertheless, as my cousin is both ill and unhappy, I would ask you—in common humanity—not to allow her to see what I saw the other night—that you love another woman, and—what other woman!"

The eyes of the two men met; and there was a minute's silence.

Conrath had grown deadly white. He felt sick and cold. And yet there was a certain quiet dignity in the pale face he turned towards Sir Cyril—a dignity which impressed the latter in spite of himself.

"There are certain things that do not admit of explanation nor discussion, Sir Cyril," he said coldly. "If it is my misfortune to have cared nearly all my life for a woman who never thought of me except as a dear and trusted friend—and if you have surprised a secret I would have given many years of my life to have kept, I can only trust to your generosity to respect my secret. As for my motives in asking your cousin to be my wife, I can only repeat that that is a
matter which concerns ourselves alone. God knows I have done my best to make her happy. I have failed, you tell me,” he added unsteadily. “I—had thought, of late, that it was otherwise—”

He broke off suddenly; for the door opened, and Fay herself entered. Cyril—seeing her quick anxious glance at Conrath’s white face—turned to her at once.

“I am just going, Fay,” he said in his usual languid tones. “Wish me bon voyage and all that sort of thing.”

Then he held out his hand to Douglas, with more cordiality than he had shown for a considerable time. Indeed a curious pity for his cousin’s husband obtruded itself on his former hostility of feeling.

“Good-bye, Conrath,” he said. “Er—are you coming downstairs?”

The other accompanied him down to the hall, and Cyril said frankly:

“Look here, Conrath—I said, perhaps, more than I had any right to say. And I see that my words cut deeper than I—er—
intended. As you say, no one has any right to interfere between husband and wife. And —er—hang it all!—you took it better than I'd have taken it. So let us part friends, you know, and that,” he concluded lucidly.

Conrath took the hand the speaker held out to him, and pressed it hard.

“Yes—I understand,” he said, with a somewhat forced smile. “It's all right.”

So they parted, these two, with perhaps kindlier feelings towards each other than they had ever had before.

Douglas went slowly upstairs again, and into the drawing-room. Cyril Northburgh was right, he thought, as he caught sight of his wife's pale, sad little face. She did not look happy. Nevertheless he resented the fact, and, as most men would have done, resented further that he had been told of it by one of her family.

“Are you feeling worse, Douglas?” she said, coming up to him and laying her hand anxiously on his arm.

An irritably impatient answer rose to his
lips. For if you are feeling seedy and out of sorts and don't quite know what is the matter with you, there are few things more exasperating than to be continually asked how you are, or if you feel better. But as he met the gentle love-light in her eyes, and remembered her indifferent health, her love for him, and his want of love for her, all the man in him rose up to reproach him. Without speaking, he put his arm round her and kissed her. After all, she did love him. And she was all he had.
CHAPTER III.

THE GHOST OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN!

"There is no God!" the foolish saith,
But none, 'There is no sorrow,'
And nature oft the cry of faith,
In bitter need will borrow;
Eyes, which the preacher could not school,
By wayside graves are raised,
And lips say, 'God be pitiful,'
Who ne'er said, 'God be praised!'
Be pitiful, O God!"
—E. B. BROWNING.

The days passed slowly and monotonously enough in the little household at Camden Town after Cyril had gone. Mrs. Chandleur, too, was more difficile than ever, resenting Sir Cyril's departure as a special insult to herself.

"I know you refused him," she kept saying fretfully to Bee. "And what you are think-
ing of I’m sure I don’t know. There’s not one man in fifty would have come forward as he did, and given you another chance of being ‘my lady.’ I declare I’ve no patience with you. I don’t know what you’re waiting for—or if you expect one of the royal princes to make you an offer.”

“Oh, grannie, I wish you wouldn’t,” said Bee on one of these occasions, when the above tenor of remarks had become intolerably rasping and monotonous. “I don’t want to be married to anybody. Isn’t that enough?”

“Fiddlestick’s end!—don’t want to be married. The girl isn’t born that doesn’t want to be married. Don’t tell me.”

“Grannie—you used to be kind to me,” broke out the poor girl with a half-choked sob. “Don’t make me feel as if I were a burden to you. I do my best to—to be all that you wish.”

“Well, there, there—don’t cry, child,” said the old lady testily. “I’m sure it’s long past my tea-time—and not a sign of it yet.”
Bee, with a swelling heart, went away to prepare it.

Everybody seemed changed and hardened, she thought, sadly enough, as she waited for the kettle to boil. Grannie, and Douglas, and of late even Fay. Only Cyril had always been uniformly kind and gentle—and she had sent Cyril away! But she did not regret her refusal to marry him. She respected and liked him too thoroughly to give him mere friendship and liking in return for passionate love; and she knew she could never give him anything warmer.

It was ten days now since he had gone. And how she missed him already!

"Goodness knows when he will come back again," Fay said in a vexed voice, one day when she was spending the afternoon in the little house in Camden Town. "I must say, Bee, I think you have treated the dear fellow very badly. Both Douglas and I hoped you would have rewarded his patience at last."

"It is very kind of you and Douglas to
interest yourselves in my love affairs," said Bee coldly.

Then she suddenly began to cry. Upon which Fay took her penitently in her arms, and petted her, and declared that she (Bee) was working herself to death, and that she (Fay) was a cruel, thoughtless thing. And so on, and so on—until, with tears and caresses and murmured loving words, their old friendship was renewed once more.

"I want you to come and dine with us next Thursday," said Fay, when they were comparatively composed. "Do come, darling. It won't matter, your wearing black. It is just to be the quietest little dinner, not more than ten or a dozen. And I want you to stay all night. No, no, it isn't impossible. For Mrs. Chandleur shall come to us too. We will send the brougham for her. She won't want to see any one, of course. But she shall have the green room, and be as cosy as possible. And you can run up to see her whenever you like."

And so it was arranged, after considerable
demur and many objections on Bee's part. But Fay would take no denial.

The little dinner went off very pleasantly; and Bee thoroughly enjoyed moving once more among one or two of the old set, and forgetting the somewhat sordid existence which would begin again to-morrow.

Douglas was grave, gentle, courteous, as usual. Nevertheless, Bee knew that one of his moods of intolerable depression was upon him. Fay knew it too. The latter had had one of her hysterical fits that afternoon, although to-night she looked so gay and bright you would hardly have believed it. And she had said some very bitter, cruel things—things that her husband found it difficult either to forget or to forgive. For his part he was feeling horribly nervous and ill. It was quite true—as Fay had told Cyril—that he had been working too hard, that he took but little rest or food, and slept hardly at all. He was dimly conscious himself that he was burning the candle at both ends. But his writing seemed the only refuge
from himself and his torturing thoughts. He wrote feverishly, almost fiercely. And his work at this time was almost painfully realistic and powerful. The critics said it "showed marvellous insight, and grasp of the human soul." They did not know that it was written with the author's heart's-blood.

Naturally, this continual holding of the emotions at high pressure—for he was one of those unfortunate authors who lose themselves in the characters they create—told radically upon his nervous system. And when he let the pressure lift a little, there was always Fay to be soothed and reasoned out of some fit of tearful melancholy, or to be calmed and caressed through some wildly-passionate paroxysm of hysterical crying—as to-day. And above all, there was always his heart to hide from her.

I do not expect you to pity him. Hundreds of men have suffered as cruelly as he suffered—perhaps more cruelly—and have got over it, and none been the wiser, beyond the fact of an acquaintance or two, or
a chum or two, remarking that "So-and-so" is looking "out of sorts," or "seedy," or the like.

And thus in the irritability and nervousness born of his failing health, he had grown to actually dread these scenes with his wife—to dread them with a curious, uncontrollable horror. Sometimes her reproaches came so near—so fatally near the truth.

On this particular night it so happened that Bee could not sleep; and remembering that Douglas had given her the corrected proofs of his forthcoming novel to read, and that she had left them on the table in his study, she put on her dressing-gown and slippers, lit a candle, and ran downstairs to get them. The house was all dark and quiet. But as she gently opened the study door, she saw with a start that the lamp was lighted, and that Douglas himself sat at the table. He still wore his evening dress, and was leaning his head on his hands as if in deep or painful thought. Bee was just about to go
softly away, when he raised his head and saw her.

"Bee!" he exclaimed, starting to his feet. "What is it? Is Fay—is she ill?"

"No, no," she answered quickly. "I am so sorry I have startled you. I thought every one was in bed. I came down for the proofs you said I might read. I forgot to take them upstairs with me."

He went back to the table, turned over a lot of papers, and handed her the bunch of proofs she wanted.

"Douglas—is anything the matter? You look so white—so strange," she said, looking up at him with her clear, childlike eyes.

"Oh no, nothing is the matter," he answered drearily. "I—I suppose I am not well. That is all."

As he spoke he sat down again, and covered his eyes with his hand. Somehow another night rose keenly in his memory. He seemed to see his old self—a despairing, poverty-stricken lad in impotent raging resentment against his destiny. He saw the
bare sordid room, the guttering candle—heard the sweep of the snow against the window. And then—and then he saw a tiny, white-robed child's figure, an earnest child's face, with round innocent, pitying eyes—felt the soft cheek against his own, the little arms round his neck——

Ah! why had Bee—the new Bee—the Bee of his manhood—come to him now—to-night?

"Don't go, Bee," he said inarticulately. "It is not so very late. And—and I hardly ever see you now. Never mind your dressing-gown," he added, with a curious smile, as she hesitated. "It is very pretty—and it covers up your neck and arms, which your equally pretty dinner-gown did not do. Stay and talk to me a little, Bee."

A strange look came into her soft eyes.

"No—I must go now," she said hurriedly. "I would not have come if I had known you—you were here."

"Why?" he asked harshly, rising and coming towards her. "Are you afraid of me,
then? Afraid to be here with me alone—at midnight—only you and I? Well—perhaps you are right. Perhaps—you had better go."

"Good-night then, Douglas," she said, raising two troubled eyes to his.

"Good-night," he answered, taking the little hand she held out to him.

The soft warm touch of it thrilled him through and through. Every pulse in his body throbbed wildly.

She trembled too, and her eyes filled with unwilling tears. At the sight of them he drew her a little nearer to him by the hand he still held.

"What is it, child?" he said unsteadily. "Why do you look so sad? Has your life been shipwrecked—too? It—it seems impossible. You told me once that you—you cared for some one. What is the fellow made of—if he does not care for you? Who is he, Bee? Surely you might trust me—whom you used to call—your brother."

As he spoke he bent his head to look into her averted face.
A fierce crimson flooded her cheeks, then receded, and left them deathly pale. She turned a swift, sudden look upon him; then wrenching her fingers from his, she sat down at the table, and covered her face with her hands.

But—he had seen her eyes.

An incredulous shock of passionate surprise shivered through him; then, as he realized all her agitation meant, his blood ran fast and fierily. But the next instant his delirious vision of what might have been was kept to earth by the stern knowledge of what was. He felt stunned and giddy.

"My God!" he said under his breath. "My God!"

He flung himself into a chair, his hands opening and shutting nervously and convulsively. He had had a good deal to bear that day. This was just the last straw. "It might have been! It might have been!" shrieked in his ears, and tore at his heart. And he bent his head on his outstretched arms, and sobbed like a child or a woman.
In an instant Bee was at his side—on her knees. She did not know what her eyes had betrayed. Just now—I doubt if she would have cared. She forgot that she loved him. She did not know that he loved her. She only knew that he was in some unknown trouble, and—womanlike—she longed to comfort him.

"Douglas—Douglas," she whispered—"can't you tell me what it is?"

He regained his self-control almost immediately, but remained quite still, his face still hidden in his arms. He felt her little hand on his wrist. He took the hand in one of his, and pressed it gently. He felt utterly heart-weary and broken in spirit, and her sympathy was sweet to him.

Presently he raised his head and said in a low voice:

"You will think me—very weak, Bee. But—I have had much to bear lately. And to-night—to-night—"

He stopped, and bit his lip nervously.

"I know—I know," she whispered. "I
suppose we all have, dear Douglas. And no one can help us. No one but God."

He was looking at her with a curious wistfulness in his dark eyes.

"Have you said your prayers to-night, Bee?" he said almost inaudibly.

"No—not yet," she answered.

"Then—say them now," he went on, his voice sinking lower yet. "Say them now—before you rise from your knees. In the old, old childish days you said your prayers kneeling beside me. I hear the echo of them sometimes still. Pray with all your heart, Bee—pray that comfort may come to you—and to me—and strength to bear—what we have to bear."

For the time, she too seemed carried back to her childish days.

"Yes, Douglas," she answered with a half sob. And she bent her head reverently on her clasped hands.

She looked like some small saint kneeling there, her tawny hair flowing over her shoulders, her long lashes sweeping her pale
cheeks, her whole body so still—so still. Who knew how her heart was beating?

The man beside her bowed his head also, and for the first time since his childhood, he too sent up a trembling, uncertain, silent petition to the God he had neglected all his life—the God who is never entreated in vain.

And the prayer was from his heart; and in the earnest conceiving of it, the passion-cloud that had held him slowly ebbed and melted away.

A few minutes passed. Then Bee rose to her feet. He rose also. No verbal good-night passed between them this time. She gave him her hands silently; and he took them and raised them to his lips.

"God bless you, my little sister," he said in a low broken voice. "You—you don't know how you have comforted me! God knows I—wanted it."

"I am glad if I have comforted you," she said simply—"if only to pay off part of the unpayable debt of kindness I have owed you
all my life. No one is like you, Douglas—no one!"

A harsh laugh made them both start; and turning, they saw that Fay stood at the door, her eyes blazing, her cheeks a vivid crimson. If any one had thought of it, she was looking almost beautiful.

"So—I have found you out at last!" she said, in a strange panting underbreath. "I have found you out at last! My husband, and—my friend! I have been very dense—very blind—very confiding. But now—I know!"

She stopped, for her husband had come quickly up to her and laid his hand on her arm. To him the re-action was horrible.

"Good God, Fay—what do you mean?" he said sternly.

"What do I mean?" she repeated slowly, a terrible smile curving her thin lips. "I think—for Miss Adeane's sake—you had better not ask me—what I mean!"

He grew white about the mouth.
"You had better go back to your room," he said, in a low suppressed voice.

"And leave you here with her alone?" she answered with an unlovely laugh. "Well, yes—perhaps I had better. Ha, ha! And so it is she you have cared for all these months? Even when you asked me to marry you—you cared for her! And she—ah, now I remember so many things!—she has always cared for you too. That was why she would not marry poor Cyril. Oh my God! how you have deceived me! And how she has deceived me! And this!—the culminating insult! In my own house—to make an appointment to meet you here—at midnight—so that you might tell her how you loved her, and how you longed for the time when I—poor fool who came between!—should be out of the way, that you might legitimately give her the place you have never given to me."

Again she paused; for there was something terrible in the look her husband turned upon her.

"Be silent!" he said between his teeth.
"By Heaven! if you say another word you will make me forget that you are a woman—and my wife."

There was a moment's silence. Bee was crouching back against the wall, her hands pressed against her heart, her eyes dilated with a wild incredulous horror.

"Bee, don't look like that!" Douglas exclaimed almost fiercely. "She does not mean it—she does not know what she is saying."

"Oh, yes, I know what I am saying," shrieked his wife excitedly. "And you and she know too—only too well."

"Fay—for the love of God!" uttered Douglas, laying an unwittingly cruel grasp on her arm.

Then—at last—Bee spoke.

"Let me go," she gasped, in a low hoarse voice. "I cannot bear it. Douglas—let me go now."

But his arm barred her passage to the door.

"You shall not go," he said with white
lips—"until my—my wife—has taken back her insulting words to you."

"Ah yes—take her part against me, of course!" cried Fay, almost beside herself. "That was to be expected. Oh, why can't I die—and be out of your way? But I will die—I will kill myself—and then—and then you can be happy—when I am in my grave!" Her voice rose to a long sobbing scream; she threw up her hands wildly, and would have fallen, had not her husband caught her in his arms. She had fainted.

"Thank God!" he muttered agitatedly, as he bent to look at the closed eyes and pale cheeks.

He himself was as white as death. Bee saw that his hands were trembling.

"Bee"—he said, turning to her, and speaking in a voice that she hardly recognized—"forgive her. She has been so nervous and excitable of late. She did not mean all she said."

"No, no—I know it," the girl interrupted him passionately. "Don't even speak of it."
"I am going to carry her upstairs," he went on hurriedly. "I'm afraid to think what the consequences of all this excitement and agitation may be. It's horribly unfortunate."

With a heavy sigh, he lifted his unconscious wife in his arms, and carried her up to her room.

A little later the whole house was in a commotion; for its young mistress was alarmingly ill. And before morning Douglas's baby daughter was born.

Many sad, anxious days followed; for Fay came very near the death she had so passionately and unheedingly desired—so near, that one night the newly-made father paced his study far into the dawn, dreading each moment the news that might come to him.

The poor, passionate, spoiled, loving little woman! His anger against her had died away. A gnawing remorse tugged at his heartstrings—a strange, terrible remorse, that whispered what he dared not hear.

They would not let him see his wife, for all excitement had to be avoided for her. And
only once had he seen the tiny morsel of humanity who had promoted him to fatherhood. Such a weird, shrunken little creature! with an old, old face, and preternaturally solemn eyes. Douglas felt half afraid of it. It seemed to accuse him silently with its premature entrance into this sorrowful world.

At last one day they brought him word that his wife wished to see him. She was restless, they said, and asked for him continually. So he followed Lady Dinwoodie into the sick room, and knelt beside Fay's pillow. She put out two thin little hands to him, and he clasped them in his. Then he took her in his arms, and bent his head and kissed her. He did not speak. He could not, just then. His lips were quivering, and his eyes were dim.

After some time Fay stirred a little in his arms.

"Douglas" — she whispered feebly but eagerly, "have you seen it? The baby?—our little baby?"

"Yes, dear," he said unsteadily.
“It is very pretty, is it not?” she went on, looking up at him with wistful eyes.

“I only saw it for a moment or two,” he answered, smiling faintly. “And I am not a judge of babies, I’m afraid. But its eyes—I thought they reminded me of yours, Fay.”

She gave a little sigh of content, and smiled. Then Lady Dinwoodie took Douglas away.

Fay gained strength but slowly. She was so thin and fragile that she was a mere featherweight in her husband’s strong arms as he lifted her daily from her bed to the sofa, and from the sofa back to bed again.

Strangely enough—but to Douglas’s inexpressible relief—she never mentioned that terrible night in his study. It seemed to have passed away from her brain—to be blotted out, as it were. ‘Only once, as they sat in the summer twilight, she said to him with a pained, anxious drawing together of her brows.

“Douglas—there seems to be something
that I can't remember—something that half comes back to me, and then flits away again—something that happened, surely, just before baby was born. I have a dim recollection of being half mad with terror—or was it anger?—and then of your being very angry with me, and saying such dreadful, cruel things. Douglas,” agitatedly, “help me to remember.”

He put his arm round her, and pressed her head down on his breast that she might not see how pale he had grown. But she felt him shudder, as at a ghastly memory.

“Douglas,” she repeated, with a piteous insistence, “what was it?”

“You were very ill, Fay,” he said in a low steady voice. “And you were frightened, and—came for me. After that you were delirious—and doubtless imagined many things.”

“Ah yes, that must have been it,” she said in a relieved voice. “I am so glad. It—troubled me.”

“Then don’t let it trouble you any more,”
he said. "Everyone has unpleasant fancies in illness."

But he looked white and anxious, and sat for a long time silently and absently pulling his moustache with strong nervous fingers. He was thinking—well, he was thinking of Bee. He had not seen her since the morning after that memorable night. She had come twice to ask for Fay, just at first—but not lately.

Conrath had fought hard against his passion. But even now—with his wife's head resting on his heart, his arm folded round her, their child sleeping in its cradle by their side—even now he was conscious of a sick longing for that other woman whose lightest touch was dearer to him than his wife's whole body. A maddening necessity to be near her, to hear her voice, to look into her deep calm eyes—clear in their never-dying childhood—came over him and shook his soul. He let the dear forbidden love creep round his heart, and held it there.

It was wrong, of course. Oh yes, he knew
that as well as you do—better, perhaps. But the sense of his wrong-doing did not affect him much. When the body is weak and the vital power below par, the moral perceptions are apt to be dulled. And he was physically very tired, and mentally feverish and unstrung. I suppose these days and nights of watching and remorseful anxiety had told upon him.

So, to-night, he sat "stabbing desire with the sword of despair," and strove with all his man's strength of will to take command of his nature. It had been a most strangely bitter-sweet shock to him—the discovery that Bee loved him. And again the mocking ghost of "what might have been" tore at his heart. A half-suppressed groan escaped him; and Fay looked up with a start of alarm.

"Douglas—my dearest, are you ill?" she said, her weak voice full of a keen anxiety.

"No, no, foolish little woman," he said faintly. "I am a little tired—that is all."

His passion had sickened and died—for the time being; or rather, with a strong relentless
hand he had subdued himself to the hard level of everyday life again.

And Bee? Ah, Bee had had a hard time since that night in Douglas's study. Again and again Fay's white, passion-distorted face rose up before her—her frenzied accusations rang in her ears and beat into her brain like a hammer. Would Douglas believe these cruel words?—words which held for Bee the terrible sting of truth, as far as she was concerned. Was he already pitying her, despising her, wondering over her? A woman who loved another woman's husband! His little sister Bee, whom he had thought so good and innocent. She writhed under the thought.

She used to think—as she knelt at nights trying in vain to pray—that she never could bear it, that any other grief would have been easier to bear than this. Even if Douglas had died—died respecting her. Poor child!—she did not remember that if we could choose our trials they would hardly be trials at all. And above all, being young, she did
not know how soon we get sadly accustomed—in a sense—to most heart-pains, even those that well-nigh tear body and soul asunder. And somehow, as the days went on, she did bear it. She went about her duties as usual, her little face always sweet if never smiling—a face that had lost all that remained of its childish look, and gained a new womanliness. But it was the womanliness that nothing but keen suffering ever brings to maturity.

One morning, quite early, before Mrs. Chandleur had come downstairs, Bee was surprised by a visit from Douglas himself. He looked so grave, so haggard, that at first Bee thought Fay was seriously worse.

"What is it?" she said looking rather white. "Fay—is she worse?"

"No—she seems rather better. And, Bee—she wants very much to see you."

Her face flushed vividly. But she did not speak.

"I wanted to see you first—to tell you"—he went on hurriedly and somewhat nervously—"that—that she seems to have no re-
collection of her—her agitation of—of that night. She remembers dimly that something happened before she was taken ill, but she has evidently no—no other memory of it than a confused one. You will forgive her, Bee?” he added earnestly. “And put the painful memory away from you?”

“Yes”—she made answer quietly, after a brief pause. “I know—she could not mean—what she said. We will speak of it no more.”

“And you will come? I will arrange for some one to be with Mrs. Chandleur. I think Fay will—will wonder if you do not come. You have always been such—friends.”

“Yes,” said the girl slowly. “We have always been—such friends. Yes—I will come.”

So that afternoon she went; and Fay was unaffectedly glad to see her. Their old affection seemed unbroken. For, as Douglas had said, Fay seemed to have forgotten the sad scene that threatened to break it. And Bee—was trying to forget.
They spent a very happy hour over the baby, who gazed at them earnestly with its great solemn eyes, like some small sphinx of old. Bee took it in her arms and kissed it softly. Douglas's little daughter! It would have been strange if she had not loved it. It was not like him, she thought, as she scanned the pinched, unbaby-like features. It reminded her of a picture she had once seen of a weirdly grave elf in some old-world legend. But its eyes were beautiful; and once, as Bee kissed it, it smiled. It was to be called Sadie, Fay said. She had always had a fancy for the name, and Douglas did not seem to care, one way or another.

Douglas took Bee home in the evening. Their drive was almost a silent one. She could not speak. He dared not. As he stood with her at her own door, he said in a low voice:

"Thank you, Bee. It was good of you to come. But—you are always good and unfselfish. You always were—even as a child. Good-night, my little sister—good-night."
And with a quick clasp of the hand he left her.

His words, his tone, his look, comforted her. Perhaps—perhaps he did not know, after all. He had seemed just the same. She did not know what that seeming cost him.
CHAPTER IV.

"FOR THE LAST TIME!"

"If I should die to-night,
My friends would look upon my quiet face,
Before they laid it in its resting-place,
And deem that death had left it almost fair;
And laying snow-white flowers against my hair,
Would smooth it down with tearful tenderness,
And fold my hands with lingering caress,
Poor hands, so empty and so cold to night!

"If I should die to-night,
My friends would call to mind, with loving thought,
Some kindly deed the icy hand had wrought;
Some gentle word the frozen lips had said;
Errands on which the willing feet had sped;
The memory of my selfishness and pride,
My hasty words, would all be put aside,
And so I should be loved and mourned to-night!"

* * * * *

As the days went on something of Fay's old fretfulness seemed to come back again. Perhaps there was some excuse for her. She
was very weak—not with the delicious languor of convalescence, but with an exhausted debility and consequent depression which were painful and trying both to herself and those around her.

About the end of July Conrath took a pleasant house at Stockton-on-the-Sea. And the fresh sea breezes had an almost magical effect on the young mother. She was out nearly all day, for the weather was wonderfully settled and warm—and yet not too warm. The baby, too, grew daily plumper and less weird-looking.

At first Conrath had not, apparently, taken much interest in his small daughter. But now, when she did not cry so much, and was beginning, as her mother and nurse declared, to "take notice," it seemed to him possible that in time he might learn to love this soft tiny atom of humanity. He used to touch its fluffy hair and velvety cheeks with a curious wondering reverence. He felt his heart stir pleasantly when it smiled and cooed at him, as it often did, or clasped his finger in its
small claw-like hand. He liked to speculate upon its future—as to when it would be able to walk, to go to school, to wear long frocks, and "come out"—perhaps be married. He wondered, too, if it would be a loving housewifely little creature such as Bee had been as a little girl—or if Fay's shrewd old-fashioned childhood would be reproduced in her daughter.

"How you do look at baby, Douglas," said Fay, one afternoon when she was feeling languid, and was resting on the sofa, the baby's cradle beside her.

"Do I?" he answered with a half smile. "Well—she's becoming rather an interesting little woman. I believe she knows me already."

Little Sadie, as if in acknowledgment of this compliment, cooed and crowed, and screwed her face in a series of dreadful contortions which made her father quail inwardly.

"Fay—do you suppose it's ill, or anything?" he said bending down to look anxiously at his offspring. "It looks very queer!"
"Why no, you foolish boy. She's only pleased."

"Oh," doubtfully. "She doesn't look very pleased, does she?"

Fay laughed a little.

"You don't deserve to have a baby," she said. "You don't know anything about them."

"Well, you don't know much, do you?" he answered somewhat absently.

He had risen, and was walking slowly up and down the room.

"What are you thinking of?" his wife asked presently.

"Nothing that would interest you, dear," he answered in a pre-occupied voice.

"But I want to know. You look so absorbed."

"Well—I was thinking out the outlines of an essay I have promised for one of the reviews," he answered.

Fay moved uneasily.

"You are always thinking of things of that kind," she said somewhat petulantly.
He did not answer. He had paused near the open window, and stood looking out. The fragrant summer breeze, laden with a breath of the sea, stole in softly. Great clusters of pale yellow roses nodded sleepily in the sunshine. In the near distance one could hear the monotonous rise and fall of the waves on the shingle.

"You know I think it is such folly of you to slave away at your writing as you do," Fay went on in the plaintive voice Douglas knew so well.

"Yes — I know you do," he answered shortly.

"I'm sure I can't bring myself to take the slightest interest in anything you have written lately," she added with an impatient sigh.

"I know that too," he said. And his voice held a ring of bitterness.

"Your writing is far more to you than I am," she continued with quivering lips. "I am always second—only second."

"Oh Fay, for the love of God don't bring
up that old grievance again!” he exclaimed sharply.

He had begun his restless walk again. Fay watched him with eyes half wistful, half impatient. His face was looking worn and old in the bright summer sunlight. He was thinner, too, than he had been, and his dark hair was plentifully sown with grey. All this Fay noticed discontentedly. She hated to see him look like that. It seemed as though he were unhappy. She did not want people to think he was unhappy. She did not want to think it herself.

"I wish you wouldn’t walk up and down in that irritating way," she said at last. "It does make me feel so nervous."

He stopped and sat down beside her.

"I don’t seem able to please you, Fay, do I?" he said wearily.

But for answer she broke into one of her old fits of crying.

And then the same old things happened. He did his best to soothe and comfort her, and after a due time had elapsed, she per-
mitted herself to be soothed and comforted. When the scene was over Douglas looked almost as white and agitated as she did. He had gone through this sort of thing so often—so often. And he felt so desperately tired of it all. He leaned his head on his hand, with a heavy sigh. Fay tied her handkerchief nervously into knots. While their baby lay and smiled, and stretched out dreamily aimless little hands to the flowers and the breeze and the sunshine. At last it slept; and across its cradle the eyes of the father and mother met.

"Fay"—said Douglas, with a quiver in his deep voice, "are we going to have all the old miserable times over again?"

"Ah no," she sobbed. "I don't know what makes me so hateful—so different from the woman I want to be. I thought that perhaps when baby came things would be better."

"Yes—so did I," he answered sadly.

"Douglas—if I try to begin all over again—will you help me?—and try to love me?" she whispered, presently.
He stifled a sigh. This, too, he had heard so often.

"For baby's sake, Douglas," Fay went on in a trembling voice.

Now—Douglas had an affectionate nature. It was difficult for him to harden his heart against the pleadings of any woman. So now, when the mother of his child leaned her head penitently and sorrowfully against his breast, and stole one thin arm around his neck, he felt strangely moved and touched.

The mother of his child!

On some men these words act as a resistless spell. What remained, but for him to forgive her?—as he had done so many times before. But a new rush of tenderness softened his eyes and shook his voice as he answered:

"My wife, we will help each other—and love each other."

And thus over their child's slumbers a new peace was signed between them—a peace that was never again broken.

A few days later the baby was taken ill. It
cried piteously night and day; and Fay insisted on sitting up with it, and devoting herself exclusively to its nursing—in spite of the remonstrances and advice of both Conrath himself and the doctor. But the child really was very ill, and seemed to lose strength with alarming rapidity.

One wild stormy night Fay sent down a frantic message to her husband to come to her at once. He hurried upstairs immediately and found her crouched on the hearthrug, her face like death, and her child clasped convulsively in her arms. The poor little thing was moaning piteously, its eyes were rolled upward in a dreadful unseeing stare.

"My dearest Fay," entreated Conrath anxiously. "You will kill yourself if this goes on. Give the child to me."

But she did not heed him.

"Douglas—Douglas—she is dying. My baby is dying," she cried in an agony of grief "See—look at her."

And indeed after a brief glance he changed
countenance somewhat, and without speaking, went out of the room.

A few minutes later he came back again, carrying a glass of wine.

"Drink this," he said in an authoritative and yet tender voice. "And give baby to me. You are quite exhausted."

She obeyed him mechanically.

"I have sent for Dr. Grimes," he went on, gently raising her with his disengaged arm. "Now rest in this easy-chair for a little. I will take as good care of her as you could do."

And, strange to say, the child ceased its monotonous wailing cry, and seemed easier. For more than an hour Douglas walked up and down the room, carrying it in the firm gentle clasp that Bee had known and loved in her babyhood. And at last it seemed to doze, and Douglas sat down beside his wife, who was weeping silently but bitterly.

"Hush, my wife," he said in a low voice, laying his hand on hers. "I do not think our baby will die. But if it be the will of God to take her from us——"
He paused, and his voice shook a little. For a strong protecting love had grown up in his heart for this little child—this part of himself. It would be hard to let her go.

The doctor came—and went. He could do little, but promised to come again in the morning.

The night wore on, and the grey dawn stole in. Husband and wife sat there still—his hand clasping hers, her head resting on his shoulder. She was weeping; but her tears were tears of thankfulness. For their baby was given back to them.

* * * * *

A few days later Conrath was summoned to the drawing-room to see a visitor—an old gentleman, who, it appeared, had given no name, but particularly desired to see Mr. Douglas Conrath.

As the latter entered the room he saw a man of perhaps seventy standing at the window, looking out. Who wheeled round at the closing of the door, and took a few steps into the middle of the room.
"God bless my soul! Your father's very image!" he exclaimed. Then he took out his pocket-handkerchief and used it violently.

Douglas looked at him with curiously mingled feelings. A swift intuition told him who his visitor was.

"Mr. Evan Conrath, I presume?" he said courteously but coldly.

"Yes, yes—that's my name. Your father's brother. I—er—well, my boy, I'm an old man, and you won't expect an old man to apologize to a young one. But—I want to make amends—if I can—for—for—" Here he broke down, and walked to the window again.

Douglas waited—silently.

Presently his uncle turned round.

"Then shall we be friends, my boy?" he said, holding out his hand.

The other took it, saying somewhat coldly:

"I am sorry that we should ever have been anything else."

For he could not but think of his dead mother, and what this reconciliation might
have meant for her—had it come in time. It had come a matter of nearly twenty years too late—that was all. Most of the good things of this world come a few years late. Do you remember Lord Clyde’s pathetic words when he received his well-earned honours? "Too late! Too late! There is nobody left I care to tell it to!"

Not a few of us are echoing them. The fame, the wealth, the position we toiled for so breathlessly through the long, weary, disappointing years, comes perhaps at last. We turn on the heights, and find ourselves alone—save for the swarm of mushroom friends whose business it is to dog success. But the dear old faces of our youth—the merry band who set out with us on life’s race—where are they? It was at their feet we were to lay our laurels; it was on them we were to lavish our wealth; it was with them we were to share our seat in high places. It must be in some other world, then. For this world knows them no more. One by one they have left us. One by one they have folded
their hands and lain down to sleep—the sleep that knows no waking here. God grant we have taken time to love them—while we had them.

Old Evan Conrath was conscious of a curious tightening at his heart, as he looked at his brother's son. So like! And yet there was a stern gravity, a strength of will in this face that that other never had. How the old days rushed back on his memory—the dear old boyish days! Ah well—he was an old man now; and Charlie—Charlie was in his grave. And they had parted in bitter anger. His lips twitched nervously. Sitting down at the table, he hid his face in his hands and wept like a child.

After a moment's struggle with himself Douglas crossed the room and laid his hand on the old man's shoulder.

"Uncle," he said unsteadily—"let the past go. Let us be friends."

The words were simple enough; but they meant a good deal. And they had been hard to say.
The two men had a long earnest talk after that—a talk that neither of them ever quite forgot. And the warm silent hand-clasp with which they parted was the earnest of a friendship that—for one of them, at least—lasted till the day of his death.

Old Conrath, it appeared, was staying at Stockton-on-the-Sea. His wife was delicate, and had been ordered sea air. The two households speedily became very friendly. Mrs. Conrath took rather a fancy to Fay, and the childless old couple raved mutually over the baby. Its great-uncle made it all sorts of presents, whose wild extravagance was only equalled by their utter uselessness. He lamented its sex, however, and confided the hope to his wife that it might grow up handsomer than its mother. Adding also that he thought a clever fellow like Douglas might have shown better taste in wives—as far as looks went.

But to her husband Fay had never seemed so lovable as at this time. She always met him with a smile now. The fretfulness that had so
tortured him in her, seemed entirely gone. She studied his moods as she had never done before. She even read up all sorts of dry subjects in order to be more of a companion to him. This touched him very much. For his part he got into the way of talking over his ambitions and his aspirations with her, aye—and his business affairs as well—in a way in which he would once have thought impossible. These summer days were perhaps the happiest he had ever known.

Had he got over his love for Bee, then? No—he had not got over it. His was a faithful nature; and she would always be the "one woman" to him. But he no longer sickened for the possession of her. Why? I cannot tell you why. Suffering had strengthened his higher nature, perhaps. I don't know. Or perhaps it had subdued his lower nature. There comes a time in a man's life when he either dominates his passions, or his passions dominate him. This time had come to Douglas. And the memory of a night when his broken prayers had silently
mingled with those of the woman he loved, and who loved him, was strong upon him still.

So the days went on, and September was half over. Douglas fancied that Fay was looking pale and thin. He insisted on her seeing the doctor, who laughed fatly at his fears.

"Oh, you young husbands—you young husbands!" he said. "What fidgets you are. Mrs. Conrath is all right—or would be—if she would give up nursing that baby, as I have told her over and over again."

And this, by Douglas's command, was done. Nevertheless Fay remained pale and thin, as before. Her husband felt anxious about her. She had a kind of transparent look that he did not like.

One night they were sitting together in the verandah. He was going down to Cornwall the next day, on some unavoidable business connected with the mine. Somehow, he felt curiously reluctant to go. Fay, too, clung to him as if they might never meet again.
"Must you go?" she whispered.

"I must, dear. But I shall only be away three or four days. Why, little woman, you will hardly have time to miss me."

She shivered, but said nothing. He noticed anew how white and fragile she looked, and there was a keen anxiety in his voice as he said:

"You are not feeling ill, dear, are you? You look such a ghost of a little girl to-night."

"Oh no," she answered, smiling as she leaned her head against him. "But I feel so tired—always so tired."

Next morning Fay drove to the station with him, and the last thing he saw was her pale plain little face with its great wistful eyes—smiling good-bye to him.

The day seemed very long to Fay. She missed Douglas terribly. Besides, she was not feeling well. She went to bed early; for she was tired, and her throat was very sore. In the morning it was worse, and on the third day it was worse still. Old Mrs. Conrath, who
came in the afternoon, dispatched a servant at once for the doctor, who pronounced it diphtheria of the most malignant type. Young Mrs. Conrath was in a very alarming state, he said. Her husband must be wired for at once.

Meanwhile Fay grew weaker and weaker. She had no strength to resist the disease—which made its usual steady wasting progress. When it abated, came the last, the fatal stage of utter prostration.

"Will Douglas come?" she whispered once during the night to old Mrs Conrath, who would not leave her. "Does he know? Can he get here in time?" Then she added, "They had better not bring—baby."

Another day passed. Douglas had wired in the forenoon that he would come by the night mail. There had been some delay in his getting the doctor's telegram.

And now it was night. Fay was sinking—sinking.

"She can't last another hour, I fear," said the doctor briefly.
Fay heard him, and opened her eyes.

"I shall wait—for my husband," she murmured with a curious quivering smile.

The night was very still. They could hear the waves on the beach, the gentle sighing of the light wind as it touched the trees.

But hark! Far away, the whistle of the approaching train cut through the stillness. Nearer—nearer. Fay heard it too.

"A quarter of an hour," she whispered as if to herself. "He will come—in a quarter of an hour."

Ten minutes passed. Presently the dying girl spoke again, quite eagerly. Her voice seemed stronger.

"My hair"—she said, turning her eyes on old Mrs. Conrath, who sat weeping. "Is it very untidy? Smooth it a little, please. And—that little pink shawl—put it round my shoulders. He always said that pink—became me."

That was done; and all was still again.

"Ah Douglas, my dear, be quick, be quick,"
gasped the faint little voice that now had a throb of tears in it.

The dull sound of horses' furiously galloping feet cleft the silence outside. Louder—louder—nearer. Will he be in time? God grant it.

The horses swept up the drive, and stopped sharply at the hall door.

In an incredibly short time Douglas was in the room, and kneeling at the bedside—holding his dying wife in his arms.

"Thank God—you came—in time," she murmured. "Kiss me—darling husband. Kiss me—good-bye."

And as his lips met hers, she died.

* * * * * * *

So Fay lay in her coffin. Flowers on her breast and in her hands, and in the soft almost living fluffiness of her hair.

Douglas spent many bitter hours in that silent, darkened room. For is there any grief so bitter as the grief of remorse? When we remember, in a heart-wrung kind of way, the pleadings for love that we answered coldly
—the wistful looks we disregarded—the loving heart, now cold, that we knowingly starved, even if we refrained from trampling upon it. We may kiss the dead lips—they will not smile, nor answer. We may murmur passionate words of tardy love and regret to the dead ears—they will not hear. Only silence answers us—the chill, awful, hopeless silence of the dead.

Towards the afternoon of the day before the funeral, a card was brought to Douglas. It was Ralph Debenham's. He went to him at once, with a curious sense of relief in his presence. The two men shook hands in silence. Douglas was struck by Debenham's ghastly pallor, and the strange look in his eyes.

"Debenham, what is it? Are you ill?" he said involuntarily.

"No," said the other in a hollow voice. Then, seemingly with an effort, he went on, "Conrath—may I—see her?"

For answer Douglas silently led the way upstairs—to that quiet room. In silence yet,
they stood looking at the dead still face. Douglas's lips were quivering, his lashes were heavy with unshed tears. But Debenham's features seemed carved in stone. He stood with folded arms and heaving chest—the misery in his eyes seeming to say that he alone had the right to mourn for her. Then all at once, with a hoarse cry, he buried his face in his hands—his whole frame shaken by convulsive tearless sobs.

A flash of comprehension swept over Conrath's soul, and held him dumb. He remembered a moonlight night in Cornwall, a few broken words, a silence.

Presently Debenham recovered himself and walked to the window. When he turned to the room again he was pale and collected. He laid his hand on Douglas's shoulder, and said almost inaudibly:

"My boy—forgive me. I ought to have told you, perhaps—long ago. But—it was difficult."

The eyes of the two men met. They understood each other.
After a minute Debenham said huskily:

"Will you let me—kiss her?"

"Surely."

Thus for the first and last time Ralph Debenham kissed the woman he loved. Who neither resented his kiss, nor kissed him back again.

* * * * *

As Lady Dinwoodie was abroad when her daughter’s death took place, and as she could not by any possibility arrive in England in time for the funeral, she decided on remaining abroad for some time longer. So Douglas, at old Mrs. Conrath’s earnest entreaty, left his baby-daughter in her care, and prepared to obey his doctor’s orders, and go away somewhere for a thorough change.

But he could not go without a few farewell words to Bee. They met calmly, almost coldly. For to Douglas, Bee’s fair face was almost like a reproach. And to Bee, Douglas’s sorrow was sacred. She half forgot her passionate heart’s love for him as he bade her farewell to-day, in his deep
mourning and with his face sharpened and haggard with the grief that was half remorse, and half the wrench from *the accustomed*, that we all know so well.

"Ah Douglas," she said weeping, "I cannot believe it. It seems so sad, so drearily sad. Surely in all the world there is nothing so sad as death."

"Except life," he answered almost sternly.

It was impossible, then, that he should think of his love for her, while his remorseful heart was half in his dead wife's grave. He took her hands loosely in both his.

"Good-bye," he said, in scarcely more than a whisper. "Some curious intuition tells me that we shall never meet again."

She turned pale. For the same intuition held her too.

"Good-bye, Douglas," she breathed, almost inaudibly. "Good-bye."

He pressed her hands—then let them go. There was a moment's silence; and he was gone.

Bee did not cry. She had not cried for a
long time now. A strange gnawing pain held her heart—a pain that never lifted. Even in sleep it hovered over her, to seize the first moment of waking. She felt that her parting with Douglas had been final. He had not said, as Cyril had done, that she was to send for him if she wanted him. But then—Cyril loved her.

And the days went on. A thousand little unimportant duties had to be done. Bee did them well and carefully.

Thus nearly a year passed, and still Douglas did not come home.
CHAPTER V.

"THE LIGHTS OF LONDON!"

'O cruel lamps of London, if tears your light could drown,
Your victims' eyes would weep them, O Lights of London Town."

—George R. Sims.

"Ay, you had much to offer: wealth enough
To gild the future; and a path of ease
For one whose way is somewhat dark and rough;
New friends;—a life as calm as summer seas!
And something (was it love?) to keep us true,
And make us precious in each other's sight.
Ah, then indeed my heart's resolve I knew
Last night, last night!"

—Sarah Doudney.

Mrs. Chandleur was dead. No particular sorrow stirred Bee's heart, for of late her grandmother had only embodied a very difficult duty. But she felt curiously desolate. For she was quite alone in the world. To no one did it matter one straw if she lived or died,
she thought drearily. Nobody wanted her; nobody needed her. Her duty seemed nowhere. And to loving natures this is a bleak vista, whose horizon means despair. As for Sir Cyril and Douglas, they seemed to have dropped out of her life completely. Of course in Sir Cyril's case, that was only to be expected, she told herself; but surely Douglas might have written to her, might have shown some desire to know if she were well or ill, living or dead. His little sister, he had called her. Ah well, his memory was no longer than other people's, apparently. And Bee's thoughts became bitter, as thoughts are apt to be when their owners are poor and friendless.

When all things were settled, and the few articles of furniture which the landlord did not claim for the rent had been sold, Bee found herself possessed of about twenty pounds. Her worldly wealth! Once she would have thought it hardly the price of a ball-gown. But now it seemed to her a good deal. It would serve her until she got "something to do." Something to do! How easy it sounds in
the uttering. How heart-sickening in the finding. But Bee did not know this. She was young, and hopeful, and ambitious. In London— in wide busy London—there must be work for one energetic little woman. Ah Bee, my dear, my dear—God help you!

She took a small room in a quiet street in the neighbourhood of Fulham, and became a frequenter of registry offices. Daily she studied the advertisements in the *Standard*. Many were alluring to her inexperienced eye. For instance:

"*Wanted*—a young person to superintend the studies of four small children. Most refined and comfortable home. Apply at 750, Cromwell Road."

Bee applied at 750, Cromwell Road, and to the tall footman who opened the door she gave her name as Miss Somers. Having waited in a species of ante-room for upwards of twenty minutes, she was at last informed that Mrs. Calverley would see her. An
austere, black-eyed, doubly black-browed woman was Mrs. Calverley. Bee quailed as she encountered her gaze.

"You are very young, Miss Somers," observed Mrs. Calverley, after a prolonged silent survey of Bee's personality.

"I look much younger than I am," the girl hastened to say, "I am twenty-two."

Whereupon followed such a severe fire of cross-examination that Bee felt absolutely giddy.

"My children are high-spirited," resumed Mrs. Calverley after pausing to take breath, "and I am thankful to say possess exuberant health. They require constant supervision and attention. You would have entire charge of them. You would of course keep their clothes in order, and I should expect you to make the dresses of the two younger girls, who, by the way, would share your sleeping-apartment."

"I hoped that perhaps I might have had a room to myself," faltered Bee.

"I am sorry I cannot alter my arrange-
ments to suit your convenience, Miss Somers,” was the cold answer.

“And the salary?” ventured the girl, after a brief pause.

“The salary?” echoed Mrs. Calverley. “Surely you understood that I expect you to give your services in return for a comfortable and refined home?”

The colour rushed to Bee’s face.

“I am afraid we should not suit each other,” she said steadily. “I could not come to you on these terms.”

“Very good,” answered Mrs. Calverley with a stiff bow. “Allow me to wish you good-morning.”

Two minutes later Bee was walking away from the house very fast indeed, her small mouth compressed, and her umbrella grasped almost vindictively. She felt it would have been impossible to share Mrs. Calverley’s “comfortable and refined home.” The woman inspired her with actual repulsion.

All very well, my little Bee, but “beggars
must not be choosers." That sad knowledge will come to you later.

Her next experience, some days afterwards, was in a large gloomy mansion in Bayswater. This time her interviewer was a man—tall, solemn, bald-headed.

"You are a Christian, I trust, Miss Somers?" he said, when a few preliminaries had been gone into.

"I hope so," Bee answered.

"You hope so, my dear young friend? You only hope so? But I cannot confide the morals of my innocent little ones to a preceptress who only hopes she is one of the Lord's people."

Bee looked out of the window.

"In that case," went on Mr. Sodeley, transfixed her with his fishy eyes, "I fear, I regret to say I fear, that I cannot entertain the thought of engaging you. This is a Christian household, Miss Somers. Our minds are sullied by no doubts here. We do not hope—we know."

And Mr. Sodeley cast his eyes upwards to
the wanton little cherubs which adorned the ceiling.

He then shook his head mournfully and rang the bell.

Bee was beginning to feel rather downhearted. A cold bitter wind met her as she walked slowly westward. It had begun to rain, too, a fine drizzling rain that promised to become a steady downpour. The shabby room which was all she could call home now, looked more than ordinarily cheerless and dreary on this damp chilly December afternoon, and Bee felt strongly inclined to sit down and cry. But a vague sense that most of her life must now be comparatively cheerless and dreary—that if she cried now she might as well be always crying—gave her a curious negative kind of bravery.

She took off her hat and jacket, and sat down at the window. In the room below some one was "whipping the piano" in a weird clanging waltz. Bee's sad thoughts twined themselves in and out of the catching rhythm. What a difference—what a hard
cruel difference!—a few short months had made in her life. She seemed no longer to have even the semblance of the personality of the old, light-hearted Bee. She was Katharine Somers now. Sometimes she felt as if she had no real name at all. Just now, she felt as if it would have been better if Douglas's father had let her die in her babyhood on that snowy night so long ago. But her healthy young soul rose in revolt at this last thought.

"No," she said half aloud in her earnestness. "God sent me into the world. He must have something for me to do with my life. I can't see just now what it is. But I shall see. And until I do I shall just stoically and patiently do what old Carlyle calls the duty that lies nearest."

Ah, brave little Bee! You are only setting out on life's journey. To youth, and health, and hope, all things seem possible.

But youth rarely takes into consideration the possibility of illness. And it so happened that Bee caught cold on that wet afternoon, and a severe attack of inflammation seized her
and kept her in her bed for some weeks. Medicines and doctors' visits make awful inroads in slender finances, and as the weeks went on Bee's twenty pounds diminished sadly. By the time she was able to sit up and be dressed, she had hardly sufficient to pay her landlady and her doctor's bill. A week or two later she had to ask the former to "wait." And landladies are not fond of waiting.

As the days went on a sleepless horror haunted our little Bee. Was she going to be turned out into the street, as Mrs. Short had grimly hinted? What was she to do? She seemed to have come to a blank wall in her young life. Once, in her despair, she thought of writing to Douglas. But the very consciousness of her love for him, combined with his apparent forgetfulness of her very existence, made it impossible that she should break the silence he had voluntarily placed between them. She could not write to Cyril. She felt that she had treated him too badly. If he had only known—if he could have come to her then—I think she would have been less
hard-hearted. Surely life with Cyril would be preferable to death on the streets, or in the workhouse. As for her female friends, they had never been numerous. Fay had been her dearest friend. And Fay—was dead.

One day when Bee was strong enough to go about almost as usual, Mrs. Short told her that her room was let, and would she please to move out on the following afternoon. Bee never forgot that awful day and the sleepless night that followed it. Towards morning a resolution came to her. She made up her mind to consult a certain well-known clergyman, whom I shall call Dr. Canns. She had known him slightly in the old days in Portland Place. Perhaps he would remember her. Perhaps he might know of some situation. She set off early, and found him at home and disengaged. He remembered her quite well, and listened attentively to her sad little story. When it was ended he sat for some time without speaking, his kind old face very grave.

"We must think," he said at last—"we must think what can be done. It is a terrible
position for a young creature like you to be placed in. And in the meantime I’m afraid I don’t know of any—er—post that you would be quite fitted for. In the first place you will allow me to make you a small loan. You can repay me later, you know. Yes, yes, it’s all right—I know, I know. Dear me, dear me, I have daughters of my own. There, there, don’t cry, my poor child, don’t cry. But of course you are weak from your recent illness. Have you looked in the paper this morning? No? Well, let us look now.”

As he spoke he took up the advertisement sheet of that day’s *Times*, and after hastily running his eyes over its columns, cut out two advertisements.

Both seemed singularly suitable, Bee thought—as advertisements have an illusive way of seeming. In the first an old lady wanted a healthy intelligent young lady as companion and amanuensis. In the second a widower desired a nursery governess for his three young children.

“Perhaps you may succeed in getting one
of these," Dr. Canns said, after perusing both carefully once more with his short-sighted blue eyes. "And you can refer to me, you know, you can refer to me. And don’t let yourself get down-hearted if you have to wait a little longer. We all have our troubles, my dear. And you may always count upon me as a friend, you know, as a friend." And the good old man went with her to the very door.

Bee could not speak her thanks. But I think he understood.

Mrs. Short’s pecuniary claims being satisfied, Bee was allowed to retain her room; and the next morning the latter took her way to a handsome house in Kensington Gore, where the old lady desirous of a young companion was to be seen between the hours of eleven and twelve. She felt confident she could give satisfaction here. For was she not experienced in the ways of old ladies?

To her disappointment, however, she found that this special old lady had already engaged a suitable companion. So she had her walk for nothing.
Now for the widower—who, Bee found on consulting the advertisement, was to be applied to in the first instance, by letter. She had overlooked this fact; so she wended her way home again, and wrote a curt little note—in her very best hand—directing it to "R. T." at a certain number in Curzon Street. By the next night's post she received the following note in reply:

"Madam,

"I shall be glad if you will call at above address to-morrow afternoon at any time between four and six which may be convenient to you.

Yours truly,

"Reginald M. C. Treherne.

"To Miss Katharine Somers."

Now, terse as it was, Bee liked this note. It was written in a firm, manly hand, with very black ink on very thick paper. Bee fancied the writer would be kind.

The following afternoon, about half-past
four, found her walking quickly along Curzon Street, nervously anxious lest this post too, should be filled up before she got there.

I am bound to say that she was not looking her best to-day. The sharp February wind had reddened her nose and her eyelids. She had a bad cold too, which was as unbecoming as colds usually are—in real life. Here again you will observe Bee's utter unfitness for a story-book heroine. She ought to have looked only pale enough to be interesting; her eyes should have had dark but becoming shadows underneath them, etc. etc. As it was, however, she simply looked a very cold and tired, and not very pretty young woman.

Upon asking for Mr. Treherne, she was told he was from home, but that Mrs. Enderton would see her. Privately wondering who Mrs. Enderton might be, she was ushered into a large, luxuriously furnished drawing-room, at once warmed and lit, on this dark February afternoon, by a cosily blazing fire. A kindly looking old lady, with
a sweet but careworn face, advanced to meet her.

"Miss Somers, is it not?" she said in a pleasant but somewhat tired voice. "I am a little deaf. I did not quite catch the name."

Bee bowed affirmatively.

"Sit down," went on the old lady. "My nephew, Mr. Treherne, has been suddenly called out of town, and may not return for a week or so. So he has deputed me to see you instead of him. He has had a great deal of trouble with his governesses. And this time I should think he has had over five hundred applications. But he liked your letter better than any of the others, and if all things are satisfactory, wishes me to engage you. The salary is fifty pounds a year. You have references of course?"

Bee named Dr. Canns.

"Ah yes, a most worthy man. The only thing is, Miss Somers, we thought you would have been much older. Indeed from your letter we imagined you quite elderly. Have you had much experience with children?"
Bee with trembling lips confessed her utter want of experience.

"But I am very fond of children," she went on falteringly. "And I thought, that perhaps, if they were very young, I might be able to teach them all that was required for a year or two. I could go on studying myself, you know."

Mrs. Enderton was soft-hearted, and the wistfulness of the girl's look and tone touched her.

"Another thing," went on Bee in a low voice. "I think I ought to tell you that my real name is not Somers, but Adeane. But I prefer to be known by the former name, because—because I used to know a good many people in London before—I mean—when I was better off. Doctor Canns knows. I told him. And he thought there would be no harm."

"Ah, silly pride, my dear, silly pride," said the old lady reprovingly. "However, no doubt we all have our pride. Yes, yes. Well—I shall write to my nephew and Doctor vol. iii.
Canns to-night. I really think you would be very suitable. Of course, it is a disadvantage, your being young and inexperienced. But after all perhaps it is better that the children should have some one young about them. And the experience is not essential. And—you will pardon me, my dear—but you are not objectionably pretty, and I am sure not flighty in any way. The life I have had with my nephew's governesses—for I keep house for him—has almost worn me to a shadow. By the way, you look pale and thin. You are not delicate, are you? No? That is right. The last governess we had was laid up continually with one thing or another. Well, good afternoon. You shall hear from either my nephew or myself in the course of a day or two."

Bee went slowly downstairs. The stove in the hall was burning cheerily. Great hot-house plants stood about, filling the air with perfume. The distant sound of children's merry laughter rang pleasantly in the lonely girl's ears. An indescribable air of peace, of
comfort, of home, seemed to pervade everything. Bee's heart sank, though. This quiet haven would not be for her, whispered conviction. It was—as we have all said in our childhood, and in finer phrase in our manhood and womanhood—"too good to be true."

Nevertheless, whether good or not it was true. For, nearly a week later, she received a letter from Mrs. Enderton, engaging her as nursery-governess to Mr. Treherne's children, and requesting her to begin her duties on the following Thursday.

Accordingly, on Thursday afternoon, in a shabby mud-stained four-wheeler, Bee and her one box arrived at her destination.

Mrs. Enderton was out, but would return shortly, said the elderly housemaid who showed her to her room. Bee took off her things, and surveyed her new domain. It was a small room, but cheerily furnished with gay chintz and light furniture. Like the rest of the house, it looked homelike. By the time she had unpacked and arranged most of her belongings, a summons came for her to go to
the schoolroom. She felt rather nervous at the idea of meeting her pupils. Their father she never thought of. Possibly she would see him but rarely. To her delight she found Mrs. Enderton in the schoolroom. A pale, pretty little girl of eight was sitting on the hearthrug, dressing a wax doll. A dark-eyed boy of six was teasing a fat little girl of perhaps half his age. It was a cheerful room, with a blazing fire, and a well-set-out tea-table. When Bee had greeted Mrs. Enderton, the eldest girl, in obedience to a sign from the latter, rose, laid down her doll, and said demurely:

“How do you do, Miss Somers?”

The boy declined to make any overtures; but the fat little girl ran across to where Bee was sitting, climbed upon her knee, and threw her arms round her neck.

“Ethel always makes friends with everybody,” said the elder girl, with an old-fashioned drawing in of her pretty lips.

“But I hope you are going to make friends with me too,” said Bee gently.
"Lionel and I will wait until to-morrow," was the disconcerting answer. "Some governesses are very nice the first day, and very nasty afterwards."

"Winifred, you talk too much," said Mrs. Enderton reprovingly. "Go back to your doll. I want to talk to Miss Somers."

After a quarter of an hour or so of pleasant converse, the old lady said briskly:

"And now I am sure you must want your tea. Don't let the children take advantage of you. I shall see you to-morrow." And with a pleasant nod, she rustled away.

During tea-time the children became more communicative. Winifred graciously allowed that Bee had quite a nice little face, and didn't look as if she could be cross. Lionel pronounced her "jolly" because she did not scold him when he spilled his tea. And little Ethel put her tiny hand into Bee's and whispered that she loved her.

The young governess went to bed that night with a heart full of passionate thankfulness. She was sure she and the children
would mutually love each other. She was sure she could do her duty by them. And how kind and friendly Mrs. Enderton had been!

She slept soundly, with only one brief dream. But it was a sad one. She dreamt that she was sailing on a stormy sea in a little cockle-shell of a boat. And on the angry waters in its wake floated a white, dead face. It was Douglas's face; and Bee woke with a sharp terrified cry.

Her prayers that morning were incoherent, and broken by bitter weeping.

"Have you been crying, Miss Somers?" asked Winifred, in the clear incisive treble of childhood, as they sat at breakfast in the sunny schoolroom. "Why have you? Auntie Enderton says crying doesn't do any good. Besides—you're too old to cry, aren't you?"

"Too old to cry," echoed fat little Ethel gravely.

"Pooh! she isn't too old!" observed Lionel, with superior wisdom and a mouth
full of bread and milk. "She isn't as old as fatlier, and nurse said he cried when mother died."

"Yes, but Auntie Enderton said we must on no account speak to father about it," said Winifred impressively—"nor to any one."

"Mustn't 'peak about it!" added Ethel the echo.

But by this time breakfast was at an end, and Mrs. Enderton came in. She greeted Bee kindly, gave her a brief sketch of her duties for the day, and hurried away again. To Bee these duties appeared almost improbably light. She was simply to be the children's companion, it seemed, to amuse them, to go out walking with them, and to infuse into Winifred's active brain such learning as was suitable to her years. Light lessons were also to be administered to Lionel.

Certainly her lines had fallen in pleasant places.

One afternoon about dusk—nearly a week later—when a merry game of "hunt the thimble" was in progress in the schoolroom,
the door opened, and a tall masculine figure paused on the threshold.

"Oh—it's father," said Winifred, going towards the new-comer.

Bee felt uncomfortably conscious of flushed cheeks and dishevelled hair.

Mr. Treherne bestowed a grave kiss upon his little daughter, patted the heads of the two younger children, and advancing towards Bee, said in a deep strong voice:

"How do you do, Miss Somers?"

At the same time he held out his hand and took hers in a grasp both firm and kindly, inspecting her keenly the while with a pair of deep-set, rather stern-looking eyes.

He looked years younger than Bee had imagined him to be. Certainly several years on the right sort of forty. His face was somewhat pale in complexion, refined, and well-featured. There was a rigid austerity about the modelling of the mouth, chin, and jaw, however, which was unpleasing, and almost repellent. Bee found herself unconsciously pitying the dead Mrs. Treherne.
The children seemed rather in awe of their father. Even the loving little Ethel kept close to Bee, and offered no demonstration of affection.

"You find the little ones tractable, I hope?" Mr. Treherne said after some desultory conversation.

The children were all that could be desired, Bee answered, with a bright downward smile at her little charges.

"My aunt has doubtless told you of my wishes regarding them?" he went on.

Bee replied that Mrs. Enderton had fully explained her duties.

"That is well," was the curt answer.

Mr. Treherne's voice and manner were somewhat cold and abrupt — more so than was altogether pleasant, Bee decided. But as the firelight flashed upon his face, she saw that the stern expression in his eyes was more like sadness. Perhaps his voice could soften too.

He did not stay very long, and Bee felt rather relieved as the door closed behind him.
So the weeks glided on, and "the new governess" became quite domesticated in Reginald's Treherne's household. The children adored her; Mrs. Enderton seemed pleased with her. And Mr. Treherne? Well, he took very little notice of her. She always went down to the drawing-room—by Mrs. Enderton's express wish—upon such evenings as that lady was at home and alone. Mrs. Enderton was very fond of music; so Bee often played and sang to her. Sometimes she assisted the old lady in the endless intricate fancy-work which invariably appeared on these evenings. Sometimes they only talked. Mr. Treherne never joined them. It was his habit to sit in lonely state in his study from dinner-time till bed-time when no social duties claimed him. To Bee, his life seemed a lonely and an empty one.

It was a surprise, therefore, both to his aunt and his governess, when he appeared one June night in the drawing-room, and seated himself in a chair at an open window, with an evident air of having "come to stay."
Bee was singing when he entered and he desired her—somewhat peremptorily—to go on singing. He was her employer; and she obeyed. He remained for about an hour, asking for one song after another. Then, without remark of any kind, he quitted the room as abruptly as he had entered it.

But after that night he made a point of spending an hour, more or less, in the drawing-room every evening. Once he asked Bee if she played chess, and finding that she did, and that she was no mean foe, challenged her almost nightly.

The months fled swiftly. One day Bee discovered to her surprise that she had been nearly two years in Curzon Street. Except in the evenings she saw but little of her employer. He rarely appeared at meals, and grew daily more taciturn and unapproachable. He was both fond and proud of his children, Bee discovered; though, from his usual demeanour towards them, few could have guessed as much. They were afraid of him, as I have hinted. He was
nothing in their young lives. And he felt this keenly.

One thing that grieved Bee specially was that she was not allowed to impart any religious instruction to her pupils. Mr. Treherne, it appeared, held peculiar views, and desired that his children's minds should be left unbiased until they arrived at years of discretion.

On a dark afternoon in November Bee was surprised by receiving a message from Treherne that he would like to see her in his study. She went at once, and found him seated at the table, which was inundated with books and papers. He looked tired, and was leaning his head on his hand.

"I want you to copy some papers for me, Miss Somers," he said, rising as she entered. "They must be sent off by this evening's post; and I have such an overpowering headache, I can hardly see. You write a good and rapid hand—so perhaps you will oblige me."
Of course Bee acquiesced, and Treherne, having told her what she was to do, and placed near her all she could want, left her.

In an hour, or thereabouts, her task was finished, and with a little yawn, she rose and took a leisurely survey of the book-shelves. They were well filled with a somewhat heterogeneous supply of literature—principally of the heavy philosophical type, and in various languages. She ran her eye over the volumes nearest her. Huxley, Tyndall, Kant, Hegel, Richter, Schopenhauer, Plato, Herbert Spencer. And, sandwiched between the two last, a few volumes of Robert Browning, and Dante's Inferno. A goodly mixture! Bee took down Richter's delicious "Flower and Thorn Pieces," and became absorbed. She hardly heard the door open, and Treherne come in. At the sound of his voice she started up, and laid down her book in some confusion.

"I have finished the writing you gave me to do," she said hurriedly.

He smiled. His face looked quite different
when he smiled. Then he sat down and read over carefully what she had written.

When perhaps a quarter of an hour had passed, he looked up and said quietly:

"Thank you. You are all that could be desired as a secretary."

"I hope you are feeling better?" she ventured in a timid voice. For she had never quite got over her awe of him.

"Thank you—yes." Then touching he book he added, "What were you reading? Ah, Richter. Is he a favourite of yours?"

"Yes," she answered briefly enough.

"Then will you accept this copy of 'Flower and Thorn Pieces?' I shall be very pleased if you will."

"Oh thank you," returned Bee in pleased surprise. "Thank you very much."

They had quite a pleasant talk after that, at the end of which Bee, remembering the children's tea-time, hastened away.

It was not the last time, by a good many, that she acted as Treherne's secretary; and in these tête-à-tête interviews she grew to
respect him very thoroughly, and like him very sincerely.

Yes, it was a happy peaceful home she had found. But—she knew it could not last. Soon—too soon—the children would be beyond her teaching. And then she would be adrift once more. A shuddering dread of being again a homeless waif used to come over her like a nightmare. It would be harder, too, after knowing this quiet home, fenced in from all immediate care and anxiety.

These thoughts pressed on her more heavily than usual one night as she sat at her bedroom window, looking out on London's myriad twinkling lights—the lights that have lured so many hopeful hearts to ruin and despair, and have been to others the lights that showed the way to worldly success and glory.

She had been thinking of Douglas, too—thinking of him in the bitterly hurt kind of way in which we think of loved ones who have shown us that they can do without us, that we are nothing in their lives.
Where was he? What was he doing? Was he well? Was he ill? Did he never think of her at all now?—of his little sister Bee?

Just then there was a tap at the door. Mrs. Enderton wanted her in the drawing-room.

"My dear," said that lady, who was dozing over a crewel-work peacock when Bee got downstairs, "my nephew wants you to assist him with some writing. You will find him in his study."

Bee went, and for an hour or more wrote diligently to dictation. But her thoughts were far away.

Suddenly Treherne took the pen from her hand.

"What is the matter?" he said, in a voice so gentle she hardly recognized it. "Your hands are trembling. Your eyes are full of tears."

As both these accusations were undeniably true, Bee wisely made no attempt to refute them.
"What is it?" he said again, his eyes softening with a deep concern. "Do you feel ill?"

"No—oh no," she stammered. "But—but I believe I am tired."

"Then you shall not write any more to-night," he said decidedly. "You do look tired—and pale. And—forgive me!—unhappy."

Then after a second or two he added almost tenderly,

"Is anything troubling you? Can I be of any use?"

But Bee, with an unsteady good-night, fled away upstairs. There are times when hard words are more easily borne than gentle ones—when human sympathy is the one thing that sends us over the boundary of self-repression.

Treherne walked up and down his study for a long time after Bee had left him. He was deciding a somewhat weighty question. There was much to be said for and against, it appeared.
When at last he threw himself into his chair, his face had a white, determined expression. He had made his decision.

The next day was wet. The children's daily walk had been forbidden in consequence; and they were unusually troublesome. As far as Winifred and Lionel were concerned, they appeared to have got out of bed on that side which is popularly known as the "wrong" one. They quarrelled incessantly, and at last Winifred subsided into a melancholy continuous wail, which was heartlessly ridiculed by her brother, and made her governess long to shake her.

Bee too was feeling cross and out of sorts. It was one of these dull, depressing days when one inclines to think with Theocritus that "it is best not to be born; but—being born—the next best thing is to die as soon as possible."

However, the day wore itself away—as days will, whether dull or lively. When the children had gone to bed, Bee seated herself in a big chair by the fire with a long sigh
of relief and some piece of necessary sewing. She was not wanted in the drawing-room to-night, for Mrs. Enderton had gone out to dinner.

The girl looked very fair and sweet as she sat there in the lamp-light. But she looked sad, too. The old grief of being necessary to no one weighed upon her——

The door opened suddenly, but gently, and to her extreme surprise Treherne came in.

"Have I disturbed you?" he said with the slow rare smile that changed his face so wonderfully.

"Oh, no," she answered. "I was only sewing—and thinking." She sighed involuntarily as she spoke.

"You must have been thinking very deeply," he said. "I knocked twice, but you did not hear me."

"No," she replied absently, "I did not hear you."

There was a somewhat lengthy pause. Treherne was leaning against the mantelpiece, fingerling, abstractedly and unseeingly, some
little ornament thereon. Something had evidently shaken him from his ordinary self-possession. He looked paler than usual, and almost nervous.

Bee went on with her sewing, wondering privately why he had come. He must have known the children would be in bed. He seemed to divine her thoughts, for presently he said in his most abrupt tone:

"You are wondering why I have come here to-night—are you not?"

"Yes"—admitted Bee truthfully—"I was wondering—a little."

He walked once the length of the room and back again. Then he drew a chair to the table and sat down.

"Put aside your sewing, please," he said, with an impatient, almost irritable gesture. "I want to speak to you."

She obeyed, folded her little hands on her lap, and waited.

"Yes?" she said, interrogatively, when a minute had gone by in silence.

"I think—that perhaps you must know
what it is I have to say to you,” he replied slowly.

A startled look came into her eyes.

“Is it”—she faltered—“is it that you no longer want me—to be governess to your children? Is that what you mean?”

A half smile unbent his stern lips.

“In a way—yes,” he answered—“that is what I mean.”

Bee was silent. For her lips were trembling sadly, Treherne was silent too.

“I am very sorry,” murmured the girl at last. And to her confusion she felt that her eyes were full of tears.

She rose as she spoke; and he rose too.

“Don’t you understand?” he said speaking in a low unsteady voice, and taking one of her hands gently in his. “Don’t you know what I want?”

Bee looked up in supreme astonishment. He was very white, and seemed terribly agitated. But his eyes held an almost imploring tenderness.

“Can you care for me?” he continued
almost in a whisper bending his head very near to hers. "Will you be my wife? I love you very dearly—so dearly that I am sure I could make you happy."

For quite a minute Bee preserved a petrified silence.

Marry Mr. Treherne! The idea was as new as it was unpleasant. A dreadful and unaccountable desire to laugh—born of nervousness, probably—took possession of her. Happily she strangled it in its birth.

"My dear—have I startled you?" Treherne went on, drawing her nearer to him by the hand be still held. "But surely you must have known—must have guessed—"

"I did not—I did not indeed!" she exclaimed earnestly. "I never thought of such a thing. How could I?"

"But you will think of it? Dear—you will try to care for me," he said—and his voice grew deeper, tenderer. "I know that I must seem very old, and grave, and stern, to a young thing like you! But I would try to change—to be different. Perhaps you
think it is only the dregs of my heart I am offering you. But it is not so. It is the love of my manhood—"

"Ah don't—don't speak of it?" she interrupted him in great distress. "I don't love you. I can't marry you. Please don't say any more about it."

He drew a sharp inward breath.

"Don't answer me now," he said hoarsely. "Wait—until to-morrow. Take time to think. To-morrow—you will answer me."

She felt his lips touch her hand. Then she heard the door open and shut, and the echo of his footsteps die away on the stairs.

Left alone, she sat down again in a kind of bewildered dream.

Of course she did not love Mr. Treherne—never could love him. Therefore of course she could not marry him. And yet—she respected him very much. She felt sure he was good, and honourable, and true. A woman’s happiness would be safe enough in his keeping.

If she married him, that terrible spectre she had grown to dread—the spectre of
homeless, wandering poverty—would be laid for ever.

Do not judge her hardly, my readers, if I tell you that she was tempted to do what has wrecked the lives of countless lonely, poverty-stricken women—to marry for a home.

Remember she was alone in the world—almost friendless. Remember she had had a bitter cruel taste of poverty. Remember that in spite of her love for Douglas, she never dreamt of that love being returned. Nay, more, she had almost embraced the certainty that her former idol was unworthy. Above all, she did not realize—what pure innocent girl does realize? can realize?—the hideousness of marriage unconsecrated by love. Into her lonely young life had come once more the blessed knowledge that some one wanted her. She could make this good honourable man's life happy. She could care for his motherless little ones. They loved her already——

The fire sank lower and lower. No sound
broke the stillness of the quiet schoolroom. The slender little figure sat there for a long, long time—its head on its hand, its grave sad eyes gazing into the dying embers.
CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH BEE IS FAITHFUL.

"Some there be that shadows kiss,
Such have but a shadow’s bliss!"

* * * *

"If I had known, O loyal heart,
When, hand to hand, we said farewell,
How for all time our paths would part,
What shadow o’er our friendship fell—
I should have stayed my foolish tears,
And hushed each idle sigh and moan,
To bid you a long last God-speed,
If I had known!"

* * * *

In the silence of her little bed a sweeping revulsion of feeling came over Bee. She felt ashamed—angry with herself that for one moment she could have entertained the idea of marrying Mr. Treherne.

Ah, it was no use disguising her heart from herself. Why should she? Worthy or un-
worthy—she still loved Douglas Conrath. And as he did not want to marry her, she would marry no one else. And that was "the conclusion of the whole matter." After a fit of passionate crying she fell asleep, and dreamed that she and Douglas were together again in Garth Street.

All the next day she felt horribly nervous. Every footstep that passed the schoolroom door, every touch on the handle, made her heart leap to her throat, in anticipation of the inevitable interview that awaited her. Winifred's announcement from the window, that "father was going out for a ride on the brown horse" quieted her somewhat. He would not return, she knew, for at least a couple of hours.

But when the children had gone to bed, and she was alone, her nervousness came back again. She was very grieved and unhappy. Of course she would have to go away—to drift out into the world again. Why need Mr. Treherne have fallen in love with her? Was there anything but wretched-
ness and disappointment in all this miserable world?

A step in the passage without. Mr. Treherne had come into the room. He had shut the door. He was close beside her. Without speaking any word of formal greeting, he took her hand in the warm close clasp of his, and said, a trifle unsteadily:

"I have come, you see—for my answer."

That was all.

A curious faintness came over Bee. She tried to speak, but somehow the words would not come. The next moment she felt his arm thrown round her, and heard his voice, tender and impasioned, say:

"My dear, how white you are! What is it? Speak to me. Tell me that you will give yourself to me—that you will be my wife?"

She found her voice then, and stepped back from him.

"No," she said, in a quick breathless kind of way—"I have thought—I have decided. It is quite impossible that I can be your wife."
A brief silence throbbed through the room. Then Treherne said coldly:

"So be it. Do not look so distressed, pray. I—might have known."

"I—I am sorry——" began Bee, raising her eyes to his.

A swift spasm shot across his face; his right hand closed involuntarily on the back of a chair that stood near. He had grown white about the mouth.

"That will do," he said quietly. "I am aware that you are in no way to blame."

Then he turned and went out of the room.

Bee shivered. He could be cruel, horribly cruel, she was sure—this man who could be so tender too. She was glad she had refused him. She felt, once more, a swift pang of sorrow for the dead Mrs. Treherne.

On the following afternoon Bee met Treherne in the hall. He was just leaving his study.

"May I speak to you, Mr. Treherne?" she said nervously.
"Certainly," he answered with cold courtesy.

They entered the study together, and he closed the door and placed a chair for her. He himself remained standing. He looked much as usual, with the exception of an added rigidity of manner and expression. But he was deeply offended, Bee could see; and the knowledge did not lessen her nervousness.

"I wanted to speak to you, Mr. Treherne," she said in a low, uncertain voice—"I wanted to tell you that—that I think it will be better for me to give up my situation as governess to your children."

He looked at her in silence for a moment or two. Then he said quietly:

"Yes—it will be better. I anticipated that you—would decide on doing so."

There was a slight—a very slight—tremor in his voice, quiet though it was. Bee's heart swelled unaccountably. He might have shown some regret, she thought. Forgetting that he might prefer showing none to show-
ing too much. And not knowing the strong restraint he was putting upon himself.

"It is a great grief to me—having to leave the children, and Mrs. Enderton, and—and you," she murmured, her lips trembling. "You have all been very good and kind to me."

He smiled somewhat bitterly.

"You will pardon me if I doubt your grief," he said. "Your going or staying depended entirely upon yourself. You have chosen to go. There is nothing more to be said. Of course I am aware that, under the circumstances, your remaining would be awkward and unpleasant for us both. Indeed it would be out of the question. We will now, if you please, drop the subject. If there is anything I can do for you—if I can be of any use in obtaining any other post for you—" He paused. Voices are sometimes unruly, you know.

"Thank you—you are very kind," faltered Bee.

Presently Treherne went on:
"I am leaving town to-morrow, and as I shall not return for a month or so, I fear I cannot hope to see you again. I will, therefore, say good-bye to you now."

Bee stood up.

"Good-bye," she said simply.

"One moment," said Treherne, in a curiously suppressed voice. "Your decision is—quite final?"

"Quite final," was the unsteady answer.

He bowed silently. Then he opened the door for her, and she passed out.

Mrs. Enderton was honestly grieved at the prospect of losing Bee's bright young companionship. She had a pretty good guess as to the reason, of course. But the subject was tacitly avoided between them. The old lady, as a matter of fact, was much offended that this struggling little governess should have refused her clever good-looking nephew. To be sure she would have been equally offended had Bee accepted him. The girl felt the change in the atmosphere, and was nervously anxious to get away.
She answered several advertisements, and left her name at two registry offices. She did not apply again to Dr. Canns, feeling sure he would ask her why she had left Curzon Street.

Nobody, it appeared, was in immediate want of a governess. At least no one wanted anything less than a well-crammed young person in that capacity—which Bee was not. One day, however, Mrs. Enderton called her into the drawing-room, and said in the slightly formal tone in which she always addressed her now:

"I think I have heard of a situation that may suit you, Miss Somers. A friend of mine has written to me asking if I can recommend a young lady competent to take entire charge of a little girl about three years old. Some friends of hers in Wales have asked her to make inquiries for them." She then went on to give Bee a *resumé* of her probable duties.

"It seems very suitable," said the girl eagerly. "Do you not think so?"
“I do. Were I you I should try to secure it. Of course I need not tell you that my nephew and myself will satisfactorily answer any inquiries that may be made,” she concluded somewhat stiffly.

“The people are called Conrath,” she added, glancing over a letter she held.

“The name of their place is Berstwith Manor. The child is their grand-niece. Her mother is dead, and her father is abroad.”

Bee’s face flushed crimson, then became deathly pale. For a minute the room seemed to be running a mad circular race round her swimming head. To take care of Douglas’s little daughter? The prospect seemed very sweet—very tempting. Douglas was away. No one would know her. She made up her mind quickly. If she could get this situation she would take it.

And so it came to pass that some three weeks later, she bade farewell to her weeping little pupils, and turned her face towards Wales. At Paddington the first thing that met her eyes was the placarded announce-
ment at the bookstall of "Douglas Conrath's new one volume novel." Need I say that she at once possessed herself of a copy?

And Douglas himself, then? Had he indeed forgotten all about her?—or wilfully neglected her?—as she fancied he had. Do you think it was likely? If you take a slight retrospect with me, you shall see. It so chanced that he returned to England some little time after Bee left Camden Town. (For this is how fate too often uses us poor mortals). The little cottage was empty, dreary, deserted. Neither the house-agent nor any one in the neighbourhood could give him any definite information, save that the "old lady" was dead. Miss Adeane was by some supposed to have gone to "furrin parts," by others to have "taken a situation," and by yet others, to be married. Half mad with suspense and anxiety, Conrath put carefully-worded advertisements in all the principal papers, and ate his heart out while waiting for replies. But as Bee at
this time was ill in bed and unable even to look at papers, he waited in vain. At last sick at heart, he went down to Wales, in obedience to a longing to see his baby-daughter, who was now nearly eighteen months old.

As far as a child of that age can be said to resemble any one, she resembled her dead mother. At times, indeed, the resemblance was almost startling. It haunted Douglas, and made him uncomfortable. To the dismay of his uncle and aunt he only remained a few months in England. And during these months he never relaxed his fruitless search for Bee. But she, being merged in the identity of Katherine Somers, unconsciously eluded him. Thus at last he gave up all hope, and torn between restless miserable anxiety on one hand, and bitter resentment as to her ignoring his claim to take care of her on the other hand, he set off on his travels again, and for many a long day England saw him no more.

His best book, I think, was published while
he was wandering to and fro under blazing foreign skies. At least the majority of his critics considered it his best. Others again said it was his worst. It sold better than any of the others—if that is any criterion of merit.

His agents at Poldornalupe wrote him that the mine was prospering amazingly. So it is that Fortune smiles—nay, grins upon us—when we don't care two straws whether she cuts us dead for the term of our natural lives or not. This is a problem which it is impossible to solve. The wise man, therefore, will not attempt it.

But in spite of his fame and prosperity, these wandering years held for him an inexpressible dreariness. Bee's utter disappearance was terrible to him. The thought that she might be ill, or in want, or among people who were unkind to her, haunted him night and day. That she might be married he never allowed himself to think for more than an instant. That one swift flash of her eyes in which he had read her love for him was
with him always. Nevertheless—she was a woman—and women may change. The most persistent thought that held him was that she was dead. Otherwise, it seemed to him that he must have found her.

* * * * *

In the wild Australian bush a man lay dying. Another man knelt beside him, his face grey with watching and anxiety and recent sickness. A rough log-hut sheltered them, through whose chinks the rays of a hard silver moon filtered uncertainly, casting grotesque black shadows on the earthen floor. In the distance rose and fell the monotonous howl of the native dogs, interrupted now and then by the impatient whinnying of two skin-and-bone horses who were feeding a few yards away from the hut.

The sick man turned uneasily, and opened his eyes. He was lying on a comfortless bed enough—as beds are apt to be in the bush—roughly improvised with brushwood and horse-blankets. His companion bent over him and took his hand.
"Are you feeling better, Cyril, old fellow?" he said in a voice as tender as any woman's could have been.

The other shook his head.

"I shall never be better," he answered, his voice hoarse with fever and exhaustion. "I am dying. You know it; and so do I."

His comrade was silent; and his features contracted sharply. Yes—he knew it, and the knowledge cut hard. For the dying man had cheerfully and unweariedly nursed him through a long weary spell of the same lingering sickness that was now sapping his own life away. They had been companions, too, in many a rough adventure during the last six months. They had more than once faced death together; and they had become friends as only men can be friends.

Presently Cyril spoke again, his shadowy fingers closing feebly but affectionately over the other's hand.

"Conrath," he said speaking slowly and with long pauses between the words—"there is something—I want to say to you. I know,
of course, that you—have always cared for—little Bee."

The other's grey face grew greyer; but he
did not speak nor stir.

"Old fellow—are you listening?"

"Yes," said Conrath briefly.

"I have sometimes wondered—if you
knew"—went on the hoarse wavering voice
—"that she—cared for you."

There was a pause; then Conrath, leaning
his elbow on his knee, and covering his face
with his hand, answered heavily:

"I once fancied—if I had allowed myself
to think so——"

He broke off suddenly.

"There is no use in raking up these things
now," he added after a short silence. "Try
to sleep a little, there's a good old chap—and
drink this."

"No," with a difficult smile. "I shall
sleep—soon enough. Let me finish. She—
always cared for you. I have reason to—
know it. Let her be happy. Marry her—
when you get home to England. And tell
IN WHICH BEE IS FAITHFUL.

her—tell her—I was always faithful to her. Give her—my love."

"I have done with marrying and giving in marriage," was the dreary and somewhat bitter answer. "Besides, I don't even know where she is. It is nearly three years since I went to the little old cottage, and found it shut up and deserted. Mrs. Chandleur was dead; and Bee had gone—I don't know where. If she had cared—ever so little—she would surely have let me have one word. For all I know she may be married—or dead." And his deep voice shook.

"No—she is not married," said the other in a singularly quiet tone. "I know her, I think, better than you do. And she is not dead—or I should have known."

Both were silent for a brief space. It was the first time Bee's name had been mentioned between them since that night in Fay Conrath's drawing-room, long ago. At last Conrath spoke again.

"I wish to God"—he said with white lips—"that I were lying there instead of you."
You have given your life for me—while I—"

Cyril pressed his hand feebly.

"That is all nonsense, old man," he said, with the ghost of his old kindly smile. "I did no more for you—than you are doing for me now." Then in a quick changed voice—"Conrath—I feel awfully faint and queer. Lift me up. Don't forget to—tell her—"

They were his last words. When Conrath laid him down again he was dead.

The solitary man sat all night beside that still, silent shape that had been his friend—one hand still grasping the slowly-stiffening fingers, the other pressed hard over his aching eyes.

The moon paled and died. The swift Australian dawn flooded the sky with passionate rose-colour. A light wind ran through the chinks of the log-hut, and ruffled the dead man's hair. And over Conrath's heart tore a wild, sick, mighty longing—stronger than grief, or regret, or
love for woman—the indescribable, not-to-be-reasoned-with longing of body and soul for home.

Meanwhile Bee, far away in England, was doing her best to struggle bravely with "the duty that lay nearest," and that—as some of us may have had occasion to know—is not always such an easy matter as stern moralists would have us believe. She had now been a year at Berstwith Manor, and Sadie, her little pupil, was between four and five years old.

Sadie was a sweet-tempered child—pretty, too, in a peculiar half-weird fashion—and singularly companionable and intelligent for her age. Bee had grown very fond of her—both for her father's sake and for her own. Nevertheless she was not nearly so happy as she had been in Curzon Street. Old Mr. and Mrs. Conrath's treatment of their little niece's governness was very kind—as far as it went. But they never dreamed of admitting her to such terms of intimacy as Mrs. Enderton had done. They never allowed her to forget
that she was their niece's governess. They certainly never dreamed of asking her to join them in the drawing-room. Not that Bee cared very much for that doubtful privilege; but—well, perhaps her life in the Treherne household had spoiled her for the ordinary practicalities of governess-ship.

But the love of little Sadie atoned for much. Intelligent though she was, she had none of the unnatural shrewdness which had characterized her mother's childhood. But outwardly she grew more like the child Fay every day. It was her eyes, I think, that were so marvellously like. And she had the same dark lashes and eyebrows—the same fluffy flaxen hair. There was little of Douglas about her, except at times, a certain half-stern compression of the little lips—almost comical in such a baby. Like most children who have been brought up by elderly people, she spoke very distinctly, with but few of the quaint abbreviations and lispings common to many little ones.

She often talked, in a rambling baby-
fashion, of her father, whom she seemed to regard as little short of a demi-god—though, of course, she could not remember him.

"This is my papa," she said, seizing upon a filigree photograph-frame one day when she and Bee were roaming through the various rooms—Mr. and Mrs. Conrath having gone to pay a round of calls—"my own dear, darling papa. And I am his little girl. He looks quite sorry, you know—because my mamma is dead. Grannie says he is away in far, far, countries; but when I am a big girl he is coming home, and will never go away any more."

Bee looked long and wistfully at the dear, well-known face—then turned away, her eyes dim with tears.

"Are you going to cry, Miss Somers?" said the little one anxiously. "Your eyes are quite wet. Don't cry."

And dropping the frame unceremoniously on the carpet, she climbed into her governess's lap, and dried the wet eyes with her own little handkerchief.
“Did you ever see my papa?” she added, with the curious intuition of childhood.

Bee flushed painfully. Then after a minute she said, pushing the flaxen hair back from Fay’s brown questioning eyes:

“Once, long ago—when I was a little girl like you—I knew some one—with a face like your papa.”

“Was it a boy?” inquired Sadie with interest.

“It was a boy—yes,” Bee answered.

“Is he a grown-up gentleman now?”

“Yes.”

“And had he a face just like my papa?”

“Not exactly. But very nearly.”

“Perhaps he has a little girl the very same as me,” observed the child thoughtfully.

“Perhaps,” said Bee, laying her lips to the soft hair.

“But why does it make you cry to think about him, Miss Somers, dear? Do you never see him now?”

“Oh, don’t ask so many questions, childie. I am not crying. But—I am tired.”
IN WHICH BEE IS FAITHFUL.

"My papa can write books," went on Sadie, with an important air. "Grannie told Mrs. Carston yesterday that he was very populous; and I asked her what it meant, and she said it meant that people read his books all over the world."

"Popular, dear—not populous," corrected Bee somewhat hysterically.

"No—I'm sure grannie said populous," insisted the little one. "Anyway she said I ought to be very proud of my papa—and so I am. Oh, Miss Somers, I wish I could see him now—this very minute!"

Did Bee's heart echo the wish? I think so
CHAPTER VII.

ACROSS THE YEARS!

"A ghost?
I know that I have heard the laugh of one,
Ah, many a time this morning in the sun;
And seen its very face look down at me,
Above the bird's nest in this apple-tree.

"It does not know—how should it know?—how still
A grave lies in the dew below the hill,
Where eyes too like its own can never see
How full of tears the violets there can be."

S. M. B. Piatt.

"She is thine own at last, O faithful soul!
The love that changed not with the changing years
Hath its reward!"

* * * * * * *

The orchard at Berstwith Manor was an exquisite retreat wherein to while away a summer afternoon. The turf was mossy, soft, velvety — studded here and there with gay
little wild flowers. It was quite near to the trimly-kept fruit garden, too, and when the wind came that way received delicious balmy suggestions of strawberries, raspberries, and luscious wall-fruit. In this orchard Bee and her little pupil spent many a long tranquil hour. They were to be found there on this sultry July afternoon—Bee deep in one of George Meredith's novels (I think it was "Beauchamp's Career")—Sadie alternately chasing lazy, downy butterflies, disposing of the ripe fruit that gleamed here and there on the short grass, and indulging in the forbidden but exciting pastime of climbing such trees as the shortness of her legs rendered available.

"Don't eat too much fruit, dear," said Bee dreamily, raising her eyes from her book. "It is not good for you. And above all don't eat these nasty bits of gum. And oh, Sadie, you have been climbing trees again. Look at your nice clean frock."

The child came and threw herself down at Bee's side.
"Why do grown-up people always keep saying 'Don't'?" she said coaxingly, leaning her flushed little face against the other's lap. Then almost in the same breath she added, "Tell me about that boy who was so like my papa's picture."

Bee laid down her book and stroked the rough hair lovingly.

"What shall I tell you about him, dear?" she said after a minute.

"Oh, I don't know. Tell me if you will ever see him again."

Bee shook her head.

"No—I think not," she answered.

"Why? Is he dead—like my mamma?"

"No, no—" was the answer, almost sharply.

"Sadie—you must never say that."

"Why?—dear Miss Somers? Did you love him very much?" whispered the little creature with a loving hug.

"Yes, darling," answered Bee almost inaudibly, clasping the child close up to her heart. "I loved him very, very dearly."

"Did he love you too?"
Bee's lips quivered. She waited a moment before she answered. Then she said:

"I think not, Sadie."

"Will he never love you?"

"No—never."

"He was a horrid boy. I hate him," said the little one vindictively. "Never mind. I'll love you."

And having kissed Bee till she was out of breath, she rushed off to the garden to gather her some strawberries, with the innocent view of comforting her thereby.

Bee sat still. Two heavy tears hung on her dark eyelashes. But she rubbed them away directly, and returned to her book again.

The shadows were lengthening over the fragrant orchard. One could hear the hoarse monotonous croaking of the frogs in the reeds down by the river. A thrush was singing in the green dim shade of the branches overhead.

Presently Bee laid down her book.

"Is he dead—like my mamma?"
The child's words rang in her ears still. Her heart seemed slowly climbing up to her throat to choke her.

Another shadow fell across the grass. A man was crossing the orchard, crushing the gay little flowers ruthlessly beneath his quick firm tread.

Bee sprang to her feet. *Who* was it?

Of course you know who it was. It was Douglas Conrath. Paler, thinner, older-looking. But otherwise the very same old Douglas.

Bee stared at him silently. She could not have uttered one word just then.

He stopped short when he was within a few yards of her. Every vestige of colour had left his face. He, too, seemed stricken with a dumb devil.

At last, in a strained, husky voice, he spoke.

"Bee!" he said—"my little Bee! Can it be you?"

The blood was beginning to throb back to Bee's heart again. Perhaps, under the cir-
cumstances, it was hardly in human nature—woman's human nature—that she should let him see how dearly she loved him—how passionately she had longed for him all these years. Her small face hardened somewhat; and her voice was quite clear and steady as she advanced towards him and held out her hand.

"Are you very much surprised to see me here, Douglas?" she said. "I am sure you must be. I am governess to your little daughter. Let me welcome you home to England again."

He took her hand in silence. While a wave of inexpressibly bitter pain swept across his heart. Poor Cyril! he had been raving. And he—Douglas Conrath—had been a fool. There was no love in the cold face of this grave, self-possessed little woman—not even the old sister-love of long ago.

"Have you seen your aunt and uncle?" went on Bee, still in that sweet, calm voice. "They will be very pleased, and I think very
much surprised. I am almost sure they did not expect you.”

“I have not seen them,” he answered briefly. “They have gone for a drive, I believe. I wired this morning; but it seems the message only arrived some few minutes ago. I was told I should find my little daughter here,” he added.

His voice was cold also—cold to indifference. Bee shaded her eyes from the rays of the level sun.

“She is in the garden,” she said. “I will go and bring her.”

She moved swiftly away across the sun-touched grass.

“Sadie!” she called softly. “Sadie!”

Douglas leaned his back against a strong young apple-tree, and involuntarily closed his eyes. So this was their meeting—after all these years! he thought with a pang of queer, dull pain. Well—he had hoped for nothing else. So he told himself. (Of course you know how much truth there was likely to be in that!)
“She has always cared for you. I know it”—he seemed to hear Cyril say—as his thoughts flew back over the weary miles to a lonely nameless grave under the burning Australian sun. But Cyril had not seen her for more than four years. And in four years any heart may change—especially a woman’s heart.

The muffled sound of Bee’s returning feet over the grass brought him back to the present again. He started, as he gazed down into the brown baby eyes looking gravely up into his—the eyes of his little daughter.

Good Heavens!—it was the very face of Fay herself. He had not loved her—that dead wife of his. But as he looked into her child’s eyes, with their marvellous, almost unearthly likeness, a sudden rushing memory of the old days came back to him—the curious stabbing pain of remorsefully remembered shortcomings and indifference towards a loving heart that is in its grave. He could not speak for a moment. And Bee saw that his lips were trembling.
Sadie slipped her tiny hand into his.

"Are you my papa?" she said, slowly.

He stooped, lifted her in his arms and kissed her.

"Yes, my darling," he answered in a husky voice. "Are you glad to see me?"

Bee moved away, and left them together. She went slowly up to the house, where she found the old couple just returned from their drive, and in a state of great excitement.

"Miss Somers," exclaimed Mrs. Conrath—"have you seen my nephew? Arkwright tells me he went down to the orchard to seek Sadie."

"Yes—I have seen him," Bee answered in a carefully modulated voice. "I think he is coming up with Sadie now."

On the day following his arrival at Berstwith, Conrath went to visit his wife's grave. By old Evan Conrath's special desire she had been buried in Berstwith churchyard, within a handsome railed space sacred to the remains of the Conraths and their wives. It was with curiously mingled feelings that the
young widower read the inscription on the already darkening stone.

Poor little Fay! It seemed only yesterday that her plaintive voice had sounded in his ears—only yesterday that he had felt so bitterly impatient of her jealousy and her fretful complainings. Then came the soothing memory of those tranquil happy days before her death. He thanked God for them. With a long, shivering sigh he bowed his head upon the tall grey stone, and for some minutes remained quite still. And in these minutes he put all his dreary past away from him, and let hope spring up in his heart again.

For he had made up his mind that the love-light should flash once more in Bee’s coldly-sweet dark eyes—and for him.

An afternoon or two later he met Bee and Sadie down by the river. The child flew to him, as usual; and, also as usual, Bee turned away.

Conrath stooped and whispered a few words in Sadie’s ear, and with a merry little
nod she ran off in the direction of the fruit-garden.

Her father threw away the cigar he had been smoking, and in a few strides overtook Bee, who was walking as if for a wager.

"Why do you avoid me as you have done during the past few days, Bee?" he said quietly.

"Avoid you? I don't know why. I don't avoid you. Do I?" she answered in somewhat incoherent fashion.

"You know very well that you do. I have not had one word alone with you since the day I came. Why is it, Bee? You were not always so changeable."

"Changeable?" flashed out the girl. "It is not I who am changeable. How can you accuse me of it? You—who for all these years never took the trouble to find out whether I were living or dead!"

"You wrong me, Bee," he said, still in that quiet voice. "Sit down here, and let me explain to you."

"No—I must look after Sadie," she said
nervously. "And I wish you would not call me Bee. The old Bee is dead," she added with a hysterical laugh—"or is merged, rather, in a person called Katherine Somers."

"Sadie will do very well without you for a while," was the calm answer. "And as for your changing your name—did you never think how effectually that barred my discovering your whereabouts. When I came home three years ago my first thought was of you. But you were gone—the little cottage was shut up"

"Ah you did go there, then? You did think of me?" she interrupted him in a quick excited way.

"Yes," was the brief, answer.

"Then—I have misjudged you," she said slowly.

He did not answer just immediately. When he did, his voice was almost stern.

"Yes—you have misjudged me in more ways than one," he said. "Why did you not write to tell me of Mrs. Chandleur's death? Why did you not let me obviate the necessity
of your earning your living in this way? Who had so good a right to take care of you as I?"

"It is not a very arduous way of earning my living," she said, looking away from him across the deep cool river, and speaking almost inaudibly. "It is not much of a task to take care of Fay's little child—and yours."

"But you have only been here for a year," he said impatiently. "Before that, what kind of people were you with? And before that? Good God! what I have suffered in thinking of you—you small, delicate thing!—cast adrift in London—liable to want, and sickness, perhaps insult. You have been cruel to me, Bee, more than cruel."

"I did not know—you cared," she faltered.

"You did not know I cared!" He had risen to his feet, and was looking down at her with a curiously sad expression in his dark eyes. "Did you think the memory of the old days had quite left me then?"

"Yes—that is what I thought."
There was a moment's silence; then Conrath said abruptly,
“Bee—I have a message for you; a message from some one who loved you very dearly, and who is—dead.”

She looked up startled. Then she sprang to her feet.

“Ah, not Cyril!” she cried sharply—“not Cyril! Say it is not Cyril!”

“Yes”—he answered in a very gentle voice—“it is Cyril.”

Bee burst into a passion of subdued but bitter sobbing. In vain Conrath tried to soothe her. She seemed hardly conscious of his presence—hardly heard him when he gave her poor Cyril’s dying message, told her of their friendship, their many months’ companionship.

“It is my fault,” she sobbed. “I sent him away. If it had not been for me he would be alive now.”

But Douglas caught her suddenly in his arms.

“Hush!” he said roughly. “Don’t grieve
for him like that—or I shall think—I shall think—that you have a deeper reason for regretting him than mere remorse. Child—for God's sake stop crying. Do you hear me, Bee. Do you want to drive me mad?"

She could feel his heart beating fiercely against her cheek. His breath came in deep labouring gasps—like sobs.

"Bee"—he whispered hoarsely—"will you marry me?"

But she tried to free herself from the strong masterful arms.

"Don't!" she cried wildly—"don't speak to me of marriage. I shall never marry any one—never—never!"

He loosened his arms from about her.

"Are you in earnest?" he said in a strange still voice——

"Papa—papa—are you making my Miss Somers cry?" exclaimed Sadie's vibrating treble. "Miss Somers—don't cry. See—I have been gathering strawberries for papa, and you shall have some."

But Bee had rushed away; and Conrath in
a stern peremptory voice forbade Sadie to follow her.

"Come here, Sadie," he said. "Miss Somers doesn't want you just now."

He sat down on a rustic bench as he spoke, and his little daughter, carefully laying down a cabbage-leaf full of strawberries, climbed upon his knee.

"Have you got a headache, papa?"

"No, Sadie," he answered wearily.

"Then why have you these little lines on your brow? Miss Somers always has them when she has a headache. Or," she added, "when she is thinking about that boy."

"What boy?" her father asked with a quick frown.

"A boy with the very same kind of face as you," was the grave answer. "She used to know him when she was a little girl, and she loved him—oh, ever so much."

"And do you think she loves him now, Sadie?" he said, pressing his lips to her forehead.
"I think so," answered the child reflectively. "I asked her one day, but she didn't tell me."

"What did she say?"

"She said, 'Don't ask so many questions, dear.'"

Her father sat for some time in silence, pulling at his moustache, and gazing at the swiftly-flowing river.

Now, Sadie was a very sweet little girl, but like some other little girls—and big ones too—she had rather a long tongue. And that very same afternoon, an hour or so later, when she was trotting round the garden with "Grannie," she observed innocently:

"To-day my papa made my Miss Somers cry."

"What do you say, child?" was the somewhat sharp answer.

"To-day my papa made my Miss Somers cry," repeated the little one, serenely unconscious of the mischief she was doing. "And she would not stop crying, though papa put his arms round her and told her
not to. And I think he kissed her—but I am not quite sure.”

Meanwhile Bee, in the seclusion of her room, was trying to remove the traces of tears from her face and eyes by means of eau-de-Cologne and water. The news of Cyril’s death had been a great shock to her. Somehow she could not associate the idea of death with *debonnaire*, easy-going Cyril. How kind he had always been to her! how gentle, how considerate—a friend indeed. Her eyes filled with tears again. But underlying her grief for the man who had loved her so well there leapt and danced the knowledge that the man she loved had asked her to be his wife. True—she had refused him. But he would understand. Douglas always understood things. He would know that smarting under the shock of the noble fellow’s death who had once been her accepted lover, she could not, just then, think of her own happiness.

A sharp knock at the door.

“Come in,” said Bee faintly.
Mrs. Conrath entered, looking pale, and exceedingly stern.

"I have a few words to say to you, Miss Somers," she said in a cold voice. "I have heard something which has grieved and surprised me very much."

"Yes?" answered Bee, with a look half haughty, half bewildered.

"Is it the case that this afternoon you were seen down by the river sobbing and crying in my nephew's arms, and that he—that he kissed you?"

The angry blood rushed to the girl's face—then flew back to her heart. But she did not speak.

"From your silence," went on the old lady in an icy, contemptuous tone, "I conclude it is true. Such shameless conduct—with an utter stranger—surely requires no comment."

"Mr. Conrath is not a stranger to me. I knew him years ago," was the low, choked answer.

"Indeed! Are you engaged to him, may I ask?"
"No—I am not engaged to him."

"Ah! I am afraid, Miss Somers, your propensities are not to be overcome. You will understand what I mean when I tell you that it has lately come to my knowledge why you were obliged to leave Mr. Treherne's employment. You will pardon me if I say that a young person with your singular ideas as to propriety is hardly fitted to be intrusted with the care of young children."

Bee had grown deadly white.

"You need say no more, Mrs. Conrath," she said steadily. "I beg to resign my situation. I shall leave your house immediately. Though I am only a governess, I will not submit to be insulted. How dare you say such things to me?"

"You are forgetting yourself, I think," said the old lady stiffly. "By to-morrow perhaps you may be in a different frame of mind."

So saying she went out of the room.

Bee remained standing by the dressing-table in a dumb, breathless passion of half-
incredulous fury. She would leave Berstwith Manor now—this very night—she resolved with a curious panting little sob. She would not even wait to see Douglas.

"If he loves me he can come for me," she muttered between her teeth as she tore her gowns from their pegs and crammed them into her truuk. "But I will never, never enter that wicked old woman's doors again. How dared she! Oh—how dared she!"

She looked a very vicious little woman indeed as she flew about the room, swiftly collecting her belongings. A strange singing was in her head; she was trembling from head to foot.

When all was finished she felt so weak and strange that a horrible fear of fainting came over her. So she straightway stuck a pin in other arm until the blood came, and the tears sprang to her eyes. Then she rang the bell, and by the judicious gift of half-a-sovereign to Jane—the most amiable of the house-maids—pledged that damsel to silence, and arranged that her trunk should be sent
to the station in time for the 8.50 train for Llewenelly. For her projected line of action was as follows. When Sadie had gone to bed, and while the family were at dinner, she would simply take her hand-bag, walk to the station, and catch the train to Llewenelly. She would stay there all night, and go on to London the following morning. All this was fearfully headstrong, and stupid, and uncalled for, of course; and I can't help feeling a little ashamed of my tempered heroine as I write it. But I suppose we have all been more or less headstrong and stupid in our day.

Her passion cooled somewhat. tea for the last time in the quiet sunny schoolroom, beside the small firebrand who had unconsciously done all this mischief. Perhaps a tiny hope crept into her heart that she might see Douglas before she left—that perhaps he might come to seek her—would tell Mrs. Conrath how she had misjudged her. But she would not admit this hope even to herself.
The dressing-gong rang, however, and then the dinner-gong, and Douglas did not come. So Bee hardened her heart.

As Douglas and his uncle were sitting over their fruit and wine after Mrs. Conrath had left them, the former, who sat facing a window looking out upon the avenue, saw a small slender figure stealing down the winding gravelled sweep, keeping close to the trees. Recognizing the figure, he rose and somewhat curtly announced his intention of taking a stroll. In the hall he lighted a cigar, drew a light overcoat over his evening dress, and walked down the avenue smartly enough to catch sight of Bee again as he turned the second corner. Then he saw that she was carrying a bag. Where on earth was she going at this time of night? he wondered. Then—all at once—the truth flashed upon him.

As a matter of fact he was in a suppressed passion. Just before dinner his aunt had somewhat nervously hinted to him what Sadie had told her.
"Well?" Douglas had answered sternly, mentally resolving to interview Miss Sadie later.

"Well, my dear Douglas—surely—" began the old lady in a deprecating way.

"You did not, I hope, say anything to—to Miss Somers?" said her nephew in a curiously repressed voice.

"Certainly I did, Douglas," was the dignified answer. "You cannot suppose that—"

"And did she tell you that I had asked her to marry me—and that she had refused?" interrupted Douglas, still in that queer voice.

"What!" almost screamed his aunt, doubting the evidence of her own ears.

"I knew Miss Somers—though that is not her real name—many years ago," went on Douglas, who had become very pale, "when she had as little anticipation of earning her own living as you have now. Her name is Adeane, and her grandfather was at one time one of the richest men in London. I did not tell you all this, because I under-
stood and respected her motive for repressing it. Nor did I see the necessity of informing you of our previous acquaintance. I was both intensely surprised and passionately thankful to find her here. I have cared for her for many years, and—as I have told you—this afternoon I asked her to marry me. And," he added slowly, "I intend to ask her to-night—to reconsider her decision."

"Douglas! you will never be so mad!" exclaimed his aunt almost in tears. "If you only knew! The very last situation she was in, she—"

But Douglas silenced her with a haughty gesture of his hand.

Just then old Evan Conrath entered the room, and the gong sounded for dinner—during which meal Douglas hardly spoke one word.

So he was in a strangely excited frame of mind as he swiftly followed the steps of the girl who was doing her best to run away from him. He followed her to the station, saw her enter the little ticket office, and then the
waiting-room. As she turned he caught sight of her face, and from what he saw there rightly judged that the present was no propitious time to renew his offer of marriage. So he, too, entered the ticket office, and took a ticket for Llewenelly, which little village, though only a few miles away, was as far as travellers could book from Berstwith. The train, he found, was not due for five minutes yet, so he scribbled a little note in pencil to Mrs. Conrath, saying he had gone to London on some business, which he would explain later, and requesting that his servant and portmanteau might follow him by the first train in the morning. He would stay at the Langham, he added. He gave the note and a shilling to a porter, with the injunction that it was to be delivered at once.

Just as he had done so the train came in. Bee got into a carriage near the engine. Douglas got into one further back. He was feeling very much annoyed, partly with his aunt, and partly, much as he loved her, with Bee herself. He knew perfectly well, of
course, what a talk would be caused in the neighbourhood by their both rushing off by the night train in this fashion. But he felt he simply could not run the risk of losing sight of her again. For he had a pretty good guess that she would go straight to London—and once plunged into that clueless labyrinth, she might elude him endlessly. Nevertheless, he was conscious of having undertaken something of the nature of a wild-goose chase. She might persist in her refusal to marry him—nay, in her present mood she might even refuse to speak to him. And she would be alone, and friendless, and poor, in wide busy London. And he—he had no manner of right over her. The strong man's heart beat up to his throat like a nervous girl's.

It was nearly dark when they reached Llewenelly, and therefore he had some difficulty in keeping Bee in sight. She took the omnibus for the "Star Hotel," and her pursuer, unseen by her, swung himself on to the top of the same vehicle. Arrived at the quiet little hotel he saw her descend, and
heard her inquire when the first train for London started next morning. Being told that it was due at 6.30, she disappeared within the hotel. Douglas, too, descended, and made his way to a smaller inn, somewhat further down the street. Having ordered his breakfast in time for the first train, he partook of a brandy and soda, and retired to his room. Not to sleep, though. Sleep was far from him. He did not even go to bed, but spent the whole of the brief summer night in pacing his room monotonously and regularly from end to end, much to the discomfort and exasperation of an old gentleman who occupied the room below.

On the following morning as he sat at breakfast he had the satisfaction of seeing Bee step into the omnibus and be driven off to the station. He followed in a fly, and caught the train just as it was starting. It was long past noon when they arrived at Paddington. Bee left her trunk at the left-luggage office. She was looking very pale and subdued this morning. There was a pathetically forlorn
look about her sweet little face, too. At least Douglas fancied so. It was no longer the face of the vixen of yesterday.

As she turned to walk down the platform she came face to face with Douglas. Who raised his hat and said calmly:

"Good morning, Bee."

She started violently, and turned so white that he hastily drew her hand within his arm

"Where are you going, Bee?" he said very gently.

"I—I don't know," she whispered.

She felt giddy, and sick, and strange. And he had startled her.

"Have you had any breakfast?" he inquired, surveying her keenly the while.

She shook her head.

"I thought not. You look as if you were going to faint. What a foolish child you are," he said very tenderly.

Then as she did not speak, he went on:

"Now listen to me, Bee. I am not going to ask you what is the meaning of this mad escapade of yours. From something my aunt
said to me just before dinner last night, I think I can guess. What I want you to understand is that I have got you, and that I shall never let you go again, in this world or the next. If you do not love me now—I shall make you love me. Give me the right to take care of you, Bee!”

She shivered, but said nothing.

Whereupon Douglas called a hansom, and directed the man to drive to Verrey’s, in Regent Street.

Now, no course of conduct which he could have adopted could have served his purpose so well as this masterful taking possession of her. She felt weak and helpless in his hands. She knew she had done a terribly foolish thing. Besides—she loved him so dearly.

When they had finished luncheon Douglas said:

“I am going to take you to a motherly old Scotchwoman with whom I used to lodge long ago. Her name is Mrs. Warren. She has a nice quiet house not far from Putney, and I know she will be kind to you.”
Bee said nothing. She was still feeling dazed and bewildered. She hardly even knew if she were happy or not. She was so desperately tired—so nervous and unstrung. If she only might lay her head down somewhere and cry! Douglas had spoken very little during the meal. Was he angry with her? she wondered.

So they took the train to Putney, and by attention to the guard's pecuniary weaknesses, Conrath secured a carriage quite to themselves.

The train moved off. And then—and then Douglas, without saying by your leave, or with your leave, just gathered Bee up in his arms, and silently kissed her trembling mouth again and again.

"Be still!" he whispered unsteadily, as she struggled a little. "Do you know how long I have loved you, I wonder? Do you know how I have hungered and sickened for the touch of your lips, my darling?—all those years! Say you love me, Bee! Say you will be my wife. Oh, my love!—for God's
sake don't let anything stand between us now!"

And Bee? Where was all her pride?—her haughty self-dependence? If I tell that she just put her arms round Douglas's neck, and childishly hid her face on his breast—shall you quite despise her?

"Oh Douglas, Douglas"—she sobbed—"take care of me—take care of me!"

Of course there were long explanations after that—which do not concern us in the least. And of course they could hardly believe it when they got to their destination.

"And now, my darling," said Douglas, when they were driving away in a cab to Mrs. Warren's cottage—"how much of your spinsterhood do you suppose you have left to you?"

"I—I don't quite understand?" she made answer, lifting her eyes to his with the old questioning look he remembered so well.

"Shall I explain to you?" he said, bending his head to kiss her. "Within the next four or five days, my little Bee, you will be Mrs.
Douglas Conrath; and I shall no longer have any superstitious fear of losing you—as I have now."

"Oh, Douglas!" was the shocked answer.

"So soon? I couldn't."

And her eyes fell shamefacedly.

"Yes, you could," he whispered—"to please me, my darling."

Bee blushed, and was silent. After all, she had promised to be his wife. Did it matter when?—sooner or later?

And just then the cab stopped at Mrs. Warren's cottage. Having comfortably established Bee under the care of the worthy old Scotchwoman—who remembered him quite well and was overjoyed to see him—Douglas drove off to town again, and repaired to Doctors' Commons to see about a special license. Then he drove to his hotel and changed his clothes. For evening dress, worn all night and half the following day, is apt to become monotonous, especially when it necessitates a buttoned-up overcoat in the month of July. As he left his room a waiter met
him with the information that Mr. Evan Conrath was waiting to see him in a private sitting-room. A monosyllabic expression escaped Conrath's lips as he received this piece of news.

He found the old gentleman pacing up and down near one of the windows in great excitement.

"My dear boy," he said quickly, as the young man greeted him—"what the devil does this mean? You must allow, you know, that it has a queer look—a very queer look."

He spoke half-nervously—for to tell the truth, he stood a little in awe of his literary nephew.

"I hardly understand you, uncle," replied Douglas with a slightly haughty inflection in his pleasant voice. "What do you mean?"

No one likes to explain, at a moment's notice, exactly what they mean. It is too much, perhaps, to ask of human nature. Because, nine times out of ten, people don't know what they mean—especially when they

Vol. III.
are as excited as old Evan Conrath was just now.

"What do I mean?" he repeated. "Well—my dear Douglas, you know perfectly that, as your aunt very properly says, it does not look well for a young man to go tearing after a young woman straight from the dinner-table up to London, at nine o'clock at night, without even waiting to change his clothes; and to be seen—as you were seen, as you were seen, sir—holding her in his arms down by the river, as if she was his promised wife, by Jove!"

"And if I tell you that the young lady in question is my promised wife? What then?" said Douglas quietly.

"Eh? What?" exclaimed the old gentleman, sitting down suddenly. "Oh nonsense, you know. You're—you're joking."

"I can assure you I am in no joking humour, Uncle Evan. The young lady whom you engaged as Sadie's governess under the name of Miss Somers, is Katharine Adeane, of whom I think you have heard me speak. As
a little child she shared my mother's home and mine. As a woman, she won all the heart I ever had to give. I hope to call her my wife before a week has passed," he added, with a strange softening of voice and eyes.

"Good Heavens! Then—what made you marry the other one?" exclaimed his uncle.

Douglas's face became indescribably expressionless. But he did not speak.

Evan Conrath rose, and stamped about in great perturbation.

"What your aunt will say I'm sure I don't know," he said testily, at last. "I know she had a most suitable wife in her eye for you. And with your talent, too—to throw yourself away upon a governess. Not even a beauty, by Jove! And I'm sure your first wife wasn't much to look at either. It's my impression that the cleverer a man is the more he makes a mess of his love affairs."

"But you'll give the bride away, uncle, won't you?" said Ξ's nephew, with the
faintest suspicion of a smile under his moustache.

"No, I won't, sir! No, I won't!" was the indignant answer. "You may make a fool of yourself if you like—but you won't get me to assist you."

"Very well," was the calm answer. "I will bid you good-bye then, as I have an engagement. I suppose we shall see but little of each other for the future?"

"And why the devil should you suppose so? Eh?" burst out his uncle, facing round upon him.

And Douglas answered coldly:

"As you seem to have made up your mind not to receive my wife, I'm afraid you must exclude me from your visiting-list as well."

Then old Evan Conrath suddenly gave in.

"Look here, Douglas," he said huskily. "In Heaven's name don't let us have the old story over again. I will give the bride away—if you wish it. After all, happiness is the great thing. And I suppose you are fond of the girl, or you wouldn't be such a fool as to
marry her. God bless you, my boy. I only hope you won't regret it, that's all—though I'm pretty sure you will. And, as I said before—what your aunt will say, I don't know."

Douglas smiled. It was a matter of indifference to him what his aunt said—or what anybody else said, for that matter.

He jumped into a hansom—after promising to dine with his uncle later—and drove off Putney-wards to a blissful half-hour with Bee. What a lot they had to say to each other, to be sure!

So the days and hours flew. And almost before Bee had time to realize that she was engaged she was married.

It was a very quiet affair, and little Sadie was the only bridesmaid. Evan Conrath not only gave away the bride, but persuaded his wife to be present likewise. The only other guest was Ralph Debenham.

And did they go off to the Continent or to some borrowed country-seat for their honey-moon? Not a bit of it. They went straight
to Douglas's old house in Kensington, which had been let until a few months ago, and, as it happened, was in capital order.

"Really, the lad seems very happy, you know. Eh, my dear?" observed Evan Conrath to his spouse late on the evening of the wedding-day.

"He has thrown himself away, Evan—simply thrown himself away," that lady answered in a vexed voice. "And—mark my words—he will regret it."

* * * * *

Nevertheless, if you had looked into Douglas Conrath's study one July evening, nearly three years after his second marriage, I think you would have been pretty sure he had not regretted it.

It was a luxurious home-like room, with the unmistakable traces of a woman's constant presence about it. Douglas himself was leaning back in a huge easy-chair, tired and languid with months of hard writing. It was over now and he might rest. Besides the look of bodily or rather mental fatigue upon
his face, there was another look that you have never seen there before—a look of deepest happiness and content. He looked younger, Bee sometimes told him, than he had done ten years ago.

And Bee—such a bonnie, winsome Bee—was sitting on a low stool at his side, leaning her head against his knee. One of her hands was clasping his; the other held a few sheets of manuscript which she had just finished reading. Her eyes were looking dreamily through the open window to the garden, where Sadie—now a slim little maid of nearly eight years old—was running round the trees in a mad game of hide-and-seek with a dainty tortoise-shell kitten. The setting summer sun was shining on the waving trees, turning their green to gold, and lighting up the child's face and hair with an almost unearthly radiance. The sleepy birds were crooning a good-night song.

Sadie reigned alone in the nursery of the sunny old house. If there was the tiniest shadow on Bee's heart, I think it was that
she had no child of her own. Sadie was very, very dear to her. But—it was not the same.

If it was a shadow to Douglas too, he never implied it by either word or look. His wife was everything to him; his companion, his helper, his inspiration, and—as he often told her—his good angel. Just now, as his eyes rested upon her earnest little face, there was a passion of love in their dark depths that is not altogether common to husbands whose vows have seen three summers and winters.

Presently Sadie ran in, holding the captured kitten in her arms.

"I am going to put kitty to bed," she said. Then suddenly making a dart at Bee, she added caressingly, as she kissed her, "Dear darling little mamma—you look so pretty!"

"What a sweet loving wee thing she is," murmured Bee, as the door closed behind her little step-daughter. "I believe she is just as fond of me as if I had been her own mother."

There was the veriest breath of a sigh in
her words. Her husband understood it. Leaning forward suddenly, he took her in his arms, and gently kissed her lips, and she clung to him with a smothered sob.

They sat silent for a long time after that—his arms still round her, her head resting on his heart. The sun had set; the birds were silent; a pale shadowy moon was already climbing the grey softness of the skies. A tiny breeze had risen, and was stealing across the garden, flooding the room with the faint subtle odour of mignonette. The roar of London sounded far away.

At last Douglas stirred slightly, and clasped his wife closer in his arms.

"My darling wife," he whispered passionately—"my good angel—my better self. May God make me worthy of your love and you!"

THE END.
F. V. WHITE & CO.'S
LIST OF
PUBLICATIONS.
NEW

NOVELS AT ALL CIRCULATING LIBRARIES.

BEATRICE AND BENEDICK. A ROMANCE OF THE CRIMEA.
By Hawley Smart, Author of "The Outsider," "Long Odds," &c. 2 vols.

THE ROMANCE OF A CHÂLET.
By Mrs. Campbell Praed, Author of "Nadine," &c. 2 vols.

A WOMAN'S HEART.
By Mrs. Alexander, Author of "The Wooing O't," "Blind Fate," &c. 3 vols.

THAT PRETTY LITTLE HORSE-BREAKER.

INTERFERENCE.
By B. M. Croker, Author of "Pretty Miss Neville," "Two Masters," &c. 3 vols.

MARRIAGE UP TO DATE.

THE SAVAGE QUEEN.
By Hume Nisbet, Author of "Bail Up," &c. 1 vol. (And at all Booksellers.)

THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN.
By "Rita," Author of "Sheba," Dame Durden, "Miss Kate," &c. 3 vols.

MY FACE IS MY FORTUNE.

CRISS CROSS LOVERS.

WHOM GOD HATH JOINED, OR, A QUESTION OF MARRIAGE.
By Fergus Hume, Author of "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab," "Miss Mephistopheles," &c. 3 vols.

BETWIXT TWO LOVERS.
By Colonel Rowan Hamilton, Author of "The Last of the Cornets," &c. 2 vols. 12s.

MASTER OF HER LIFE.
By Lady Constance Howard, Author of "Sweetheart and Wife," &c. and Ada Fielder-King, Author of "It is Written," &c. 3 vols.

THE OTHER MAN'S WIFE.
By John Strange Winter, Author of "Bootles' Baby," &c. 2 vols.

DRAWN BLANK.

A ROMANCE OF MODERN LONDON.
By Curtis Yorke, Author of "Hush!" &c. 3 vols.

F. V. WHITE & CO., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.
THE WORKS OF JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

UNIFORM IN STYLE AND PRICE.

Each in Paper Covers, 1/-; Cloth, 1/6. At all Booksellers' & Bookstalls.

LUMLEY THE PAINTER.
WINTER'S CHRISTMAS ANNUAL. (7th Year.) (4th Edition.)

GOOD-BYE. (5th Edition.)

HE WENT FOR A SOLDIER. (6th Edition.)

FERRERS COURT. (5th Edition.)

BUTTONS. (6th Edition.)

A LITTLE FOOL. (9th Edition.)

MY POOR DICK. (8th Edition.) Illustrated by MAURICE GREIFFENHAGEN,

BOOTLES' CHILDREN.
(10th Edition.) Illustrated by J. BERNARD PARTRIDGE.

"John Strange Winter is never more thoroughly at home than when delineating the characters of children, and everyone will be delighted with the dignified Madge and the quaint Pearl. The book is mainly occupied with the love affairs of Terry (the soldier servant who appears in many of the preceding books), but the children buzz in and out of its pages much as they would come in and out of a room in real life, pervading and brightening the house in which they dwell."—Leicester Daily Post.

THE CONFESSIONS OF A PUBLISHER.

"The much discussed question of the relations between a publisher and his clients furnishes Mr. John Strange Winter with material for one of the brightest tales of the season. Abel Drinkwater's autobiography is written from a humorous point of view; yet here, as elsewhere, 'many a true word is spoken in jest,' and in the conversations of the publisher and his too ingenious son facts come to light that are worthy of the attention of aspirants to literary fame."—Morning Post.

MIGNON'S HUSBAND. (12th Edition.)

"It is a capital love story, full of high spirits, and written in a dashing style that will charm the most melancholy of readers into hearty enjoyment of its fun."—Scotsman.

THAT IMP. (11th Edition.)

"Barrack life is abandoned for the nonce, and the author of 'Bootles' Baby' introduces readers to a country home replete with every comfort, and containing men and women whose acquaintanceship we can only regret can never blossom into friendship."—Whitehall Review.

"This charming little book is bright and breezy, and has the ring of supreme truth about it."—Vanity Fair.

MIGNON'S SECRET. (16th Edition.)

"In 'Mignon's Secret' Mr. Winter has supplied a continuation to the never-to-be-forgotten 'Bootles' Baby.' . . . The story is gracefully and touchingly told."—John Bull.

F. V. WHITE & Co., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.
THE WORKS OF JOHN STRANGE WINTER—(continued).

ON MARCH. (9th Edition.)

"This short story is characterised by Mr. Winter's customary truth in detail, humour, and pathos."—Academy.

"By publishing 'On March,' Mr. J. S. Winter has added another little gem to his well-known store of regimental sketches. The story is written with humour and a deal of feeling."—Army & Navy Gazette.

IN QUARTERS. (10th Edition.)

"'In Quarters' is one of those rattling tales of soldiers' life which the public have learned to thoroughly appreciate."—The Graphic.

"The author of 'Bootles' Baby' gives us here another story of military life, which few have better described."—British Quarterly Review.

ARMY SOCIETY; Life in a Garrison Town.

Cloth, 6/-; also in Picture Boards, 2/-. (9th Edition.)

"This discursive story, dealing with life in a garrison town, is full of pleasant 'go' and movement which has distinguished 'Bootles' Baby,' 'Pluck,' or in fact a majority of some half-dozen novelettes which the author has submitted to the eyes of railway bookstall patronisers."—Daily Telegraph.

"The strength of the book lies in its sketches of life in a garrison town, which are undeniably clever. . . . It is pretty clear that Mr. Winter draws from life."—St. James's Gazette.

GARRISON GOSSIP, Gathered in Blankhampton.

(A Sequel to "ARMY SOCIETY.") Cloth, 2/6; also in Picture Boards, 2/- (5th Edition.)

"'Garrison Gossip' may fairly rank with 'Cavalry Life,' and the various other books with which Mr. Winter has so agreeably beguiled our leisure hours."—Saturday Review.

"The novel fully maintains the reputation which its author has been fortunate enough to gain in a special line of his own."—Graphic.

A SIEGE BABY. Cloth, 2/6; Picture boards, 2/- (4th Edition.)

"The story which gives its title to this new sheaf of stories by the popular author of 'Bootles' Baby' is a very touching and pathetic one. . . . Amongst the other stories, the one entitled, 'Out of the Mists' is, perhaps, the best written, although the tale of true love it embodies comes to a most melancholy ending."—County Gentlemen.

BEAUTIFUL JIM. (7th Edition.)

Cloth Gilt, 2/6; also Picture Boards, 2/-.

MRS. BOB. (6th Edition.)

Cloth gilt, 2/6. Also Picture Boards, 2/-.

F. V. WHITE & Co., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.
MRS. EDWARD KENNARD’S SPORTING NOVELS.
At all Booksellers’ and Bookstalls.

A HOMBURG BEAUTY. Cloth, 2s. 6d.

MATRON OR MAID? Cloth, 2s. 6d. Picture Boards, 2/-.
(3rd Edition.)

LANDING A PRIZE. (6th Edition.)
Cloth, 2s. 6d. Picture Boards, 2/-

OUR FRIENDS IN THE HUNTING FIELD.
Cloth, 2s.

A CRACK COUNTY (5th Edition.)
Cloth gilt, 2s.; also Picture Boards, 2s.

THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT.
Cloth gilt, 2/6; Picture Boards, 2/-. (7th Edition.)

“'Nell Fitzgerald' is an irreproachable heroine, full of gentle womanliness, and rich in all virtues that make her kind estimable. Mrs. Kennard’s work is marked by high tone as well as vigorous narrative, and sportsmen, when searching for something new and beguiling for a wet day or spell of frost, can hardly light upon anything better than these fresh and picturesque hunting stories of Mrs. Kennard's.”—Daily Telegraph.

KILLED IN THE OPEN.
Cloth gilt, 2/6; Picture Boards, 2/-. (8th Edition.

"It is in truth a very good love story set in a framework of hounds and horses, but one that could be read with pleasure independently of any such attractions."—Fortnightly Review.

"'Killed in the Open' is a very superior sort of hunting novel indeed."—Graphic

STRAIGHT AS A DIE.
Cloth gilt, 2/6; Picture Boards, 2/-. (8th Edition.)

"If you like sporting novels I can recommend to you Mrs. Kennard's 'Straight as a Die.'"—Truth.

A REAL GOOD THING.
Cloth, 2/6. Also Picture Boards, 2/-. (7th Edition.)

"There are some good country scenes and country spins in 'A Real Good Thing.' The hero, poor old Hopkins, is a strong character."—Academy.

TWILIGHT TALES. (Illustrated.) Cloth gilt, 2/6.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.
In Paper Covers, 1/-; Cloth, 1/6.

THE MYSTERY OF A WOMAN’S HEART.
Hawley Smart's Sporting Novels.

At all Booksellers' and Bookstalls.

The Plunger. Gilt cloth, 2/6. (3rd Edition.)
The Master of Rathkelly. Cloth gilt, 2/6. Picture Boards, 2/- (5th Edition.)
The Outsider. Cloth gilt, 2/6. Picture Boards, 2/- (6th Edition.)

By the same author. Each in Paper Covers, 1/-; Cloth, 1/6.

A Black Business. (3rd Edition.)
The Last Coup. (3rd Edition.)
Thrice Past the Post. (3rd Edition.)

New Novels

By B. L. Farjeon.

In Cloth, 2/6.

Basil and Annette.
The Mystery of M. Felix.
A Young Girl's Life. (2nd Edition.)
Toilers of Babylon. Also Picture Boards, 2/-
The Duchess of Rosemary Lane.
By the Author of "Great Porter Square," &c.

In Paper Covers, 1/-; Cloth, 1/6.

A Very Young Couple.
The Peril of Richard Pardon. (2nd Edition.)
A Strange Enchantment.
By the Author of "Devlin the Barber," &c.

The Honourable Mrs. Fetherstonhauch's New Novel.


Bret Harte's New Novel. Cloth, 2/6; Picture Boards, 2/-
The Crusade of the "Excelsior."
By the Author of "The Luck of Roaring Camp," &c.

Sir Randal Roberts' Sporting Novel.

Curb and Snaffle. By the Author of "In the Shires," &c. Cloth gilt, 2/6.

Daughters of Belgravia.
By Mrs. Alexander Fraser. Cloth, 2/6. Also Picture Boards, 2/-

F. V. White & Co., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.
MRS. LOVETT CAMERON'S NOVELS.
At all Booksellers' and Bookstalls.

IN A GRASS COUNTRY.
(A Story of Love and Sport.) (9th Edition.) Paper Covers 1/-.
"We turn with pleasure to the green covers of 'In a Grass Country.' The three heroines are charming each in her own way. It is well sketched, full of character, with sharp observations of men and women—not too hard on anybody—a clear story carefully written, and therefore easily read. . . . recommended."—Punch.
"When the days are short and there is an hour or two to be disposed of indoors before dressing time, one is glad to be able to recommend a good and amusing novel. 'In a Grass Country' may be said to come under this description."—Saturday Review.

JACK'S SECRET.
Cloth, 2/6.

A LOST WIFE.
Cloth, 2/6.

A NORTH COUNTRY MAID.
Picture Boards, 2/-

THE COST OF A LIE. (2nd Edition.)
Cloth, 2/6; also Picture Boards, 2/-. 

THIS WICKED WORLD.
(4th Edition.) Cloth, 2/6; also Picture Boards, 2/-. 

TWO NEW NOVELS by

JUSTIN M'CARTHY, M.P. 
AND 
MRS. CAMPBELL PRAED.

Authors of "The Right Honourable," &c.
Cloth, 2s. 6d. each.

THE LADIES' GALLERY. (2nd Edition.)

THE RIVAL PRINCESS; a London Romance of To-day.
(3rd Edition.) Also Picture Boards, 2/-

F. V. WHITE & Co., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.
MRS. ALEXANDER'S NOVELS.

At all Booksellers' and Bookstalls.

BLIND FATE.
Cloth, 2/6.

WELL WON. (2nd Edition.)
Paper Covers, 1/-; Cloth, 1/6.

A LIFE INTEREST. (3rd Edition.)
Cloth, 2/6. Also Picture Boards, 2/0.

BY WOMAN'S WIT.
(5th Edition.) Picture Boards, 2/-; Cloth, 2/6.
"In Mrs. Alexander's tale
Much art she clearly shows
In keeping dark the mystery
Until the story's close!"—Punch.

MONA'S CHOICE.
Cloth, 2/6. Picture Boards, 2/- (4th Edition.)

"RITA'S" NEW NOVELS.
AT ALL BOOKSELLERS' AND BOOKSTALLS.

SHEBA, A STUDY OF GIRLHOOD.
(3rd Edition.) Cloth, 2/6. Picture Boards, 2/-

MISS KATE.
(3rd Edition.) Cloth, 2/6.

THE SEVENTH DREAM.
1/- and 1/6.

THE DOCTOR'S SECRET.
(2nd Edition.) 1/- and 1/6.

F. V. WHITE & Co., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.
POPULAR WORKS
At all Booksellers' and Bookstalls.

By WILLIAM DAY,

TURF CELEBRITIES I HAVE KNOWN.
With a Portrait of the Author.
1 Vol. 16s.
At all Libraries and Booksellers.

By GUSTAV FREYTAG.
REMINISCENCES OF MY LIFE.
Translated from the German by KATHARINE CHETWYND.
In Two Vols. 18s.

By MRS. ARMSTRONG.
GOOD FORM.
(2nd Edition.)
A BOOK OF EVERY DAY ETIQUETTE.
Limp Cloth, 2s.

By PERCY THORPE.
HISTORY OF JAPAN.
Cloth, 3s. 6d.

By PARNELL GREENE.
ON THE BANKS OF THE DEE.
A LEGEND OF CHESTER.
Cloth, 5s.

By W. GERARD.
BYRON RE-STUDIED IN HIS DRAMAS.
Cloth, 5s.
THE VISION, AND OTHER POEMS.
Cloth, 3s. 6d.

F. V. WHITE & CO., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.
ONE VOLUME NOVELS
BY POPULAR AUTHORS.
Crown 8vo., Cloth, 2s. 6d. each.
AT ALL BOOKSELLERS’ AND BOOKSTALLS.

By JOHN STRANGE WINTER.
MRS. BOB. A SIEGE BABY.
BEAUTIFUL JIM. GARRISON GOSSIP.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD.
A HOMBURG BEAUTY.
MATRON OR MAID?
LANDING A PRIZE.
A CRACK COUNTY.
OUR FRIENDS IN THE HUNTING-FIELD.
A REAL GOOD THING.
STRAIGHT AS A DIE.
THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT.
KILLED IN THE OPEN.
TWILIGHT TALES. (Illustrated.)

By HAWLEY SMART.
THE PLUNGER.
LONG ODDS.
THE MASTER OF RATHKELLY.
THE OUTSIDER.

By B. L. FARJEON.
BASIL AND ANNETTE.
THE MYSTERY OF M. FELIX.
A YOUNG GIRL'S LIFE.
TOILERS OF BABYLON.
THE DUCHESS OF ROSEMARY LANE.

By MAY CROMMELIN.
THE FREAKS OF LADY FORTUNE.

By FLORENCE WARDEN.
A WILFUL WARD.

By MABEL COLLINS.
VIOLA FANSHAWE.

By B. M. CROKER.
TWO MASTERS.

By HUME NISBET.
THE SAVAGE QUEEN.

F. V. WHITE & CO., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.
ONE VOLUME NOVELS—(continued).

By F. C. PHILIPS & C. J. WILLS.
SYBIL ROSS'S MARRIAGE.
By MRS. ALEXANDER.
BLIND FATE.
A LIFE INTEREST.
MONA'S CHOICE.
BY WOMAN'S WIT.
By MRS. LOVETT CAMERON.
JACK'S SECRET.
A LOST WIFE.
THIS WICKED WORLD.
THE COST OF A LIE.

By JUSTIN M'CARTHY, M.P. & Mrs. CAMPBELL PRAED
THE LADIES' GALLERY.
THE RIVAL PRINCESS.

By MRS. ROBERT JOCELYN.
THE M.F.H.'S DAUGHTER.
THE CRITON HUNT MYSTERY.

By BRET HARTE.
THE CRUSADE OF THE "EXCELSIOR."

By the Honble. MRS. FETHERSTONHAUGH.
DREAM FACES.

By FERGUS HUME.
THE MAN WITH A SECRET.
MISS MEPHISTOPHELES.

By Mrs. HUNGERFORD, Author of "MOLLY BAWN."
THE HONBLE. MRS. VEREKER.
A LIFE'S REMORSE.
APRIL'S LADY.

By "RITA."

SHEBA.
MISS KATE.

By MRS. ALEXANDER FRASER.
DAUGHTERS OF BELGRAVIA.
SHE CAME BETWEEN.

By MAY CROMMELIN and J. MORAY BROWN.
VIOLET VYVIAN, M.F.H.

By F. C. PHILIPS and PERCY FENDALL.
A DAUGHTER'S SACRIFICE.
MARGARET BYNG.

F. V. WHITE & CO., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.
“POPULAR” NOVELS.

Picture Boards, 2s. each.

AT ALL BOOKSELLERS’ AND BOOKSTALLS.


BEAUTIFUL JIM. (7th Edition.) By the same Author.

A SIEGE BABY. (4th Edition) By the same Author.

GARRISON GOSSIP. (5th Edition.) By the same Author.

ARMY SOCIETY: Life in a Garrison Town. (9th Edition.) By the same Author.

MISS MEPHISTOPHELES. (5th Edition.) By Fergus Hume.

LONG ODDS. (4th Edition.) By Hawley Smart.

THE MASTER OF RATHKELLY. (5th Edition.)

By the same Author.

THE OUTSIDER. (6th Edition.) By the same Author.

A LIFE INTEREST. (3rd Edition.) By Mrs. Alexander.

MONA’S CHOICE. (4th Edition.) By the same Author.

BY WOMAN’S WIT. (5th Edition.) By the same Author.

THE HON. MRS. VEREKER. By Mrs. Hungerford, Author of “Molly Bawn.”


MATRON OR MAID? (3rd Edition.) By the same Author.

F. V. WHITE & Co., 31, Southampton Street, Strand.
"POPULAR" NOVELS—(continued).

A CRACK COUNTY. (5th Edition.) By the same Author.
A REAL GOOD THING. (7th Edition.) By the same Author.
STRAIGHT AS A DIE. (8th Edition.) By the same Author.
THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT. (7th Edition.) By the same Author.
KILLED IN THE OPEN. (8th Edition.) By the same Author.
SHEBA; A Study of Girlhood. (3rd Edition.) By "Rita."
TOILERS OF BABYLON. By B. L. Farjeon.
A WOMAN'S FACE. By Florence Warden, Author of "The House on the Marsh," &c.
A WILFUL WARD. By Florence Warden.
THIS WICKED WORLD. (4th Edition.) By Mrs. Lovett Cameron.
A NORTH COUNTRY MAID. By the same Author.
DAUGHTERS OF BELGRAVIA. By Mrs. Alexander Fraser.
VIOLA FANSHAWE. By Mabel Collins.
MY OWN CHILD. By Florence Marryat.
The CRUSADE OF THE "EXCELSIOR."
By Bret Harte.
ONE SHILLING NOVELS.
In Paper Covers. (Cloth, 1s. 6d.)
At all Booksellers and Bookstalls.

LUMLEY THE PAINTER. WINTER'S CHRISTMAS ANNUAL. (7th Year.) By JOHN STRANGE WINTER, Author of "Bootles' Baby," "Bootles' Children," &c. (4th Edition.)

GOOD-BYE. (5th Edition.) By the same Author.
HE WENT FOR A SOLDIER. (6th Edition.) By the same Author.
FERRERS COURT. (4th Edition.) By the same Author.
BUTTONS. (6th Edition.) By the same Author.
A LITTLE FOOL. (9th Edition.) By the same Author.
MY POOR DICK. (Illustrated by MAURICE GREIFFENHAGEN.) (8th Edition.) By the same Author.
BOOTLES' CHILDREN. (Illustrated by J. BERNARD PARTRIDGE.) (10th Edition.) By the same Author.
THE CONFESSIONS OF A PUBLISHER. By the same Author.
MIGNON'S HUSBAND. (12th Edition.) By the same Author.
THAT IMP. (11th Edition.) By the same Author.
MIGNON'S SECRET. (16th Edition.) By the same Author.
ON MARCH. (9th Edition.) By the same Author.
IN QUARTERS. (10th Edition.) By the same Author.

THE PICCADILLY PUZZLE. By the same Author.
A VERY YOUNG COUPLE. By B. L. FARJEON, Author of "Toilers of Babylon," &c.
THE PERIL OF RICHARD PARDON. (2nd Edition.) By the same Author.
A STRANGE ENCHANTMENT. By the same Author.

F. V. WHITE & Co., 31, Southampton Street. Strand
ONE SHILLING NOVELS—continued.

MY JO, JOHN. By Helen Mathers. (2nd Edition.)

THREE WOMEN IN ONE BOAT; A River Sketch. (3rd Edition.) By Constance MacEwen, Author of “Soap,” &c.

WELL WON. By Mrs. Alexander, Author of “The Wooing O’t,” “Blind Fate,” &c. (2nd Edition.)


THE CONFESSIONS OF A DOOR MAT. By Alfred C. Calmour, Author of “The Amber Heart,” &c.

THE MYSTERY OF A WOMAN’S HEART. By Mrs. Edward Kennard.

IN A GRASS COUNTRY. By Mrs. Lovett Cameron. (Ninth Edition.)


THE SEVENTH DREAM. By the same Author.

A BLACK BUSINESS. (3rd Edition.) By Hawley Smart, Author of “The Outsider,” &c.

THE LAST COUP. (3rd Edition.) By the same Author.

THRICE PAST THE POST. (3rd Edition.) By the same Author.

HER LAST THROW. (2nd Edition.) By Mrs. Hungerford, Author of “Molly Bawn,” &c.

A LITTLE REBEL. By the same Author.

MY WONDERFUL WIFE! A STUDY IN SMOKE. (2nd Edition.) By Marie Corelli, Author of “A Romance of Two Worlds,” &c. (Dedicated to the Daily Telegraph.)

A FRENCH MARRIAGE. By F. C. Philips.

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES. By the same Author.

DEVIL’S FORD. By Bret Harte.
BELGRAVIA:
A LONDON MAGAZINE.

Terms of Subscription: Payable in advance.

TWELVE MONTHS (POST FREE) . . . . 12s.
DO. INCLUDING THE SUMMER NUMBER AND CHRISTMAS ANNUAL . . . . 14s.

Elegantly Bound Volumes of "Belgravia," with Gilt Edges (560 pages), price, 7s. 6d. each. Now Ready.

"'Belgravia' begins the year with a remarkable advance both in its literature and general 'get up,' and gives promise of the well-deserved return of its old popularity."—Life.

"'Belgravia' is one of the most thoroughly entertaining of all the monthlies which supply their readers with the lighter forms of literature. Its fiction is of a high order, and its shorter sketches and stories are little gems in their way, with scarcely a dull page in the whole of them."—North British Daily Mail.

"'Belgravia' keeps up the character for originality which it has held so long."—Blackburn Times.

All Communications to be addressed to

THE EDITOR OF "BELGRAVIA,"
C/o F. V. WHITE & CO., 31, Southampton St., Strand, W.C.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

LONDON SOCIETY.
ESTABLISHED 1862.
A MONTHLY MAGAZINE
Of Light and Amusing Literature by the most popular Authors of the day.

Terms of Subscription: Payable in advance.

TWELVE MONTHS (POST FREE) . . . . 12s.
DO. INCLUDING THE SUMMER NUMBER AND THE CHRISTMAS NUMBER . . . 14s.

Handsomely Bound Volumes of "London Society," with Gilt Edges (780 pages), price, 10s. 6d. each. Now Ready.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.
"Readers who like to be amused should take in 'London Society.' . . 'London Society' is a good shillingworth."—Lady's Pictorial.

"This attractive magazine is remarkable for variety of subject and excellence of its light literature."—Public Opinion.

"Full of the light and amusing literature it professes to supply."—Literary World.

"It is bright, interesting, and a perfect mine of light and amusing literature. It is ably conducted, and should enjoy an ever-increasing circulation."—Grantham Times

All communications to be addressed to

THE EDITOR OF "LONDON SOCIETY,"
C/o F. V. WHITE & CO., 31, Southampton St., Strand, W.C.

F. V. WHITE & CO., 31, Southampton St., Strand, W.C.