

*Knights Who Fought the Dragon*

"and yes—an affection calm and quiet, like that I feel for my mother."

"Is that love—love enough to marry me, Ray?" he said.

"That is just what I don't know, Douglas. Does any one ever love twice, I wonder?—that is, any one who loves deeply. Then, I'm not heroic and self-sacrificing as you are. You are blinded to my real self. I'm no mate for you. I'm contemptible in my own eyes often and often. Why don't you despise me for an ease-loving creature? Why did you ever love me?"

"Love you, darling," he echoed, passionately. "I love you because I was born to, I think. I can no more help it than I can help the circulation of my blood."

"I know," she said gently, "because I had that maddening, delirious love once, and Douglas, I haven't it now. Can you be satisfied with less?"

"I have thought sometimes," he said, speaking with an effort, "that if I could be near you always and have the right to shield you—if you were only mine—mine, darling, what presumption it seems to say it?—that that would content me; but in my calmer moments I know that, dear as you are to me, I would not want