

## CHAPTER LI

### AN EPITAPH

**G**EORGE did not hear of Ethel's death till she was buried. He read of course in next day's evening papers of the sensational suicide at Covent Garden, but no names were given, and he had not associated the two unfortunate women.

Pourgot had been thoroughly frightened by the meeting, and sounded the bugle of return. He agreed, however, to spend one more day in London as Claire was not yet well enough to travel.

That night George invited them to dinner at Frascati's, making instinctively for the same table as that associated with Ravin's farewell. The band was playing Elgar's *Salut d'Amour* as they entered, a melody which captivated Claire, but which George by this time found a trifle hackneyed. He was particularly silent that evening, but Pourgot was so absorbed in Claire, and Claire was so absorbed in herself, that at first they did not notice.

George was more and more a fatalist. It seemed to him now natural that he should make friends only for a little, and that they should pass again out of his life. Other people were but stones flung into the surface of the slow-moving river of life, round whose brief entrance and exit rippled circles which in another moment passed into oblivion.

Such was life in relation to other men and women. But, ah, how different was the life of energy in work! Here there was no baffling circle, no drift of aimless current. Every day was a step of progress, new knowledge and new power acquired. Love and friendship might in vain hold out enticements. They were the life-illusion, necessary