

you something, something which, try as I must, I cannot keep from telling you, though every day, and all day long, I keep the thought uppermost in my mind that I am too bold. I am a poor man, I have no prospect of fortune, except that my brains can make, but they shall make one; only now, just now, it looks so hopeless, and it will look hopeless always if I have not your love to help me; but I shouldn't ask for it yet I know—Forgive me, forgive me, Margaret, and understand—”

“I do understand; but why, why have you come to-day?”

“Why have I come to-day?” he echoed. “Why have I come to-day! Because I couldn't keep away any longer, that was why—Don't you see, Margaret?”

There was a look of terrible fear in his face.

“I loved you yesterday,” she said, slowly, looking away from him, “and I think I shall love you to-morrow—”

“Ah!” he said, bending and kissing her hands passionately. “But,” she continued, drawing them slowly away, “I don't seem to be able to love you to-day in quite the same way. I have just killed somebody for your sake—don't be afraid, I shan't go to the gallows for it; those are the sort of murders that have nothing to do with the law—but while the blood is red upon my hands I feel a sort of guiltiness—I cannot be so frank with you as I might be—do you understand?”

“Yes, I think so,” he said slowly; “some poor beggar has not been as lucky as I hope to be—”

“That's it; now go, Alec—No, I will not give you a blood-stained hand, but come back to-morrow, and perhaps you shall have them both.”

“Margaret, my darling!”

But she pointed to the door, and he obeyed.

The morrow came, as morrows will, and with it Alec Deane.

Margaret met him with outstretched hands.

“Margaret!” he said, bending over

them tenderly; and they talked as lovers will, and forgot all but their own happiness.

“And when, love, when?” he whispered for the third time—

“Oh, you impatient boy!” she answered, laughing, “Isn't twelve months soon enough?”

“Don't be cruel, darling!”

“Well then, six, will that do?”

He had to be satisfied, and so it was settled.

One May morning, when Margaret was busy writing pretty little acknowledgments to the senders of some presents, Alec Deane came in upon her in a state of suppressed excitement.

“I have some news for you, Margaret, such good news!”

“Really?” smiling round at him, and going on with her writing.

“But it's like a fairy-tale, Margaret, and I hardly know where to begin. Well,” he blurted out, “a nice old relative in Australia, whom I never knew existed until now, has died, and in doing so, left me his fortune, which amounts to half a million.”

“Alec!”

“I knew, of course, in a dim sort of way, that I had relatives out there; but that there was any money, or I should be the lucky heir, or anything of that sort, never entered my head. Upon my word I can't realize it yet, can you?”

“N—o.”

“We shall be rich now, Margaret, just think of it, dear! And I am so glad for your sake, my beautiful darling. There is only one very awkward and disappointing thing about it to me, which is that they want me to go out there and see about some legal matters for which my presence is absolutely necessary. If they insist I suppose I shall have to go; but I shall not be an hour longer than necessary.”

“You must go, if it is to your interests to do so, Alec; and, after all, a few months out of our whole lives will not make so very much difference, will it?”

“I was going to ask you, Meg, if