

## "THE SCARLET THREAD."

By E. C. SALTMER.

"How dull is life!" a maiden cried;  
 And o'er this sad refrain she sighed,  
 "So little pleasure, so much pain,  
 So full of toil, so little gain!  
 'Tis like a loom whereon each thread,  
 As woven in, looks dark and dead.  
 I throw my shuttle day by day,  
 But still they come out cold and grey;  
 Nor warp nor woof will ever shine  
 With colours in this loom of mine.  
 I look around, but all I see  
 Of other lives perplexes me;  
 On every hand their fabrics fair  
 With mine so poor I must compare.  
 I see their textures rich with gold,  
 And shot with colours manifold;  
 With best designs of art replete,  
 In what seems perfect all complete;  
 And yet, if closely you espy,  
 A tiny flaw may meet the eye;

A flaw unnoticed, till there springs  
 A rent therefrom that ruin brings.  
 Ah! what is lacking, weaver, say,  
 Who doth the threads supply each day?  
 Why some so seeming fair and bright,  
 And others sombre as the night?"  
 Oh, maiden, there is still one thread  
 Your shuttle lacks, its colour—red,  
 Or rather, scarlet is the line  
 That you should straightway intertwine  
 To make your fabric strong and sure;  
 For then no rent will come from flaw;  
 And howsoever grey it seem,  
 This thread the dulness will redeem.  
 No golden glint nor hues that daze  
 Can e'er a texture's value raise.  
 It can be only seeming fair,  
 Unless the scarlet thread is there.  
 It means Redemption, nothing less;  
 So weave in fast His Righteousness.

## IN SPITE OF ALL.

By IDA LEMON, Author of "The Charming Cora," "A Winter Garment," etc.



## CHAPTER II.

BEATTIE'S Aunt Ella was a French-woman, and younger than her husband by several years. She was short and stout and not at all pretty, but she was very vivacious and had a bright gay manner that

carried people away with her. She was also very well off and could call to her aid all that was necessary in the way of art to improve on the shortcomings of nature. For, like many people who think much of personal beauty and do not possess it, she had a great deal of vanity. She had exquisite feet and hands, and to the right exhibition and proper adornment of these she devoted hours of meditation, while as much thought was given on how to hide or diminish her defects, such as her over-stoutness and red complexion. For the former she was for ever trying some new cure, in the way of diet or other treatment. At one time her food had to be weighed by herself at the dinner-table, at another claret had to be drunk at a certain specified time after instead of with meals, while, in the matter of exercise at stated intervals, she was a perfect tyrant to herself. Still, everyone must have some interest, and her husband, who took life philosophically, and who owed to his wife the fact that he was independent of his business for a substantial income, was thankful that her interest ended with herself instead

of causing her to meddle with other people's affairs. He had a theory that, if a woman can gratify her selfishness she has a right to it.

Then, too, Aunt Ella had behaved very well about Beattie. When Mr. Swannington's sister died and left the child to his charge, his wife made no objection to having her. At first Beattie was a new toy to the childless woman, then a genuine pleasure. She interfered little with her comfort; she was exceedingly affectionate and had good health. Also Aunt Ella took a pride in her beauty. She enjoyed buying her pretty dresses and picture hats and seeing her wear them. She found solid comfort in this, for the love of clothes was a passion with her, and yet she had enough good taste and good sense to see that it was more becoming to her to wear quiet colours and simple designs than the more elaborate styles she craved for. As Beattie grew up this satisfaction became keener. When she was buying a bonnet, expensive but simple, she would see a hat with broad brim and feathers and loops of bright-coloured ribbon, and turn it round and round on her hand, longing to put it on, but not daring to because she knew the shop-woman would be amused however grave she might look. Then she would have her momentary triumph.

"You may send this home with the bonnet," she would say.

And when it came home she would try it on with locked doors, and afterwards give it to Peattie with a sigh, following her with her eyes for the first few times she wore it with an expression of mingled delight and envy.

In Beattie's education she took little interest. She sent her to a good day-school and considered she had done her duty. She had never cared for study herself, and she hated learned women.

"Why should she spoil her eyes and her complexion by poring over books?" she would say to her husband. "They will be worth far more to her than a mind by-and-by."

A wiser man might have told her that an empty mind is a greater destroyer of beauty than an over-filled one, but in these matters Mr. Swannington was willing to be guided by his wife.

"She shall learn to dance well, behave prettily, dress well, and sing. With that, Lionel, she will be well-equipped, and we will marry her very soon, you will see."

And to be soon married, to some one of means, meant to Mrs. Swannington the acme of woman's success. When once she had seen Beattie mistress of her own house, and that a good one, she would feel she had done her duty to the sister-in-law she had never seen; for Beattie's parents had lived in India.

So that to her Beattie's leaving school was a matter on which she saw fit to congratulate rather than condole with her niece.

"How *gauche* she is, that Margaret," she said. "She is quite without charm. But pretty mothers often have such daughters. S. now school is over, eh, Beattie?"

"I have a prize, Aunt Ella," said Beattie, turning as she went upstairs to prepare for luncheon. Aunt Ella was following her, panting a good deal, as was her wont.

"Oh—but I thought—that—plain-girl!" (stopping for breath between each word), "that Edith was to have them all."

"She did have three, and she was not lower than third in anything. She is clever."

"She need be," said Aunt Ella, who was now safe on level ground. "She squints."