

The girl flushed with pleasure. "I thought you'd forgotten."

"And *I* thought Miss Videlle had persuaded you to give up everything for this massage you're so keen about."

Their talk took a more personal tone, and Lady Forsyth's attention strayed again towards the other boat. It had drifted a little farther off, and a change of seats was in progress between Mark and Miss Videlle. One moment his tall figure loomed against the dying splendour; the next, he sank cautiously down beside Miss Alison, who vouchsafed him a side-long glance of welcome.

"We're moving on a bit, Mother," he sang out, seeing her face turned in their direction.

They moved on accordingly: and it did not occur to Lady Forsyth that Miss O'Neill, sitting alone in the bows, obscured from vision of the disturbing pair, was in much the same mood as herself. Lonely, passionate, and emotional, her thwarted womanhood had found in Bel Alison an object on which she could lavish at once the protective tenderness of a mother and the devoted service of a man. Unhappily, this last included a consuming jealousy of those who had a better natural right to the girl than herself. Diligently and skilfully, therefore, she had scattered seeds of prejudice against the unjust half of creation—which, by the way, she very much appreciated in units, while denouncing it in the mass. By way of a more positive deterrent, her slender means were taxed to the utmost that Bel might have cushions and flowers and curtains to suit her fastidious taste. No one, least of all Miss Alison, suspected the extent of her secret shifts and sacrifices. And, intermittently, she had her reward. But no skill in self-deception could blind her to the fact that her lavish devotion was as dust in the balance against the passing attentions of a baronet, lord of two estates, and a fine-