

CHAPTER LIV.

TRUE LOVE.

There was a quiet marriage about a month after this, but not at Rossmore. Nora was married from Lady Barbara Biddulph's house in town, that lady especially desiring that this might be, "As I suppose, James," she said, with her usual brusqueness, to her nephew, "that there is no fear of a *third* woman laying claim to you?"

Biddulph having assured his aunt that this need not be dreaded nor anticipated, Lady Barbara wrote a kind letter to Nora, and also invited the doctor to be present at the ceremony.

This invitation gave the good man great pride and pleasure, but much perplexity. For one thing, he had a secret fear of Lady Bab's sharp tongue, and for another, some of his poor patients at this time were sorely in need of his aid. Finally, he decided not to go to the marriage, writing to tell Lady Bab "that such things are a bit out of my way;" at the same time thanking her for the honor she had done him, and wishing that all God's best gifts should be given to the two "who were about to share, and thus lighten, the burdens of our mortal life."

He also gave a gift to the bride before she left Scotland—a gift about which the halo of an old romance still hung; for in the days of his young manhood the doctor had bought this pretty, simple pearl ring, meaning to give it to the girl he then silently worshipped, when fame and fortune came to him.

Fame and fortune never came to him, and his love wedded another, not even knowing of the faithful heart she had won. But the doctor made no second choice, and for thirty years the ring never saw the light.

It pained him even now to look at it, though he had often thought of this unused love-token; but a few days before Nora left Rossmore, he arrived with it in his waistcoat pocket, and presented it to her with a blush and a sigh.

"I bought it lang ago," he said, with simple pathos, "when I had my dreams, too, maybe, Miss Stewart; but no woman's hand has ever worn it—and though it's a pair