

"I did to 'om!" She snarls with a sudden access of tigerishness. "And if that white face of yours had been within reach of my ten fingers, I'd have ragged it into ribbons like the blooming fallals. Don't dare tell me you'd not have done the same! Perhaps, though, you wouldn't. You're a lady, born and bred," owns Lessie grudgingly, "and I was a jobbing tailor's kid, that worked to keep myself and other folks as a baby imp in Pantomime, while you were being coddled up and kept in cotton-wool!"

She ends with a husky laugh and a shrug of the shoulders. The swollen face with the wet eyes is averted, or Lessie might be reused to fresh resentment by the tenderness of pity that is dawning in Lynette's.

"You have suffered cruelly, Lady Beauvayse; but I was not knowingly or wilfully to blame. Please try to believe it!"

Lessie blows her small nose with a toot of incredulity, and says through an intervening wad of damp lace-edged cambric:

"Go on!"

"I met Lord Beauvayse out at Gueldersdorp." The voice that comes from Lynette's pale lips is singularly level and quiet. "He was very handsome and very brave; he was an officer of the Colonel's Staff. He asked me to marry him, and I—I believed him honourable and true, and I said, 'Yes.' . . . That was one Sunday, when we were sitting by the river. On Thursday he was killed, and later—nearly a year after my marriage to Dr. Saxham—I found out the truth."

Lessie shrugs her pretty shoulders, but the face and voice of the speaker have brought conviction. She realises that if she has been injured, her rival has suffered equal wrong.

"You were pretty quick in taking on another man, it strikes me. But that's not my business. You say you found out?" She shows her admirably preserved teeth in a little grin of sardonic contempt—"nearly a year after your marriage. Don't tell me your husband let you go on burning joss-sticks to Beau's angelic memory when he might have made you spit on it by telling you the truth!"

Lynette's lip curls, and she lifts her little head proudly.

"He never once hinted at the truth. Nor was it through him I learned it!"