

and your voice as soft as any mother's: but—are you able for the work, do you think?"

"I have considered everything," answered Lydia, "and I am prepared to endure whatever may be disagreeable in my task, or rather, I should say, in my profession. This I know: it is a noble work and well worthy of the best laborers."

For a while longer the two girls talked on the subject, Judy gradually becoming infected with Lydia's enthusiasm, till she began to view this particular branch of woman's work in an entirely new and favorable light.

It was while they were thus conversing that a quick bark from Trap, an angry and altogether aggressive bark which was presently followed by one of undoubted joy and welcome, arrested the attention of the two girls. Lydia was the first to discover the cause of Trap's agitation; she started and then looked, with a humorous twinkle in her bright brown eyes, at her companion.

"When do you expect Mr. Littleworth, Judy?" she inquired, naively.

"Not till the end of the month. Why—" She perceived the expression of Lydia's face, and her own flushed and paled as she stood up and looked around with a soft, expectant light in her blue eyes.

"Jack!" she exclaimed, making a step forward, and then stopped, confused and trembling; while Littleworth, who had caught sight of her, advanced with rapid strides, his handsome, sun-burnt face all aglow with eager love.

Now Lydia, like all non-sentimental people, had an extraordinary horror of a scene, be it a love scene or any other, and as she sat there on the mossy log in full view of the meeting between the lovers, she devoutly wished that the earth would suddenly open and engulf her, log and all. As it was, she conceived a sudden interest in Trap, who was performing some idiotic antics with a large stone; and he evidently appreciated the close attention she gave to him, for he worked himself into such a transport of delight that the anxious gravity of Miss Graham's countenance relaxed in a broad smile.

But she need not have dreaded a scene between the lovers. Their greeting to one another was perfectly composed and altogether devoid of sentiment; except such as is conveyed from eye to eye, or in a close, long pressure of the hands. Most readers of these lines will understand these secret signs perfectly, the writer has no doubt. Lydia drew a breath of relief when, as she expressed it—"it was all over," and Mr. Littleworth advanced to shake hands with her, remarking that he was pleased to see her looking so well.

"I may return the compliments for you are looking extremely well, Mr. Littleworth. Is he not, Judy?" she asked, with that mischievous twinkle in her eye again.

Judy answered "yes," and raised her eyes for a moment to meet his gaze fixed full upon her face, which crimsoned as she turned away with a wildly beating heart, and seated herself beside Lydia. But that decided young person was not disposed for the part of "Gooseberry," and rising, declared that she must hasten home or she would surely be late for tea, and laughingly setting aside Judith's eager protests bade them good afternoon, and left them.

"I almost think we had better be going, too," said Judith, nervously, half rising as she spoke, but Jack laid his hand on her arm, and gently detained her.

"It is really not very late, Judy. Give me at least half an hour, won't you? Come, let us sit down on the dear old mossy log." He drew her down beside him, and presently with his arm around her waist he bent his head and kissed her trembling lips.

"Do you love me, Judy?" he whispered, and she answered softly, "Yes."

So, like Lydia, reader, let you and me leave them to the enjoyment of what Miss Braddon calls "the sweet inanities of love."

THE END.

A Just Ordeal.

It was to meet such difficulties as this that Tontines—"Bother!"

I wrote the first sitting at my desk, and said the last aloud, impatiently—well, there, angrily—for Mattie had bounced into the room, run to the back of my chair, and clapped her hands over my eyes, exclaiming:

"Oh, Dick, what a shame! and you promised to come up and dress."

"I do wish you would not be so childish!" I cried, snatching away her hands. "There's a blot you've made on my manuscript."

"Don't be so cross, sir!" she said, laughing, as she gave a waltz around the room, making her pretty silk dress whisk every one of the chairs, which she merrily picked up, and then coming to my writing table, she took a rose out of a basket of flowers, and began to arrange it in her chair.

"I am not cross," I said, coldly, "but engaged in a serious work of a mercantile and monetary nature. You seem to think men ought always to be butterflies."

"No, I don't," she cried.

"There, will that do?"

She held her hand on one side for me to see the creamy rose nestling in her crisp, dark hair; but after a glance at it, I let my eyes fall upon my desk, and went on writing my pamphlet. I saw that she was looking wistfully at me, but I paid no heed, and then she came and rested her hands upon my shoulder.

"Are you cross with me, Dick?" she said softly.

"Cross, no!" I jerked out impatiently. "Only I thought I had married a woman, and she has turned out to be a child." There was silence then for a few minutes, only broken by the scratching of a pen. The little hands twitched a little as they lay upon my shoulder, and I very nearly wrote down instead of the calculations—"Richard Marlow, how can you be such a disgraceful wretch?" But of course I did not write it—only thought—and then I felt wonderfully disposed to turn round, snatch the little graceful figure to my breast, and kiss away the tears which I knew were gathering in her eyes.

Somehow or other, though, I did not do it—only went on glumly writing—for I was cross, worried or annoyed. I had set myself a task that necessitated constant application, and I was not getting on as I could wish; so, like many more weak-minded individuals of the male sex, instead of asking for the comforts and advice of my wife, I visited my disappointment upon the first weak object at hand, and that object was the lady in question.

"Please, Dick, dear, don't be angry with me. I can't help feeling very young and girlish, though I am your wife. I do try, oh! so hard, to be womanly, but Dick, dear, I am only eighteen and a-half."

"Thirteen and a-half, I should say," I said scornfully, just as if some sour spirit were urging me on to say biting, sarcastic things that I knew would hurt the poor girl; but for the life of me I could not help it.

There was no answer—only a little sigh—and the hands were withdrawn.

I went on writing—rubbish that I knew I should have to cancel.

"Had you not better get ready, Dick?" said Mattie, softly. You said you would come when I went up stairs, and the Wilsons won't like it if you are late."

"Hang the Wilsons!" I growled.

There was another pause, filled up by the scratch of one of the noisiest pens I ever used, and another little sigh.

Mattie was standing close behind me, but I did not look around, and at last she glided gently to a chair and sat down.

"What are you going to do?" I asked roughly.

"Only to wait for you, Dick, dear," she replied.

"You need not wait. Go on, I shan't come. Say I've a headache—say anything."

"Dick are you unwell?" she said, tenderly, as she came behind me once more, and rested her little hand on my shoulder.

"Yes—no—. Pray don't bother. Go on. Perhaps I'll come and fetch you."

Don't waste life in doubts and fears; spend yourself on the work now before you, well assured that the right performance of this hour's duties will be the best preparation for the hours of ages that follow it.—Emerson.