

specifications, I asked, as the condition that he should reap the benefit of the invention, a half share in the works—and the hand of his niece. Ha! ha! The hand of his niece. You never saw a man so startled. I thought how you would have laughed had you seen his face. That a man in his own employment, the son of his secretary, should show such presumption was at first too much for him. And he had to take a good look at the invention and make no end of calculations as to its worth before he could make up his mind to say yes."

"That was last night, I suppose," said Rose.

"Yes, last night, after dinner. I could not say anything to you then, because you were playing, and there was that popinjay of a fellow, Mr. Carteret, hanging about as if you belonged to him. Now, that's the sort of fellow I hate, Rose. Hands like a lady's, face always on the grin, never able to say a thing straight out, but must always playround it like a cat with a mouse. Yah! And besides, last night, Rose, the first time after seven years, I could not get over the feeling of strangeness. You looked so beautiful—too beautiful for me—and I was not able to realise my happiness. But now, Rose, now, it is all over, and you are mine at last."

He took her in his arms and kissed her on the lips and cheeks. Oh! how different were the kisses of Julian Carteret the day before! She accepted his caresses without resistance, quite passively; if the tears came into her eyes they were tears of humiliation and blind rage against Fate; if she was silent it was because she had no words to speak of her shame in playing this false part; if she accepted her lover's kisses, it was because these were clearly part of the contract. If she engaged herself to him she must accept his caresses. Not to be allowed to kiss your *fiancée* would be a thing unseemly and quite foreign to the North-countryman's notions of an engagement.

"I cannot love you as you love me, John," she murmured at length, with dry lips.

He thought she meant that she could not love him with such a passionate longing as filled his own heart.

"No, Rose; because nobody *could* love any one else as I love you. Oh! how have I longed for this moment during the long seven years of our separation!"

"Do you really love me so much?" she

said, timidly. Do you love me enough to do anything for me, like a knight of old?"

"The knights of old were humbugs," said John, laughing. "I would do any mortal thing for you but one——"

"And that one thing?" she asked eagerly.

"Is to give you up."

Her face fell. That was the one thing she would have asked him to do.

"And you would be satisfied to take me as I am," she went on, "knowing that I can never—never love you as you love me?"

"Quite satisfied, Rose—more than satisfied. So long as I have you, I have everything. If you are not to be mine, I have nothing. Why, my dear, the right sort of love will come. I am not afraid. When you and I are alone—not in a great dreary palace like this, with dinners that last for hours, and black coats for evenings, and stuck up ceremonies to go through—but in a pretty cottage all our own——"

A cottage! and no black coats for evenings! and no ceremonies at all! Poor Rose!

"A cottage all our own, with a garden in front and one behind—then you will know what happiness really means. We shall have dinner at one sharp to the minute—a quarter of an hour for a pipe—off to work again—back at six-thirty, punctual—have a wash——"

Oh, heavens! he would have a wash!

"But you will not be a workman, John."

"Yes, I shall. I shall be the working partner. And I mean to work too, among the wheels with the men just as I do now. Well, I shall get home at six-thirty, wash-up for the evening, have tea, and then sit down for a couple of hours work over books or whatever else turns up. And then, my dear, at nine o'clock we shall sit side by side before the fire, while I smoke a pipe and drink a glass of grog and talk to my wife. What a life it will be!"

"What a life it will be!" echoed Rose, drearily. To sit every evening by the fire while her husband smoked his tobacco. What a life!

"No-fooling about with parties and society and all that nonsense," her lover went on; "no racing after pleasure. A quiet home life for you, and for me, a good hard-working twelve months in every year."

No parties! no fooling about! no society! What a life! The girl's heart sank very low.