

throw his arms about her and kiss away the glistening beads on her long eyelashes.

"You have been very, very successful," she added. "Only yourself would stoop like this."

It seemed a choking wave swept over him; his ears were drumming and singing.

"Do not say that," he replied hoarsely. "I am not successful. Long ago I set one thing before me; strove for it, prayed for it above all things in this world, and I was miserably foiled and beaten. I wanted you—you, Florence, and I lost you. I have been an abject failure."

She took a step forward, and laid a trembling hand on his arm.

"I cannot bear you to say that," she told him. "You have not failed because what we—what we once wished has not come to pass."

"Yes, yes, I have failed," he repeated. "I have failed where failure is misery—unless—" He paused, his eyes glowing as she had once seen them glow before. "Florence," he asked dizzily, "in spite of all—all that is past, will you let it be yet?"

For a moment she did not move; then she put her arms about his neck and kissed him.

"My noble Evan," she said. "I loved you long ago; I love you more than ever now. But certain things are for ever impossible."

"Not impossible," he cried brokenly. "Do not say impossible."

"Yes, impossible. There was a time and we missed it, and now it is too late. Put it from your mind. We have already cost you enough; let the sacrifices end. Take that," kissing him again. "But I am not fit to be Sir Evan Kinloch's wife."

"You are fit for the best in the land," he protested.

"Then I might be fit for you, for you are the best in the land, the very best. But whatever I once was I have now quite got over vanity. No. I could not stand beside you. You will go higher up yet, up to the very top; and I will sit in the shade and admire from afar, and in all the huzzaing crowds there will not be one whose 'God bless him,' will come so straight from the heart as mine. You know that?"

"I know," he answered. "But that is not enough. Florence, I want your love—I want you."