

PRETTY MISS NEVILLE

BY B. M. CROKER

CHAPTER XIX

PRETTY MISS NEVILLE IS ENGAGED AT LAST

"Be wise to-day, 'tis madness to defer,"—Young
 I felt a shock—a shock as if a large
 bucket of icewater had been suddenly
 dashed over me. I stood still, in the
 middle of the road, fern in hand—
 stupefied and speechless. So this
 was what he called friendship! Had
 I heard aright? My ears had not
 deceived me.
 "You will marry me, won't you,
 Nora?" he repeated, somewhat
 abashed by the undigested amazement
 reflected in my ever-tall-tale
 face. "Surely you have known my
 feelings this long time? Make me
 happy; say you will be my wife."
 "Impossible," I answered, blushing
 furiously.
 "And why impossible?" eagerly.
 "I thought you only cared for me
 as a friend?"
 "A friend? Pah! I fell in love
 with you across the dinner-table the
 first night I ever saw you! There is
 no such thing as friendship between
 a man like me and a girl like you; it
 must be love or nothing."
 "But you said you were my friend,"
 I persisted.
 "Yes, very true; friendship is the
 beginning of love, the outworks of
 the citadel. And now, Nora, tell me,
 my dear little girl—do you care about
 me—do you love me?"
 "No, I do not; no, certainly I do
 not," I replied, with great resolution
 and flaming cheeks.
 "But you like me," he answered,
 unabashed. "Your auntie told me
 that I might—hope. I have her best
 wishes in the matter. Nora, surely
 you will listen to me; with even
 liking I will be content to commence
 with."
 "I—do like you—I like you very
 much—better than any other man
 except uncle—but I do not love you,"
 I stammered.
 "If you love no other man, that is
 enough for me; you are sure there is
 no one you care about?" he asked in
 a calm, judicial manner.
 "No one," I answered, firmly.
 "Then you will marry me, Nora—
 liking will soon ripen into love," he
 urged, in a tone of subtle persuasive-
 ness.
 "But I do not want to marry any
 one," I replied with a woe-begone
 face, and on the very brink of tears.
 Surely no one would guess from my
 face and attitude that a heart and
 coronet were figuratively at my feet!
 "Oh, come now, you know that all
 nonsense! Some day you will
 marry, as a matter of course. Shall
 I give you a day to think of it, Nora?
 Shall I come for my answer to-
 morrow?" said Major Percival, stand-
 ing right before me, with an air of
 resolution, and an inflection in his
 voice that told me he was a deter-
 mined man, and one not to be denied.
 "Very well," I faltered, eagerly
 grasping at the proffered delay.
 "You can talk it over with your
 aunt" (oh, crafty Major Percival!),
 "and this time to-morrow you will
 for my answer. You don't know how
 anxious I will be, nor how I shall be
 counting the minutes till I know my
 fate. May I walk home with you
 now?"
 "No, not on any account!" I an-
 swered, pettishly. "I see uncle coming
 this way," casting my eye discarded
 fern among the bushes. "I will go
 with him; I want to be alone, and to
 think. You have taken me so much
 by surprise."
 I kept my word; I thought a great
 deal. I lay awake for hours, revolv-
 ing the matter in my mind. Major
 Percival was much older than I was,
 and I did not love him; but many
 marriages were exceedingly happy,
 despite disparity of years, and I asked
 myself, over and over again, could I
 love any one? Was I not, although
 hot-tempered and impulsive in every-
 day matters, of a really cold and un-
 demonstrative disposition? It was
 a magnificent match. Auntie's heart
 was set upon it. She had talked to
 me eloquently for hours before I went
 to bed, and discussed Major Percival's
 character, his position, and his pros-
 pects of happiness, and had summed
 up; and, in her opinion, the verdict
 should be, Yes.
 "Think, my darling girl, if any-
 thing were to happen to us, how
 alone in the world you would be,
 without any near relatives, without
 any man of your own kind and kin,
 to take care of you and look after
 you."
 I thought of Maurice, and became
 crimson.
 After all, I made up my mind to
 say "Yes," and "Yes" I did breathe
 in Major Percival's rapturous ear
 when he came to hear his fate, that
 lovely April afternoon, in our dim,
 jasmine-scented drawing-room. But
 —there were conditions.
 "I have some stipulations to make,
 Major Percival," I said, as he took
 me by both hands, and drew me to-
 ward him.
 "Anything, everything, to the half
 of my kingdom," he exclaimed gayly.
 "The first is, that our engagement
 remains unknown to any, save our
 immediate relations, for the next six
 months—in case we should change
 our minds."
 "I agree. I shall be in England
 all the time," he answered cordially.
 "But my mind can know no change."
 "At the end of that time, you can
 come and see us at Mulka-pore, and
 the matter may be made public; but
 I shall not marry you for at least a
 year."
 "I agree to that also—though I
 think it is rather hard lines."
 "And the third is—" becoming

crimson, and breaking down alto-
 gether.
 "Is—that? Something easier than
 the last, I hope."
 "Do not think me very foolish, or
 be very angry with me; but I have a
 nervous horror—of—of" (making
 a superhuman effort and bringing
 out my words with a gasp)—"of any
 man kissing me."
 "But I am different," returned
 Major Percival, boldly putting his
 arm around my waist.
 "No, no, you are not," I answer,
 scarlet and trembling. "If I thought
 you would—I should dread every
 time I saw you."
 Major Percival's sole answer was
 to put his hand under my chin, turn
 my face towards his, and, before I
 could move, without a word of warn-
 ing, the dreaded kiss had become a
 hateful fact. It was (speedless to re-
 mark) the first time a man had ever
 laid his lips on mine. I struggled,
 I shuddered, I tore myself from his
 arms, and casting myself down on a
 couch, buried my face in the cushions,
 and burst into a storm of tears—
 tears of shame and terror. I wept
 and sobbed so long and so bitterly
 that my betrothed was beside him-
 self with amazement and consterna-
 tion.
 He came and sat by me, smoothed
 down my rumpled auburn locks, and
 overcame me with fond epithets
 and endearments, and vague apolo-
 gies; but I was deaf as the traditional
 adder to all his caresses; and he was
 almost at his wits' end.
 "If I never kiss you again without
 your leave, Nora, will you be satisfied?"
 he asked at length, in a low voice;
 "never again without your permis-
 sion?"
 "Promise," I repeated, raising my
 tear-stained face and sitting upright,
 but averting my eyes.
 "I give you my word of honor,"
 placing his hand in mine. There
 was a long pause. At length my sobs
 ceased, and Percival broke the silence.
 "You little goose," he said, reproach-
 fully; "well, I give in. I know I am
 a great fool for my pains; but I agree
 to all the conditions. And now,
 Nora" (looking at me with the air of
 a triumphant proprietor)—"now you
 and I are engaged to be married."
 "Yes," I answered, with a watery
 smile.
 "Here is your ring," producing a
 little velvet case. "I bought it on
 my chance," he added apologetically,
 displaying a splendid sapphire and
 diamond marquise ring, and placing
 it on the third finger of my left hand.
 "But I do not wish to wear it yet;
 we are to do nothing—nothing de-
 cided—for six months," I answered
 hastily.
 "Oh, you have given me your word;
 and now there is no going back. You
 belong to me," he replied, firmly.
 "You don't know how my first time
 with you," he said, "that you were just
 the style of girl that I would like to
 make my wife. You are so aristoc-
 ratic-looking; your lovely face would
 adorn the highest position; your
 manners are so natural and so fascinat-
 ing; and yet there is a tinge of
 hauteur about my little Nora that
 will sit very well on Mrs. Hastings
 Percival," he concluded complacently.
 The few days intervening before
 the morning of Major Percival's de-
 parture he spent almost entirely
 with me. We walked together, sat
 out in the garden together, and did a
 considerable amount of talking to-
 gether; but there was no more kiss-
 ing. My fiancé was evidently well
 pleased with his betrothed, and I felt
 it quite possible that we would be a
 very happy couple. My future hus-
 band—how odd it sounded—was
 clever, gentlemanly, much sought
 after, and evidently very much in
 love with me.
 I had but little sentiment in my
 composition, and no scenes of hys-
 terical smothered sobs, or wild pro-
 testations need be expected from me
 when the wrench of parting came. I
 was sorry—moderately sorry—I was
 really surprised and ashamed within
 myself that I did not feel the leav-
 ing more acutely. I saw my lover
 whirled away in a Madras Carrying
 Company's carriage, while I stood at
 our gate waving my handkerchief
 with tearful eyes. It was not
 proper, it was not natural, I am de-
 sirous as he was granite, I said to my-
 self reproachfully, as I turned away
 and walked slowly toward the house.
 A few days later I likewise went
 down from Ooty, an engaged young
 lady, in the charge of a very com-
 placent chaperon. During the long
 down-hill drive, thirty-four miles, I
 had ample time for reflection, and
 by the time we had changed horses
 at Kular I had thoroughly and
 minutely reviewed my career during
 the past three months, and came to
 the conclusion that, on the whole, I
 liked Major Percival as well as I
 could possibly like anybody; and that
 I was—as auntie said—an extremely
 fortunate girl.
 True, uncle could not endure him,
 but that was mere narrow-minded
 prejudice. He declared that "Major
 Percival could not hit a flying hay-
 stack, nor ride a dhoty's donkey!"
 The fellow is too old; he is a dandy,"
 he added, "and not the sort of hus-
 band I would choose for my little
 Nora."
 "I suppose if she is satisfied, that's
 the main thing," said auntie, point-
 edly.
 "Oh, of course, of course; but, all I
 can say is, that there's no accounting
 for tastes," he retorted, as he once
 more subsided behind the Pioneer
 newspaper.
 It was a cruel trial to auntie that
 the engagement was to be kept quiet,
 and not immediately blazoned forth.
 But I was firm. I had Major
 Percival's consent, and that was suf-
 ficient, and the matter was to be

buried in silence for the present.
 "And why?" asked auntie, irritably.
 "Because I wish for a whole six
 months' freedom before I am branded
 as that public curiosity, an engaged
 young lady—who is to have no more
 social cakes and ale, and is supposed
 to care for nothing but love-letters
 and the moon!"
 The day following our return Mrs.
 Fox (who had preceded us to the
 plains) came stepping over the wall
 connecting our compounds, thirsting
 for news, but news there was none!
 There was evidently no engagement;
 Major Percival's name was not even
 mentioned in the course of conversa-
 tion; and as I looked fagged and
 haggard (after our long journey),
 she immediately leaped to the well-
 come conclusion that I had been very
 badly treated. She veiled her col-
 dolences, but secretly, talked in a
 general way of unprincipled male
 flirts engaging girl's affections
 (gazing impressively at me with an
 air of grievous interest), and then
 leaving them the lurch!
 "Dear, Mrs. Neville," she said,
 pressing auntie's hand, as she was
 leaving, and looking into her face
 with deep compassion, I know what
 it is; I can feel for you sincerely. You
 remember that terrible business of
 our Mossy's and the unparadised
 way Major Walker—"
 "Really, Mrs. Fox," interrupted
 auntie, coloring and drawing herself
 up; "I am at a loss to understand
 you; there is no occasion for your
 sympathy, I am happy to tell you."
 "Oh, of course, of course; keep it
 as quiet as possible!" returned the
 irrepressible matron, nodding her
 head with indescribable significance,
 and backing toward the door. "But
 indeed I feel for you, although you
 will not trust an old neighbor like
 me." So saying, she hastily departed.
 "Remember your promise; and if you
 tell her, you must say as well as
 announce it in the Mulka-pore Herald.
 I'm sure I don't mind; I think it is
 a capital joke."
 "A joke?" echoed auntie. "Well,
 I fail to see the point of it. Now
 here comes Mrs. St. Ubes," as a close
 carriage drove under the porch.
 "Look here, Nora," said auntie de-
 cisively, "I shall certainly tell her.
 She is a friend of Major Percival's,
 and she ought to know; and she
 shall, giving her cap a tug to em-
 phasize the fact."
 I had no time to remonstrate;
 Mrs. St. Ubes was already sailing
 languidly into the room, an elegant
 vision of cream surah and crimson.
 She, too, came to condole; and was
 possessed with an insensate craving
 for "hill news"; having also pre-
 ceded us to the plains.
 After a little desultory talk about
 our journey, the heat, the dust, the
 people who were still at Ooty, and
 the weddings that were, and were
 not coming off, she casually inquired
 for Major Percival.
 "He did not leave his heart behind
 him, at any rate. He is a shocking
 flirt, I can tell you, Miss Neville,
 and never means anything; as no doubt
 you know. But he is quite too charm-
 ing, he is not?" she remarked to me
 in her most pointed manner.
 I did not know exactly what to
 reply.
 "He is one of those gay cavaliers
 who love, and then ride away, and
 ha! I hope you kept a tight hold of
 your heart?" she proceeded, with an
 air of would-be graceful badinage.
 Auntie now came into action, and
 in spite of my nods and signs,
 speedily declared the real state of
 affairs.
 A stare of the rudest incredulity
 was the only answer she received to
 her announcement for nearly sixty
 seconds. Evidently, it was not
 agreeable intelligence to our fair
 visitor. She became very red, then
 very white. At length she found
 words, and asked, with a lolling
 hysterical laugh, "Are you in earn-
 est, Mrs. Neville?"
 Auntie replied in a tone that must
 have carried conviction to the most
 disbelieving.
 "Then it is really all settled," re-
 turned Mrs. St. Ubes, who had now
 recovered her usual color and her
 presence of mind. "All settled,"
 she reiterated, eying me with a look
 of deadly import.
 "Yes, quite settled," replied
 auntie, almost humble in her tri-
 umph.
 "Well, it is certainly a magnificent
 match for your niece," observed Mrs.
 St. Ubes, in a tone that King
 Cophetua's relations might have
 used when speaking among them-
 selves of his betrothal.
 "You must feel yourself of some
 importance now, Miss Nora," turn-
 ing to me; "may your former ac-
 quaintances presume to touch the
 hem of your garment?"
 "It is not to be known to any one
 in the place," I answered compos-
 edly.
 "But knowing you were such a
 friend of Major Percival's," inter-
 rupted auntie, "I thought you
 ought to be let into the secret, as I
 was certain that you would be
 pleased to hear of Nora's good for-
 tune." Oh, simple-minded, single-
 hearted auntie!
 Mrs. St. Ubes glared at her hostess
 during this most unfortunate speech.
 If her face was any index to her
 feelings, her pleasure was imper-
 ceptible to the naked eye; to tell the

truth, she was in a highly volcanic
 state—a condition the laws of good-
 breeding, and a colossal outlay of
 self-command, alone enabled her to
 restrain. Turning to me with a
 forced smile, she said:
 "Well, I hope you will be happy,"
 in a tone of voice that expressed the
 gravest doubt. "You may rely on
 me. Your little story shall not go
 any further," rising. She threw
 vast emphasis into the word story,
 and accompanied the thrust with a
 look baffling all description. "I
 suppose we shall see you at the band
 this evening, Mrs. Neville?" she
 said, kissing auntie with an appear-
 ance of almost filial affection; and
 patting me on the shoulder, with an
 air of negligent patronage, she
 marched off, drums beating, colors
 flying, and, in fact, with all the
 credit of a honorable retreat.
 Major Percival had no associations
 in his mind connected with Mulka-
 pore; and at times I could scarcely
 believe that I was engaged to him.
 My weekly letter and auntie's occa-
 sional remarks alone reminded me
 of the fact. I liked him. Yes, I liked
 him very much indeed. I was proud
 of having been singled out by so in-
 tellectual and popular a man; but I
 was not one atom in love. They say
 that "absence makes the heart grow
 fonder," but time and distance had
 had no effect upon mine. The fact
 was, I could not be "in love" with
 any one; it was not my nature, I
 told myself over and over again.
 The love of which I read in novels
 was simply as unintelligible to me
 as one of the dead languages. Differ-
 ent people had different disposi-
 tions, I told myself; and although I
 was impulsive and readily carried
 away by anger, grief or joy, I was
 really and truly of a cool, unim-
 passible character. My surround-
 ings as a child had withered up my
 tenderest sensibilities. I had had
 neither father, mother, sister, nor
 brother, and the affection I would
 have gladly bestowed on grand-
 father or Miss Fluker had been to a
 great extent returned on my hands.
 So I had grown up a hardened little
 creature—not that I was this by na-
 ture—but simply because no one
 cared two straws whether I loved
 them or not. Now that I had some
 scope for my feelings they were not
 readily forthcoming. If I had been
 asked whom I cared for most in all
 the world—on my word of honor I
 would have said auntie first, and
 then, perhaps, Major Percival; but
 even of this I was not very sure.

THE MISTRESS OF WIRIBIRRI

Ellen M. O'Sullivan in "The Southern Cross"
 It was late afternoon on an early
 December day, and the giant gums
 threw long shadows over the Wirri-
 birri homestead and over the big
 dam at the garden's foot, darkening
 the delicate green of the willows
 that tenderly kissed its cooling sur-
 face. The magpies had awakened
 from their afternoon nap and were
 filling the air with rippling music.
 The master of Wirribirri was lying
 on a cane lounge on the cool south-
 ern veranda, nursing his left knee,
 and in a fall he had had a couple of
 weeks' previously while schooling a
 new hunter over some rather stiff
 fences. The necessity of careful in-
 activity at first palled almost un-
 bearably, and it required all Mrs.
 Moyle's—his housekeeper—most
 earnest persuasion to keep him in
 bed for one week and the threat of
 Shane O'Shane, his right-hand man
 and the counsellor of his whole life-
 time.
 "Put one foot out, Master Kevin,"
 he had said, "as sure as the sun
 rises to-morrow I'll leave you
 for good and all and go gardening
 for old Brown at 'Letherton.' So
 there's for you now, my boy—
 you do it and I'll do it." So he
 moved out to the veranda, where he
 lay dreaming on this bright Decem-
 ber day. The dream was one that
 had haunted him for the last five
 years, and it gave him exquisite pain
 and pleasure—pleasure because of
 the unspoken beauty and lovableness
 of the girl who came to him in
 it and pain because of its utter in-
 tangibility.
 The crunching of a horse's hoofs
 on the gravel of the drive brought
 him back to the everyday world
 around him as Shane rode up with
 the mail bag swinging over his
 shoulder. He gave a long, low
 whistle, and a black boy came from
 where he had been enjoying a siesta
 under the big mulberry tree and took
 the long way. Shane slowly
 mounted the steps and came along
 to his master.
 "Those confounded ewes will have
 to be sold, Master Kevin," he said.
 "I met two of the boys out at the
 two-mile gate with them now. They
 found the lucerne flats last week and
 they've lived there since, and you
 might as well try to stop the tides
 from flowing as those sheep from go-
 ing back there now."
 "An' there's the mail, and a good
 big one it is, too." And he sorted
 the letters and papers and laid them
 conveniently to his master's hand and
 threw himself into the deck chair
 opposite and surveyed the master
 with a look of tender solicitude.
 "How does the knee feel to-day,
 laddie? You've got pale and thin.
 It's the lying still that's done it."
 And without waiting for a reply he
 went on: "Sure, every living soul in
 the township was after me to know
 how you were. The doctor said he'd
 run out some evening, and his wife said
 to tell you that she was coming, too,

and going to bring her sister. And a
 fine-looking girl she is, too," and
 Shane glanced out of his eye at
 his master's face, which was unper-
 turbed as he answered slowly:
 "It's very kind of her."
 "Brown was in the township, too,"
 Shane continued. "He was asking
 about you, and said to tell you he
 and the girls will ride over some
 day next week to see you. He sold
 two mobs of fats from 'Letherton'—
 didn't make much of them, either—
 and Father Lyons wanted to know
 every mortal thing about you, from
 your temper and your weight to
 what you eat and read, and he said
 to tell you that the new organ has
 come for the church, and as soon as
 you are able you're to go and try it.
 And you're to be the organist, and
 he won't have any parley about it.
 He has given his orders, and you're
 to obey. The only other fingers he'll
 allow on it are those of the mistress
 of Wirribirri, and if you'll provide
 her well and good. Meanwhile you're
 organist, and Mrs. Connor is quite
 frantic about it. Miss Kitty is home
 from the city wearing such a hat!
 Oh, Lor'! It is as big around as—
 as—as—that rose bed yonder, and
 there is quite a bushel of flowers
 cast about it; and they're both set
 on her being organist. But Father
 Lyons said nothing to the master or
 to me, and that's all about it."
 "Father Lyons is absurd," said
 Kevin O'Neill impatiently. "Miss
 Connor or any of the Brown girls
 would make a much more competent
 organist than I, but because it hap-
 pens that I presented the instrument
 he insists that no one else shall play
 it. I'll have to remonstrate with
 him."
 "He hasn't said 'no one else'
 Master Kevin," said Shane caution-
 ously. "He said one other night, and
 as he says to me, 'Shane, why
 doesn't that man marry? He should,
 you know; and there's many a
 nice girl who—'
 "Shane," said Kevin, sitting erect,
 "drop it. The world only holds one
 girl that I'd marry, and as I'm never
 likely to meet her again, that's an
 end to it."
 He gave his knee a little twist that
 shivered him with pain and drove
 the moisture to his brow. Shane in-
 stantly had him in his arms, and
 laying him down again, gently
 straightened the injured knee.
 "Ah, laddie, laddie, you shouldn't
 flare; you hurt yourself, you see.
 It's wholesome advice, and you
 know, lad, I've not known you from
 your babyhood, aye, and loved you,
 too, for nothing. I feel an interest
 in you, and I'm getting to be an old
 man; and when I have to meet your
 sweet little mother on the blessed
 shores of eternity I want to be able
 to tell her that I left her boy in good
 hands. The little mother said to me
 that very last night: 'Shane, take
 care of my wee lad, and see that
 there are always good hands to tend
 him,' and I promised her."
 Kevin's strong, young right hand
 went out and clasped those of the
 old man, who for the last twenty-five
 years had served him and his so
 faithfully. He had come into his
 life when he was only a baby, when
 she had brought his gay, handsome
 young father home lifeless from
 where he had found him, crushed
 beneath his disabled horse, and he
 had been the young widow's right
 hand for the few years she lived
 after her husband's death. And
 then he had been father and mother
 to the orphaned boy, until he was
 able to take up the reins of manage-
 ment and drive for himself. Several
 times since the boy had grown up a
 spirit of unrest had taken possession
 of Shane, and many times he was on
 the point of setting out to "explore
 the world," as he termed it, but
 each time he hesitated and then
 settled in his little cottage on Wirri-
 birri again and became interested in
 the doings of his young master. But
 the feeling had returned with re-
 newed strength, because—there was
 a reason.
 "I was thinking, Master Kevin,"
 he said, when the sharp pain had
 passed, of getting out and having
 a good look over the face of the
 earth before I have to leave it, but
 I'd wish to see you safe in good
 hands before I go."
 Kevin's hand tightened on his.
 "Don't, Shane," he said shortly.
 "Don't, for it seems to me when a
 fellow goes far afield he stands
 greater chances of meeting troubles
 which, had he stayed at home, he
 would never have come in contact
 with. In fact, I found it so."
 The old man shook his head. "My
 mind is made up, lad. I'm going to
 be a wanderer for the next year or
 two. And indeed I must. I'm
 getting old, and I've two duties to
 see to before I leave this old world,
 and one is to see you safe with good
 hands to tend you and the other—
 it's what's calling me out."
 Kevin O'Neill carefully lit a cigar-
 ette and thoughtfully blew the blue
 rings of smoke heavenwards. Presently he spoke:
 "Shane, I'll tell you a dream of mine.
 I've dreamed it every day and night
 for the last five years; dreamed it
 sleeping and waking, until at times
 it seems so real that I nearly cry
 aloud in my joy, and again it is only
 so utterly a dream that the pain is
 intolerable. Anyway, five years ago
 I've not breathed this to a living
 soul before, Shane—you remember I
 went travelling, and one August
 morning I found myself in an Eng-
 lish village, and went looking around
 the little town. On the outskirts I
 came upon a little church. I went
 in, and I remember distinctly every
 detail—the old notched seats, the
 tall, narrow windows, the statue
 of our Lady, with a crudely blue

mantle, the perfume of a thousand
 white roses massed about her feet;
 the silver sanctuary lamp of exquisite
 workmanship, the Stations of the
 Cross, beautiful in the extreme, in
 frames that were hideous. Oh, and
 a hundred other things. I was tell-
 ing my beads and enjoying the cool,
 when some one commenced playing
 the organ, softly and tenderly at
 first, a miracle of delicate melody,
 then swelling and rising until it was
 a perfect pean of glorious sound.
 It was only a common little instru-
 ment, I discovered afterwards; all
 the magic was in the player. Presently
 I ventured to look back, and just
 above the organ I could see a
 drooping white hat and the lower
 part of a girl's face, a dainty chin
 and an exquisite mouth. I turned
 to the altar again and drank of the
 melody that welled around me. The
 music ceased, and I followed the
 player out. She was a tall, graceful,
 white-clad figure. I had forgotten
 my name in the church and hurried
 back for it, and when I came on to
 the street again I was just in time
 to see her take an over-dressed young
 fop by the shoulder and seize a whip
 with which he had been beating a
 little dog, break it in two and throw
 it over the fence into a field, and
 taking the poor, bruised dog in her
 arms, carry it away with her. Late
 that afternoon I met her again on a
 country lane, and she was kneeling,
 binding the wound on a poor old
 tramp's foot and laughing with him
 and cheering him. It was then I
 spoke to her, offering my services.
 "Thanks so much," she said, in a
 voice that was peculiarly deep and
 musical. "I've just finished nicely
 now, but I'd be so glad if you'd help
 this poor old fellow back into the
 village. I'm going the other way,
 and my people will be anxious about
 me if I'm out late. Otherwise I
 go myself." She stood up beside me
 and looked at me with those sea-
 blue eyes that have haunted me ever
 since. Of course, I said I would.
 Indeed, I'd have done anything she
 might have asked me. She came
 back a little way, helping the old
 chap along, and when leaving she
 gave him her hand. "Cheer up,"
 she said brightly. "Why by to-mor-
 row you'll never know you were
 had a cut on your foot. I wager
 you'll be ready for football or a race."
 And then she placed that firm white
 hand in mine and thanked me shyly,
 and when she took it back again,
 Shane, she took my heart with it.
 The next day I determined to dis-
 cover her name and her people, but I
 could do neither. They were tourists,
 and they had left that morning. I
 suppose it seems odd to you, Shane,
 that the girl I saw for that brief
 while is the only girl I shall ever call
 wife. I close my eyes a thousand
 times a day and I can see her mov-
 ing about Wirribirri. I can see the
 gleam of her red-gold hair down
 there among the roses. I meet the
 direct blue eyes and I see the rare,
 sweet face in the light and dark, and
 the music of her voice comes to me
 at will. I love her, Shane; she is
 my "one woman," my dream-wife,
 the mistress of Wirribirri and of me.
 That closes the matter, Shane, and
 we won't mention it again, please.
 You're going down to the cottage
 now? Well, take those papers. You'll
 probably find something of
 interest in them, and I won't want
 them before to-morrow."
 Shane O'Shane rose and, taking
 the papers with a soft word of thanks,
 went slowly down to his cottage,
 where Billy, his black boy, kept
 everything in the pink of dress per-
 fection. He threw the papers on
 the table and himself into an easy
 chair—the master had seen that his
 chair left nothing to be desired—and,
 closing his eyes, went back into the
 past and saw many things, but chief
 among them was the tall, graceful
 figure of a woman, who smiled on
 him with a sweet, tender mouth and
 sea-blue eyes that held a world of
 love, and on whose shapely head
 coiled masses of red-gold hair and in
 whose arms there nestled a little
 child. The night came down un-
 heeded; the past held him securely, and
 it was only when Billy came in and
 lit his lamp that he recalled himself
 and with trembling hands took the
 paper that lay nearest and opened it
 and on looking down its columns
 read, at first uncomprehendingly, and
 then again and again the following:
 "Mr. and Mrs. John St. John have
 returned to Australia from abroad
 after an absence of twenty-five years,
 and taken up their residence at 'St.
 Winifred's,' at Mosman's Bay. They
 are accompanied by their two daugh-
 ters.
 "'Tis them; 'tis them," he said
 aloud. "Ah, dear Lord. After
 twenty-five years. Oh, my little girl,
 my little babe! I must, I must!
 Oh, surely I may just look upon you
 —just once—no more. I swear no
 more. 'Tis God's doing. Just when
 I'm about to search the whole world
 over, to just set eyes on you, He
 brings you here so close to me."
 Then out of the night the past
 came leaping back again, and he
 lived through the most poignant
 anguish of his life, just as he had
 done one night twenty-five years be-
 fore, and when the first faint rays
 of the morning came creeping into
 the room he aroused himself. He
 had a cold bath and some breakfast,
 meanwhile making his plans rapidly.
 He called the black boy.
 "Billy, saddle Jess and bring her
 around for me quickly. I want to
 get into the township to catch the
 train."
 The boy went for the horse, and
 Shane hastily wrote a note to the
 master, telling him he was going
 down to Sydney for a couple of days,
 but not giving any reason. It was
 the first time he had gone further

than the township since he had come
 to Wirribirri twenty-five years before.
 He gave the note to Billy.
 "Take it to the homestead," he
 told the astonished boy, "at dinner
 time and gave it to the master.
 Mind the cottage, Billy, and I'll be
 back in a couple of days, please God."
 And, mounting his horse he rode
 away.
 On the following morning, when
 the first rays of the sun were tipping
 the treetops with gold and burnish-
 ing the crest of every wave that
 broke across Sydney's harbor, an
 upper window of "St. Winifred's,"
 at Mosman's, was thrown open, and
 the morning light glorified the girl
 that looked out, turning her red-gold
 hair into a halo and deepening the
 depths of the eyes that were as blue
 as the sea she looked out upon.
 She drew a long deep breath and
 withdrew, and presently emerged
 from a lower door, swinging her
 bathing dress and towel, and ran
 lightly down through the grounds to
 the private bathing beach.
 In about half an hour along the
 way she had gone came Shane O'Shane.
 With white, set face and
 cautious step he worked his way
 around to the back of the mansion
 and hesitated.
 "Dear Mother of God," he breathed,
 "help me. Let me just see her and
 know if she is happy. I'll not break
 my word. I'll go there."
 As he paused a door close to where
 he was standing opened and a woman
 came out—one of the servants early
 astir. He started and faced her, and
 she threw out her hands with a
 startled exclamation. "Shane
 O'Shane!" she gasped in a hoarse
 whisper. "Man, why have you
 come here—how dare you—what
 right have you?"
 "The right of a father," he an-
 swered fiercely, fearing he was going
 to be deprived of the chance he had
 watched so long for.
 "Shane," she said sorrowfully,
 "are you mad? Do you know what
 you are doing? What is it you
 want?"
 "Not much, Alice—only the sight
 of my child, to know if she is happy