

CHAPTER TWO

AREN'T they lovely, dad?" said Aylmer. "They come every day," she added shyly. "Ah!" remarked Forsythe absently. He was not thinking of the flowers in the epergne. He was thinking of his child — of the mystery which had invaded her being. Every allurements of youth — colour, curve, gesture even, had acquired accent, meaning. A half-score of yesterdays ago he had said good-bye to his little daughter with her naïve obedience, her touching dependence upon him, little dreaming that it was for the last time.

And now, across the dinner-table, he watched her furtively, his heart tense with pain. A woman! — Yes, his little girl had become that, and how pitifully eager she was to dig the grave of her childhood! Love? — The boy and girl called it that.

Ah! how he longed to take her in his strong arms, and carry her away — away from this experience that encroached, that claimed dominion. Love! — it was a sly, witching synonym.

The passionate protest of the father, of the man who gauges the meaning of another man's love, surged high in his heart.