

Her husband grew more fractious—more difficult to bear with every day; and if she had loved him less her proud spirit would have rebelled a dozen times a day. An ordinary woman would have ceased long ago to feel any remnant of regard for him; would probably have learned to despise him and treat him with disdain; or else according to her nature, would have openly defied him and annoyed him by every means in her power. We have seen wives acting in this way; and it is truly a sorrowful sight to witness when one remembers the solemn and beautiful words of the marriage service. It is not for us to say in how far such conduct is justifiable; God alone will judge; but I think a woman will endure much ere she be tempted to violate her marriage vows.

Sybil Macdonald was a singular woman. Before her marriage she had held an idealized theory of love; with the poet she believed that—

"They sin who tell us love can die."

She thought that if ever she learned to love with all the strength and depth of her soul, no power on earth would be great enough to destroy her love; wounded it might be, many times, but it could never die. For would not the blissful memory of the time when first she learned to care for him, appeal to her heart? The time when he had been all that was chivalrous and loverlike; when the sound of his approaching footsteps had made her heart flutter with a strange, new joy, and the lingering pressure of his hand, the low, caressing tones of his voice had mantled her face and brow with swift blushes! Would not all these sacred maiden memories plead with the wife for the husband who was different from the lover of those happy days?

So Sybil reasoned, and though she had met with many evidences to the contrary, still her favorite theory remained unshaken.

"It could not have been true love," she would argue—"They could never have really loved each other in the first place."

"That is not love that alters, when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove."

Although her view of the matter may have been an idealized one, unsuited to the practical spirit of the age and incompatible with the laws of human nature; for it would be a degradation for some unhappy women to love the creatures they call their husbands—yet leaving these extreme cases there are others where the man may have done nothing to render himself actually *loathful* in the eyes of his wife, he may be mean and tyrannical, bad-tempered and harsh to her—he may even have committed a crime, yet so long as he has kept himself above the level of the brutes that perish, the woman who in the freshness of her youth gave him the whole treasure of her soul—may still cling to him, still love him with all a wife's devotion, though her belief in him may have vanished as completely as the bloom of her girl-hood.

It is only exceptional natures, we grant, that could endure the torments and indignities of such an unhonored wife-hood and still love on to the end. To such love we give all honor and reverence, for there is nothing like it upon earth—nothing. God bless the women who thus love deathlessly on to the bitter end!

Sybil Macdonald was just such a woman. She knew pretty well by this time what manner of man her husband was; she knew that in his inmost heart he held his honor but lightly; she knew that he was selfish, tyrannical, spend-thrift and utterly callous to the woes of others. Knowing all this of him she still loved him dearly, mourned over his failings and sought by every means in her power to lead him to better things. But if she had discovered the dark secrets of his past life; if she had heard the miserable story of Grace Roberts; and learned of the vile treachery which had ruined the life of Neal Despard and blighted Mollie Stuart's happy girl-hood—would her affection for her husband have still endured? Who can tell!

Of late too, a terrible truth had forced itself upon her mind, and struggle as she would against it, the conviction still remained—her husband was fast becoming an habitual drunkard! No one knew the indescribable tortures the proud woman suffered when this bitter knowledge came to her. Often when she returned home alone from some entertainment—for Arthur frequently now objected to accom-

pany her—she would pace up and down the long drawing room, with pale, anxious face and feverish eyes; to and fro, to and fro, far into the morning hours, waiting for her husband to come home from some mid-night revel, much as other women in humbler homes wait night after night with sinking hearts for the return of their husbands. Sybil's object in thus waiting up for Arthur, was to shield him from the idle gossip of the servants as far as possible. But they knew of their master's intemperate habits, and freely discussed the subject amongst themselves. Mrs. Macdonald felt that they knew all about it, and a sort of shame took hold of her whenever she spoke to them; and there was not one domestic in the house who did not sincerely pity the unhappy mistress.

Sybil went out into society as much as she had ever done, and gave her own entertainments at home in her usual way; but she did it all under protest. She knew that the fashionable world was quite cognizant of her husband's habits; but she was a proud woman; one who would not bend an inch, though she knew that the world pitied her; and her dear five hundred friends commented upon her private affairs and shook their heads in disapproval over "that husband of hers."

It may readily be imagined that with such a constant strain upon her mind both at home and in society her health would suffer in no small degree. She grew thin; and lost the rich bloom which had formed one of her chief attractions, and dark circles began to appear underneath her eyes which told of sleepless nights, of anxious vigils and feverish tears. Her friends were shocked by the change in her, and intreated her to see a doctor; but she laughingly declared that she was perfectly well and refused to place herself under medical care. Then when they grew more solicitous about her, she proudly repelled them, and was allowed to go her way unmolested.

Katie Howard shook her little dark head dolefully as she talked with Tom about the matter; of course she, as well as everyone else knew the reason of Sybil's altered looks.

"Oh! Tom darling is it not sad? I cannot bear to be so happy while she is wretched; it nearly breaks my heart to look at her poor white face, so changed as it is. Ugh! how I hate that husband of hers!" and the small matron would clench her little hand and stamp her foot with energetic emphasis. If wishes were thunderbolts Arthur Macdonald would have been annihilated long ere this.

"I am awfully sorry for Mrs. Macdonald, but you know my dear Kate, she married Macdonald with her eyes open; she was warned repeatedly as to his character but—being a woman she naturally chose her own way. However she is a proud woman and will not give in a jot, or I am much mistaken." But Tom's practical view of the matter did not comfort his tender-hearted little wife; who shed many quiet tears on the unconscious faces of the twins as they lay upon her lap. "He is a bad man, and I would not wonder at any thing he might do," she murmured to herself, as she rocked the babies to sleep. And yet Katie Howard, a day is coming and is not far distant, when those brown eyes of yours will dilate with horror and astonishment at something this man did. But how had Arthur Macdonald fallen so low in the eyes of his fellow men? he had never, it is true, been regarded as a good man; all the little world of fashion in which he lived knew that he had led a wild, dissipated life prior to his marriage; but a young man with no home ties whatever, is forgiven much that the world would never overlook in a married man. So when Arthur made Sybil O'Brien his wife and—outwardly—reformed his habits, the world forgot his past, and with many approving pats on the back welcomed him into the ranks of respectable married men. Hitherto he had done nothing to forfeit the good opinion of that world, and was indeed, regarded rather in the light of a model husband. Why then was it, that he had cast off all at once every restraint; and entered upon a course of reckless dissipation, till his hand was never steady, and the feverish flush of the drunkard never left his sunken cheeks; till good and honorable men passed him in the street with a cool nod of recognition, and when he had passed, shrugged their shoulders and thought pityingly of his lovely wife? Indeed if it had not been for her, many of his old acquaintances would have dropped him; but for her sake, they shook hands with him, eat at his table, and in return invited him to their