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if her laugn ever got back the old ring. That is what I should like to know. I don't think it did for a long time. I think she waited and hoped. She sent

me one or two picture post cards, and a tie that she had promised to work me. It's with the hairpin.

I wrote to her, then. I think I enabled her to infer that I was not free, without saying anything that implied that this mattered to her, or that I suspected that it did. Anyhow, I wrote and rewrote the letter sixteen times.

Seven years afterwards I was free. I spent a small fortune tracing her. She had been married a year, I found. That ends it all, except—I'd like her to know the facts-that I didn't mean to hurt

I've thought over that a good deal. I couldn't write and tell her. It would be an insult to suggest that she cared. By now she probably doesn't. I hope not. Still, I'd like her to know that I wasn't just a blackguard who deliberately flirted with a young girl.

If I were a story-writer like you, I should just put it in a story and hope that she might read it. She read a lot. Will you, old man? Thanks—many thanks. I expect I'd have told you some day, anyhow; but that was in my mind when I started to tell you to-night. Yes, we understand each other. Our friendship—counts.

The editor of the Fiction Weekly was worrying me for a domestic story. Things that Count" appeared within two months. I gave Forrington's story word for word, altering the names.

A few days afterwards the editor persuaded me to go to one of his wife's At Homes.

"A friend of my wife," he said, "at least, she's the friend of a friend of a friend-insists on knowing you. I believe that she made our acquaintance solely for that purpose. She is a singularly charming young lady of about

eight-and-twenty, and——"
"My dear man!" I interrupted, "I am lady-proof!"

"Oh!" He laughed. "I don't suppose she wants you to marry her; only to read a story.

"Hang her!" I growled. I repented of this rude observation when I met the lady. She was a delightful young woman, pretty and smiling

and bright. "Now, Mr. Franklyn," she said, when we had talked for some time, "I want to ask you about one of your stories— 'The Things that Count.' Is it fiction

or reality? I looked hard at her and she looked hard at me.

"Does that-count?" I asked.

"Yes," she said quietly.
"Reality," I owned, "except—I under-

stood that the Little Girl got married; but perhaps she didn't, Miss Vane?"
"Possibly," she suggested, "he might

have heard of the marriage of a younger sister—the youngest." "It would make a great difference to

him," I told her. "That you-I mean that 'she' is free." "Then he really does—care about her

still? Really?" "He really does—you mean Sir John -?" I paused.

"Forrington," she supplied, and I nodded. She smiled, and I understood why he had described the Little Girl's expression

as "amused."
"Then will you tell him that, if he still uses them to clean his pipe"—she drew a hairpin from her hair—"he may

have this one." "Hadn't I better tell him to call for it-say, this day week?" I asked with

"You provoking man!-I am going back to the hotel now." She gave me the address.

"Some people are very lucky," I said. "Yes. He will come. Good-bye."

"Good-bye. Perhaps you, too—if the rest of the story were true. I won't ask, but good luck, Mr. Franklyn." "Good luck to you; and him," I said. "My luck is out."

"You never know," she protested.

"I know," I said sadly. I motored to Forrington's office. He borrowed my motor to go to her, and left me to find a cab, or walk. I walked for two hours, but I don't remember where. One way is as good as another when you travel alone; and since Phyllis Newton would not walk with me, I must journey singly to the end of my days.

The next morning my married sister sent me an urgent summons to go round in the afternoon. I went, and there I met Phyllis Newton. I had not seen her for five years-not since our engagement terminated. I was five-and-thirty then, and she was five-and-twenty.

"The years have treated you lightly," I said, when my sister went out-she said to fetch the baby for us to see. 'Now I-

I touched my head where the hair was growing thin.

"It's production has been internal," she suggested. "I read a great deal of your work. I always thought that authors put themselves in their stories, but you have disillusioned me. Things that Count,' you know."

"Some years ago you disillusioned me, Phyllis. I beg your pardon, Miss New-

"I suppose I am growing too old to be called by my Christian name?" "You look very young," I told her.

"Do I? You can call me how you please, then. The disillusion wasn't all my fault; but I daresay I was as bad as you were. That's a great admission for me, isn't it?"

She laughed-that old, deep contralto laugh, that seemed to come from the bottom of her heart. If Phyllis could be put in a word it would be "genuine."
"It's a pity that we weren't both more

ready to make admission then," I said. I—it happens to be true about the handkerchief, Phyllis."

She fumbled in a little bag and brought out the programme of the last concert that we were to together; and a crooked sixpence that I gave her when she wore her hair in a pigtail.

"Oh, Teddie!" she cried with a sob.
"Oh, Teddie! The things that count!"

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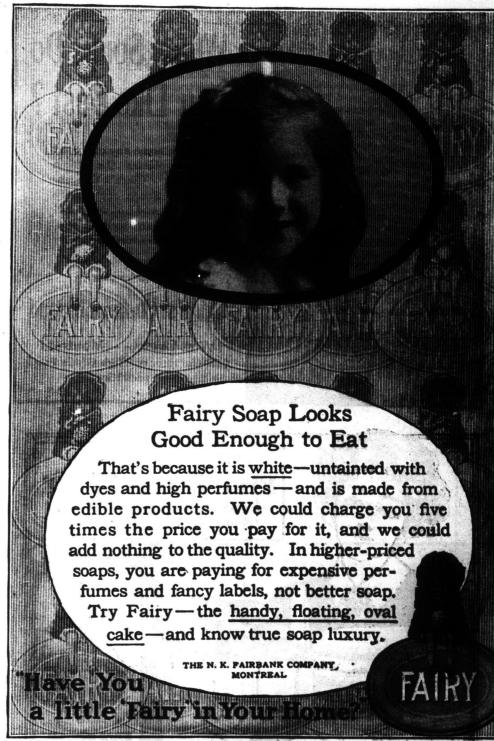
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