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if her laugh 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, with-
out saying anything that implied that
this mattered to her, or that I suspected
that it did. Anyhow, I wrote and re-
wrote 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
her.

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 flirt-
ed 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. "The
Things that Count" appeared within two
months. I gave Forrington's story word
for word, altering the names.

A few days afterwards the editor per-
suaded 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 be-
lieve that she made our acquaintance
solely for that purpose. She is a singu-
larly 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 deli-
cious 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
a smile.

"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 engage-
ment 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. 'The
Things that Count,' you know."

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

"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.
"—it happens to be true about the hand-
kerchief, 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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