

"I don't know; I hardly realize it all as yet: but certainly not to-day. I cannot, I cannot. . . . Good-bye, Maimie. Good-bye . . . Maimie."

And she held her hand out coldly and formally.

Maimie took it, held it for a moment with a doubtful pressure, and then letting it drop like a stone from her fingers, sat down once more despondently upon the sofa, and burst into a flood of childish tears.

They went down the stairs, Jocelyn and Hetty, and out of the door, and down along the streets toward home in silence, till they had almost reached their own staircase. Then Hetty spoke at last in trembling accents.

"Jocelyn," she said, "I can't understand how such a man as Sydney Chevenix could ever have so completely sacrificed everything for such a woman as Maimie Llewellyn! If she had been somebody fully worthy of him, now—some generous, noble, broad-souled creature—some girl who would have appreciated so great devotion!—but Maimie! Maimie!"

Jocelyn halted on the step a second and held his unlighted cigarette poised between his fingers as he answered slowly:

"That only shows how bad a psychologist you really are, my precious Hetty. It is for just such a woman as that, darling, that a good man, a true man, a great man, a noble-minded man, is always ready to sacrifice everything. If you look through all history and all biography, you'll find invariably it is for the lightest women, the emptiest women, the shallowest women, the unworthiest women, that men have always in all time done and dared the utterly unspeakable. Where a single man would barely die for love of you, Hetty, a thousand men would willingly die, I dare be bound, for love of Maimie. He did it all for Maimie's sake; and for Maimie's sake he will still do what yet remains for him."

Hetty shuddered.

"Oh, Jocelyn," she cried again, "you don't mean to say you think he is really going to kill himself?"

Jocelyn shrugged his shoulders.

"Che sara, sara," he answered gloomily. "The world works itself out its own predestined way, and we can do but little to help it or retard it. Let it work itself out what way it will, it can bring nothing but misery and regret to Sydney Chevenix. Better far he should lie and sleep at peace on Thames bottom, than live to know, day after day, that Maimie, for whom he has wrecked his life, cares really less than nothing for him."