

"Perhaps, my dear, you read too much," suggested the gentleman, tentatively.

"Nonsense, Jack! I read comparatively little now. Two novels a day was my allowance a year ago; but they have lately palled upon me so that I can hardly read one a week through to the bitter end. Even in my best estate I could never bring myself to begin at the beginning."

"How would it do to read something solid,—some government reports or common council proceedings?" said Mr. Forrester, still tentatively.

This was acknowledged only by a derisive glance. "No," continued the lady; "I know perfectly well what is the matter with me,—I have not enough to do. My brain and hands are alike idle. These last few years, since my life has been devoid of real, useful occupation, I have not felt contented at all. I have actually been thinking, Jack, that I should like to dismiss the girls and do my own work again."

"*Again*, Bella? I was under the impression that when we formerly dispensed with servants the work simply wasn't done at all."

Mrs. Forrester, lost in a maze of agreeable memories, ignored this interpolation. "And you know, Jack," she went on, musingly, "that after our little dinners were over——"

"And *very* little dinners they used to be, too!" said Jack, with a retrospective groan. "You didn't do much cooking, Bella; I was a living—no, an almost dead proof of that. Though, to do you justice, I must say I never saw your equal at getting up a meal of tea and soda-crackers."