



A Fair Invald

"What faith you have in him," she said, and with that the conversation ended. I went home some days after that, and then matters fell into their old routine. The only change was in Miss Vane herself. She grew more human; her one great act of forgiveness seemed to have changed her whole character. There was only one thing she would not do—she would not mix with the world. She took up a lily one day when talking, and from the deep white cup pulled a petal. "Can anything restore that petal or make the lily whole?" she asked.

"No," I replied.
"It is the same with my life," she said. "A page was torn abruptly from it—a page on which sweetest hopes were written—and nothing can restore it. I could not take up my old duties, resume my old pleasures, mix freely in the world of men and women, talk, laugh, and enjoy myself with them—I could not bear it. I can only live as I am now, unknown and unknowing, forgotten—waiting for the signal of release. You will not urge me again, will you?"
"No, I will not," I replied.
"I am happier than I ever hoped to be, because I have forgiven Lord Wynton, and the blank desolation has gone out of my life."
Instinctively I kept two secrets from her. I never told her that Lord Wynton had promised to come to see me, or that he intended to call upon her. So the year passed, spring came round again, and in May I read this announcement: "Died, on the 3rd of May, at Nice, Isabelle, Lady Wynton. She was interred in the cemetery at Nice on the 5th."

A leading fashionable journal devoted a small paragraph to the event, and said that Lady Wynton, after suffering severely for some months, had died at Nice. I took the papers to the River House and showed them to Huldah Vane. She grew very pale as she read—her eyes filled with tears; and then she turned to me and said: "I am very sorry for him. Poor Clive!"
The remainder of the story I tell as I heard it some time afterward, when the mystery was explained to me, and all was clear.

CHAPTER XII.

When it was known in London that Gerald Ashton, the younger son of a poor but noble family, had returned after thirty years' service in India, a millionaire, society decided upon opening its arms to him. A millionaire! Such exceptional distinction society deemed ought to be recognized—must be recognized, in fact—and Gerald Ashton was received with open arms. He did his duty as became a millionaire. He purchased one of the most magnificent mansions in Belgravia, and furnished it regardless of cost; then Lord Bather's family estate, Silverwell Priory, came into the market, and he bought it, and had it refurnished with the utmost splendor. Afterward, hearing of a pretty little villa in the Isle of Wight, he purchased it, also. With three houses, each one rivaling the other in beauty, he began to consider who was to inhabit them.

His friends advised him to marry; but for that he did not care. His brother had married, and his wedded life, like his life generally, had not been a success. He had married a gentle, accomplished girl, who had no fortune except her fair face and her noble mind. She survived her husband six years, during which time she was supported entirely by the bounty of Gerald Ashton, who allowed her an income quite sufficient for her wants. At her death, he ordered his agents to place her only child, Huldah, in one of the best schools.

He found to his intense surprise a tall, lovely girl, with a graceful figure and a beautiful face. His delight was taken from school, installed as mistress at Silverwell, and everything that money could procure was lavished upon her. Gerald Ashton idolized his beautiful niece; he never tired of looking at her, of listening to her, he formally adopted her as his heiress, and did not rest until he had made his will, leaving her mistress of his vast fortune.

It spoke well for Huldah Ashton that her head was not completely turned by this change in her position. She had been happy and contented at school, feeling sure that her education and accomplishments were to be her fortune, and that she would have to earn her livelihood as a governess. The result was that she had acquired a certain independence of character, feeling that her success in life would depend on her own efforts.

At seventeen she found herself one of the most beautiful, wealthy and admired girls in London. She could have married just as she would, but, young as she was, Huldah Ashton had formed a resolution to marry only for love. Before she had been a month at Silverwell she proved that she was fitted for her responsible post. A girl of seventeen, as stately as a duchess, as beautiful as a poet's dream, gifted and intellectual, looking upon wealth as an accident, a stepping-stone—pure in heart as a little child—full of beautiful thoughts, her mother's only legacy—wondering with a grave, solemn, childlike wonder what was to be her ultimate fate, what grand destiny awaited her—a girl of the rarest type, noble in soul, but proud to a degree—not vain of her beauty or her wealth, but proud in the highest, broadest, noblest sense—such was Huldah Ashton.

Gerald Ashton loved her. He delighted in hearing his beautiful niece called "The Queen of the Season;" he had foretold that she would be that. Society welcomed him because he was uncle of the beautiful Miss Ashton.
She was very happy. She enjoyed the magnificence, the wealth that surrounded her; she enjoyed the homage laid at her feet; she enjoyed the admiration that seemed to be a tribute to her beauty. But she enjoyed the vague, dreamy happiness of her inner life better than all. Standing where womanhood and girlhood met, her heart and soul thrilled with the vague, sweet poetry of life.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Countess of Irvington had a beautiful villa on the banks of the Thames. She delighted in spending part of her time there, surrounded by the very flower of London society. She had invited "The Queen of the Sea-

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Breaking the News.
Patrick arrived home much the worse for wear. One eye was closed, his nose was broken, and his face looked as though it had been stung by bees.
"Glorious!" exclaimed his wife.
"That Dutchman Schwartzheimer--" "twas him," explained Patrick.
"Shame on ye!" exploded his wife, without sympathy. "A big shalpeen the likes of ye to get bate up by a little omniphony of a Dutchman the size of him! Why?"
"Whist, Nora," said Patrick; "don't spake disrespectfully of the dead!"
"Everybody's Magazine."
"A necklace of diamonds has been stolen from me!" said Mrs. Cumrox. "Aren't you going to notify the police?"
"I don't know what to do. It does seem rather classy to be robbed of jewelry; and yet I hate to have people think that I'd ever miss a little thing like a necklace."--Washington Star.