

4 THE COTTAGE ON THE FELLS

So Hellier wished he was Comyns, utterly ignorant of the fact that if some magician had converted him into the object of his admiration, the woman he loved would not have looked at him twice.

He had only known her ten days. Her name was Mademoiselle Cécile Lefarge, he had met her accidentally at the Hotel des Bains, and had fallen in love with her on sight.

When a man falls in love with a woman on sight, it is through his desires that love comes to him. Her body takes possession of his mind. This kind of love may fade away or endure for ever; as a rule it is unfortunate, and fades; sometimes it becomes converted into hatred, when the lover, after marriage, has discovered how the flesh has betrayed him, what a base soul beauty has palmed off on him, wrapped in an attractive wrapper.

A bad bargain in love. Those five words contain in them the plot and essence of most of the tragedies in life.

Cécile Lefarge was twenty-eight, and looked, perhaps, twenty-six. Pale, of medium height, voluptuously formed, dark, with blindish-looking violet grey eyes, serious-looking as a priestess of Aphrodite, yet with a nun-like spirituality, she was a woman to drive a sensualist mad with desire, a woman to inspire the dreams of a poet or a saint.