

'Twas a pity Cecil married a rich man. Her best chance would have been having to think, work, deny herself for another, who might thus have become dear from the very sacrifices entailed by him. It was hard on Fane, who had been constant so long, and found he had grasped nothing but fairy gold. The old manor-house was generally full, for somehow both dreaded a *tête à tête*, and equally, in early days especially, a betrayal of the feeling.

Cecil left her guests pretty much to their own devices in the morning, and read and painted in her own peculiar den, fitted up half as a library, half as a studio. The winter she devoted to hunting, and scarcely any meet was too distant or country too intricate for her. Bertie's riding lessons, at any rate, had not been forgotten; and carelessness of life is certainly conducive to steadiness of nerve. Jack Vavasour, who was out one day, was under the impression she wished to break her neck. Mrs. Fane became noted in her county for going with the most unflinching straightness; but so little did she care for the reputation, that sometimes she would stick unambitiously to the roads and never take a fence.

She had a separate stud of hunters, and rode independently of her husband, who followed the amusement in a less erratic style than his wife, and in more moderation.

Cecil often thought of her dream, when Du Meresq was transformed into Fane, and how singularly it had been realized. Certainly adventitious circumstances were averse to that first love of hers, for, however much appearances were against him, the lock of hair which had decided her destiny was no love token of Du Meresq's. It had been consigned to him by a dying friend, who besought him to write the news to his betrothed, and restore to her the lock of hair she had given him.

When Du Meresq had sent this letter off, he found he had omitted enclosing the tress; but they were then just going into action, and he had placed it inside his tunic.

After long years Cecil met this girl, who had been faithful to the memory of her Crimean hero. Once she spoke of him to Mrs. Fane, mentioning the circumstance of the omission of the lock when Du Meresq's letter had conveyed to her the fatal news. Little did she think how her companion had