

could suggest. Through this second ordeal, with its wearisome felicitations, toasts, and laboured attempts at wit, the bride bore herself with the unruffled composure that had distinguished her in the church. At the proper time she withdrew, and in her dressing-room, amid the smiles and gay ministrations of her bride's maids, changed her Honiton lace and satin for the plain brown suit in which it was her will to travel.

The first bride's maid, a pretty, rosy little creature, very youthful in appearance, though in reality a year or two older than the bride, was the one who placed the tiny hat with its long ostrich plume on the bride's head, and as she did so, she drew her to a deep bay window apart from their companions, and tenderly kissed her.

"I can scarcely believe, my darling, that you are really married—that all is over. Do you feel very happy?"

"A singular question, Letty! Have I not married the husband of my choice?"

"True, very true. Well, let us hope for the best, but listen to a parting word from Letty Maberly, a friend who loves you dearly. I have known Clive Weston longer than you have, and warn you that he is one to hold the reins tightly if he once gets them into his grasp."

A slight smile wreathed the new-made wife's delicate lip as she rejoined: "To carry out your simile, Letty, I am not afraid that Mr. Weston will seek either to drive or rein me in. In any case, I can take care of myself."

Here an elderly lady, frail and shadowy in appearance, entered, and approaching the bride, tearfully said:

"I must bid you goodbye, my love, here, for my heart is too full and sorrowful to do it before all those people in the drawing-room."

"Why should you be sorrowful, dear aunt? You have known Clive a long time and like him well?"

"But I am losing you, my pet; the house

will be very large and empty without you. And, oh, the trouble I have had with you, my darling, between one thing and another. Watching that you wore overshoes in wet weather, warm woollens in winter, and guarding you from fortune hunters at all seasons."

"You have nobly fulfilled your charge, good Aunt Jane, and an onerous one it has been. Kiss me now, and say that you pardon all my obstinacy and waywardness during the fifteen years you have watched me with such patient care?"

Miss Jane Ponton burst into tears, and throwing her thin arms around the girl's neck whispered: "God bless you, my pet, you were never obstinate or wayward with me."

"Poor Aunt Jane, because you always gave me my own way; but kiss me again!"

When Mrs. Weston raised her proud young head there was a suspicious brightness in her large dark eyes, the first token of emotion she had given that day.

Miss Ponton sank sobbing on a chair whilst the attendants and bride swept lightly down the broad stairs. The latter received farewells as calmly as she had done felicitations, and when Clive Weston sprang forward with joyous smile and eager face to assist her into the carriage, whispering at the same time some tender word, the slight smile she vouchsafed him was no warmer than the one she had just bestowed on a comparative stranger who had officiously moved the door an inch farther back for her egress.

"Does she love him?" asked more than one of the guests as they noted that cold look and smile.

"Does she love me?" asked Clive Weston of himself, as another word of tender inquiry on his part as to whether she felt fatigued, won nothing more for him than a careless: "Not in the least, I am used to crowds."

And yet Virginia really loved her husband, though her indomitable pride prevented her showing it, and Clive Weston was scarcely