

if the wages suit you we will call it a bargain. You understand Miss Dellamy is soon to be married, and that you will accompany her abroad on her tour, for a year in all probability."

And as Mrs. Horatio Dellamy's terms suited "Mrs. Smythe" remarkably well, Jessie Howard, carefully concealing her identity beneath the first assumed name she thought of, accepted the very pleasant position of companion and confidential lady's-maid to pretty little Blanche Dellamy, with her pink and white face, fair and soft as drifted rose petals, and eyes blue as a June sky, and wavy, flossy hair, yellow as corn silk—an affectionate, cringing little body, who took a violent fancy to Mrs. Smythe, whose pure, classic features, and serious, thoughtfully dark eyes, and magnificent wealth of shining hair, and grave, gracious mien, were such a charmingly-marked contrast to her own little butterfly self.

"Only I don't want to call you Mrs. Smythe at all," Blanche declared, between a smile and a frown and a very pretty little pout. "Do tell me your first name, there's a dear?"

And Jessie had complied, to Blanche's delight and enthusiastic admiration.

"Jessie? Oh, it's heavenly, and it suits you exactly! I do so love fancy names! My lover has such a grand, kingly one. I never told you, did I, who he was? Mr. Howard—Philip Fairfax Howard; and all the family have such aristocratic names. His married sister is Alexandria, and the single ones Beatrice and Georgia; and his brother who is dead—poor, dear fellow! oh, he was just the handsomest man I ever saw in my life!—his name was the prettiest of all—Algernon."

Jessie felt as if some cruel hand had suddenly, sharply grasped at her heart. Could it be possible—could it be that Fate had brought her to this place, of all places the most undesirable?

Her head was averted, and voluble Blanche went on in a sweet, consoling voice:

"There was such a romance connected with poor Algernon. Of course, only the immediate family know of it; but, of course, Philip told me all about it—how he was entrapped into a secret marriage with some bold, designing creature, who actually, after his sudden death, when they had been married but a little while, had the impudence to write to Philip and announce herself as Algernon's widow."

Blanche's tone quivered with sympathetic indignation, and Jessie—well, Jessie still sat there, her dead-white face turned toward the dusk that was creeping greily in through the window.

She felt she must say something—any-

thing—to break the oppression of the silence that was suffocating her, and she wondered if her voice sounded as horribly strange and unnatural to Miss Dellamy as it did to herself.

"And what did Mr. Philip Howard do?"

Blanche laughed.

"Oh, he said he put a peremptory stop to any future annoyances. I never asked him what he did, but I know he sent her some money as a deed of charity."

Then all the hot color surged warmly back from Jessie's chilled heart to her cheeks, and she rose from her chair, and began arranging to have lights brought.

"She must have been less than a woman to have accepted the money under such circumstances," she remarked.

"But she didn't accept it, you see. She sent it back in silent contempt. And my Philip says it raised her in his estimation. Jessie, please let's have it lighted now."

And the brilliant glow of the lights only showed on Jessie's face a warmer flush than usual, and a new sparkle in her usually serious eyes.

Two or three days afterward, Blanche managed that her future lord and master should have the opportunity of seeing her new companion.

And Mr. Philip Fairfax Howard wondered what uncanny fate was a work that such a magnificent creature as Mrs. Smythe should be occupying the position of hired servant.

And did he forget her in a hurry? Day and night her beautiful face haunted him, until he grew almost alarmed at himself.

"This will never, never do!" he told himself, and forthwith increased his devotedness to Blanche.

A fortnight later he had to face the serious fact that he had met his fate—he, engaged in a month's time to marry Blanche Dellamy!

In all his life before, Philip Howard had never experienced the intensity of passion that now governed and controlled him. He had been going on to his marriage with Blanche in perfect, honest faith, and had thought he cared for her, until now, when Jessie had taught him that of all the women in the world she was the woman for him.

There came a terrible struggle and doubt; and then, one starry dusk, when Jessie was sitting by herself in a quiet corner of the breakfast-parlor, Philip sought her, his heart in his eyes, his purpose in his stern, handsome face.

"Don't go away, please, Mrs. Smythe. I came especially to see you."

Jessie's fingers fluttered between the leaves of the book she had been reading