

"Nan, this is what I want to tell you. I must tell you!" she went on; "I have kept it to myself too long. My life is shadowed by the memory of the past. If he knew, if he only knew, that I had wavered in my loyalty, that I had listened to Eugene Milrake—loved Eugene Milrake—Nannie! Nannie! Would he forgive me? Would he believe that even then, in all my weakness, he held a sacred place in my heart? Would he trust me? Would he still love me, as he loves me now?"

Her old friend, still looking into the beautiful, agitated face, did not answer.

"Nannie! Eugene pursued me for many months," she went on, in a low voice. "I could not escape from him. He was here—here in our house on the day before Sydney returned. You remember? It was the day when Mr. Rostron died."

"I remember," whispered Nannie.

"Sydney came home. He was so happy to come home. So kind, so good, so dear! But if he had known, Nannie, if he had known!"

The pearl stringer drew herself away from Rose's convulsive grasp. She looked steadily and fearlessly into her eyes.

"Your husband knew!" she said. "I had told him. Listen!"

Quietly, simply, without a tremor, she described the night when she had seen, through the uncurtained window, Eugene Milrake alone with Rose. She described her secret journey to the Midlands to speak with Sydney Challis, and how they had returned, immediately, together.