



I.

"Love me, sweet, with all thou art,
Feeling, thinking, seeing;
Love me in the highest part,
Love me in full being.

"Love me with thy thinking soul,
Break it to love-sighing;
Love me with the thoughts that roll
On through living—dying.

"Thus, if thou wilt prove me, dear,
Woman's love no fable,
I will love thee—half a year—
As a man is able."

The voice that had begun the recitation of the verses in a jocular, taunting tone grew suddenly serious when the last two lines were reached, and murmured them in a hesitating way, as though they too frankly expressed a thought not altogether timely.

"Who wrote that?"

"Mrs. Browning. Don't you know her little poem, 'A Man's Requirements?'"

"No, and I don't want to, if such are her sentiments. They're not fair to us at all. Do you believe that these verses have any application to a love like mine?"

The speakers were sitting in close proximity on a rustic bench in a secluded corner of a large and beautiful garden. They had come there in order to be sure of freedom from interruption, for this was the last talk they would have together for many months, and they had much to say to one another.

When Rodd Maclean had first met Inez Illsley he experienced a sensation of temporary bewilderment that made him feel highly provoked with himself for yielding to a weakness quite unworthy of the assistant editor of a morning daily. She was fresh from the

completion of her course at Toronto University, and he met her while still in the full flood of congratulations and glory poured upon her because of the brilliancy of her record.

Assuming in that cynical spirit which he was assiduously seeking to cultivate as a necessary part of his professional equipment that this Miss Illsley, whose praises society was chorusing with remarkable unanimity, would prove upon acquaintance to be simply another species of "blue stocking," with glistening glasses balanced upon her nose and a general air of being competent to say the last word on any given subject, Maclean was taken aback in no small measure at being presented to a graceful young girl, whose merry blue eyes needed no adventitious aid from a *pince-nez*, and whose symmetrical, springy form carried a countenance that, if not classically beautiful, was, by reason of blooming cheeks, flashing white teeth, bewitching dimples and the most forgiveable of freckles, set off by an aureole of golden brown curls, extraordinarily attractive.

He felt the charm of her personality at once. It summarily put to rout the masculine conceit with which he had been diligently seeking to clothe himself as with a coat of armour.

"No falling in love for me," he had been wont to say to himself. "Journalism shall be my only mistress, until I've made my way at all events. I'm not going to make the mistake that other fellows have by handicapping myself with a burden of domestic cares."

This philosophy had hitherto stood him in good stead, although he mingled as freely in society as the arduous and