

garding the simpler life from his mind, and as Biddy said no more about it he concluded she had got rid of the impression too. But he made a mistake. Biddy was on the eve of a great experiment. Supported by the writer of the book, whose acquaintance she had made, she was about to give the social set in which she moved a lesson in the whole art of the simpler life.

A dinner was arranged with Carslake's ready approval, he being a social soul, never happier than when entertaining his friends in his own home. He asked no questions about the dinner, having already had ample proof of his wife's ability to deal with it.

He had always been proud of her achievement, and trusted her absolutely. It had been his custom to bring the fruit for dessert out from the City, partly because it was cheaper than in the expensive suburb where they lived and partly because he liked to save her the trouble.

"What'll I bring today, Biddy," he asked as he was leaving the house. "Pines are rather dear. Yesterday there wasn't a decent one under six shilling."

"Never mind, dear, I think I've got everything." Have you? Good, if I see anything special I'll annex it. Good bye dear, be sure you lie down for a couple of hours in the afternoon and get a good rest. I want to turn that chap Dodson green with envy. He's such a self-sufficient ass."

"O, wicked Thomas," said Biddy, as she put him gently outside the door.

Carslake had a busy and successful day, and returned home at night half an hour earlier than usual, prepared to have a thoroughly enjoyable evening. He let himself in with his latchkey, and, not seeing his wife, he looked into the dining room.

The table was laid very daintily and very prettily, but not a flower to be seen. There was a centre of white satin upon which some dried leaves and some ferns had been scattered. A silver flower pot in the centre held some growing hyacinths of a rather crude pink shade. The effect was rather disappointing. Hitherto Biddy had never failed to provide a pleasing sur-

prise in the way of table decoration. "Something's happened to the flowers. I suppose they've forgotten to send them, or something, and she's gone out to see. Poor little woman! she'll be worked up about it."

He glanced at the clock. It was already ten minutes to seven, and the guests were to arrive at half past.

He went rather soberly up stairs, and to his surprise found Biddy in her bedroom, apparently sewing some chiffon on a sad colored gown.

"What's happened Biddy, about the flowers: did the reprobrates forget send them?"

"No, dear, I thought it would do. Have you been in? Don't you think it pretty?"

"O, yes—not up to your usual, that's all, and I did want to impress that ass Dodson. Didn't you feel up to it today?"

"O, yes," she said, and there was a little nervous note in her voice. She was not so eager on her experiment as she had been ten hours ago, and at the last moment had been tempted to send round to the florists. But she had held on to her courage only she did not like the disappointed look in her husband's eyes.

"What's that you're doing, dear? Surely you're not going to put on that rag?" he asked gazing with dismay on the sage green velvet.

"It's very nice and simple, Tom, and this is a fichu of real lace."

"Where's the white one?"

"In the wardrobe."

"Well, get it out. I want you to look your best, Biddy and you know Mrs. Bellamy wears her wedding frock. Don't let them think it a century since you wore yours."

She smiled somewhat wintrily, and obediently put the sad coloured garment out of sight. The intervening half hour swiftly passed, and the guests arrived, eight in number, all persons of good position asked to meet a newly married couple for the first time. The bride was a country girl whom Biddy had been a-keed to befriend, and she had thought it her clear duty to show her an example of the simpler life.

The dinner was in Carslake's estimation