

home comforts and perhaps some of your pleasures too."

She clasped her hands round her knees, and looked hard into the water, while the cynical expression on her face deepened as she continued: "No, you would rather keep us as we are. We may share your anxieties and worries; we may nurse you when you are ill, and in return you give us comforts and occasional treats. But it would never do to let us do anything for ourselves, there is no telling where we should end! You think you are wise, but you are really foolish. As the average woman is now, she will never love you or be worthy of your love, as she might be if you helped her to rise out of herself and her own petty pleasures. We have only a counterfeit of 'love abroad in the world now. A love that can be bought and sold; taken and cast aside at pleasure. There are very few rocks in the ocean of humanity where real love finds a resting-place."

She paused and looked past him, to the far-away hills, while a sad expression and that old wistfulness crept into the dreamer's eyes.

"What do you call real love?" he asked, picking up a stone and tossing it idly into the lake. He liked to hear her talk, and purposely encouraged her by questions.

For some minutes she remained silent, gazing always over those distant hills. Then she said slowly, "The love that is not afraid of sacrifice; that

shines brightest when the strife is fiercest and grows stronger with the passing years. The love that sees the weaknesses as well as the beauties in the object of its devotion and still loves on—time cannot change it—cares cannot lessen it—and death will not end it."

She ceased speaking and both were silent.

Her beautiful eyes still gazed dreamily beyond him, into a strange, dim, ideal world of her own pure imagination.

At last Jack spoke, and his voice sounded harsh and matter-of-fact. It was as if he would feign expel the softening influence of her words; as if they made him "think," which was just what he did not want to do.

"You look for too much," he said, rising on his elbow and throwing another stone into the water. "You will never find love like that, it doesn't grow nowadays."

"I know that and I don't expect to find it," she answered. "In my own imaginary future I have left no place vacant for it. I don't intend ever to get married. I expect to live and die a sour old maid. In any case, it would be almost sure to come too late. The life I am leading now is turning me into stone, another year or two will about complete the work. By that time I shall be too callous to think of love as anything but a fraud and a delusion—an impossible dream I had once when I was a girl."

But here Jack turned to her quickly

and said half-impatiently, "Don't talk such nonsense, Madge. I hate to hear you say those sorts of things. You really are the very oddest girl I ever came across. I wish you would try to be more like other girls; I shall go back to town quite miserable about you, if you don't brighten up and look happier."

"Oh, no! you mustn't do that," she said quickly. "I will promise to try and make the best of things. I couldn't bear to make you unhappy, Jack."

"That's right," he replied cheerfully. "Look on the bright side, and when the mother's cross don't take any notice of her. Think about the good time coming, when you're of age and your own mistress. I'll get father to let me take you on the continent and we'll have no end of fun. Don't think so much, it only worries you."

Madge wondered what he would have her do instead, considering how little choice she had, but she did not say so. She only kissed him and promised to try, but her heart was very heavy.

Little as she knew what she really wanted she felt at least that satisfaction would not follow on the means suggested by her bright but careless brother. The young heart, in its loneliness and bitterness, felt no throb of delight at the idea of mixing in the gay world, which it had already learnt to distrust. There was indeed one true and lasting satisfaction to be had but, clever as she was, she would not find it yet.

(To be continued.)



THE YOUNG MOTHER.

By EDWARD OXENFORD.



In a far-off land is my love to-day;

I know not when I his face shall see;

From the morning's dawn to the twilight grey

I count the hours he is lost to me!

On their silent journey they come and go;

To each that passes my hopes are sighed,

And I bid them listen, and whisper low

My words to him o'er the ocean wide—

"O love! though parted is hand from hand,

My heart is with thee in that far-off land!"

From a far-off land in my dreams I hear

A voice that thrills with a joy untold,

And it bids me trust to the past so dear,

For perfect still is the love of old!

In the spirit then he is near, I know,

And souls are joined by a mystic tie,

Oh his words would never so clearly flow,

Repeating my own in the sweet reply—

"O love! though parted is hand from hand,

My heart is with thee in that far-off land!"