

THE END OF THE GAME

But exhausted as she was, there was yet a joyful peace and relief upon her — a peace such as she had never tasted, for it was that which comes after fierce effort, and what fierce, passionate effort was, Mary Reddin had only known since the day before. She felt as though the morning of yesterday were years and years ago, and she herself almost an old woman as compared to the light-hearted girl who, dressed in her pink muslin, had gone so happily and so gaily to preaching. And it was all true enough, she was older — older with the aging of circumstances and the education of fear; and for her ever again to be the same care-free and unafraid personality that she had been was as impossible as for the hatched chicken to creep back to its comatose condition in the shell. She might be — nay she would be — gay and happy once more, but it would be a gaiety in the background of which there lurked, to give it balance, a realization of the seriousness of life — the realization which comes only with actual experience — never by any amount of greybeard warnings.

David too felt an upspringing of peace and relief. He seemed to himself no longer blown hither and thither by every varying breath of his emotions — the plaything of love and hate — he had chosen his own path and the weary confusion of indecision had fallen from him. Circumstances had indeed fought for him, but it seemed good to know at the last that he had been sure of his own mind. That he had made the choice for himself, knowing that in the end love, and not hate,