

"But that isn't the point, Nan. We can all learn to appreciate, but the great thing is to love."

Then the little boy sat down on the hearthrug, cross-legged, and Nannie divided the chestnuts. The three shadows on the wall turned into one gigantic shadow. The log of wood fell apart, scattering white ashes into the heart of the fire.

Nannie and her friend talked of Perth's growing success; of Pill's approaching marriage with a dear little dancer—"the only girl he had ever loved!"—of Mrs. Leonard's pride in a pantomime engagement; of the lengthy book that Professor Mordaunt intended to write some day on the subject of legerdemain by a master of the art; of Nannie's work, and of the silent aunt.

When Solomon had gone away, to share the last of the chestnuts with Olly 'Ooper, they fell into silence. Rose still looked into the fire, and Nannie watched her, musingly. They were both thinking of the past year.

Suddenly Rose stretched out her arm and drew her friend closer. Nannie leaned against her knees.

"Nan dear! I want to talk to you, freely and frankly, but I am afraid you will not understand. It will sound so exaggerated, so extravagant, if I try to tell you of my love—for him. Every day and every hour it deepens and intensifies. Oh, Sydney! Sydney!"

The low, thrilling voice trembled and broke on her husband's name. There was silence once more, except for the murmur of Nannie's sympathy.