

Father is away, so it won't bother any-one."

Then followed a delightful children's song.

"That was for Kenneth," he heard Amy say, when the song was finished.

"Now, sing one for me, muver."

"How many kisses will you give me if I sing one for you?" he heard his wife ask in a voice he could scarcely recognize as hers in its glad, loving, motherly tenderness.

"Just dozens," was the merry reply, and he heard the promised kisses given until Kenneth impatiently interrupted.

"Don't kiss mother to pieces, Amy, or she won't be able to sing for you."

The song followed. Then he heard the little tyrants plead for just one story.

He listened, but the softly modulated words of the story did not reach him.

When it was finished, she said in a louder and more decided voice: "Now, children, no more songs or stories to-night. Come and say your prayers."

He moved stealthily forward to hear them. The words, "God bless father and mother and make me a good boy," coming from the lips of his headstrong little son, brought tears to the father's eyes.

He felt like a sinner outside Paradise, and longed to enter in. Then he turned and went quietly to his room.

Presently he heard his wife go downstairs. Then a soft prelude on the piano floated up to him.

Soon she began to sing, and one song followed another, until at length the listening husband said bitterly to himself: "She does not sing so when she knows I am around."

When the singing ceased he went down to his study. To his surprise he found her there. She looked up in confusion as he entered and closed the book she was reading, but not before his keen eyes had seen that she had been reading a magazine article of his own that was attracting considerable attention.

Then she rose to leave the room saying apologetically—"I did not know that you had returned."

He laughed and caught her arm, saying in a voice vibrant with some new emotion: "Wait a moment, Helen. How like a beautiful culprit you looked when I found you in my study, reading something I have written! So you do take an interest in your husband after all. You seem to forget that I hold that relation to you."

The Little Widow

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"Are you forgetting our arrangement?" she returned, coldly.

But he was not to be rebuffed. "No, I have not forgotten it. But I am going to," he declared, boldly, not like a dignified professor, nor a reserved husband, but with the joy of a light-hearted lover. "You have carried out the 'arrangement,' as you call it with the nicest exactitude and ability. You have been an excellent housekeeper, an exceptional hostess, an accomplished governess, and a loving mother, but a very cold wife. I want to be considered now, Helen, for I love you with the deep, true love of experienced manhood, not with the same ardent, first love that I gave Amy. That died when I lost her. But I love you with a love that will satisfy even you. Will you accept it, Helen?"

A glad light deepened and glowed in her eyes as they were raised to his, while she whispered, "I would never have married you if I had not cared for you." These words banished her reserve for ever and rendered their "arrangement" null and void. He half dreaded that she might wish to learn the "real" answer to the question she had asked them on their wedding day and was intensely relieved when she did not. He took the ring from his pocket, and, placing it on her finger, said, with a mystic mingling of lover and husband, "Till death do us part."

Some weeks later when she had returned from a visit to Mrs. McLaren, where she had gone with the children for a change of air and rest, she waited impatiently for her husband's return from college. After he had greeted her and the children, and she had answered all his questions concerning his sister, she asked him if he would spare her a few minutes in the study alone. He followed, wondering greatly what she wanted to tell him. When they were alone, she looked at him with all her wife's love in her eyes and said: "I know now the real reason why you married me, Archie."

"Why resurrect that old question, Helen?" he asked rather, impatiently. "I thought you had forgotten it."

"Kate confessed," she laughed, showing that the remembrance did not trouble her now. "To ease her conscience she declares."

"I do not understand. What had

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Kate to do with it?" he questioned, much puzzled by her words.

"Why, she thought you were in great need of a wife, and wrote that first letter asking me to marry you, saying that you loved me since meeting me at her home. I admired you very much at that time and so accepted you. You would not humiliate me by an explanation and so sacrificed yourself, and—"

"So that's the explanation," he interrupted with a laugh, showing that the perfect understanding between them

had banished all his former fear of her possessing such knowledge. "I often wondered who wrote that letter, but I never thought that Kate would dare do such a thing. Well, I shall write to thank her for giving me the best wife in the world, and my children such a mother. But the sacrifice was yours, not mine, Helen. I wonder now how you bore everything as you did."

"It was hard sometimes, Archie, but your little daughter's words, 'I love you, muver,' helped me over the hard places."