

"I only intended staying a day or two. I am on my way to the St. Lawrence."

"Nonsense!" rejoined Harry. "You can see nothing in a day or two. Ah, but then you said you only *intended*!"

"I expected you would think differently, from what you have just said about the town."

"I don't let my personal feelings bias my opinions. Besides, you are not in the position of a stranger, who has only eyes for the tallest buildings and the handsome women and the best houses, and ears for the latter's cost and the latest scandal. You have old scenes to revisit. You said as much yourself just now."

"True, O king!" responded Mrs. Macintyre gaily. "You are right. How long should I stay, Harry?" Mrs. Macintyre was getting a little sentimental, I am afraid.

"It will be a dangerous thing to leave that question to me, Bella. We won't talk about it now. To begin with, the place is about as dull—it's normal condition—as Margate in winter, if I remember Thackeray correctly. But it is pretty outside."

"Very well, Harry. And you will come and take lunch with me to-morrow, will you? That is, if it will not interfere with your business. And then we can have a nice long afternoon. See how fine the sky is and full of promise!"

"Business is nothing but a name just now; and it should be forgotten if it were otherwise," said Proteus, as he rose to say good-night. "I shall be delighted, and shall lie abed till noon to dream of it."

This was very well for a beginning. To Bella, the events of the days that followed were like a succession of delightful dreams. As for Proteus, he lived in an atmosphere of delightful dreams, too; but it occurred to him frequently that this thing could not last. He even played this second part so merrily, that he wrote his wife, telling her not to hurry home if the country

air was doing her good; and when he had posted the letter he wondered if the country air *was* really doing her good.

These drives, however, down dusky lanes on still evenings, with the stars, or perhaps the moon for an audience—and sometimes even *she* grew shy—were dangerous. One night Harry had asked Bella to kiss him. This is a different thing from asking a woman to let you kiss her. His arm—it would have been a customary action five years before—had slipped round her waist; and the horse, a well-trained animal with a wonderful instinct, had slipped into a walk. Bella hesitated, thinking, perhaps, of his wife. But she loved him, and one woman is liable to forget the rights of another when the same man is the object of their affections, and when the *man* will not remember. So the kiss was given.

Proteus went home deliriously happy. Fresh lips are wonderful stirrers of the pulse; but when they are lips you kissed once upon a time, and when the kiss is accompanied by a look from a pair of eyes that smiled indulgently on all you did or said, then there is a deeper charm and sweetness.

Proteus went to bed, but he could not sleep. Neither a rosy mouth, nor the memory of it, is a good narcotic. The moral side of the thing would present itself with disagreeable force and persistency. It always does—in the dark. He was a man who said his prayers every night, partly because the youthful habit had clung to him, and partly because he felt timid about breaking off from it. It was the same prayer, perhaps, with very few grown-up alterations, that he had been saying ever since he learned the art of repetition,— "God bless So-and-So," omitted from time to time, as God saw fit to bless So-and-so, or his relations, according to the idea that death is a blessing. But this night Proteus did not kneel down. He *was* not, in the strict sense of the word, a hypocrite;