

At last Monica sighed. Then her eyes were slowly raised, and for one long, ardent moment she gazed upon the man whose blemishes were so many and whose virtues were so few, and yet whose manhood was far, far greater to her than that of any other she had ever known. She saw in him that wonderful thing which few women can look upon unmoved. She saw courage and manhood, and she bowed her woman's love of all the virtues to the instinct of her sex. She would not, could not judge. Nature had created in her an ardent woman's soul, full of the power of love, regardless of the right and wrong of her feelings. She had loved this man, and it was beyond her power to recall, or change those feelings. So her words came, thrilling with gratitude and love for the man who knew no other life than at her side.

"I'm glad, dear, so glad," she cried passionately. "Oh," she went on, with a ring of wonderful delight which carried joy into the man's stormy heart, and set his every sense thrilling, "I'm glad of it all. I'm glad I am here—you are near me. I'm glad that this wonderful evening sun is shining, and that my eyes can look upon it. I am glad that I am breathing this fresh, pure air, and that God has seen fit to let you drag me back from those dark and painful ways. But more than all I am glad of you, Alec, glad that I can reach out and touch you—so."

She thrust out one almost transparent hand, which was seized and gently clasped in both her husband's.

"It is good, dear, to feel your great, strong, warm hands in mine. It is good to know they are always with me, ready to fight for me, ready to caress me. Lift me up, dear—so."

The man reached out and supported her frail body, so that her fair head rested against his shoulder as he drew her to him.

"So, yes, it is good to have you with me," she went on happily. "Now kiss me, dear; kiss me, and tell me that the shadows are all gone by, that never again, so long as we live, shall we let others replace them. So—yes." She sighed in perfect contentment and happiness. "God has been very good to us—far, far better than either of us deserve."

So there fell a wonderful, perfect silence upon the room. The great sun beyond the window lolled heavily to his rest, and the shadows grew out of the remoter corners of the room.