

"You are kind to remind me," he said, bitterly. "But I never dreamed that you could, with an accession to fortune, become like the rest. Why, I thought you were an Anti-Poverty Society champion."

"Oh, it is not that!" she said, earnestly. "I do not look down upon you." Then suddenly, as she thought of it, she commenced a new line of conversation. "By the way, were you not surprised at my elevation to my present position? What do you think—do you know anything about it?" She was very curious and seemed absorbed in the interest of his expected answer.

"I did not know what to think to-day after I heard you were not Mrs. Herbert. But it was Gay who enlightened me on both subjects. I know how it comes you are here."

What a wave of color dyed Nyle's face. She bit her lip, but could not say anything for want of the right thing to say. Afterwards she said to herself many, many times, "What a hypocrite, what a sham, what an adventurer I must seem in his eyes. That look he gave me was almost unfathomable, but it must have meant that though he would keep what Gay told him to himself, he could not think well of me."

"Mr. De Vere can give you something in the line of programme, if you like," Mr. Coleby whispered to his hostess, presently. "He has a fine talent for oratory, and argues well on that pet theory of yours."

"Is that so?" Nyle answered, wondering how a speech in favor of land tax would suit her company. "It would really be a treat to show them that I am in earnest about this question. And then Mr. De Vere would see by my putting him on the programme that I do not look upon him with the favor of a superior in rank."

You see, she was anxious, after all, be he a married flirt or not, that he should not be angry with her. She thought she knew herself, but she really had a very great deal to learn yet about her own motives and feelings. And she was very proud, indeed, of him, in an unconscious way, when he accepted her call upon him, and rose to make "a few remarks" on the "condition of society," which resolved themselves into a most masterly piece of eloquence and reason burning with Henry George's best ideas and full of "rights of unborn generations."

"I am afraid I have made enemies for you to-night," he apologized when he was going away. "I should not have spoken on such a subject to capitalists and millionaires."

"I wish the impression *would* be lasting," she replied. "But it won't. They are hardened and hear these things only to laugh at them. It is a slow way of getting the thin edge of the wedge in, this telling them about it. It needs some *doing*."

"Yes," he agreed. "It needs action. If one moneyed person would make a sacrifice in the right line, it would look like success."

Nyle remembered these words. Pondered over them, dreamed of them, cried over them. Because she did not want to do the sacrificing. After all, this luxury, this wealth, was more to her than she thought. And she hesitated—and kept giving her dinners and receptions and soirees, and dreaming noble things, not doing them. The more she realized that the time was ripe for action, if she had ever meant to make any, the more she realized that she was incapable of the necessary unselfishness and heroism to do what she had dreamed of doing. Ah, we are such heroes and

heroines in thought, such cowards in action, so ready to plan sacrificial work, so loth to engage in it. Nyle could read and re-read, and had done so, the arousing utterances of Edward McGlynn and Hugh Pentecost, the pamphlets published by the Anti-Poverty Society, the "Social Problems" of Henry George, could listen for hours to lectures on the elevation of the masses and the alleviation of all distress, could even go home and cry a little over the pictured woes of the oppressed poor, but not yet had she arrived at the identical moment of resolution necessary to convert her plans into action. And putting off from day to day the carrying out of her dreams, the impression of duty to be done faded and she grew indifferent, at last, in the whirl of social engagements she allowed herself to be drawn into.

"Butterfly is no name for me!" she wrote to Cecil, regretfully. "I am the most perfect specimen of ephemera extant. I am doing nothing all the day long but flit in the sunshine and lie in the roses and lilies of life."

Cecil went to town shortly after receiving that letter. She went to Flutterby Terrace and found her cousin occupied in doing nothing in her boudoir, clad in an exquisite morning gown of rose pink, with silken rosettes and quaint figured silk ruffles making a Kate Greenaway picture of her.

"You lazy, idle, darling!" was Cecil's greeting. "You are indeed getting good for nothing! Reading novels and eating confectionery when you might be out doing charity work. Really, Nyle, you surprise me by your late conduct. You were so different in Mayville!"

"I know it!" Nyle admitted, putting her book down. "I tell you, it's the poison of society's allurements that has got into my veins. Oh! Cecil, never, never be a leader in the beau monde! Don't let Gay get rich enough to transplant you to city life. It will be the death of me yet."

"Why don't you cut it then?"

"What is the use of doing that? It will cut me soon!"

"Where is Audrey De Vere, Nyle? He told Gay he had met you."

"He is living in the city. Is head over heels in Anti-Poverty work, too. Oh, he is good now, I tell you. He is the saint now, I the butterfly."

"Nyle, he loves you still."

Nyle sprang up and looked at Cecil in flushed anger. She was going to speak sharply, but changed her mind. "You need not tell me that!" she said, brokenly. "It would be of no use now. He could not have loved me much, however, when he could forget so soon and marry another."

Cecil was about to reply with a perplexed intonation matching her expression when a strange occurrence took place. The girls thought afterward that they would not have been more surprised if the ghosts of dead generations had trooped into the room, the one who entered being a most unexpected visitor, and one who came with white lips and anguished voice to tell them news of a most distressing character.

## CHAPTER IX.

A duet of weddings.

"Audrey is dying! Oh, Miss Fairgrieve, will you come to him and let him have one last word with you. He begged me so hard to come to you."

Those were the words uttered by the trembling girl who had entered so unceremoniously into Nyle's private rooms, and she was so exhausted with emotion that she sank into a chair and put her hand over her heart, as she looked be-