

much as possible : it was a great mistake to retain a mere courtesy title, as if she had interests and station remote from those of her husband. Caspar had smilingly opposed this change, but Lady Alice had stood firm. Indeed, to her old friends she remained "Lady Alice" to the end of the chapter ; but to the outer world she was henceforth known as Mrs. Brooke.

She sent up one of her new cards when she called upon Mrs. Romaine. She paid this visit with considerable shrinking of heart. She had bitter memories connected with Mrs. Romaine. Since the day on which she had been reconciled to her husband, she had cast from her all suspicion of his past—cast it from her in much the same arbitrary and unreasoning manner as she had first embraced it. For, like most women, she was governed far more by her feelings and instincts than by the laws of evidence. As Rosalind had once told her brother, Lady Alice had accidentally seen and intercepted a letter of hers to Caspar ; and Lady Alice had then rushed to the conclusion that it was part of a long continued correspondence and not a single communication. And now—now—what did she think ? She hardly knew ; of one thing only was she certain that Caspar had never been untrue to her, had never cared for any woman but herself.

She was not at all sure that Mrs. Romaine would receive her : she knew that she had written to her in a tone that no woman, especially a woman like Mrs. Romaine, is likely to forgive ; but time, she thought, blunts the memory of past injuries, and if Rosalind chose to forget the past, she would forget it too. It was with a soft and kindly feeling, therefore, that Lady Alice asked for admittance at Mrs. Romaine's door, and learned that Mrs. Romaine was at home and would see her.

Before she had been in the drawing-room five minutes, it dawned on Lady Alice's mind that there was something odd in her hostess' manner and even in her appearance. Of course she was prepared for a change ; in the twelve years or more that had elapsed since they had met she herself must have also changed. But, as a matter of fact, Lady Alice's long, elegant figure, shining hair and delicate complexion showed the ravages of time far less distinctly than she imagined ; while Mrs. Romaine was a mere wreck of what she had been in her youth. During the last few