

had illuminated a man's journey (I knew and felt it now) through the Valley of the Shadow. It had held his senses captive. It had brought him to her feet. It was a charm that she could always offer to his eyes. It was her glory and her pride to enhance it for his delectation. Her beauty was herself. That gone, she had nothing but a worthless soul to offer, and what woman would dream of offering a man her soul if she had no casket in which to enshrine it? If I had presented this other aspect of the case to Lola, she would have cried out, with perfect sincerity:

"My soul! You get things like mine anywhere for twopence a dozen."

It was the blasting of her beauty that was the infinite matter. All that I loved would be gone. She would have nothing left to give. The splendour of the day had ceased, and now was coming the long, long, dreary night, to meet which with dignity she was nerving her brave heart.

The tears were not far from my eyes when I said again softly:

"Your lover always, dear."

"Make no promises," she said, "except one."

"And that is?"

"That you will write me often until I come home."

"Every day," said I.

So we parted, and I returned to London and to my duties at Barbara's Building. I wrote daily, and her dictated answers gave me knowledge of her progress. To my immense relief, I heard that the oculist's skill had saved her eyesight; but it could not obliterate the traces of the cruel claws.

The days, although fuller with work and interests, appeared long until she came. I saw but little of the outside world. Dale, my sister Agatha, Sir Joshua Oldfield, and Campion were the only friends I met.