

to-night," said Percy, jumping up. "We'll walk ; the streets are so jolly. Ernest," and he took him by the arm, "they are full of men and women, and all these months I have never remembered that."

The sight of Percy had been extraordinarily pleasant to Blanche, and his abandonment of his absurd hermit's life not less so. That the sight of him was also strangely exciting to her, she would not admit to herself, though it was quite indubitably true. Frankly she had been disappointed in him in the autumn; she had hoped and believed he would have conducted himself more successfully. Anyone, she told herself, could go and shut himself up and see none of his friends. Percy ought to have taken a finer and, she added, a more characteristic line. No doubt the suddenness of the blow had staggered him; it was natural that his world should seem *boulevardé*, but it was a confession of incompetence to make a hermit of himself. True, as everyone said, and as he himself had told her, he had buried himself in work,—he had made one passion take the place of another,—but in order to study Art there was no reason why you should give a shut door to your best friends. Blanche confessed that she could not suggest a line that should be striking, but she held an extremely high opinion of Percy's possibilities, and in this he had acted below his best.

Anyhow, the treatment had succeeded. There was no denying that to day he had been quite com-