

little ; her heart full of the loneliness and loss of these two past years.

"It was such a hard conflict between duty and love," she goes on, "my duty, it seemed to me, forbade my ever seeing again the man who had caused Bertie Vaughan's death—forgive me that I speak of it, Lewis, I never will again—and my love called always for my husband's return. Many, many times, when half wild with thinking of you, alone and wretched as I was, have I begun letters imploring your return, telling you the past was forgiven and forgotten ; but when they were finished and the impulse was past, I could not send them. My promise to my father seemed to rise before me and appal me. To ask you to return seemed to me like a crime, and these letters went into the fire, one and all."

"And yet, my wife, you are here."

"Yes, Lewis, it all seemed so clear that night. Sister Monica and Lucy were nearer heaven than I ; they knew best. All was dark with me ; I could not decide what was right or what was wrong. I was like one shipwrecked, tossing about on a troubled sea without rudder or compass or pilot to guide. But they knew, and my heart, hungry for the sight of you, echoed every word they said. And so I am here, and I know at last my first earthly duty is to the husband I love and venerate above all men, and to whom I have pledged to cleave until death. And never—no never, Lewis, shall the shadow of the past come to darken my life. I want you to know and feel *that*, to believe that I love and honor you as greatly as though the past had never been."

She flings her arms about him with a great sob as she ceases, and they sit in silence. Presently he reaches over and takes up the sheet of paper on which he has been writing.

"Look here, Sydney."

She looks and reads, "My Dear Wife," and lifts her surprised eyes to his face.

"Were you writing to me, Lewis ?"

"I was writing to you. Does it not strike you as strange that after a silence of two years I should to-day begin a letter to you ? I could get no further than these three words ; they hold a charm for me. I thought I had written them for the last time that morning in my mother's house. Do you not wonder what I was going to say ?"

She laughs and blushes in the old charming way that Sydney Owenson was wont to do, under Lewis Nolan's eyes.