

seemed so happy in her sister's happiness, that Madge's own joy had been increased and doubled by her tender sympathy, although her lover looked grave sometimes as he marked Leslie's hacking, constantly-recurring cough, which was too slight to awaken alarm in less-experienced eyes.

But one day, when he spoke to Leslie, gently suggesting change of air and a warmer climate, she looked up at him with those beautiful tired eyes of hers which always stirred the young man's heart with a feeling of pain, and laughed a little and shook her head and changed the subject so decidedly that he did not speak to her again, but went to Dora and imparted his anxiety to her. Dolly came and put her arms about her sister and whispered something about "rest and change," but Leslie as decidedly unclasped the gentle hands and put her away.

"Rest would drive me mad, I think," she said almost coldly. "And there is no need of change, Dolly. Won't you all understand that I am just a little tired, and that nothing but hard work will do any good?"

Perhaps the person who understood her best during this dark and terrible time was Mark Stretton; his own sufferings had taught him sympathy, which found a vent in thoughtful deeds, but never in words. Sometimes it seemed to him hard and unjust and unrighteous that the love which was not hers should seem so precious to her, while his own love, so great, so mighty, so patient, should be of no worth in her eyes, blinded as they still were by her love for Hugh Forsyth.

With the new year came a new triumph to the actress who had already given such proofs of power and genius. The new play was brought out and proved an entire and glorious success. No other triumph for Leslie had been so great as this. Her name was in every paper, spoken of in terms of the most enthusiastic eulogy, and she herself was genuinely pleased at her success.

"My fame will live longer than I," she said to Mark, a day or two after the first performance, as they stood together, and alone, in the green-room of the Star. "They will talk of me when I am dead, and—Why, Mark, what is it? Have I pained you? Forgive me."

"You have not pained me more than you do daily, almost hourly," he said wistfully. "Ah, Leslie, if you would only try to forget him—and be happy!"

"To forget him!" she repeated. "Why, he is the husband of another woman now! It would be a sin to think of him, would it not? And I have forgotten."

"Then, if it be so," he cried passionately, "will you not come to me and let me take care of you, and take you away from this life which is killing you? Leslie, you have known long enough that I love you—that I would give my life to make you happy. Will you give yourself to me, dear? I am not a poor man now, you know."

"Mark"—she put her hand upon his arm and looked at him with misty eyes—"do you remember telling me once of your friend Max Schroeder, who walked so steadily across the field after he had received his death-wound? I am like him, dear, I got my death-wound long ago, and some day—ah, not long to wait, I hope!—I will fall too, suddenly; and, Mark, if you really love me, you will be glad, and you will put no cypress or yew, but just roses upon my coffin, because you will know that I am glad at last."

She turned away towards her dressing-room, and Mark hurriedly left the green-room and, passing out of the stage door, went out into the night-air. It was cold and clear, a few stars shone in the dark blue of the sky, the wind was sharp and frosty; but Mark, although in evening-dress and without an overcoat, did not feel the cold in his anguish, as he paced up and down, heedless of the crowd pouring into the theatre and the long line of carriages waiting their turn.

Mastering his agitation, he went into the theatre again, this time by the front entrance—he had left Jenny and Madge and Dora in a box with young Doctor Campbell. As he did so, a carriage dashed up, and a gentleman, springing out, lifted a lady from the vehicle and placed her by Mark's side without letting her feet touch the pavement in the transit. Something in the lady's laugh, as he did so, attracted Mark's attention, and he turned sharply and looked at her. She was small and slight, and dressed in black velvet with pearls round her white throat, and her face was as beautiful as a poet's dream in its youth and beauty and happiness. She did not see Mark, and, perceiving this, he drew back a little and let her husband join her, also unrecognized. He was a tall handsome man, with frank, smiling blue eyes, and he smiled tenderly at his wife as he drew her hand within his arm and moved on with her, the trailing folds of her dress brushing Mark's feet as she passed him where he stood in the shadow.

Mark smiled bitterly as he followed. The last time that he had seen that handsome happy face it had looked wan and haggard and ghastly pale in the moonlight, as they had stood together in the quiet deserted road; and, as he went up the wide carpeted stairs leading to the boxes, he hoped passionately, yet almost against hope, that Leslie would not see at among her audience.

As he took his seat in the box, he glanced swiftly and anxiously round the house.

Every seat was full; but, among the multitude of faces, in a box near the stage he saw Bee Forsyth's beautiful face, eager and expectant. Her husband had drawn slightly behind one of the curtains, and was in the shadow, but not so much so but that Mark could see his tender smile as he spoke to his wife. Had he so soon forgotten, the artist wondered; had he buried the past so completely that no spectre of it could rise up and confront him in the present?

The curtain rose, the play began, amid profound attention and stillness among the audience. There was nothing very novel about it, there was much love and jealousy, and the usual misunderstanding which a word could set right, which word however is not spoken until much misery has been wrought and mischief made; but the common plot was redeemed by admirable dialogue and dramatic situations, by scenery as perfect as it was possible to be, by some of the best acting on the London boards—above all, by the genius and beauty and power of Leslie Scott.

Her rôle, that of a loving, passionate, true-hearted woman, scorned, misunderstood, distrusted, separated from the husband whom she loved, but who was unworthy of her, and from the little child who had been the joy of her life; was one admirably suited to show her histrionic powers to their best advantage, the audience were with her, and a triumph one tenth part as great would have assured her success had she been a debutante. From the first moment when she came smiling on to the stage in the white satin and lace she wore as her bridal-dress, the audience was with her; they revelled in her joy, they despaired with her despair, they hoped with her hope. Never had she seemed more beautiful, and Mark felt a proud thrill that they should witness her triumph, and looked over at the box where Sir Hugh and Lady Forsyth sat. Sir Hugh was very pale now; but his eyes never left the stage, while Bee, flushed and excited, with parted lips and hurried breathing, sat equally attentive and absorbed.

Had she seen them? Mark wondered once or twice, with a little thrill of dread at the thought, then reassured himself anxiously. No, it was impossible. Among such a number of fair girls' faces, how could she distinguish one? Among such a sea of eager, agitated men, her eyes could not seek out one.

Towards the end of the second act, Mark went to the green-room, where he had the *entree*, and where delight and excitement reigned supreme among the company, the manager, and the author, who were congratulating each other and smiling at the thunders of applause which shook the building and made the roof ring again. Leslie was still on the stage; but in a few minutes she came in, excited, trembling, and panting under the weight of the flowers she bore, and they clustered round her with eager facile compliment.

Swiftly and almost brusquely she answered them, and, passing through the group, she approached Mark, and looked up at him with eager, shining eyes.

"Are they pleased?" she said abruptly. "Pleased—overjoyed!" Mark answered, trying to speak lightly. "Jenny is rapidly going out of her mind with delight and excitement, Madge and Campbell have quite forgotten each other's existence, and Dora is divided between pride and anxiety that you should over-fatigue yourself."

"She need not fear for me. Tell her so," she said quietly. "Mark, do you know I feel to-night as if I personified those words—where are they?—I used to sing. What are they?" she added confusedly. "Ah, I remember.

"Her mirth the world required,  
She bathed it in smiles of glee;  
But her heart was tired, tired,  
And now they let her be."

"They are sad lines, not befitting your triumph to-night," he said gently.

"Perhaps not. Forget them then, and—You have been very good to me, Mark."

She looked at him earnestly for a moment, then turned away, muttering something about changing her dress, and left him; and he returned to Dora, with an unspoken anxiety and dread at his heart which he could not define. One or two among the audience recognized the painter, and glanced at him as he passed down the corridor; but he heeded nothing, and sat, waiting in silence for the curtain to rise on the third and last act.

It rose amid the hushed expectancy of the audience. Mark leaned forward eagerly, listening to the words spoken upon the stage, but understanding them as little as if they were spoken in an unknown tongue, and, although he looked at the actors as they moved about, he saw nothing until Leslie appeared.

She was dressed in white; long shimmering folds of silk fell around her, trimmed with cascades of softly falling lace; her hair, the pretty chestnut hair, which was designed never to become gray, although a few white hairs had appeared there so early, was falling over her shoulders in heavy waves, and gave her the appearance of youthfulness. She was very pale, but her eyes shone with a feverish lustre which gave her loveliness a strange intensity and force.

A burst of applause, loud and prolonged, greeted her as she came slowly down the stage; and she bowed her head in recognition of her reception. As she lifted it again, glancing round the theatre with a little stereotyped smile, Mark saw her face change, and knew that what he had dreaded had taken place—she had seen Sir Hugh and Lady Forsyth. The applause died away, the audience became still, and waited.

Standing motionless upon the stage, she tried to speak. Twice she made the attempt—her lips parted, but no words came; and those who stood by her saw that a look of wild intense agony came into the beautiful eyes, and glanced at each other in fear. Among the audience there was no alarm; it was acting, they thought, wonderful, lifelike, matchless acting, but only acting.

But hush, hark—surely that one low, yet terribly distinct and anguish-stricken cry was not acting, although it came from the actress's lips! Surely she was not

acting as she fell suddenly forward, her arms outstretched before her, upon her face, and lay there a motionless figure, a mass of shimmering costly silk and streaming chestnut hair.

When they lifted her up she was quite dead; the "bullet" had touched her heart at last.

All night her sisters watched beside her as she lay upon her bed, white and still, a faint little smile parting her lips. Many a long night she had lain there wrestling with her anguish, choking back her tears lest her sobs should disturb her sisters, fighting against the love she could not kill, which conquered her at last; but now as she lay there were no tears upon her face, her eyes were closed and the long lashes swept her cheek; she was smiling, and there was a look of peace upon her face which had long been a stranger there. At her feet and on her breast, and in the waxen hands folded so meekly upon her breast, they placed the flowers which had been showered upon her in such profusion and in such admiration a few hours before; and as the dawn broke in the eastern sky, they left her there to her rest.

As, through the chill gray dawn of the wintry day, Mark left the house and turned his face towards the home which would ever be a lonely and a sorrowful one, a faint stir of life was beginning to move in the great city. It seemed as if its mighty heart were beginning to throb once more with renewed life and vigor. Mark pushed his hair from his brow to let the chill morning wind blow upon it, and let his weary eyes rest upon the gray expanse above him, in which the pale light was slowly breaking. But he saw nothing but the calm beautiful face of the dead woman, as she lay with a smile upon her lips.

Greatness and fame and wealth had been in her grasp; the laurels of fame had filled the little hands now crossed so meekly on the pulseless heart, her name was on the lips of the world and in the hearts of the people to whom she had given such pleasure; but he knew that to her death was welcome, and he tried, with all his aching desolate heart, to be glad it had come so painlessly and mercifully.

And as he walked there seemed to come to him from the great city which he was approaching the soft melody of the words she had sung in the lighted drawing room of Oakhampton Court, and he saw again the look in her eyes as she sang them—

"Strew on her roses, roses,  
And never a spray of yew.  
In quiet she reposes—  
Ah, would that I did too!"

"Her mirth the world required,  
She bathed it in smiles of glee;  
But her heart was tired, tired,  
And now they let her be."

"Her life was turning, turning  
In mazes of heat and sand;  
But for peace her soul was yearning,  
And now peace laps her round."

"Her cabin'd, ample spirit,  
It fluttered and failed for breath;  
To-night it doth inherit  
The vasty hall of death."

THE END.

GOOD FLOUR.—In selecting flour first look to the color. If it is white with a yellowish straw-color tint, buy it. Next examine its adhesiveness. Wet and knead a little of it between your fingers; if it works soft and sticky, it is poor. Then throw a little lump of dried flour against a smooth surface; if it falls like dried powder, it is bad. Lastly, squeeze some of the flour tightly in your hands if it retains the shape given by the pressure that, too, is a bad sign. It is safe to buy flour that will stand all these tests. These modes are given by all old flour dealers, and they pertain to a matter that concerns everybody.