

long period—years and years—but the last one was written by Ted to her in Holland."

"Oh!" said Clare, and she drew her breath rather sharply, for now there was something to go upon.

She knew Ted's outrageous softness of heart where women were concerned, his inability to hurt them, and how easy they found it to play on his feelings. And he had never possessed a tithe of his sister's acumen and foresight. He had never been afraid to commit himself on paper. He had written reams of love letters and forgotten them the moment they had flowed from his pen.

But how to explain this odd idiosyncrasy to people like the Rodneys with their extraordinary, puritanical ideas, was a problem for which, as yet, Clare had found no solution. She had had to face it before when called to task by Mrs. Rodney with regard to certain persons whom Clare had got her to invite to Hans Crescent.

"Whatever Anna Helder may have said or given you to believe, it is all exaggerated. If everybody acted in this high-handed sort of way, heavens! where would any of us be? None of us are saints. We live in an ordinary and rather difficult world. Believe me, Kitty, the only short cut to happiness is to forgive and to forget."

"There are some things with regard to which it is not possible to do either. I would show you that letter—the last one, I mean—only it would shame me too much. It was written just after Ted had asked me to marry him, and it—it explained to Miss Helder why he had had to do it. He said quite frankly that it was necessary for him to marry money, and that she had always known it."

"Oh, the fool!" muttered Clare under her hot breath.

"Of course, after that, even you will admit that there is no more to be said," went on Kitty quite calmly, though the colour was burning high in her cheek.

"I admit nothing. If you knew Ted as well as I