

## A Woman's Laughter

"Yes, there were others. But to understand you must have known my friend before he sank down into the pit—when he was still a man. He was a tremendous student. His fortune was sufficient to give him both time and means for the pursuits he loved. He had his great library, and adjoining it a laboratory. He wrote books which few people read because they were filled with facts and old theories. He believed that the world was very old, and that there was less profit for man in discovering new luxuries for an artificial civilisation than in re-discovering a few of the great laws and miracles buried in the dust of the past. He believed that the nearer we get to the beginning of things, and not the farther we drift, the clearer comprehension can we have of earth and sky and God, and the meaning of it all. He did not consider it an argument for Progress that Christ and His disciples knew nothing of the telephone, of giant engines run by steam, of electricity, or of instruments by which man could send messages for thousands of miles through space. His theory was that the patriarchs of old held a closer touch on the pulse of Life than progress in its present forms will ever bring to us. He was not a fanatic. He was not a crank. He was young, and filled with enthusiasm. He loved children. He wanted to fill his home with them. But his wife knew that she was too beautiful for that—and they had none."

He had leaned a little forward, and had pulled his hat a trifle over his eyes. There was a moment's lull in the storm, and it was so quiet that each could hear the ticking of Father Roland's big silver watch.

Then he said :

"I don't know why I tell you all this, father, unless