

If Mary had spoken as frankly, she would have said: "I am terribly, terribly happy, for I am going away to-night with the man I love." She remembered the letter she had written to Robert Aymms the day before — and the things that Mr. Maughm had uttered about his wife, and her thoughts sprang to his defence as she looked at the woman before her. She thought: "Well, you are not the only one that's terribly, terribly unhappy."

Mrs. Maughm continued, "I don't know where my husband is. He went away from here yesterday. I know he went down to the office; but he did not come home, and I haven't any idea where he has gone. I wouldn't take any means to find out — that is, no means but this. I thought perhaps you knew."

The colour came slowly into Mary's cheeks, but her business training enabled her to say tranquilly:

"If Mr. Maughm went away without telling you where he was going, I guess he must have wanted to be alone."

"Then you do know where my husband is?"

"He didn't leave any word at the office."

"I don't ask you to tell me where he is unless you care to, Miss Moreland. I could have him followed. It isn't that. I don't want to spy on Tom. But as I told you, I am terribly unhappy. I think he is going to leave me."

Mrs. Maughm paused after this statement — not as though she wished to have it refuted or commented upon, but as though she wished to follow out its tragic suggestion. She bit her lip; tears overflowed and rolled down her cheeks; she stared straight before her; and the stenographer believed she now saw the reverse of the picture presented to her the day before.

She began to feel like a robber entertained as a guest in the house that was to be plundered. She was dazed. In the buttonhole of her jacket she had put a spray of the lily-of-the-valley. It recalled the smell of the earth.