

'The earth shall pass away first, my own!' he answers. 'No one can part us now, and *together*, my Nest, we can surely meet sorrow even with a smiling face!'

But a shadow of the past—a shadow cast by a little grave, violet-crowned, where 'Baby' lies serenely sleeping under the crystal sky of the Riviera—sends a thrill to her heart, and she slightly shivers.

'Ah! there is no perfect happiness in this world, even with Guy beside me,' she thinks, with the nervous organisation of a woman; but he—all *he* thinks is that the woman he loves is his for the rest of his days. Come what may, he can show a brave front, while his eyes rest on the quaint gipsy beauty of his wife's young face, and her slender arms form a magic circle round his neck.

So as he marks her shiver he never dreams, with the egotism of man, that he shares her love with 'Baby,' and says,—

'These warm days and chilly evenings are trying for my darling! Mine now, to keep and guard from every ill!' and drawing her cloak round her, he fastens it carefully and tenderly at her slim throat.

And she, to whom such tenderness and care are indeed new and strange, nestles against his heart, and looks up into his grey eyes very wistfully.

All the *piquante* sparkle of her face is gone; but a soft light breaks over it, and there is a universe of dumb pathos and eloquence in her gaze.

In this moment, all that may be left of the capricious, coquettish girl's nature, merges entirely into true, loyal-hearted womanhood.

'What is it, my Nest?'

'I love you! I love you!' she cries eagerly, as if all her soul went out to him in the three simple words and she *could* not keep it back, and her accents tremble with earnestness.

He smiles one of his rare sweet smiles as he harkens, and in proof of his unlimited gratitude a dark moustache swoops down once more swiftly on the rosebud lips, and Nest, who is saucy and defiant no longer, but a good and obedient wife, never dreams of remonstrating or repulsing. Nay, she even renders back (with interest) to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and thus the theme of the discourse is broken for a halcyon moment or two. Then Guy gives a short, blissful sigh, like that of a giant refreshed.

Suddenly on the still air comes the shrill treble of Gus Wylmer's voice.