Harraden Beatrice

Katharine Frensham: A Novel

Beatrice Harraden

Katharine Frensham: A Novel

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=23166555
Katharine Frensham: A Novel:
ISBN http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/42812

Содержание

Beatrice Harraden
Katharine Frensham: A Novel

"Midway the road of our life's term they met,
And one another knew without surprise;
Nor cared that beauty stood in mutual eyes;
Nor at their tardy meeting nursed regret.

To them it was revealed how they had found
The kindred nature and the needed mind,
The mate by long conspiracy designed;
The flower to plant in sanctuary ground."

– George Meredith.

NOTE

My thanks are due to Herr Sigurd Hals (Christiania) for permission to use from his *Hals-Album* the Norwegian folk-songs: "Aagot's Mountain-song;" "Astri, my Astri;" "Home from the Saeter."

And to Herr Wilhelm Hansen (Copenhagen) for permission to use from his *Danmark's melodie bog* the Danish song, "Thou who hast sorrow in thy heart."

And to Herr Abraham Lundquist (Stockholm) for permission to use from his *Svenska Folkvisor* the Swedish

song, "At daytime when I'm working."
BEATRICE HARRADEN.

Hampstead, *Oct., 1903*.

PART I
IN ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

"Do you understand, Alan, my boy?" asked Clifford Thornton.

"No, father, I don't," the boy said in a low voice. "It seems all such a fuss about nothing. Why can't you and mother have it out like any other fellows, and then make it up and be friends? You can't think how easy it is."

"We have been doing that for fifteen years and more – all your lifetime," the man said.

"I never knew it was as bad as that," Alan said.

"We tried to spare you the full knowledge of it," the man answered gently. "But now that you are old enough to know, we are obliged to tell you that we are not, never have been, happy together, and that we do not wish to be together. We spoil each other's lives."

Alan was sitting on the sofa. He stirred a little, and then suddenly, without any warning, burst into tears. Although he admired his mother's personality and bearing, he had never been particularly attached to her; but with that conservative conventionalism characteristic of an English boy, he was

mortified, and felt it to be a disgrace that there should be any serious disagreement between his parents.

Clifford Thornton looked at the boy whom he loved and whom he had wounded; and he recognised with a sharp pain of regret that Alan was still too young and too sensitive for the news which had been broken to him. Bitterly the man reproached himself for his selfishness. And yet he had waited for this moment for fifteen long years – more than that; for he and his wife had discovered at the onset that they were out of sympathy, each having an *aura* hostile to the other. Then the child had come, and these two naturally antipathetic people had thought: "We shall draw nearer to each other because of the child."

But Nature is merciless in many of her ways, and mysterious; and perhaps her greatest and subtlest human mystery is the strife, conscious or unconscious, of one individuality with another individuality. And she gives no balm for it. On the contrary, she gives a sort of morbid remorse, wholly out of proportion to the quality and quantity of mistakes and failings born necessarily of unsuitable companionship.

Clifford Thornton bent over him and put his hand on the lad's shoulder.

"Alan," he said, almost imploringly. "Don't fret like that. We will talk about it another time. Come, pull yourself together. We will go for a ride, and you can try the new cob."

The boy sobbed on as though he had not heard.

"Alan," Clifford Thornton said.

The boy looked up, and stifled his last sob.

"I don't want to go riding," he said. "I want to go and be alone."

He rose from the sofa and dried his eyes. He did not seem ashamed of his tears; he offered no excuses for his sudden outburst of grief.

"I'm awfully upset, father," he said with trembling voice.

"I have done you an injury to-day," his father said, "and I can never forgive myself. I have taken away from you something which I can never give back – that splendid belief of childhood that everything is going on all right."

Alan did not seem to hear. He took his cap from the writing-table and turned towards the door. It was evident that he wanted to say something to his father, but that the words would not come. He opened the door slowly and passed out. Clifford Thornton watched him, and watched the door close, and then stood still a moment, waiting, longing, and listening. But when he realised that the boy had indeed gone, he slipped into his study chair and leaned back, his arms folded tightly together, and his thin face drawn into an expression of great pain. The thoughts which passed through his mind kept him chained there, as one paralysed. Not a muscle of his face moved. He might have been a dead man staring at nothing. At last, perhaps half an hour afterwards, the door opened, and Alan came back.

"Father," he said shyly. "It's all right now. Let us go riding, after all."

The strain on the man's face relaxed. Father and son clasped

hands.

CHAPTER II

Mrs Thornton, who had been making a tour in Scotland with her friend, Mrs Stanhope, returned to her home the next day after Clifford Thornton's interview with his boy. The Thorntons lived in Surrey, in a beautiful house standing with fifteen acres of untouched heather around it, not far from Farnham. It was called "Falun" after the place in Dalecarlia, Sweden, where Clifford Thornton's father had been educated at the celebrated School of Mines, since removed to Stockholm.

Mrs Thornton arrived at Farnham about five o'clock. Alan went to meet her at the station, and even during their drive home to "Falun," Mrs Thornton noticed that there was something unusually strained in the boy's manner. She herself was in a state of great mental excitement, having been urged by her friend, Mrs Stanhope, who had always taken an unsympathetic view of Clifford's character, to propose to him an immediate deed of separation.

Marianne Thornton was a beautiful, imperious woman, with an impossible temper and an impracticable temperament; she never had been, and never could have been controlled by any one. But this evening, something tugged at her heart when she saw that her boy, whom she loved in her turbulent way, was in trouble; and when they were alone in her boudoir, she questioned him in her abrupt fashion which so often jarred on her husband

consciously and her son unconsciously.

"Father told me yesterday that you were not happy together," he said shyly, as he played with the spoon in his teacup. "It upset me rather. I am awfully sorry about it, mother."

He did not look at her when he spoke, and did not see the sudden flush on her handsome face. She herself had meant to tell Alan. It had never entered her head for one moment that Clifford, who, so she knew in her heart of hearts, had borne with her patiently, would have taken the initiative and opened the subject to the boy in her absence. She was stung beyond bearing.

"Happy!" she said excitedly. "Who could be happy with your father? So he has been speaking to you about me, has he? And what has he been daring to say against me?"

"He never said anything against you," the boy answered, in a low voice. "He only told me you were not happy together."

She arranged the cushions on the sofa angrily, and leaned amongst them angrily.

"Happy!" she said. "I should like to know who could be happy with your father – a man of no heart, no emotions, selfish beyond words, and unkind beyond belief."

"Oh, mother, that's not true," the boy said, with an indignant outburst. "Father is always good and kind. I never once heard him say an unkind word to you or me. It's all your fault. It's your temper. That's what it is."

His championship of his father aroused all the anger and jealousy in her nature.

She got up from the sofa and turned to him.

"You are just like him," she cried passionately, "just like him. Make your lives together, and find your happiness in each other. I don't want either of you."

She hastened from the room, swept down the stairs, swept through the hall, through the study and flung the door of the laboratory violently open.

Clifford, who was a chemist, was distilling over a flame a substance which represented more than a month's work. Marianne's sudden entry made him jerk the bottom of the flask containing it against the ring of the retort-stand. The flask cracked, and in an instant the whole of the contents blazed off and disappeared.

She did not notice, and would not have cared if she had noticed.

"What have you been saying to the boy?" she asked, in her tempestuous manner.

Clifford moved round, looked at her, and leaned against the bench.

"I have told him that we are not happy, and that we must part," he answered.

Something in his manner, something in his face, in the tone of finality in his voice arrested her. She glanced at him, glanced at the obvious signs of his lost labour, and some words rose to her lips, but she did not speak them. She went towards the door, and there she paused and turned towards him. He was still leaning

against the bench, and his whole bearing denoted that of a man who can deal no more with despairing conditions. She knew then that everything was over between them. She retired to her room, and was not seen any more that evening.

Father and son took their dinner in silence, and no reference was made to Mrs Thornton's absence. It was tacitly understood by them both that she was in one of her tempers, which were, alas! part and parcel of the "Falun" everyday life.

Clifford and the boy played a game of billiards, and then both father and son went to develop some photographs in the dark room, which adjoined the laboratory. They were not happy; but like two criminals, they felt a certain amount of easement in being together.

At last Alan went to bed, and his father shut himself up in his laboratory and tried to work out some structural formulæ in connection with certain experimental data he had obtained. But his mental serenity had been disturbed by his wife's return, and he was disheartened by the loss of the result of his work. That was only one of the many times when Marianne had burst into the laboratory and spoilt his experiments, and he was annoyed with himself for not having remembered to turn the key and thus secure himself from an unwelcome intrusion. He struggled some time with conflicting thoughts, but eventually came into his study and drew his chair up to the fire; for it was a cold September night. He sat there staring at the fire, and his mind wandered back to his happy student days under Bayer in Munich, and Hofmann

in Berlin, when everything seemed possible to him because his mind was free from harassment. He glanced at Hofmann's portrait, which was hanging over the mantelpiece, and he heard once more the man's genial voice, and felt the charm of his genial presence. A thrill of pleasure and enthusiasm passed through him. For three years he had studied with Hofmann, and had finally become his private assistant, only leaving him to take over the Professorship of Chemistry at Aberystwith College, a post which he held for two years. Then his father, a mining engineer, died, leaving him a considerable fortune; and he was thus able to devote himself entirely to research work, his subjects being the study of stereo-isomeric compounds, and syntheses amongst the vegetable alkaloids. It was during his last year at Berlin that he had met and married Marianne Dacre, the beautiful daughter of a widowed Englishwoman keeping an English boarding-house in the German capital. When his father died, they settled down with their little son at "Falun," and from that moment until this very evening, happiness had been a stranger to the home. Yet the man was made for happiness. He would have been glad enough to love and be loved. But he had, of his own free will, chosen badly, and he had to pay the penalty. And he paid it with all the chivalry and kindness which were part of his nature. But the moment had come when he realised that he had paid enough, and as he sat there, half-musing, half-dozing, he said:

"I have paid enough. I can and will pay no more."

And suddenly he fell asleep from sheer mental exhaustion,

and he dreamed. He dreamed that he was telling his wife all his locked inmost thoughts of her. He had kept them controlled so long and so sternly, that now they came tumbling out with reckless abandonment.

"You have never known me for what I am," he said passionately. "You have spoiled my life, my spirit, and ruined my best talents. I tell you I had talents before you came and trampled on them. Listen to me. If ever a man has been spiritually murdered, it is I. But now the barrier of silence has broken down, and I dare to tell you what in my inmost heart I really think of you. I dare to tell you that I despise your paltry mind and petty temperament; that your atmosphere is an insult to me, and that I long and thirst and am starved to be free from the pressure of your daily presence. You have been merciless to me with your uncontrolled rages, your insane jealousies of me, my work, my ambitions, and my friends. I can bear it all no longer. The day on which we go our own ways, will be the day of my re-birth. And that day shall be to-morrow – now – even now. No, no, don't begin to argue with me, Marianne. There is nothing you can say to me either about yourself or the boy that could alter my determination. We have delayed too long already, and the precious years are passing. Sixteen wasted years – oh, the hopeless folly of them, and leading to what? No, no, I'll listen to no more arguments – there is no sense in this continued penance. We must and shall part to-morrow; no, no – now – this moment – ah, at last, at last – freedom at last!"

He awoke and looked around his quiet study.

"Ah," he said, "it was a dream. I am glad, in spite of everything, that it was a dream. I am glad that I did not say those things to her in reality. The look of pain and astonishment on her face would have haunted me all my life."

He shuddered.

"It was horrible," he said. "Poor Marianne, poor Marianne! You must not know the truth which kills. Poor Marianne! We must pick up the bits to-morrow – somehow."

Then he turned down the lights, and went upstairs. His wife's door was open, and he heard her voice calling him.

"Clifford, Clifford!" she cried, as though in some great danger.

He hastened his steps, and found Marianne standing in the middle of the room, her hair dishevelled, her eyes transfixed, and her face bearing the same expression of pain and astonishment which he had seen in his dreams.

"Good God!" he cried. "What is it, Marianne?"

"Clifford," she sobbed, "I dreamed that you had been telling me you hated and despised me, that I was an insult to your life and talents, that I had ruined your life, murdered your spirit, and crushed out all the best in you. Tell me, tell me, it was only a dream. I know we have not been happy, but – but – it could not have been as bad as that. Tell me, it was only a dream – but, oh, Clifford, it was so vivid, so penetrating that I cannot believe it was a dream. I heard your voice – your real voice; tell me – tell

me – "

"It was only a dream," he said excitedly, "nothing but a dream. You must not look like that. I cannot bear you to look like that. It is more than I can bear. You must forget about it, and we will begin all over again to-morrow. I never said those things to you – thank Heaven, I never said them to you – it was only a dream – your dream – and my dream."

He could have bitten his tongue out after he had said those last words.

"Your dream?" she cried, with a ring of despair in her voice.

"Marianne," he said, gathering himself, and all the best in himself, together for victory over his temperament and hers – "oh, Marianne, we are not to be held responsible for our dreams. You know how it is with our restless, wayward fancies: one little passing discord in real life becomes magnified and expanded into an immense orchestra of discordant strains in that dream-life over which we seem to have no control. Don't you understand – can't you understand?"

"You dreamed it," she said slowly, "and it was so vivid to you that it broke through all barriers and reached me in my dream. It must have been born of your inmost thoughts, bred up and strengthened through these long years of our misunderstandings, until it reached its full maturity. We should indeed each have gone a separate way long ago. But it is not too late even now."

"Not too late to find the key to each other even now," he said. "Let us try to do it. Where others have failed, let us make

a triumph. It is not our hearts which are at war, Marianne: our hearts mean well to each other. It is our temperaments which cause all the strife."

"We can make no triumph," she answered. "I have ruined your life, murdered your spirit, crushed out the best in you."

"It was a dream," he cried passionately. "Let it go the way of all dreams."

She shook her head.

"We must part to-morrow," she said, "and to-morrow will be the day of your re-birth."

"You stab me with your words," he said, as he passed, with head bowed, to the door.

"And you stab me with your dreams," she replied.

"We are both very unhappy," he said, as he paused on the threshold.

"Yes," she said, "very unhappy."

And she closed her door.

He stood alone on the landing. There was not a sound to be heard within the house or without. It was a still September night, so that even the branches of the trees were not moved in music. The harvest moon shone in coldly. The world seemed lonely to that lonely man.

"What a failure I have made of everything," he said to himself – "even of my silence."

He longed for some kind word, for some arresting glance of sympathy; but life could yield nothing to him in his moment of

need. He thought of his boy whom he loved with all his heart, and he remembered only that he had deliberately made the lad suffer. He forgot all the years of intimate companionship which they two had enjoyed together, all the secret understanding so precious to both of them. These memories, which might have comforted him, and eloquently too, were silent; and because he was gentle and generous-hearted, he had to pay the uttermost price for the emotions which were the finest in his nature. He remembered only that he had wounded Marianne, hurt her to the quick, and that if he got his liberty – after fifteen years of bondage – he would be even as a released prisoner to whom the sweets of freedom had become distasteful.

He went mechanically down the stairs, let himself out of the hall-door, and stole round to the stables. Bully, the bull-terrier, knew his master's footstep, and, as a welcome, beat his tail against his kennel. Jinny, the brown mare, was asleep at the time; but she woke up and neighed softly when she heard her master's voice, and was eager enough to be saddled for a midnight ride. It was not the first time that she had been called upon to sacrifice her own slumbers to his restlessness. Many a time she and he had ridden out into the darkness and the tempest and the moonlight of the night.

When he came back again, it was nearly five o'clock. Worn out in body and spirit, he flung himself on his bed, fell asleep, and only awoke to the sound of some commotion in the house, and cries of "Father, father." He sprang up, opened the door, and

found Alan outside.

"Father," he cried. "Mother – "

Clifford Thornton saw the look of alarm on his boy's face, and rushed to Marianne's room. The door stood open. Marianne was leaning back in the arm-chair – dead.

CHAPTER III

There was, of course, an inquest, and then poor Marianne Thornton was laid to rest in the little Surrey churchyard five miles from "Falun." The verdict was death from sudden failure of the heart's action, due probably to some shock, the exact nature of which was unknown.

"She must have had some shock, some great fright," Dr Aldborough deposed. "The expression on her face was that of excessive alarm. It may have been a dream – I have met with three such curious instances in my experience. Moreover, it was known to us all that Mrs Thornton was suffering from valvular disease of the heart. She had only lately been consulting a new heart-specialist."

"It was a dream," Clifford Thornton stated, "and she called to me, and I found her with that same expression of alarm on her face, and I tried to calm her and failed. And feeling heavy of heart, I saddled my horse and went riding."

"And the nature of the dream?" he was asked.

He shook his head.

"I do not know," he said. "I only know it was a dream."

He had made up his mind to keep that secret, chiefly for Alan's sake. He felt that he had already injured the boy, and no word of his should now add to the heavy burden of hastened knowledge.

"If I began to speak of it," he said to himself, "I should go on

to tell him that I had killed her – and in time he would believe it – even as I do."

That was the torturing thought which at once began to assail him, although he fought it with all the weapons of reason and common-sense. He fought it even at the side of the grave, his impenetrable face showing no sign of the mental torture which he was enduring unhelped by any one. But when they came back to "Falun" after the funeral, he put his hands on Alan's shoulders and said sorrowfully:

"Alan, I would give my right hand, and the sight of my eyes, and the strength of my brain, if only I could unsay what I said to you the other day about your mother."

"Oh, father," the boy answered, in a paroxysm of grief, "perhaps we did not love her enough."

He broke off there, and they did not speak together further, both being of painfully reserved natures; but each wrung the other's hand silently, in token of closer friendship, and throughout that sad day they did not leave each other's side. The doctor called in during the afternoon, and found them in the study sitting close together and trying to interest themselves in a new book on architecture, which was Alan's beloved subject, and for which he had undoubted talent. They looked so desolate and pathetic that Dr Aldborough, who had always been attracted to this reserved man and his son, was concerned for their welfare. He offered no un-timely word of comfort or cheer, but he said to them:

"Come out with me. It is a splendid afternoon. I have to drive over to Midhurst, and the air will do you both good. You will sleep better. And Alan shall handle the greys, whilst we smoke."

The boy brightened up at once.

"Let us go, father," he said, a little eagerly.

"You go," his father answered. "I think I shall stay here."

"Then I shall stay," Alan said. "I couldn't be without you."

"In that case we will both go," Professor Thornton answered, smiling; and so they went off, thankful really for the break in that long day.

When they came back that evening, they were a little more cheerful in spite of themselves, and Alan went to bed and slept, and Clifford wrote to his old Danish governess, Miss Knudsgaard, telling her of his wife's sudden death, and asking her to come over. Then he sat thinking of his dead wife and of all the circumstances of their married life. He recalled to himself how bitterness of spirit and tenderness of intention had been ever at war within him. He had no sooner recovered from an attack of bitterness, than he was assailed by prolonged paroxysms of self-reproach, which tore him to shreds even more ruthlessly than his feelings of self-commiseration. He recalled all the petty strain and stress of trifling tragedies which had been steadily impairing his mental serenity. He hardened himself when he thought of that.

"This tragedy has happened," he said, "and through no fault of mine. I must not let it spoil the rest of my life. I am forty-three.

What cannot a man still do and be at forty-three? I will battle with it until I conquer it. It shall not crush me. No, it shall not."

He rose from his chair with a grim determination in his manner.

"Do you hear what I say?" he said, as though to a vast audience. "It shall not crush me."

Then his eyes lighted on a box of his wife's letters and papers which had been found in her room. He opened the box and took out some of the papers. A few of them were receipted accounts. Several of them were letters evidently written on that last night, gummed down, and stamped ready for the post. One was to her intimate friend, Julia Stanhope, with whom she had been touring in Scotland: a woman whom he had always disliked, and who, so he thought, had always encouraged poor Marianne's displays of uncontrolled anger. He put the letters into the post-box. And here apparently was her journal. He did not know that she had kept a journal. He smiled sadly as he thought of all the stormy scenes it must surely record. He did not read it. He tore it up and threw the fragments in the fire, and watched them curl up and carry their secret away with them. But one page, the last page, had escaped the destruction, and fell at his feet. He picked it up and he saw these words:

"*September 20th*. – Had another temper to-night. As usual, bitterly, bitterly sorry. If only I could tell him; but I can't, and I won't."

Those must have been her last written words. They touched

the most tender chords in the man's highly-strung gentle nature. He forgot his own sufferings: his own outraged peace and harmony of spirit: his own ambitions and schemes marred by constant turmoil of mind: his own broad outlook on life stealthily fenced in, now in one direction and now another, by her compelling pettiness of temperament. All this he forgot. She had not understood him – but – had he ever understood her? Ah, that was it – that was the crux of the whole matter; and he remembered now that never once had she reproached him with that. Never once had she said to him:

"And do you think there has been nothing to understand in me? I may not be the marvellous person you suppose yourself to be. I may not have all the gifts you are supposed to have; but at least I am a human being, with my own necessities and crying demands, no less importunate with me than yours with you."

Never had she said that to him. But he said it to himself over and over again, and almost broke his heart in the repeating of it.

CHAPTER IV

"And so you have come home at last, dear old Katharine," Ronald Frensham said to his sister as they both sat over the fire in the music-room of Ronald's house in Kensington, one evening in the middle of March. "It is good to see you again."

Katharine Frensham said nothing, but held out her hand, which her brother grasped silently. There was a harmony in the atmosphere, a silent song of friendship. The faces of both brother and sister wore that expression of quiet happiness always unmistakable when people of the right temperament are feeling how gracious a thing it is to be together once more. The music-room, too, delicately furnished, was restful to the eye; and there seemed to be an appropriate sympathy between the pictures on the walls, the books on the shelves, and the musical instruments, some of the latter lying about casually, and others carefully enshrined in a Chippendale cabinet. A small organ at the other end of the room gave a dignity to the surroundings peculiar entirely to the presence of that most compelling of all musical instruments. A little white Pomeranian dog was curled up in front of the fire, and added for the time to the effect of peacefulness. Of course one knew that directly the music began, he would get up, yell, refuse to be removed, and go as near as possible to the very source of his nerve-disturbance; but for the moment he was in a dog's Paradise – on the best rug in the room, near those he

loved best, and therefore in tune with self and circumstance.

It was now nearly three years since Ronald had married, and Katharine had left England to travel about the world alone. She and her brother had always been close friends, and their companionship had ever been a joy to themselves and to those who knew them. Since childhood they had been called "the inseparables." They had fished together, climbed trees, fought, followed the otter hounds in their old Somersetshire home, stolen, ridden, and accomplished all their fun and wickedness in close partnership. And together they had loved their mother passionately. And when she died, she said to them, "Love each other always – promise me, whatever comes – whatever befalls. Stand by each other." And boy and girl of fifteen and sixteen then, they said, "Always – always."

So the years passed. They grew up and made their home together alone. Ronald became head of the organ-building business left to him and Katharine by their father, and thus they were partners in business as well as in pleasure. And they were still called the inseparables. People said, "Ah, Katharine is somewhere about, for I see Ronald." Or they said, "Ronald cannot be far off, as Kath has arrived." There was a story that Ronald had said at a picnic, "Nothing more for me, thanks, and nothing more for my sister!"

But at last the inevitable happened: Ronald became engaged to an attractive girl, and Katharine had the bitter experience of becoming a secondary consideration in his life. And then people

said, "What will Katharine do? How will she take it?"

She behaved splendidly, and bore herself in a manner worthy of a warm and generous nature.

"Ronald and Gwendolen shall have a joyous engagement-time," she said to herself. "I will keep all my jealous feelings locked up in an iron safe."

And they had it, unmarred by any sadness or jealousy on her part. Nevertheless she suffered; for she and Gwendolen had nothing in common. Katharine had the free spirit and the broad outlook. Gwendolen was essentially of the world worldly, belonging to that ever-increasing community known as "smart," with no outlook worth speaking of, but, for all that, delightfully engaging in her beauty and her bearing. In her metallic way, too, she was appreciative of Katharine's kindness, and she made a very real attempt to accept the sisterliness affectionately offered to her.

But they spoke a different language. That was the only criticism Katharine made of her, and then only to Willy Tonedale, her old friend and admirer.

"Well, my dear Kath," he had drawled out as he twirled his moustache, "all I can say is that I prefer your language. It is more intelligible. Perhaps it may be because I am supposed to have a slow brain. Anyway, you're behaving like a brick to them both, and Ronnie is a deuced old duffer for giving you up. I would not have given you up if you'd been my sister, my grandmother, or my great-grandmother, for the matter of that."

"Nonsense, Willy!" Katharine had answered laughingly. "Don't be ridiculous. It is right that Ronnie should marry. It all comes in the day's march; and I might have been the one to have given him up."

She said that to Ronald when for the last time he and she sat together by their fireside on the eve of his marriage. She comforted him when, in spite of his passionate adoration of and desire for Gwendolen, he felt torn by the thought that he was entering on a new life and renouncing Kath irrevocably.

"Kath, dear old senior partner," he said, "I feel – terribly upset about you – now it comes to the point – I – "

He broke off, but there was no need to finish the sentence, for Katharine knew.

"It is all right, dear old chap," she answered. "And you see, we are friends for life. And I might have been the one to leave you. I nearly did three times!"

"Four times," he said quaintly. "You never own up to four times!"

And they both laughed. They had had many merry times over some of Katharine's passing love affairs.

"But at least you will live near us," Ronnie said.

She shook her head.

"I am going to travel," she answered, "I am going to the ends of the earth. You know I've always wanted to see the great vast countries of the great world. And this is my chance. You have some one to love you and look after you, and I can go forth. But

I want you to promise me one thing. Don't give up your music. Don't give up your Wednesday evening quartette meetings. I should love to think that you had kept that pleasure out of our old life, and that Herr Edelhart, Monsieur Gervais, Signor Luigi, and yourself were continuing to fiddle together on Wednesday evenings. And when I come back I shall try to arrive on quartette-night."

That was three years ago, and now Katharine had returned from her wanderings and arrived at her brother's house on quartette-day. She left her things at the Langham, intending to take up her quarters there until she should have made up her mind how to shape her life. But Ronald seemed hurt, and so she consented to stay a few days in his beautiful home. Gwendolen was away, but she was coming back the next morning; and Ronald assured Katharine that his wife's welcome to the returned traveller would be as warm as his own. Meantime brother and sister, alone together, renewed the sweet old intimacy which had been so dear to them both. They talked of old times, old bits of fun, old difficulties, old bits of mischief, old quarrels, old reconciliations.

"Do you remember that day when I shook you?" Ronald said. "We had had a terrible upset over one of my love affairs, and I lost my temper, whilst you remained quite silent and stared into the fire. You were most irritating."

"And I claimed damages, three theatres and a new evening dress," Katharine said. "And Signor Luigi declared we ought

both to be heartily ashamed of ourselves for quarrelling, and that the only way of effacing the disgrace was by giving *him* a new violoncello bow! I have always thought that was so funny."

"Well, he uses the bow to this day, and calls it his Queen," Ronald said. "How glad they will all be to see you. They have no idea that you have come back. Every night after we have played, we have drunk your health, each of us taking it in turn to propose the toast.

"'To the illustrious Signorina.'

"'To the wunderbar Fräulein.'

"'To the gracieuse English Mees.'

"'To the senior partner.'"

The tears came into Katharine's eyes.

"I am so glad you have remembered me," she said.

He rose as he spoke, perhaps to hide his own eyes, and he began to get out the music.

"Do you know this is the last of our quartette-meetings?" he said. "Gwendolen does not like them. They seem to interfere with other arrangements. Every invitation that ever ought to be accepted, appears to be fixed for that evening in the week. But I'm awfully sorry."

Katharine was silent.

"I should have given them up long ago but that I promised you," he said. "I think they are a little out of Gwendolen's line, you know. And I want to please her. I always want passionately to please her. She is my life, my whole life."

"Then you are really happy, Ronnie," she said gently.

"Yes, yes," he said, his face lighting up, "of course I am. Only sometimes I am rather worried about money, Kath, and think we are spending too much. It seems to take such a frightful lot of money to keep up with other people – and, oh well, we can talk about it another time – but the quartette costs money, and I think I must let it go at last. It was different when I was unmarried."

"Let me stand the quartette, old fellow," Kath said. "I like four people to drink my health regularly once a week."

"No, no," he said, smiling at her. "You must keep your money for yourself."

And then he added:

"Where are you going to live, and what are you going to do?"

"I am going to live in a flat in Westminster; that is my idea," she answered. "When you have been away a long time from England, you yearn to be within sight of the dear old Thames, the Houses of Parliament, and the Abbey. I have often closed my eyes and seen Westminster in a vision."

"Do you never intend to marry one of the many men who want you, Kath?" he asked.

"No," answered Katharine. "You did not marry until you loved passionately, did you? I shall not marry until I love passionately. And as that may never happen to me, and the years are passing, I have made up my mind to go into the business. The senior partner wants at last to be an active partner. I want to have something definite to do, Ronnie. I know you won't oppose me."

"Dear old girl," he said warmly, "you shall do as you like, and for as long as you like, or for as short. You shall receive the clients, help with the correspondence, design the organ cases, voice the reeds, any mortal thing you like."

"I am sick of travelling merely for travelling's sake," she went on. "If I had been a clever woman like Mary Kingsley, for instance, then I could have contributed something useful to the world as the results of my travels. But being what I am, there is no real zest in merely moving about aimlessly like any other globetrotter. No, I want something to do. I envy all women with a profession, Ronnie. When loneliness comes into their lives, they have something which has to be done, whether they are sad or gay. That is the salvation of men. And I believe it is going to be the salvation of women."

"Are you very lonely?" he said, turning to her impulsively.

"No, no," she said, gathering herself together. "But there have been times when – "

At that moment the door opened, and a sprightly little man with white hair leapt into the room. When he saw Katharine, he stood speechless at first and then advanced running.

"Signorina, the adorable and illustrious Signorina once more!" he cried. "Ah, what joy, what delight to see you here!"

"Signor Luigi," she exclaimed, "how glad I am to see you again!"

"Ah," he cried, as he shook both her hands time after time, and then lightly kissed them, "the world have changed places with

Heaven. I have not forgot you one leetle minute. See here, my pocket-book, your gift, nearest my faithful heart. And the bow, 'my Queen,' here she is – under my faithful arm. Ah, she is a treasure. We chosed her well – you and 'brother' and I. Yes, that was a splendid idea of mine!"

"Yes, it was brilliant," Katharine said, laughing. "How often I have laughed over it. How often I have thought of you all. And you see I have kept my word, and come back on quartette-night."

"The last quartette-night," he said. "But never mind. It will be an adorable finishing-up. And we will play extra beautiful for the Signorina. I will make my violoncello sing superb. The others – they shall be nowhere!"

The door opened once more, and a stately-looking German came in carrying his violin case. He had bushy hair and a fierce moustache.

"Guten Abend, Signor," he said. "Guten Abend. It is sehr kalt to-night. Meine Finger – "

Then suddenly he saw Katharine, and Signor Luigi was only just in time to prevent the violin case from falling to the ground.

"Lieber Himmel!" he cried. "I do see my distinguished pupil."

"Distinguished for my ignorance and impatience, Herr Edelhart, wasn't it?" said Katharine, greeting him.

"And for wunderbar charm," added the German fervently. "Ah, I have had no one so distinguished for that. The others have had a little talent or none – generally none – and no charm. But Fräulein's wunderbar charm – it could not be described –

only felt. Ah, and how himmlisch that you are come back. My violin shall sing her very best to-night. She shall inspire herself to welcome Fräulein. The others shall be nowhere! They – "

Then the door opened again, and a dark little man, obviously of French persuasion, came into the room looking rather dreamy and preoccupied; but when he saw Katharine he returned to real life, and his face broke out into a radiant smile.

"Mon Dieu!" he cried. "Mademoiselle have returned to us. Ah, *le climat* detestable of England have become a beautiful, French printemps. The fogs is gone. My dead hearts is alive. And Mademoiselle have made the miracle."

"You see that you have come back to faithful admirers, Kath," Ronald said, laughing.

"I see that I have come back to faithful flatterers," Katharine answered, as she stood in their midst laughing and shaking hands with them repeatedly. "But it is all delightful, and I feel years younger at being amongst my old friends. How many years have we known each other? Isn't it ten?"

"Ten years, five months," said Herr Edelhart, accurately.

"Onze, onze," said Monsieur Gervais.

"Always, always!" cried the Italian, waving his arms about in dismissal of time, and then dancing a sort of war-dance round the room.

"Ah, ha, we have not been so gay since the Signorina was cruel enough to leave us," he cried. "Tra, la, la, tra, la, la!"

"Look here, Luigi, we must manage to behave ourselves

somehow," said Ronald, catching hold of the little Italian. "For there is a stranger coming to-night, and he will think we are all mad."

"A stranger," they cried, "and on our last night?"

"Oh, hang it all," said Ronald, laughing, "it can't be our last night."

"Bravo, bravissimo!" they cried.

And Herr Edelhart whispered to Katharine:

"Fräulein has come home, and 'brother' is coming back to his senses."

"Who is the stranger?" Katharine asked. "And how dare he intrude on us at such a moment?"

"Poor fellow, he wouldn't willingly intrude on any one," Ronald answered. "But I asked him in myself. He was a neighbour of ours in Surrey during the summer. And I met him several times. He lost his wife under very tragic circumstances, and he is a sad man. We must not let our gaiety jar on him."

The door opened, and Professor Thornton was announced.

"Light of mine eyeballs," whispered Luigi, "he does not look gay, does he?"

"Mon Dieu!" whispered Gervais. "He belong to the country of fogs. He give me the sore-throats at once."

Katharine had risen to receive Clifford Thornton, and when he saw her he said gravely:

"But, surely I know you?"

"And I know you, surely," she answered, almost as gravely;

and for a moment they stood looking at each other in silence, surrounded by the four musicians, each waiting with his instrument in his hands.

"Where have you met?" Ronald asked, turning first to Clifford and then to Katharine. "On your travels?"

"I do not know," they said together, and they still stood motionless, arrested of body and spirit.

"Well, now for the quartette," said the musicians, and they resined their bows and tuned up. It was their habit to go into raptures over their respective instruments; so that sighs of content, and mysterious expressions of admiration, were soon filling the air. Signor Luigi bending over his violoncello, kept crying out:

"Ah, per Bacco, what for a treasure! Light of mine eyeballs – light of mine eyeballs – maccaroni of my native land, what for a beautiful treasure!"

They laughed as they always did laugh over the merry little Italian, and were just settling down to Beethoven's Rasomoffsky Quartette, when Signor Luigi remembered the Pomeranian.

"Ah, ha," he said, "the adorable dog will howl – he must go – he or I must go. We will depart him prestissimo. He will come very, very near and mock us. I know him, the rogue! Ah, Signor Professor, many thanks, no use you trying to do it. It needs a grand genius like myself to depart that amiable animal."

"And now I think we are safe," he said when he had expelled the reluctant white Pomeranian and shut the door.

Then the voices and laughter were hushed, Herr Edelhart gave the sign, and the quartette began, led off by the low notes of the violoncello. Clifford Thornton and Katharine, sitting in different corners of the room, lost themselves in the wonderful regions which music, with a single wave of her magic wand, opens to every one desirous of entering.

"Behold my kingdom," she whispers, "wander unharmed in all directions – you will find the paths for yourselves – "

Clifford Thornton, with the war of conflicting emotions in his heart, entered and found the path of peace.

Katharine entered too, and trod unconsciously the path of noble discontent with self and circumstance.

"Ah, how one rests," thought the man.

"Ah, what an aimless, lonely life I've been leading," thought the woman. "No use to myself or any one – " The sounds died away, and the listeners came back from their distant wanderings. Katharine looked up and met the grave glance of the stranger.

He seemed to be asking her:

"Where did we meet, you and I?"

And her silent answer was:

"I cannot tell you, but I have known you always."

Two or three times during the next quartette, of Brahms, she was impelled to look in his direction, and saw him sitting alone at the other end of the room, in an isolation of frigid reserve, staring straight at her as over a vast, with that strange expression of inquiry on his thin drawn face. She was curiously stirred,

curiously uneasy too. She was almost glad when the quartette was over and he rose to go.

He went up to the players and thanked them. Then he turned to Katharine.

"Good-bye," he said, and a ghost of a smile, which he repressed immediately, began to cross his face. "I have been trying to think – "

He broke off.

"Good-bye," he said, and he went to the door.

Ronald followed him out of the room, and every one was silent, until Signor Luigi made an elaborate gesticulation with his right forefinger, and finally landed it in the centre of his forehead.

"Signor is like me," he said, "just one leetle poco agitato in the brains."

Ronald came back after a few minutes and said:

"Well, now, he did not interfere with us much, did he? And I am sure the music rested him, poor fellow."

"For certain it should have given him pleasure," said Herr Edelhart, "for we played grand to-night. I was at my wunderbar best. Lieber Himmel, what a tone I make! We were all at our wunderbar best because of Fräulein's wunderbar charm."

"The Fatherland don't leave off admiring himselves!" whispered Gervais to Katharine.

"Gentlemen," said Ronald, "I believe this is an evening for '47 port. Are we in tune about it?"

"In perfect tune," they cried. "Bravissimo, 'brother'!" So in

'47 port the three foreigners and Ronald toasted Katharine, who responded by drinking to the *entente cordiale* of all nations, and the long life and good health of the quartette.

"May it never be shut out like the adorable Pomeranian dog," she added, "and if in a moment of temporary aberration it is shut out, may it howl and howl like the Pomeranian until it is called in again!"

When they had all taken their leave, Katharine spoke affectionately of these faithful old comrades, and begged Ronald to let her at least help him to keep on the quartette which had been a pleasure to them both for so many years. And then, in her own frank way, without any preliminaries, she asked him about this stranger, Clifford Thornton, who had made a great impression on her. Ronald told her what was known of the tragedy of Mrs Thornton's sudden death, which had taken place after some disturbing scene of unhappiness between husband and wife.

"I admire the man," Ronald added. "It was an awfully sad position for him to be in, and he bore himself with fine dignity. And he did not leave his home. He stayed on quietly, living down and ignoring the gossip and talk of the neighbourhood."

Katharine was deeply interested.

"Poor fellow, poor fellow," she said. "He looks as if he had suffered."

She could not forget him. He penetrated into all her thoughts that night as she lay awake thinking about her plans for the future,

about Ronald's new life in which she feared that she would have but little part, about her travels of the last three years, about the people she had met, talked with, liked, disliked. Her wandering mind came ever back to this one thought:

"We knew each other. But how – and where – and when?"

CHAPTER V

For a few months after Mrs Thornton died, Clifford Thornton and his boy had stayed quietly at home at "Falun." People in the neighbourhood were kind in their expressions and actions of sympathy, and repeatedly invited both father and son to their houses; but the Thorntons had always been so reserved, that no real intimacy had ever been possible with them. Professor Thornton had written to his old governess to come and stay with them, and but for her, it is difficult to imagine what these two desolate people would have done with themselves. Fröken Knudsgaard, generally called "Knutty," was a cheerful old soul, fully persuaded that the world was an excellent place to live and thrive in. She was Danish by birth, and the Danes, unlike the Norwegians, have a large supply of good spirits and the *joie de vivre*. She had lived a great many years in England and spoke English perfectly, with a slight foreign accent which was very engaging. Clifford loved her, and indeed he might well have done so; for she had taken entire charge of him when he was a little child, and had lavished on him all the kindness and affection of which her warm heart was capable. If in his great trouble he could have unburdened his heart to any one, it would have been to Knutty. But apart from the man's painful reticence, his own sense of chivalry made him shrink from confiding in one who could not be generous in her estimate of his dead

wife's character. Marianne and Fröken Knudsgaard had never succeeded in making friends; and after one or two visits to Clifford's married home, Knutty had said:

"Farvel, Clifford. You must come and see me in Copenhagen. I am not coming to you again yet. None of us get any pleasure out of the visit, and I only do harm to you all. My aura does not match with Marianne's aura. But do not let the boy forget me. Speak to him sometimes about old Knutty."

She immediately packed up and came to him when she heard of Marianne's death; but although he was overjoyed at having her near him, he told her nothing. Still, it was a comfort to know she was at "Falun;" a comfort to sit with her and try to begin to tell her something of that which was torturing his mind, even if the attempt always ended in failure.

"Ak, ak," she reflected, "he was always like that. I used to try and make a hole in the ice; and when I thought I had succeeded, lo and behold it was frozen up again! People of his temperament have a hard time under that ice. Poor dears, all of them."

He told her of course the outward circumstances of the tragedy, and he made one remark which puzzled her.

"I am so terribly afraid, Knutty," he said, "that Alan may turn against me."

"Sniksnak!" she said. "Why make trouble for yourself? Why should he turn against you? If you had murdered your poor Marianne, of course then – "

"Ah, but sometimes I think – " he began, and then broke off.

"I know what I think," said Fröken Knudsgaard, getting up and tapping him on the head with her knitting-needles. "You must go away, and at once. Shut up 'Falun,' and turn your back on the laboratory. Take a journey immediately."

"Shall I come to dear old Denmark?" he said. In the old days he had had many happy times with Knutty in Copenhagen.

"That is not far enough," she said decisively. "I should advise you to go round the world, and at once. You have plenty of money and plenty of time. Don't take a million years to make up your mind. Start tomorrow, both of you. It will do Alan good to get away. He is a dear boy, but he is going to be sensitive like you. I wish I could come too. But I am too old and fat. But you must go, Clifford. You cannot stay on here and add to your unhappiness by inventing absurd tortures for yourself. Go and see some of the Yankees' laboratories first, and then run out to Japan to see your Japanese chemist friend at Tokyo. You have always been talking about going."

"Shall I really go, Knutty?" he asked, a little wistfully.

"Ja, kjaere,"[1] she answered, nodding at him. "Otherwise, you will have to go much farther; you will have to go out of your mind. What a nuisance that would be, and selfish of you too! For you would spoil the boy's life, and poor old Knutty's life. You know how she loves to smile and be happy like a true Dane. Take my advice, shut up 'Falun,' go to London, stay at a hotel for a few days, amuse yourselves, get your kit, spend a lot of money,

[1] *Kjaere*, dear one.

and then take your tickets and be off to Japan. And when you come back, call in at Copenhagen and see me. We will then go down to your beloved harbour to see the ships coming in. Do you remember how interested you used to be in the egg-and-butter ships? Very well, is that settled?"

Clifford Thornton was silent. But he knew that his old Dane was right, and that he could not go on day after day struggling with his conflicting emotions without the immense help of changed circumstances. He knew that every hour he spent in his laboratory mooning over the subjects on which he could not fix his real attention, was wasted time and wasted strength.

"And as the days go by," Knutty continued boldly, "you will feel differently about everything, dear one. And then you must find some one whose aura will be entirely sympathetic with your aura. Ah, you shake your head, Clifford."

"Hush, hush, you must not say that," he said, turning away from her.

"Well, well," she said, half to herself, "perhaps I press on too quickly. But you will go away – promise me that? And shut up 'Falun' with all its sad memories?"

"In my secret heart," she thought, "I should like to blow up 'Falun' and have done with the wretched place!"

"If we go away, will you come too, Knutty?" he said eagerly. "We would take such care of you."

"Seventy years of age, and seventeen stone in weight!" she replied gaily. "No, no, kjaere, I should be too heavy a

responsibility. No, I will wait for you in my own little Danish home, made so wickedly comfortable by your kindness; and every day I shall say, 'My Clifford is finding his way into the sunlight again.'"

He stooped down and kissed her kind old hand.

"If I could only tell you my inmost thoughts; but I cannot," he said sadly.

"You never could unfold yourself, dear one," she answered. "You know I always had to guess at what was going on within your mind, and always guessed wrong, of course, and therefore could not help you. I am sure there can be no mental or physical suffering so great as reluctant repression of the thoughts within us."

"Knutty," he said, after a pause, "do you believe that minds can reach each other in dreams?"

"I don't know, kjaere," she said. "I have never reached any one's mind, either in a dream or out of one. In the years gone by, I prided myself on doing so, and then found out that I was mistaken. My present belief is that no one mind can ever reach another in reality, and that each human being speaks and understands only one language – his own language – and every one else's language is what you English people call a 'damned foreign tongue.' Excuse me, dear one, my words may not be academic, but they are supposed to be philosophic. And that reminds me that, in my opinion, you have been a true philosopher, Clifford."

"How so, Knutty?" he said.

"You have asked very little of any one," she answered, "and you have made a successful fight with bitterness. That is what I call true philosophy."

He shook his head in deprecation of her praise, and after another pause he said:

"Do you think, Knutty, that one might be able to injure another person in and through a dream?"

"How should I know?" she said, looking troubled. "I am not given to reflecting on such matters, thank Heaven."

"If one could injure, one could also benefit," he said, without heeding her answer. "There would at least be that comfort – for others."

"And why not for you?" she asked.

"Alas!" he answered, "my dreams were always the other way."

But after he had said that, he returned hastily to his usual reserve, and Fröken Knudsgaard understood him too well to press him for a confidence.

"Besides, it would be waste of tissue," she said to herself. "One would have more success in pressing an alabaster effigy."

But in this way she had had one or two glimpses into his mind, and she was really anxious about his mental state, and not happy about Alan either. She kept her shrewd old eyes open, and she began to see that Alan sometimes avoided being alone with his father. He seemed a little awkward with him, as though some shadow had risen up between them. He too was reserved, and

Knutty could not get him to speak of his mother's death.

"I am living with a pair of icebergs," she wrote to her botanist nephew and niece in Copenhagen, Ejnar and Gerda. "Darling icebergs both of them, but icebergs all the same. I find this Arctic expedition of mine, like all Arctic expeditions, fraught with grave difficulties. Write and encourage me, dear ones; and in case I should become a frozen plant, keep an extra warm place for me in the herbarium of your hearts."

But Alan was not reserved about other matters, and he and the old Danish lady became excellent friends together. He said repeatedly to her:

"Knutty, why haven't you been to see us more often?"

And Knutty, stroking her chin, would reply:

"The climate, dear one, the climate; either too hot or too cold; too dry or too wet – generally too wet! Anyway, the atmosphere didn't suit me; too trying."

And of course she was speaking of the mental atmosphere of "Falun."

She transformed "Falun" into an abode of comparative cheerfulness, and brightened up the house in a most astonishing manner. The boy hastened home from his riding or cycling. There was something to go back for now; and Knutty was always in a good temper, always ready to be photographed at the exact moment when she was wanted, and always ready to sympathise with electric batteries, books on architecture, square towers, round towers, telephones, and of course chemical experiments.

"Make any experiments you like," she said. "Don't be afraid of blowing me up. I have been accustomed to it for years. In fact, I prefer it. Anything is better than monotony. The unexpected is always delightful, and it is quite refreshing to have a few fingers blown off in a thrilling fashion, or even a head! Most people lose their heads in a much less interesting way, and under much less provocation. And as for smells, Alan, I worship them. In fact, I feel quite exhilarated when I have the smell of that adorable sulphuretted-hydrogen under my Danish nose. As for architecture, I could listen all the day long to anything you have to say on that subject. I am glad you are going to be an architect; indeed you cannot with any self-respect be anything else, since you were christened after your father's hero, Alan de Walsingham. Only listen: if you don't succeed in building a cathedral every bit as fine as Ely, I shall cut you off from my visiting-list. So there. Now you know what you have to expect from old Knutty."

She disliked the dismal drawing-room. She was much happier sitting in the laboratory, and even happier in the dark room, where Alan sometimes enticed her. And occasionally he got her out for a walk, which was a great concession; for Knutty hated walking. She always declared it was the invention of the devil.

In fact she won him entirely, and then by many subtle processes, she tried to find out what his real feelings were towards his father. He undoubtedly loved his father, but there was something troubling his mind: something which had to be

cleared up; and from Clifford's allusion to his own fears of the boy turning against him, Knutty guessed that the father too was conscious of a change in his son's attitude towards him. Whatever it was, it must not be allowed to grow. She was nearly distracted between the two of them. Sometimes she thought it would be better for them to be separated for a little while, and at other times she believed it would be safer for them to have a complete understanding at once. One morning Alan's strained manner to his father strengthened her in the belief that her two icebergs must be brought into closer contact again before they drifted away into different parts of the Arctic regions, where they might never rejoin. By means of great craft, she at last managed to make Alan speak of his mother, and then some of the trouble came tumbling out. He regretted so bitterly that he had told his mother that he knew his father and she were unhappy together; he regretted so bitterly that he had said it was all her fault.

"And to think that those were the last words I ever said to her," he said with almost a sob.

He did not say that he blamed his father for telling him about the proposed separation, but he kept on repeating:

"If only I had not known, if only I had not known."

And of course in his heart he was saying:

"If only father had not told me, if only he had not told me."

Knutty listened and felt torn, for the boy and his father too. Clifford had wounded his child; there was no doubt about that. And only the hand which inflicts the wound can give the healing

touch – if people love. Nevertheless, it was for the man she pleaded, for the one who had done the injury to his son whom he loved.

"You see, kjaere," she said, "your father is very unhappy. He would give his whole life not to have told you. And you know he was very good to your mother – very gentle; and he is suffering greatly over her tragic death. It is a hard time for him. And when he looks at you, he remembers that he has made things hard for you too; and that naturally adds to his trouble. And he is ill. No one can comfort him except you. His poor old Knutty is no good to him now. She is no use to any one now – she is too old, and too stupid."

"Oh, Knutty, you know you are not stupid," Alan said indignantly. "Why, you know an awful lot about all sorts of things – and an awful lot about chemistry. Father says so. And he doesn't think you are useless; for the first thing he said, was, 'We must send for Knutty.'"

Fröken Knudsgaard closed her eyes for a moment to check some tears. Those words were very precious to her. When she opened them again, there was a twinkle in them, and no sign of tears.

"Perhaps I am not so stupid after all," she said. "I forgot I knew about chemistry! Not that I do know anything, dear one, but I can talk about it! However, it comes to the same thing. And perhaps I am not so useless either, not if I make you understand how he has suffered, and how sad he is, and how you only can help him.

He has only you. Talk to him, kjaere. Tell him everything in your mind. Get rid of every thought which is not friendship. And now pull old Knutty up from her chair. That's right. Mange tak.[2] Now I am going to have a sleep. I'm sleepy, Alan. It is the atmosphere of the dark room. Tell your father I am going to have a good Danish snore in the dismal drawing-room, and no one must disturb me unless it is to unfold some plans about the journey to Japan."

So Fröken Knudsgaard went hastily into retreat, for she had heard Clifford's voice outside, and she wanted her two icebergs to be alone together.

"By St Olaf's sword, I am very tired," she said to herself, as she lay on the sofa in the desolate drawing-room. "Arctic expeditions are exhausting journeys. All the same, I could not have forsaken my poor icebergs."

Knutty yawned and yawned, and then stared at Marianne's portrait which hung opposite to her.

"Never liked that woman," she thought. "Beautiful, but Billingsgate. Quite the wrong aura for Clifford. What a mercy she has died! Cannot help saying it, though of course I ought to be ashamed of myself if I were a moral person, which, thank goodness, I'm not! Ak, that Marianne! And how like her selfishness to die in that way, and leave my tender-hearted Clifford torn in pieces. Nå, these English people, how stubborn and ungracious they are! And yet I love them, and love England too. If Ejnar and Gerda came and stayed long enough, they too

[2] *Mange tak*, many thanks.

would love England, and not feel angry with their old Tante for being so fond of this wicked country. Ah, the battles I have to fight for England. I ought to be given the Order of St George. Ja, ja, and I must remember to send those mosses to Ejnar tomorrow. How happy he will be over them! And Gerda, too. I can see the botanical smile on their dear faces. Dear, dead-alive plants, both of them!"

And Knutty fell asleep and dreamed marvellously of mosses found in icebergs, and of her nephew, Ejnar, the botanist, and Gerda, his wife, and of how they came over to England and made friends with the authorities at Kew Gardens.

"There now, I told you!" Knutty said triumphantly, "I told you that the Kew people would not insult you after the first quarter of an hour. After the first quarter of an hour, when they had recovered from the shock of receiving foreigners, they would be delighted to see you, and would be willing to exchange specimens. I know them – the dear, proud, rude ones! You just have to learn how to unwind yards and yards of Red Tape. I own it takes time. I admit that, Ejnar."

She smiled, laughed, and woke up. Perhaps it was her laughter which woke her up, and perhaps it was the voices of her two icebergs who were standing by the sofa.

"Where am I – where am I?" she said, rubbing her eyes. "Of course, I remember, at the North Pole again! You horrid chemical compounds, I told you not to wake poor old Knutty unless you had something to tell her about going to Japan."

"That is just what we have to tell you," Clifford and Alan said together.

Fröken Knudsgaard glanced furtively at father and son, and saw that they were standing arm-in-arm. She was too wise an old bird to ask what had passed between them, and what they had said to each other. Besides, she knew that icebergs would use only a few words of explanation, and then drift into intimacy again. She saw at a glance that her Clifford looked comforted, and that in some way Alan had eased his father's heart and his own boyish heart too. That was all that mattered. A tender expression came over her face.

"Help me up, dear ones," she said, holding out her hand to each. "You know Knutty's knees have become very rheumatic. And Clifford, kjaere, we really must send those mosses off to Ejnar and Gerda without delay. I heard this morning that they have had a serious falling out over a fungus. Let us hope that they will become reconciled over the mosses. Ah, you must bring them all sorts of treasures from your journey to Japan."

CHAPTER VI

So "Falun" was shut up, and Clifford Thornton, Alan, and Knutty came up to London to spend two or three weeks at the Langham, and get the tickets for the journey to Japan. When Knutty was satisfied that all arrangements were going on satisfactorily, she left her icebergs, but with a good deal of uneasiness in her kind old heart. She had been increasingly stern about the necessity for this change of scene and habit, for she saw that Clifford's unhappy state of mind prevented him from again taking up his life and work. She knew, of course, that it was only natural that he should be unhappy in the circumstances and considering the tragic manner of Marianne's death; but she could not help thinking that, in addition to the sadness and lingering regret from which a man of his sensitive character would inevitably be suffering at such a time, he had some other trouble at the back of his brain. He had told her nothing about his dream, but he continued to make strange references to psychic phenomena, such as dreams, telepathy in dreams, transmission of thoughts, subconscious activities, and subjects of that description, subjects which Knutty knew to be entirely outside his natural range of inquiry and thought. In puzzling over this, she said to herself, "Perhaps he dreamed he wanted her to be dead, and was horrified with himself when the dream came true. Well, it is all too much for me. Not for me these problems of

occult thought. Certainly I am of the earth, earthy; and grateful in all conscience for the comfortable possession of a mundane spirit. May I never have any aspiration beyond. But, alas for my poor Clifford if he is going to spoil his freedom won after sixteen years of unhappy married life!"

But although Knutty knew a great deal about Clifford's married troubles, she had not, up to the time of Marianne's death, realised the seriousness of the havoc which sixteen years of uncongenial companionship with Marianne had wrought in his spirit. He had kept his secret hidden away from the world, hidden away until the last from Marianne, almost hidden away from himself. Knutty only knew that he had married the wrong woman – married a coarse-fibred person who could never appreciate his delicate sensitiveness of brain and character, the innate chivalry of his heart and the great possibilities of his intellect, which needed, however, a protecting care to bring them to easy and natural development. She saw, as the years went by, that Clifford's labours in his own branch of work were being grievously hindered, and she had heard in scientific circles that he was not considered to be fulfilling the brilliant promise of early manhood. It was thought to be a pity that a man of his leisure and means, and of undoubted gifts, should not come more prominently to the fore, since there were so few scientific men in England who were, like himself, independent of paying work and able to devote their time to research. Something was wrong with him. Knutty knew that that something was Marianne.

Sometimes, when she had questioned him, on his visits to her at Copenhagen, he had said, shrugging his shoulders:

"Temperamental strife, Knutty. Temperamental strife, nearly every one's trouble."

That was all he told her. But when she learned that he had made up his mind to separate from Marianne, and had told Alan of his intention, she understood that he, so gentle and chivalrous by nature, must have been driven to desperation to even think of taking such a decisive step. In speaking of his part of his trouble, his deep regret at having burdened Alan with a knowledge of their unhappiness, he merely said:

"You see, Knutty, I waited nearly fifteen years, until I thought that he was old enough, and then I found he was too young."

"But you had some happiness, dear one?" she asked anxiously.

"No, Knutty, none," he answered.

"But you had your work, kjaere," she said. "That has been a haven, surely?"

"My haven was always invaded," he said. "There was no peace."

"Ak," she thought, "he must and shall find peace for his work and happiness for his heart. He was meant to be cared for and loved by some dear woman with a suitable aura. And where is she, the wretch? Where is she? She must be waiting somewhere in space for him, if he could only see her and capture her at once. Ak, how glad I should be! Ak, how I should cry aloud, 'I see daylight!' Bah, if we could only get rid of this absurd convention

called time! Moments are centuries and centuries are moments, according to circumstance; and yet we go on adjusting our lives and emotions to the strike of the parish clock. Parish clocks indeed! I'd like to stop every one of them all over the world."

But she did not venture to give utterance to these bold sentiments when Clifford put her on the boat at Harwich. She kept to the safe subject of his work and arrested ambitions, and tried to arouse his intellectual pride.

When he thanked her for her tender kindness to himself and the boy, she answered:

"Alas! dear one, I have done little enough for either of you. I should have loved to have put everything right for both my beloved icebergs, but that is not possible. The longer I live, the more clearly I see that we cannot put matters straight either for ourselves or for other people. We can only muddle through difficulties, and help others to do the same. So I say to you: Muddle through your worries quickly, kjaere. Go for this long outing, and then come back and take up your life again. Come back to your test-tubes, your platinum dishes, your carbon compounds, your asymmetric carbon atoms, and get to work on your stereo-isomerism and all that kind of comforting nonsense! Do, dear one! You are at your best now – forty-three. What is forty-three? If I were forty-three, I believe I could make discoveries in all the branches of every science which ever existed and ever will exist! Come back and knock everybody into fits by your successful work. Talk about carbon

compounds indeed! I expect you to become a compound of Berzelius, Crookes, Liebig, Faraday, Hofmann, Gay Lussac, and all the other chemistry creatures. Don't I rattle off their names beautifully? Oh! what a clever old woman I am! Of course, being a Dane, I couldn't help being clever – or thinking I was! But there now! How I chatter, and the boat just going! Sweep the past away, Clifford. Remember, some people only begin to wake up at forty-three, and then they have to crowd all sorts of splendid achievements into their remaining years. And don't fret about the boy. He loves you in his own icebergic way. And don't dare to come back to 'Falun' until I give you permission."

She had raised her finger, and was still shaking it in playful warning, when the boat moved off. Clifford stood and watched her until he could see her no longer, and then took his place in the train for London.

"My good old Dane," he said, "my best friend in the world. How are we going to get on without all your kind ways?"

He was alone in the carriage, and his thoughts turned unhindered to the past, which Knutty had wished him to sweep away. He could not sweep it away. It was seven months now since Marianne had died. During that time he had not known one single day's peace of mind. It was in vain that he had reasoned with himself. Reason had had no lasting influence on his emotions. If he could have spoken to some one about Marianne's death, if he could have talked it out with some clear-headed, impartial person accustomed to ponder over the strange phenomena of

the dream-world and their true relation to everyday life, over the mysterious workings of the brain, when, under the influence of sleep, it loses the responsibility of normal consciousness, he might perhaps have shaken off some of the burden which was so greatly oppressing him. But, in the first place, he was reserved by nature; and, in the second, he shrank, as a scientific man, from entering that debatable land, the phenomena of which are not verifiable by the direct experimental method. Even if his mind had been tuned to such subjects, how could he have brought himself to say to any one:

"This was my dream and hers. Now tell me, have I killed my wife?"

So he had to fight the battle by himself, and this was how it was fought. One day he would say, "I will not let the past crush me. I will remember only that I did my best for Marianne, sacrificing to her the most precious part of myself – my very brain-power, my power of thinking and working. I look back with mourning, and see that I have accomplished scarcely anything of all I intended to do; that I have lost the threads of this and the threads of that, and also the habit of subtle concentration. Marianne has ruined my life and my career. But now she has gone, and I am free. And at forty-three years of age, with health still left me and my working powers intact, surely I am not going to let the remembrance of this tragedy rise up between me and my freedom?"

But the next day, this bravado of mind would have spent itself, and he would remember only that Marianne had died, and that he

had certainly had some part in her death. She had fallen in their final conflict of temperaments. He was left as victor. And yet no victor either. No, rather was Marianne victorious, as she had ever been. And he was the one left vanquished and remorseful. Then all the pity and kindness in him rose up to condemn him in his own judgment. He forgot his own grievances and remembered only hers; adding with generous hand to her list. Where she could scarcely have claimed one, he gave her ten, twenty, a hundred. And the next day he took them back again, remembering only the harm done to him by her turbulent spirit. He shuddered as he recalled the incessant irritations, the senseless scenes of uncontrolled temper, the insane jealousy, with which his work seemed to inspire her, the scornful utterances hurled against the things most precious to him, the carping criticisms on the people he admired most in the world.

All this had taken an immense effect on him, although he had always tried to ignore it. But he could not ignore scenes. He capitulated to them. They took the life and spirit out of him. And Marianne knew it. She knew her power and used it ruthlessly. It had seemed in her lifetime as though she had been irritated beyond bearing when she saw him intent on some task in his laboratory; as though she had deliberately got up a scene to wreck his day's work, and had only been propitiated when she saw the fabric of his brain-power in ruin for that morning at least.

He went over all this as he leaned back in the carriage. He remembered that Knutty said he had made a successful fight

with bitterness. It was true that he was not bitter; but he knew that he could take no praise to himself on that score. For he had discovered that bitterness ruined his abilities even more ruthlessly than want of serenity; and so, out of self-preservation, he had tried to keep the citadel of his heart permanently fortified against that enemy. Knutty also said that he had asked little of life; but, looking back now, he knew he had asked for the greatest thing in the world, being what he most needed —*peace*. Peace. He had had no peace in Marianne's lifetime; and now he knew it all depended on his own strength of will whether or not he could reach it at the eleventh hour.

"If I can put from me the remembrance of the past, stifle morbid fears, and get to believe I was not responsible for Marianne's death, I shall reach peace," he said.

"Responsible," he repeated. "How could I be considered responsible, unless it could be proved that there is dormant power in us to prevent our evil thoughts from overwhelming us in our dreams?"

"Dormant power," he said. "Is it not rather that, proved or unproved, there must surely be a living force in us which should be able to control our attitude of mind whether we wake or whether we sleep?"

"Ah, that is the trouble," he said, as he got up and moved restlessly to the other end of the carriage. "The responsibility comes not from the dream itself, but from the everyday attitude of mind which caused the dream. If I could have felt and

thought differently, I might have dreamt differently, and a different message would then have been transmitted to my poor Marianne."

So he tortured himself; argued with himself; fought the battle unaided; conquered; was conquered, and, worn out with the strife, longed all the more passionately for peace which implied the power to work and forget.

"And what else is there in life greater than work and peace?" he said.

Something in his lonely heart whispered, "There is love."

"Yes, yes, there is love," he answered impatiently. "But love has passed me by. I and love have nothing to do with each other."

And then suddenly the past was swept from his remembrance, and he found himself thinking of Katharine Frensham.

"Where have I seen her before?" he asked himself. "I knew her face. I knew her voice – "

The train stopped.

CHAPTER VII

Gwendolen arrived home the day after Katharine's return, and the two women, although speaking a different language, were genuinely pleased to see each other. Katharine thought that Gwendolen was more beautiful than ever, and with her generous heart recognised that her sister-in-law was one of those women born to be worshipped by the men they marry, to the extinction of every one and everything. Her complexion was perfect, her features were in harmony with each other, her smile was bewitching. Her eyes were the least attractive part of her; they were a little cold. Her figure was grace itself, and so was her bearing. She dressed faultlessly, but in such a quietly extravagant fashion, that Katharine was appalled when she thought of the enormous outlay which her toilet implied; whilst in the management of the luxurious home, too, money seemed to be of no consideration to her. Katharine remembered that Ronald himself had expressed uneasiness about his increasing expenses; but when she hinted at her own anxiety on his behalf, he merely shrugged his shoulders and said:

"Oh, every one lives like this, Kath. Times have altered since you were here. One is obliged to keep up a style if one wants to be in society."

"Well, old fellow," she answered, "all I can say is, don't make a fiasco and have to retire into the country suddenly one day, with

the excuse that you have become violently in love with rural life. Every one knows what that means, and it only makes one look ridiculous."

But even this much had ruffled him, and Katharine said no more. As time went on, and the first flush of pleasure at her return had faded, she saw that he had changed, and the atmosphere around him had changed too. None of his old personal friends belonging to their old happy free life visited his home. All the people who were in touch with him now were acquaintances only, of the so-called "smart type," most of them over-dressed, under-dressed, mindless women and snobs of men, at whom Katharine and Ronald would not have looked in former days. Katharine thought:

"I suppose these women are what is called 'respectable,' though they don't look it. And they are not half so pleasant and interesting as that *bona-fide* demi-mondaine with whom I travelled across America for four days. She had a heart, too, and these people seem to be without such an old-fashioned possession. Well, I suppose I am out of date."

Once or twice she inquired after their old friends.

"Where are the Grahams? Where is Willy Tonedale?" she asked.

"Oh, the Grahams have gone away," Ronald answered indifferently, "and Willy comes down to the office to see me. He prefers that. He says he doesn't like the people he meets here, and they don't like him. He feels out of it."

Katharine was silent again. She felt as Willy Tonedale, out of it. And not only was she out of harmony with her surroundings, but she found as the days went on, that Gwendolen was becoming jealous of her, and that if she continued to stay, she would soon be a source of discord between husband and wife. For although Ronald was passionately attached to his wife, worshipping, indeed, the very ground she trod on, he could not quite hide from Gwendolen or himself that he loved to have his sister near him.

Gwendolen, who was not unkind by nature, tried to conquer her growing jealousy; but her attempts were not successful. She was all the more ashamed of it, because in her metallic fashion she admired Katharine, and wished to be friends with her. But one morning her manner was so insufferable, that Katharine, without giving any warning of her intention, packed her trunks. When they were packed, she came down into the morning-room and bent over Gwendolen, who was sitting at her bureau, writing scented invitation-cards for several dinner-parties.

"Gwendolen," she said gently, "I am going to leave you, dear. You must not think that I am running away in a temper. But I cannot stand your jealousy, nor the strain of appearing not to notice it. I have never been accustomed to strained relations with any one. People have always wanted whole-heartedly to have me; and I have been glad whole-heartedly to be with them. I would much prefer to live alone in a top-garret than to be on difficult terms in a luxurious house with my everyday companions. It saps all my strength and all my pleasure in life: and to no purpose. If

I were benefiting you and Ronnie, I might perhaps be virtuous enough to wish to stay; but as I am only harming you both, I want to go. And I want you to take me: so that we may both feel there is no ill-will. Put on your things and come down to the Langham and settle me in. Kiss me, and let us be good friends now and always. No, no, dear, don't argue about it. I have not come back from my wanderings to make your home unhappy."

Gwendolen was ashamed and touched, and even shed two or three metallic tears on the scented envelopes.

"I thought I had been hiding my jealousy so beautifully, Kath," she said.

"My dear child," Katharine answered, "a polar bear could have found it out. It requires no exquisite and dainty power of penetration. Jealousy is felt, tasted, seen at once. Did you really think you had been hiding it?"

Gwendolen nodded, and Katharine laughed ever so gently.

"Well, dear, at least you tried," she said. "Come now, put on your prettiest hat, and let us go at once."

So they went without any further discussion, Katharine's mind being completely made up on the subject. And when Ronald came home that evening, he found, to his astonishment, that his sister had fled.

"Had you any words?" he asked anxiously.

"No, no," Gwendolen answered. "I wish we had had. I should not be feeling such a wretch then. Kath said she could not stand my jealousy, and that she had not come home from her

wanderings to make our home unhappy. She was lovely about it, and I don't wonder you love and admire her. I think she is a grand creature built on a grand scale, Ronnie, and I am a horrid mean-spirited thing, and I hate and despise myself – "

"No, no, darling, not that," he said, as he comforted and kissed her. "But it is sad. I am sorry. My good old Kath who gave you so uncomplainingly to me! To think she has come home after three years' absence to find she cannot stay a few days happily with us."

He paced up and down the drawing-room, his heart torn with sadness and concern.

The clock struck six.

"Ronald," Gwendolen said, "it is only six – if you are not too tired, let us go to her and fetch her back."

He brightened up at once.

"I would go miles to see her, Gwen," he said eagerly – "miles."

"And so would I," she said. "You can't imagine how much I wish to see her again."

They had never been so near together and so much in sympathy as when they started off to find Katharine. Ronald did not attempt to reproach Gwendolen, and indeed there was no need. As far as her limited nature would permit, she was overcome with remorse, which gave her an added beauty in her worshipper's eyes. It was nearly seven o'clock when they knocked at Katharine's door. Katharine did not hear. She had drawn her chair up to the fire, and was busy with her thoughts. Loneliness had taken possession of her heart; for although she had known

that sooner or later this cold visitor would invade her with his chill presence, his coming was even worse than she had imagined it would be.

"Why did I return?" she said. "If there was nothing and no one to return for, why should I have returned? Home-sickness – ah, yes – and love of the old country. But even then, if one has no ties and is not wanted, what is it all worth? One country is as good as another if there is no love-niche anywhere. And there can be no loneliness greater than that found in old conditions changed to new."

She looked lonely, like some strong tree left standing alone on the mountain-side, to face the tempests alone. She was tall, and, as Gwendolen had said, made on a grand scale. As there was nothing petty in her attractive appearance, so also there was nothing petty in her mind. Without being learnèd or clever, she had been born with a certain temperamental genius which could not be classified, but only felt and seen. It was this which drew people to her; and because she knew that they were always ready to like her, her manner had that simple ease seen often in unself-conscious little children. Bitterness and harsh judgments were foreign to her nature; and so now, although she felt desolate, she was free from bitter thoughts. She remembered with gratitude all the years of happy comradeship with Ronnie – thirty-six years: his whole lifetime and nearly hers; for she was his senior by one year only, and their mother had always said that the two children had begun their friendship at once.

"No person on earth has the right to grumble," Katharine said, "if he or she has been lucky enough to have thirty-six years of close companionship with some beloved one. And it was a splendid time; something to give thanks for, all the rest of one's life."

"And I had a beautiful home-coming, alone with him, and under the genial old conditions," she said. "I could not have expected that happiness to continue. And perhaps it was as well that it came to an end quickly, before I found it too hard to go – "

Then the knock came outside, but Katharine heard nothing.

"In any case I had to face a new kind of life," she said.

The knock came again – louder this time. Katharine heard it. She went to the door and opened it. Gwendolen and Ronald stood outside.

"Oh, Kath!" Gwendolen cried, putting out her arms.

"She longed to come," Ronald said.

"Come in at once," Katharine said, holding out a hand to each of them, and drawing them into the room. There were tears in her eyes, and there was a smile of welcome on her face. The chill in her heart had turned to warmth. Perhaps it was only then that she knew what she had been through; for she collapsed into the armchair and cried. They watched her silently. They felt that they could do and say nothing. So they waited. But when she looked up and smiled at them, Gwendolen knelt down by her side, and Ronald bent over her and pinched her ear as in the old days when he wanted to show especial sympathy and attention.

"I can't help crying a little," she cried, "because I am so happy."

"Happy?" they said inquiringly.

"Yes, happy," she repeated, "because you cared to come. You see, that is what matters most."

"Come back, Kath dear," Gwendolen pleaded. "I will be so different. You have taught me such a lesson. You have not any idea how ashamed I feel of myself."

"No; I cannot come back," Katharine said, shaking her head. "Some other time perhaps. But not now. No, Ronald, old fellow, not now. One has to go forward, you know – and alone."

"But you will not put us out of your life, Kath dear?" Ronald said sadly.

She had risen from the arm-chair, and now put her arm through each of theirs and drew them to her.

"You will not get rid of me so easily as all that," she answered with some of her old brightness. "I can skip out of your home, but not out of your lives. No; I am yours always, and always ready for you. And now I think we ought to have dinner. You know, my dears, there is no denying that great emotions produce great hunger! I am starving."

So they dined together and had a happy evening; and when they were saying good night, Gwendolen whispered:

"When you feel you can come to us again, Kath, you will see how different I shall be."

Ronald stayed behind a moment to say:

"Kath, it is dreadful to leave you here alone – I feel it dreadfully – won't you come even now? Do, dear old Kath."

But Katharine shook her head and sent him on his way, promising, however, to come down to the organ-factory in a day or two. After they had gone, she lingered for a few moments in the hall, watching some of the people who were standing together talking and laughing. Every one seemed to have some belongings. There was that stern-looking military man whose harsh features relaxed as his two pretty daughters stepped out of the lift and touched him on the arm.

"We are ready, father," they said, and the three went off arm-in-arm.

Then there was that handsome mother with her fine young son, each proud of and fond of the other; and that happy young couple yonder, the centre of a group of friends; and that crippled man leaning on the arm of his wife, whose face was eloquent with tender protectiveness and love.

Katharine felt desolate again. She went slowly into the reading-room.

"I will read the papers," she thought, "and forget about personal matters."

There was no one in the reading-room; at least she thought there was no one, until she discovered a young boy who had hidden himself behind a paper. He was sitting near the fire, and she drew up her chair to the fire too, and began to read. She had previously greeted him; for Katharine did not observe the rigid

English rule of ignoring the presence of a stranger. So she had said, "Good evening," as though he were a grown-up friend and not a young stranger of perhaps fifteen years.

The boy coloured a little and said, "Good evening," and retired quickly into 'The Graphic' again. At last he put down 'The Graphic,' and Katharine said:

"May I have 'The Graphic' if you have done with it?"

He rose at once, brought it to her, and glanced at her shyly. Something in his wistful face prompted her to speak to him.

"Is it a good number?" she said, smiling at him.

"Yes," he said.

And he added with a jerk:

"There is a picture of my school and our football team – here it is – it is so awfully good of the fellows."

"And are you here too?" Katherine asked, looking at his face and then trying to find him in the picture.

"No," he said, "I'm not there. I've not been to school this term."

"Been ill?" said Katharine; "perhaps measles, mumps, smashed-in head, broken knee or nose – what other ailments do boys have? I used to be so well up in them. My brother was always being brought home in fragments."

He smiled a little and said:

"No, I've not been ill, but – "

He paused a moment, and having glanced at her once more, seemed to gain confidence. He was evidently very shy; but he

desired to explain his absence from that football team.

"You see," he said, "mother died."

Katharine made no answer, but nodded sympathetically, and for a moment there was silence between these two new acquaintances. The boy himself broke it.

"Father and I are going to travel for a few months," he said. "But next year I shall be in the team again."

"And where are you going?" she asked.

"We are going to Japan," he said half-heartedly. It was obvious that his heart was not in the travelling scheme.

"Why, that is where I have just come from," Katharine said. "You are a lucky young man. And you speak of it as if it were a horrible holiday task. You ungrateful boy!"

And she warmed him with glowing accounts of the journey and all the queer things and people he would see, and succeeded in making him so interested that he ended by saying:

"By Jove! I think I shall like to go after all."

"Of course you will," she said. "You will enjoy every minute."

A shadow passed over his young face; and she remembered that he had lost his mother, and that very likely he was feeling desolate in his own boyish way. He looked desolate too. He reminded her of some one she had met lately – who was it? Oh, well, she did not remember; but there was an air of distress about him, pathetically combined with boyish eagerness, which appealed to her sympathies.

"And you will come back feeling so spry," she added, "and fit

for any amount of football. Besides, it is a good thing to go and see if Japan would make a suitable ally, isn't it? Then you can send in a report to the Government, you know."

His face brightened up, and he drew his chair a little nearer to her; for he felt that she was distinctly a sensible sort of person, not unlike Knutty in intelligence.

Katharine gave out to him unsparingly, and when she saw that the boy was becoming more at his ease and more inclined to talk, she went on laughing and chatting with him, until her own loneliness tugged less at her own heart.

Suddenly the door of the reading-room opened, and a man came in. Katharine and her young friend both looked round.

"It's father," the boy said awkwardly, not knowing what to do next.

"Professor Thornton," Katharine said, with a start of pleasure and surprise.

"Miss Frensham," he said, with an eager smile on his grave face.

And he sank into the arm-chair as though he had come into a haven.

CHAPTER VIII

Katharine woke up the morning after her arrival at the Langham feeling much less miserable than she had expected. The visit from Gwendolen and Ronald had cheered her, and the evening's companionship with that lonely father and son had taken away the sting of her own loneliness. She sang as she rolled up her beautiful soft hair. And when the sun came streaming into the room, she felt so full of brightness and hope, that she paused in her process of dressing and danced the Norfolk step-dance in her smart silk petticoat. Then she stopped suddenly, arrested by an invisible touch.

"Ah," she said, "how often Ronald and I have danced that at the bean-feasts! And now, never again, never again, old fellow! All the old fun is over. You belong heart and soul to that over-dressed jealous little idiot."

"Shame on you, Katharine!" she said, shaking her fist at herself in the looking-glass. "You deserve to put on an unbecoming dress. You shall put on that blue failure. You know blue does not suit you – not that tone of blue."

Katharine took the dress in question from the wardrobe and began putting it on.

"No," she said with a smile, "I have changed my mind, Katharine. You shall not be punished. You shall wear your most becoming one – the dove-coloured one. Punishment, indeed!

You don't need punishment. You need consolation. And what could be more consoling on earth than a becoming dress, unless it were a becoming hat? You shall have both."

She nodded and smiled to herself in the glass, and was still smiling when she went down in the lift, and found Clifford Thornton and Alan in the hall. By silent agreement they breakfasted together, and then made their way into the reading-room and drew up to the fire. Katharine was so genial and companionable that it was impossible even for Knutty's two icebergs not to thaw in her presence. Free of spirit always, and fresh from her recent travels, she was feeling as if she had met two strange people unexpectedly in some desolate corner of the earth, and had therefore the right to greet them and treat them as fellow-travellers. She knew that they would pass on, of course; but meantime here they were; they had broken in upon her loneliness, and she had the right to enjoy what the hour brought. It was only a chance that the desolate corner happened to be the Langham. It might have been Mount Ararat, or some spot in Siberia or Central China.

As for the icebergs themselves, they were feeling vaguely that it was delightful to be with her. Alan's shyness yielded to her influence, and the man's grave reserve underwent a slight modification. He seemed to become younger. Once or twice he even laughed at something Katharine said. It was such a fresh, boyish laughter, and had such a ring in it, that any one would have believed he was meant for happiness. That was what Katharine

thought when she heard it; and when she glanced at his face and saw that for the moment his strained expression had given place to easier adjustment, something tugged at her heart. In a curious, impersonal sort of way he, too, appeared to think that this chance meeting was to be made into pleasure for them all; for he said quite simply, as one traveller meeting another might say:

"What shall we do this morning?"

"I will do anything you both like," Katharine said. "I have no plans in the world, except to go to Denmark in a few weeks."

"Denmark!" they both said, interested at once.

"Yes," she answered, "I have a mysterious and sacred parcel intrusted to me by two botanists in Arizona; and I vowed that I would go myself to Denmark and put it into the hands of two botanists in Copenhagen – Ebbesen was the name."

"That is curious," Clifford said. "They are the nephew and niece of my old governess, whom I only saw off to Denmark last night. Ejnar and Gerda Ebbesen. And they are great on 'Salix;' and have a good many quarrels over that and other debatable subjects too. You will find them to be delightful people, and highly intellectual, as so many Danes are. But your parcel will probably give rise to many a battle-royal."

"Apparently all botanists quarrel," said Katharine. "I know my friends were in a perpetual state of warfare. They had a fearful dispute when I was there about a cactus. Such a hideous thing to quarrel over, too! And when I said that, they instantly became reconciled and attacked me!"

Then Clifford, with a smile in his heart at the mere thought of Knutty and her belongings, began to speak of his dear old Dane. And he added:

"You will not need an introduction to her good graces if you are bringing offerings to her nephew and niece, whom she adores. Still, she would like to know that you have seen her troublesome Englishman. She is the kindest friend I have ever had in my life. She came to take charge of me when I was about seven years of age. A lonely little beggar I was, too – in a great house in Surrey, with no one to care about my comings and goings. My mother was dead, and my father, a mining engineer, was always travelling about to all parts of the globe. When Knutty arrived on the scenes, I felt that heaven had opened and let out an angel."

"She doesn't look much like an angel now!" said Alan quaintly. "She weighs about seventeen stone."

"I would not have her otherwise, would you?" said his father, smiling.

"No, no," said Alan staunchly, "she is ripping, just as she is."

"We wanted her to come with us on our travels," Clifford continued.

"She would have been splendid, father, wouldn't she?" Alan said. "Nothing would have upset Knutty. Why, I believe if we had been drowning together, she would have said, 'By St Olaf, what a delightful ocean this is!'"

They all laughed. Knutty at that moment tossing on the sea, would have been glad to hear her belovèd icebergs laugh, and

glad to know that she was the cause. She would have rejoiced also to know that some one, and that some one a sympathetic woman, was being kind to them. Perhaps she would have said:

"I see daylight!"

Then Clifford spoke of Denmark, and Norway, and Sweden, the wonderful North which Knutty had taught him to love and understand.

"I had the love of it in my veins," he said, "for my father had a passion for Northern countries and people, and that was why he chose a Northern governess for me; although of course she knew English perfectly. But she fostered my love of the North, and brought me up on the Sagas. And it was she who first took me up to the extreme north of Norway. That is where you should go: where you see the mountains as in a vision, and the glaciers reflected in the fiords, and the exquisite colours of the sky chastened and tempered by the magic mist."

Katharine said that she had always intended to go there, but that other places had taken precedence; and that when her brother married three years ago, she had been impelled to take a long journey, in order to get accustomed to a new kind of life, a crippled kind of life without him.

"And have you become accustomed to it?" Clifford Thornton asked.

"No," she answered. "Not yet."

"Then the long journey did not help?" he said.

"Oh yes, it helped," Katharine answered. "Mercifully one

passes on."

"Yes," he said, and he seemed lost in thought.

Katharine broke through the silence.

"Well," she said, rising from her chair, "if we are going out, we should not delay much longer. Where shall we go?" she said, turning to Alan.

Alan chose the Hippodrome, and the three started off together in that direction. Knutty would have been somewhat surprised to see her two icebergs. They did not talk much, it is true, for Katharine did all the talking; but they laughed now and then, and made an occasional remark which was not at all Arctic. They had a splendid day together: a mixture of Hippodromes, ices, lunches, animated pictures, Natural History Museums, and camera-shops; and in the evening they dined together, and chatted, like old cronies, over the day's doings.

They knew that they owed the day's pleasure to Katharine's companionship; and when Alan said good night, he blushed and added with a jerk:

"Thank you."

And Clifford said:

"Yes, indeed, thank you for to-day – tak for idag, as the Danes say."

"Ah, I must learn that if I am going to Denmark," Katharine said, and she repeated it several times until Alan pronounced her to be perfect.

"Tak for idag, tak for idag!" she said triumphantly. "It is I who

have to thank you for today."

She thought of them as she went to sleep. They seemed to her two pathetic figures, hapless wanderers, not fit to be alone in the world by themselves. She wished the old Dane had not left them. She dreamed of them; she saw in her dreams the boy's young face and the man's grave face. She heard the man's voice telling her that he had met and known her before, and she answered:

"Yes, it is true. We have met somewhere, you and I. Some message has passed between us somewhere – somehow – "

When she woke up, she remembered her dreams and lay thinking a long time.

"He haunts me," she thought. "He is on my mind and in my heart day and night. I suppose I ought to try and get rid of him. I suppose it would be the right sort of British matronly thing to do, considering the circumstances. And yet why should it be the right thing? It does not harm him that I think of him and am strongly attracted to him. Why should I stamp down my emotions and impulses? No. I shall think of him as much as I like, and dream of him as much as I can. I know he is a man with a broken spirit – out of reach, out of region – but – "

"Well, well," she said, "I must shake myself and 'go forth.'"

She went forth that day looking the picture of health and attractive grace. She wore the dove-coloured dress, a most becoming hat, and a cloak which added to her natural charm of bearing. But it was her whole personality more than her looks which stamped her as a special brand of beautiful womanhood;

whilst her adorable manner, the natural outcome of a big heart and generous spirit, gave her a radiance which was felt and seen by every one. Wherever she went, people even of the dullest types had a distinct feeling of being pleased and stirred. Her arrival at the organ-factory, near Cambridge Heath, was the signal for all the employees on the premises to be more or less agreeably excited, according to their varying powers of receptivity. The porter, who was known as the "dormouse," from his sleepy disposition, became electrified into activity when he saw Katharine. He ran and spread the news.

"Miss Katharine has come," he said first to one workman and then another.

She soon passed in and out amongst them all. The sulky but clever artiste, who voiced the reeds, the sympathetic craftsman who was doing a delicate piece of carving for part of an elaborate organ-case, the mechanics, the packers, the clerks, the manager, all had their eager word of welcome ready for her.

"It's good to see you, Miss Katharine," they said. "Organ-building hasn't been organ-building without you."

Ronald was with a client at the time, but he too became excited when he heard that Katharine had come; and the client was ingeniously got rid of as soon as possible.

"How many times you have come and upset us all," he said, when they were alone together in his sanctum. "No one will do any more useful work to-day, and I am sure I don't wonder. And how jolly to see you here as in the old days! And how splendid

you look too! Why, Kath, I do believe you have a flirtation on! You have that well-known air of buoyancy which always has meant a new flirtation. I should recognise it anywhere."

"No, no," she laughed; "I have no flirtation on. I should tell you at once, if only from sheer force of habit."

"Well," he said, "I have been torn the whole time thinking what a brute I was to leave you in that way and let you stay at the Langham. I can't get over it, Kath. Gwendolen is so ashamed, and so am I."

"Don't fret about it," she said gently. "The bitterness has passed, if, indeed, it ever existed, Ronnie. Gwendolen never meant to be unkind. Most people would have stayed on and pretended not to feel the strain; but I couldn't have done that. I would rather never see you again than live on strained terms with you now that you are married. That would be a pitiful ending to our long friendship, wouldn't it? No, no, cheer up. It will all work out beautifully; and I shall come and see you more often than you wish. I promise you that."

"But it is dreadful for you to be alone," he said.

"I have not been alone," she answered, and she told him about her strange meeting with Clifford Thornton and his boy.

Ronald pretended to believe that she knew they were there all the time, and that she had left his home deliberately.

"Don't be ridiculous," she answered gaily. "Life is only a series of chances, and this is one of them."

"And here have I been racking my brains to think how I might

comfort you, Kath," said Ronald.

"Dear old fellow!" she replied. "Lonely people have to work out their own redemption."

"Are you very lonely?" he asked regretfully. It always pinched his heart to think that he had abandoned her.

"No, no," she answered, giving him a sudden hug, "scarcely at all, and then only for a few passing moments. Nothing that matters. And now tell me about business. For if you want the benefit of my advice about anything, now is your chance. I feel that my brains are in splendid condition this morning, and that I can settle the most momentous questions in five minutes. I always was quick, wasn't I?"

"There are one or two matters you can help me with, if you will really give your attention," he said.

"Well, then, I must remove this hat," Katharine said, taking pins recklessly out of her hair. "No person could be business-like in such a hat, could they? There, I feel different now, absolutely serious and commercial! And here go my gloves and rings. Now, Ronnie, I am all brains and attention."

"And you won't flirt if I ask Barlow in?" Ronald said. "We shall want him too."

"I will be sphinx-like," she answered, with a twinkle in her eye.

Ronald laughed and sent for his manager, and the three together settled some important difficulties, over which Katharine showed herself so quick-witted and sensible that Mr

Barlow was lost in admiration, and remarked it was a pity she was not in the business.

"I have always maintained, Miss Katharine, that you ought to take an active part in the business," he said. "You have a good and a quick judgment."

"Ah, Mr Barlow," Katharine answered eagerly, "you have touched the right chord. I want to take an active part from now onwards, and Ronald says I could be of use."

"Yes, but the trouble is that you'd soon get tired of routine work," Ronald said. "You were not made for a dull life."

"Why could I not be a traveller for the firm?" suggested Katharine. "I am sure I could manage ecclesiastics beautifully; and that wouldn't be dull really, though it sounds dull! I have every confidence that I could make all creeds employ our firm and our firm only. I feel myself quite capable of tackling Archbishops or Plymouth Brethren, Unitarian ministers or Anabaptists. All sects of all shades except Christian Scientists. I draw the line at Christian Scientists. No one could tackle them, no one on earth or in heaven or – anywhere!"

The manager laughed.

"I believe you can tackle any one, Miss Katharine, even Christian Scientists," he said, "and I am sure we can make use of your quick judgment."

When he had gone, she said to Ronald:

"Ronnie, I really am more stable than you think, and I believe I could even do routine work now. I must have something to do.

And you admit I have a quick brain. It goes like a flash, doesn't it? Not like Willy Tonedale's, for instance."

And at that moment Willy Tonedale was announced. He was a handsome fellow, to whom the gods had given a beautiful face, a splendid form, a dear, kind heart, and certainly the very slowest of brains. Every one loved him, and Katharine herself was one of his best friends. He was too lazy to have worked seriously at a profession; but he had had a vague training as an artist, and had dawdled through the Royal Academy schools. It was his custom to propose to Katharine every time he met her, and he at once said:

"Ah, Katharine, there you are, home at last! Do be mine, my dear. Do. There's a brick."

"We were just talking of you," she said.

"Talking of my slow brain, as usual, I suppose," he said, slipping into Ronald's chair, his handsome face aglow with the pleasure of seeing her.

"It was just mentioned," Katharine said, laughing; and Ronald said:

"Kath wants to come into the business; and she was remarking that she had a quick brain, not like – "

"Not like mine, of course," put in Willy. "I know. But what on earth does she want to come into the business for? I never heard of anything so absurd. Why don't you tell her to marry me instead, Ronald?"

"You are not the right man, Willy," Katharine said brightly.

"You are an awful dear; but you never were the right fellow, and never will be."

"Well, don't settle down to work," he said. "Work! Who wants to work at anything regularly? Never heard such an absurd idea. Good heavens! If it's money you want, take all I've got – every blessèd shilling – and remain yourself – Katharine the splendid! Business routine for you! It's ridiculous to think of. Why, the world wouldn't go on properly unless you were a leisured person. Some nice people have got to be leisured. That's why I take things easily. Too many busy people make life a nuisance. Even I've sense enough to know that."

"I am quite determined to take up business, Willy," said Katharine, "and the world will have to do without me. Ronald says I could be of use. And Mr Barlow says so too. Now just imagine for one moment how beautifully I might manage bishops, archbishops, curates, even Popes. Can't you picture to yourself the Pope ordering a new organ with all the newest improvements of which only our firm is capable!"

And she went through an imaginary interview with the Pope, which called forth peals of laughter from her little audience of two. Seriousness had scarcely been re-established when the card of a real clergyman was brought in, and Ronald said laughingly:

"Here, Kath, here's your chance – the Dean of St Ambrose's."

"No, no," she answered. "I can't begin with any one inferior to a Pope or an Archbishop. Come along, Willy. I suppose you are going to your home to lunch. You know I am spending the

afternoon there. Make haste, Willy! Ronald is longing for us to be off."

"My dear Kath," Willy Tonedale said quaintly, "it isn't I that am putting all those mysterious pins into my head. Can't understand how they don't hurt the head, going right through like that. They would hurt my head. But then it's true – "

"Yes, it's true," said Katharine. "You needn't finish your remark. I know! Good-bye, Ronnie. Love to Gwendolen, and I'm coming to dinner to-morrow. If it had only been an Archbishop, I would have begun at once!"

The Dean passed into Ronald's sanctum as Willy Tonedale and Katharine passed out. The dignitary of the Church glanced at her, and a fleeting expression of pleased surprise lit up his clerical countenance. He had come about some experiment which he wished tried on the organ of St Ambrose's; but he found himself unable to concentrate his attention on business until he had asked who that delightful-looking lady might be. Ronald smiled invisibly as he replied that it was his sister – the senior partner of the firm.

"Dear me, dear me!" replied the Dean as he stroked his chin. His eyes wandered restlessly towards the door. Wicked old Dean. He was thinking:

"Surely I have heard that it is always safer to ask for the senior partner."

CHAPTER IX

"Well, Willy," said Katharine, as he and she made their way towards the Tonedales' house in South Kensington, "what have you been doing whilst I have been away? Have you finished the famous historical picture of the unhistoric meeting between Queen Elizabeth and Mary, Queen of Scots? I should like to think that you have finished it, for then I shouldn't have to sit for it any more! Let me see, how many years have you been painting at that immortal masterpiece? Is it ten or fifteen years?"

"Don't make fun of me," Willy said. "You know perfectly well that I am one of those fellows who were never intended for work, although if I had had you to work for, Kath, I might have overcome my natural laziness. Anyway, the masterpiece isn't done yet. It has been waiting for your return. You must still sit for it. I have missed you fearfully. Everybody has missed you. Even that duffer Ronald, infatuated as he is with that idiot Gwendolen, even he has had the sense to miss you. By Jove, though, he is altered! Not the same fellow at all. I never go to his home. Don't care to meet those pretentious asses of people whom Gwendolen thinks such fine style. I don't see how you are going to get on with them, Kath. They'll hate you, and you'll hate them. It's their pretentiousness I can't swallow. It makes me positively sick. No, when I want to see Ronnie nowadays I go down to the organ-factory. That is good enough for me. No one is artificial there."

"Yes, Ronnie has altered," Katharine said. "But still, if he is happy, Willy, that is the main thing. And I think he is happy; although I am sure that he knows he is spending too much money. The truth is, Gwendolen has always been accustomed to these weird people, and likes to entertain them. Ronnie has nothing in common with them, but he worships Gwendolen, and loves to please her, and so he has persuaded himself that it is the right thing to keep in and up with them. Perhaps it is, from one point of view. It all depends on what one wants in life. I assure you I was glad enough to escape two or three days ago, and take refuge in the Langham until I could find a flat for myself. Gwendolen was jealous of me, too. I felt that at once."

"At the Langham, nonsense!" said Willy. "Come and live with us. That's the proper place for you until you have decided what to do. Come, Kath, do!"

Mrs Tonedale and Margaret, Willy's mother and sister, also begged Katharine to come and make their home her own; but she could not be persuaded to leave the hotel, and said in excuse that she was still feeling a wanderer to whom a home was not yet necessary. They did not coerce her, knowing her love of freedom, and knowing also that she understood there was always a warm welcome awaiting her. For they loved her dearly, in spite of the fact that she did not respond to Willy's adoration.

Margaret Tonedale had been Katharine's earliest school friend in the years that had gone. They had both been together at one of those prehistoric private schools, where the poor female victims

used to get very little learning and much less food.

"It didn't matter so much about the learning," Kath said to Margaret that afternoon, when they were speaking about old times. "I always thought vaguely one could make that up somehow or other, but one could not make up the arrears of food; and, you know, I have remained hungry ever since."

"If you married me, Katharine, I would feed you splendidly," Willy said. "You'd soon forget that you had been starved at school. My dear girl, you should have a baron of beef every day!"

"Willy is still incorrigible in the way he proposes," Mrs Tonedale said, laughing. "You must go on forgiving him, Katharine."

"Willy is a dear, and I don't mind when or how he proposes to me; whether with a poem, or a baron of beef, or a picture of the meeting between Elizabeth and Mary, Queen of Scots," said Katharine, smiling. "I think we still understand each other, and he knows that he will always get the same answer. Don't you, Willy?"

"Yes, my dear," answered Willy. "Same question, same answer. That is all I expect now."

"But, supposing some day I said 'Yes,' instead of 'No.' What would you do then?" suggested Katharine, teasing him.

"By Jove! Kath, I should go out of my senses," he said eagerly.

"My dear fellow, you must keep what brains you've got," she replied. "You know I've always said you had some, though they do work slowly."

"The machine's there, my dear," he said, "but it certainly doesn't work quickly. I'm quite willing to own that it doesn't work quickly. It never could, not even for love of you. Quite sure you couldn't stand a slow machine?"

"Quite sure," she answered. "It would send me frantic, Willy."

"Awfully hard on a man to have a slow machine when only a quick one will do the trick," he said. "Where's the justice of it, I should like to know? Tell me that."

"Oh, I don't pretend to know about justice," she said. "But I think there are plenty of other women who would not go frantic over the slow machine."

"Exactly," he said, pulling his moustache. "But I want the woman who would go frantic."

"Do be sensible, Will," she said. "Our temperaments are hopelessly different."

"Oh, hang temperament!" he said recklessly. "I hate the word."

"Everything turns on it," she answered. "I see that more and more."

"Oh, don't you begin to talk about temperaments," he said. "I can't stand it from you, Kath. We hear of nothing else now, since cousin Julia came to live in London. But, there she is, confound her! And now she will begin on her eternal subject: a dead friend who was done to death by her husband's temperamental cruelty. And mother and Margaret will listen in rapt delight. And if any one fresh is here, she tells the whole story from beginning to end.

All I can say is, that if the woman was anything like cousin Julia, the husband must have had an awful time of it, and, if he is a sensible chap, must now be revelling in his freedom."

Katharine looked in the direction of the new-comer, and saw a well-dressed woman with a hard face. She was received by Margaret Tonedale, and joined the little group of friends who had come in whilst Katharine and Willy had been talking together at the other end of the big drawing-room.

"What was the name of the dead friend?" Katharine asked indifferently. She wondered afterwards why she had asked. It was nothing to her. At least she believed at the moment that it was nothing to her.

"The name was Thornton – Marianne Thornton," Willy said. "I ought to know, considering I've heard it about a million times. Even my brain would retain it after that."

Katharine rose from the sofa.

"Let us join the others, Willy," she said; and she took a chair not far off from Mrs Stanhope. Willy followed her reluctantly.

"Never thought you'd want to listen to that shrew of a woman," he said. "Besides, what good does she do to her dead friend? The whole thing is past and gone. And, as for temperaments, I tell you – "

"Hush, hush!" said Katharine, with a slight flush on her face, "I want to hear what she says."

"Oh, I am never tired of talking about it," Mrs Stanhope was saying. "You see, she was my great friend, my dearest friend on

earth. And to lose her in such sad circumstances has made me feel tenfold more bereaved than I should have felt if she had just passed away from ordinary causes and chances of everyday life. As for her husband, he deserves all the unhappiness which remorse can measure out to him. He wrecked and ruined my poor friend's life. She was high-spirited and full of noble emotions. She had a fine natural disposition which he never even tried to understand. He never spared a thought to her. His thoughts were for himself, his work, and his son. I will do him the justice to say that he loved his boy. But he never gave a thought to his wife. She had sacrificed everything to his temperament; she sacrificed herself, her friends, her social obligations, her personal inclinations, her very love for her boy. No woman could have given more. She was alone in the world. Her husband had put her out into the biting cold of loneliness."

She paused for a moment, and Willy Tonedale drawled out:

"But you did say once, Cousin Julia, that she had a most fearful temper. No fellow can stand that sort of thing for long."

Mrs Stanhope glanced at him sternly, and said:

"Could you imagine your temper improved under such conditions? She went to him sweet-tempered enough; and, if she became a little hasty as the years went on, it was only right that she should have won that protection for herself. I encouraged her. '*Let yourself be felt, Marianne*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.