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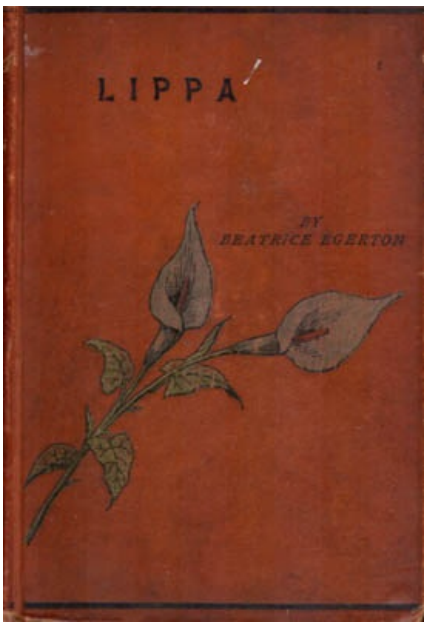

LIPPA

A NOVEL

BY

BEATRICE EGERTON

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[Transcriber's Note: Chapter numbering is as in the original text, so there are two Chapter XIs.]

CHAPTER I

'I hold the world but as the world

A stage where every man must play a part.'

—SHAKESPEARE.

It is four o'clock, and —— Street is wearing a very deserted appearance although it is July. The cab-drivers are more or less fast asleep in attitudes far from suggesting comfort, the sentries on guard at —— Palace look almost suffocated in their bearskins, and a comparative quiet is reigning over the great metropolis.

'Do you know, Helmdon,' says Jimmy Dalrymple. 'I'm nearly done;' these two are seated in the bow window of a well-known club.

'You don't mean it, what!' replies Helmdon, better known as Chubby.

'I do, all the same,' says Jimmy, testily, 'heat, money, everything, in fact!'

'That comes of racing, my good boy,' this from Chubby, in a sort of I-told-you-so tone.

'For Heaven's sake don't begin lecturing,' says Dalrymple, 'it doesn't suit you, and how in the name of fortune could the heat come from my racing. Chubby, you're an ass!' and really, J. Dalrymple of the Guards is not far wrong, for the said Chubby, otherwise Lord Helmdon does look rather foolish half leaning half sitting on the back of a chair, his hat well at the back of his head (why it remains there is a mystery), his reddish hair very dishevelled, his face on a broad grin while he watches with deep interest two dogs fighting in the street below.

Dalrymple receiving no answer to his complimentary speech, gives vent to a yawn, and sends for a brandy and soda.

'Eh what!' says Chubby, suddenly, and *à propos* of nothing; by this time the dogs have been separated. 'Didn't you speak just now?'

'Well, yes,' replies Dalrymple, 'I merely observed that you were an ass.'

'Thanks, awfully, but why did it strike you just now?' asks Lord Helmdon, sweetly.

'Don't know, I'm sure—'

'Ah! I thought so, but look here, why are you so down in the mouth, there's something up I'm sure,' and Chubby scrutinises his friend gravely.

'Nothing's up,' says Jimmy, 'but I've got into a confounded business with Harkness over that mare of his, that ought to have run in the Oaks, I've laid more than I've got, against her winning the Ledger, and I don't know what on earth to do—'

'Do nothing,' says Helmdon, 'it'll all shake down somehow, and the Ledger's weeks off—'

Jimmy grunts an assent, and then rising says, 'I'm off to tea at Brook Street and the Park afterwards.'

'You'll probably find me there,' replies Helmdon, settling himself comfortably for a nap. While Dalrymple walks out of the Club and turns in the direction of Brook Street. He has not gone far when he is overtaken by a man who greets him with: 'Where are you going to, my pretty maid?'

'I'm on my way to the Park,' replies Dalrymple, smiling, 'only I thought of stopping at your sister's on the way. Where are you bound for?'

'There too,' answers his companion, who, save for his drooping fair moustache would better deserve to be called a 'pretty maid.' 'Mabel has a small party on, and I promised to drop in, we may as well go together.'

Paul Ponsonby is decidedly handsome; tall, fair, of almost a feminine complexion, and with blue eyes of a very sad expression. He is a great favourite with the female sex and many a mother longs to have him for a son-in-law, remembering that he has plenty of money, and only three people between him and an earldom; but he has no intention of marrying, there being 'a just cause and impediment' why he should not.

But by this time our friends have reached their destination, and ascend the staircase to the strains of distant music.

'Mabel,' otherwise Mrs Seaton, is standing on the landing and greets them both eagerly.

'So glad you've come,' says she, 'but I didn't expect *you*, Mr Dalrymple, and now you're here you must make yourself useful, your mission in life at the present moment, Paul,' she adds, turning to her brother, 'is to go and amuse Philippa, poor child, I'm afraid she feels rather out of it, but I haven't time to attend to her now. She's near the window, the old Professor was talking to her a few minutes ago—'

'Very well,' says Paul, moving towards the well filled drawing-room; the music has ceased and everyone is talking at once. He pauses for a second in the doorway and glances round the room, bowing to two or three people, then making his way to the window holds out his hand to a girl who is looking decidedly *ennuyée*.

'How do you do, Mr Ponsonby,' she says in a clear sweet voice, 'I'm so glad you've come, don't

you know the feeling of loneliness that comes over one in a crowd of unknown people, and I've been here all the afternoon feeling dreadfully cross, and have wished myself back again in Switzerland about twenty times. It's rather a bad beginning,' she adds, with a little laugh—

'Feeling cross, do you mean?' asks he, 'I often think it does one a great deal of good to be cross. I wish Mrs Grundy didn't come between us and the carpet, it would be so delightful to sprawl full length on it and roar; I remember I used to derive a great deal of comfort in it in the days of my youth.'

'I suppose that was a long time ago,' says she, mischievously—

'Yes, of course, almost centuries—but where's Teddy?'

'Gone out for a walk,' replied Philippa, 'isn't he a dear little boy?'

Paul Ponsonby laughs and says, 'I think him rather the *enfant terrible*, but I suppose women are naturally fond of children, even taken as a whole; it does not matter much what they are like taken singly.'

Some one has begun to sing and Philippa does not answer, but when the song is finished, she asks the name of an old lady who is sitting on the sofa at the farther end of the room.

'The one with the blue feather, that's Lady Dadford,' says Ponsonby, 'and that's her daughter standing by her, Lady Anne; she is very clever; but surely they're some sort of relation to you, I know the old lady comes here very often.'

'Well, child,' exclaims little Mrs Seaton, coming up and laying her hand on Philippa's shoulder; 'they have nearly all gone, thank goodness, I am afraid you have been very dull, eh?'

Philippa laughs, while Paul twirling his moustache says, 'You know I've been talking to Miss Seaton for the last half hour, as you told me to, next time I shall not obey you if this is all the thanks I get.'

Philippa looks up quickly, so this is why he has been talking to her. 'It was very good of you,' she says in a very polite tone, 'very kind, but you need not have troubled yourself so much, I am quite happy watching people.'

'My dear child, what an absurd creature you are,' exclaims her sister-in-law, 'but come with me now I want to introduce you to two or three people—'

'What did I say to annoy her,' thinks Paul, and then seizing the first opportunity he makes for the door, but his sister stops him on the threshold.

'Oh, Paul, do be a dear,' she says, 'and get some places for us for the play, I don't care what, only let it be somewhere proper, for Philippa's sake not mine, get them for to-morrow night, and come and dine here beforehand.'

'All right,' he answers, 'I shall probably look in during the morning. Ta ta.'

Mabel Seaton is a great favourite. She is not what one would call pretty, but she possesses a bright, cheery face, which is reflected in miniature in her son Teddy, who is as his uncle says rather the '*enfant terrible!*' but do not say so before his mother, or her wrath would be dire. Her husband George is really the only person who dares to interfere concerning the conduct of that small personage.

Philippa, who up till now has lived with an aunt in Switzerland, having reached the age of eighteen, has come over to England to be presented and enter into the vortex of London society. So it is to quite another world she has come, and she wonders if she will be happy. Life is such a strange thing, so many beginnings and so few endings.

But the theatre is hardly the place for melancholy meditations, and she is sitting in the stalls of the L——. Mabel on one side, Paul Ponsonby on the other; the latter has become deeply interested in Philippa, and wonders what sort of a woman she will become—a coquette, a flirt? He glances at her fair, childish face and sighs. The curtain goes up, but he does not see the scene before him; no, 'tis a woman's face he seems to see, a pale face, with large brown eyes that are fixed on him with a look of—pshaw! what had love to do with her. Time had been when love for that woman had filled his whole being, but there came a day when he tried to make himself hate her, and he did not succeed. Heigh ho!

'Mr Ponsonby,' Philippa is saying to him, 'do look at that dear little baby.'

With a start he comes back from the reverie into which he had sunk and answers at random 'Yes, she always acts perfectly—'

Philippa looks at him in astonishment, how could that child *always* act perfectly when it couldn't be more than three, but she says nothing and watches with interest the play. It is a sad piece of a woman wronged, the acting is splendid and more than once Miss Seaton feels a lump in her throat, but it is over at length and the curtain falls for the last time.

'Did you like it?' asks Ponsonby, helping her on with her cloak.

'Very much,' she replies, 'I have never been to an English theatre before, you know, but it was awfully sad.'

'Sadder if it had been the man wronged,' he says—

Philippa looks up with a laughing retort about each one for himself, but he seems so very grave that she refrains and wonders why he said that, but it is sometime before she finds out.

CHAPTER II

'A face in a crowd, a glance, a droop of the lashes, and all is said.'—MARION CRAWFORD.

It is some days later, and having a ball in prospect, Mrs Seaton has left Philippa to rest, whilst she goes on a round of visits; and Philippa, nothing loth, settles herself comfortably on the sofa with a book, and prepares to enjoy a lazy afternoon, but she is destined to interruption. The door suddenly bursts open and Teddy flies in, with 'Oh, Aunt Lippa, will you come into the Square with me. Marie's sister has come to see her and it would be kind to let them be together, don't you think—'

Lippa feels inclined to suggest that it would be just as kind to let her alone, but she refrains and merely says 'Well?'

'Will you?' asks the little boy, emphasizing his words by leaning heavily against his aunt. 'You see,' he continues, 'I do feel sometimes lonely, 'cos Marie's old and won't run, and I think you look as if you could—'

'I have done so in the course of my life,' she answers laughing, 'and I might be able to do so again.'

'Then you will try this afternoon, won't you?' this very coaxingly. 'Marie had better walk with us there, but it's such a little way we can come back by ourselves, can't we.'

'Yes; I should think so,' says Philippa.

'Then I'll just go and get my hat,' and Teddy, pausing at the door, adds. 'Do you know I think you're a very good aunt for a boy to have.'

'Indeed?' and Lippa laughs.

She finds it quite as pleasant sitting under a shady tree in the Square, as on the sofa in Brook Street; and her nephew does not require her to run, having found another companion in the person of a fat, very plain little girl; but after some time she has to go home, and Teddy having worried the life out of a stray cat, returns to his aunt, with a red, smutty face.

'Well,' he says, 'I am so hot, what shall I do to get cool—'

'Sit still,' suggests Lippa.

'Oh no, that'd make me heaps hotter, oh! there's Joseph,' and away flies Teddy. Joseph is an old gardener whose business it is to keep the paths in order, and of whom most of the square live in wholesome awe, not so Teddy, he loves him dearly and will talk as long as the old man has time to listen, this afternoon he is busy and Teddy soon returns again to the seat.

'He's such a dear old man,' he says, nodding in the direction the gardener has taken, 'a dear old man, but he has a terrible cough, and he doesn't know anything that will cure it.'

'Poor old man,' she answers, 'but really Teddy you *must* sit still, you are so hot, and jumping up and down like that shakes me all over.'

'Does it?' he says, innocently. 'I'll sit still if you'll tell me something, but perhaps I'd better tell you something first. Did you ever know that I had a sister?'

Lippa nods.

'Oh!' he says, 'well then perhaps you knew that her name was Lilian, and she was lost.'

'Yes,' replies Philippa, 'I knew all about her; you see your father is my brother, so of course I know all about you.'

'Not everything,' says Teddy, confidently, 'you don't know that I'm feeling rather empty, not 'xactly hungry but as if I could eat my tea.'

'Well, I dare say it is time to go in,' says his aunt, 'and if you will cease to sit on my feet I will get up.'

Teddy rises with alacrity, and not till they get to the square gate do they remember they have not got the key. 'How tiresome,' ejaculates Philippa.

But Teddy who is always full of resources, departs in the hope of finding Joseph or some one who has a key, but alas they are the only occupants of the square, what is to be done. They stand gazing helplessly over the gate, Philippa looking uncommonly pretty in a light gown that fits to perfection, and her large black hat adorned with red poppies, 'I wonder who she is,' thinks a

gentleman who has already passed them twice, and is contemplating turning back to see her again. But he hears his name called in a shrill voice, 'Captain Harkness, Cap-ta-i-n H-a-r-kness!' He turns round hastily and sees Teddy waving frantically over the gate.

'Well, little boy,' he says, 'what is the matter? eh!'

'We can't get out, Aunt Lippa and I, we've forgotten the key, do go to mother and ask her for it.'

Captain Harkness turns to Philippa and raising his hat, says, 'I shall be very pleased if I can be of any service to you, I was just on my way to see Mrs Seaton.'

'If you could get the key,' replies she, 'it would be most kind.'

'Not at all,' says he, still wondering who she is, 'I will not be long,' and he is as good as his word, reappearing with the key and setting them free, when they return to Brook Street.

'My dear child,' says Mabel, addressing Lippa, as they enter the drawing-room, 'how very foolish of you to lock yourselves up like that. I was getting quite uneasy about you, but come and have some tea, and you Teddy go upstairs to yours, Captain Harkness now let me introduce you properly to my sister-in-law.'

Philippa smiles and Captain Harkness congratulates himself on his afternoon adventure.

Eleven o'clock sees Mabel and Philippa on their way to the ball, not having been to many she has not become *blasée*, but enjoys herself thoroughly. It is still early when they reach their destination, and Mrs Seaton is enabled to find a seat in a good place for seeing, almost opposite the door. Lady Dadford followed by her daughter soon puts in an appearance and makes for them at once.

'Well, Mabel, my dear,' she begins, 'so glad to have found you here, how do you do, Philippa, you are not done up yet, I see, and you look charming, what a sweet dress you have, and I do believe you have not been introduced to my boy yet, I am afraid he isn't coming here to-night, he's such a dear boy, my Helmdon, I'm sure you will like him. But where's Anne, ah! dancing already, the dear child, she does do it so well,' and with a benign smile on her kind old face, Lady Dadford seats herself by Mabel.

Miss Seaton's partners claim her one after the other; they have very little individuality to her, of course some are better dancers than the others, but caring for one more than another, would be quite impossible she tells herself. Why is it then that suddenly as she catches sight of a certain brown head in the doorway, she smiles, and when the owner comes towards her feels just a little thrill of pleasure.

Ah! Miss Seaton let me warn you, don't pretend to care for *none* of them, for that thrill does not come without some cause, and almost before you are aware of it, you will find that your heart is not your own, you know quite well that Jimmy Dalrymple has found favour in your eyes, and you know too, that with very little trouble you could bewitch him. Do not play with edged tools.

Lippa waltzes off with him through the crowded room and just a little sigh escapes her as the music stops.

'Where would you like to go to?' asks he. 'To supper or the garden?'

'Oh, the garden,' says Miss Seaton, 'fancy naming them together. Supper is such a very prosaic affair,' and then as they enter the garden, 'One could almost imagine oneself miles away from London here.'

'They have arranged it awfully well,' says Dalrymple, gazing round on the illuminated parterres, and then, 'would you like to sit or shall we walk about?'

'Walk, I think,' replies Philippa, and so they wander on, talking about nothing in particular, and yet they both forget that there are such things as sleep and to-morrow. Having come to the end of a narrow path, and finding two empty chairs they remain there. The lights are dim and the people passing and repassing are scarcely recognisable, but presently a lady in a light blue gown attracts Lippa's attention. 'Who is she?' she says.

Dalrymple turns and looks at her. They hear a murmured sentence and then 'Eh, what!' in rather an unmistakeable tone.

'Oh, her partner is Helmdon,' says Jimmy, 'he's never to be mistaken with his *what*. The lady, I think, is Mrs Standish, an American widow, and therefore rolling in riches. I never knew an American widow who wasn't.'

'It would be very nice,' says Lippa.

'What! to be an American widow?'

She laughs. 'No! to be very rich; there would be no need to think twice as to whether you could afford anything—'

'What a great many useless things you would get,' says Dalrymple.

'Really! but why?'

'I did not mean you in particular,' he protests. 'I assure you I didn't; but there are a great many useless things in the shops, which I suppose people buy. What is the matter, Miss Seaton? For Philippa has risen hastily with a little scream. 'There's something under my chair, I felt it move,' she says, woman-like raising her skirt.

Dalrymple bends down, kneel he could not in his best evening trousers, 'I don't see anything,' he says, peering about and nearly choking for his collar is high and somewhat tight. *Il faut souffrir pour être beau.*

'Oh, but you must,' persists Lippa. 'I felt it move.'

'Wait a second,' says he, producing a match, and proceeding to light it on the sole of his pump; they are all alone in this part of the garden, and nobody is watching them, the match will not ignite at first and then they both bend down at once nearly upsetting each other, and behold calmly blinking at them a large black cat. This is too much for Jimmy who gives way to suppressed laughter, the match goes out, and Miss Seaton though inwardly convulsed thinks proper to assume an air of dignity. 'I think I had better go back to the ball-room,' says she.

Jimmy vaguely feeling he has done something he ought not to, says; 'I-er beg your pardon, I'm awfully sorry—'

'What for?' asks Lippa, stroking her right arm with her left hand.

Jimmy considers for a moment wondering what he had better say, and then suddenly seized with an inspiration 'I do believe I hurt you,' he says, 'the match didn't touch you, did it?'

'No; but *you* did,' replies she, and then seeing the consternation depicted on his face, Miss Seaton smiles, and then they both laugh.

'You know, you really might have knocked me over,' she says pathetically.

'I can't tell you how sorry I am,' exclaims Dalrymple, gently taking possession of the injured arm; 'please forgive me?'

'I'll try,' she says,—'I wonder what has happened to the cat—'

They are nearing the ball-room, and he finding this *tête-à-tête* very pleasant wishes to prolong it and says, 'Shall we go back and see?'

'I think I am engaged for this dance,' says Lippa, knowing Mabel will be wondering what has become of her.

'You'll let me have another?' asks Jimmy, eagerly.

'Certainly,' replies she; 'only, no more cat-finding. I can't bear them, can you?'

'Can't endure them,' says Dalrymple, who would agree with whatever she said.

That night, or I should say next morning, when Miss Seaton retires to rest, a certain brown head figures prominently in her dreams, together with searching after huge monsters, who all bear a resemblance to Lady Dadford. And even when awake the brown head is a subject for deep thought, and it is with a bright, happy face Miss Seaton appears (though somewhat late) at the breakfast table.

CHAPTER III

'Philippa,' says Mrs Seaton one day, 'I have just had an invitation from old Mrs Boothly, asking us to a water party next Wednesday, would you like to go?'

'Who is going?' asks Lippa wisely, 'not only the Boothlys—'

'I suppose the "*not only*," means that in that case you would not go, but rest assured lots of other people are going, the two Graham girls, little Tommy Grant, Mr Dalrymple, and Captain Harkness,' says Mabel, 'but read the note yourself and decide—' Philippa's mind is soon made up. 'I think I should like to go, it will be rather fun I expect.'

'Yes, I daresay,' replies Mabel, 'then I will write at once to get it off my mind, but *what* day is it for?'

'Wednesday,' says Philippa, meaning to enjoy herself. But in one sense she is doomed to disappointment, the weather is everything that could be wished, and, donning a pretty gown, and covering her head with a dainty confection, she feels ready for the fray.

Ten o'clock is the hour fixed for starting from —— Station, but Teddy has been refractory over his breakfast and his mother considers it her duty to reprimand him, tears ensue, and then some time is spent in consolation, so that they are only just in time and have to run along the platform to the saloon carriage, out of which Tommy Grant is gesticulating violently.

'You're only just in time,' says he, helping them in.

Philippa looks round and does not see Dalrymple; she finds herself next the eldest Miss Boothly who is saying, 'I am so pleased you could come,' giving Lippa's arm a little squeeze at the same time, 'I think we shall have a nice day, don't you, and you know all the people?'

'All except the man at the further end.'

'Oh! don't you know him,' says Miss Boothly. 'He's Lord Helmdon; he has come in the place of Mr Dalrymple, who at the last moment wrote to say he could not come, and so we asked Lord Helmdon, he's so nice; we always fall back upon him when anyone fails us.'

Chubby does not look as if he had been fallen back upon by any means, for apparently he is keeping up the spirits of the party, for they are all in shrieks of laughter. Captain Harkness eyes Lippa from the distance, and when they reach their destination prepares to assist her to alight, when Lord Helmdon clumsily treads on her dress just as she is about to jump down on the platform; no great damage is done, and Chubby, profuse in apologies, wins Miss Seaton's heart by the plain distress depicted on his countenance, and a safety pin which he produces and with which he fastens up the torn gathers, and before they come to the river, they are on quite friendly terms, much to the disgust of Harkness, who has been attacked by his hostess's youngest daughter.

Up the river they go, dividing into three parties; Mrs Boothly, who has placed herself next Mabel, warm, and decidedly sleepy, tries in vain to feel happy in seeing her dear girls amused, and discusses the management of children with Mrs Seaton. And the day wears on, Helmdon making himself decidedly agreeable to everyone. Lippa amuses herself to a certain extent, but she becomes irritated by the assiduous attentions of Captain Harkness, to whom she has taken a violent dislike. She gets more and more out of patience with him and at length is almost rude. It appears to have no effect upon him whatever, for like a great many other people he has a very good opinion of himself, and that this girl is not pleased with his attentions never enters his well-curled head. Philippa has taken his fancy and as he has just made up his mind that it is time to enter the blissful (?) state of matrimony, she seems to him to be the exact person to make his wife; money makes no difference, for he is one of those fortunate individuals who has almost more than he knows what to do with. That Miss Seaton will have nothing to do with him, has not crossed his mind yet.

The party disperse again at the station pouring into Mrs Boothly's ear many sweet sentences, which had she been listening would have made her think that going up the river in a boat and lunching on the bank was almost heaven upon earth; but poor dear lady she is longing to get home, feeling painfully conscious of the shapeliness of her shoes; and the pain thereby caused, absorbs all her faculties for the present: but when the above mentioned articles are removed, she thinks with pleasure how much everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, and she makes up her mind to have a similar day; only, made more pleasant to her by large and shapeless boots. Wise Mrs Boothly—

Garden-parties, balls, dinner-parties, follow each other in rather monotonous succession, and Lippa is beginning to tire of them, she has been to three balls where a certain young man has been conspicuous by his absence; and it is almost a week since he has dropped in to tea, and Miss Seaton misses him more than she will own to herself. She is feeling out of sorts this afternoon and has betaken herself to the back drawing-room, which is only curtained off from the front, leaving Mabel and Lady Dadford in earnest conversation.

Presently the door opens, and Ponsonby comes in. 'All alone,' says he. 'I thought you always had some one worshipping at your shrine.'

'Indeed, you are much mistaken,' replies she laughing, 'but I didn't know you were in London—'

'I only came back this morning—'

'Mabel and Lady Dadford are in there,' interrupts Philippa indifferently, pointing to the front room.

'Well, unless I am disturbing you, I will remain here,' says Paul, 'there are some letters I must write,' and going to the table he proceeds to hunt for paper and pens; Lippa goes on reading her book, and a silence of a few minutes ensues.

Then he says, 'What wretched pens you do keep—'

'Yes,' replies she, 'they are rather bad, but I think you will find some others in the right hand drawer—have you ever read this?' holding up her volume.

'The "Epic of Hades," yes, parts of it are very fine. "There is an end of all things that thou seest. There is an end of wrong and death and hell,"' quotes he.

'What a melancholy passage,' says Lippa.

'A very grand one I think,' he replies, 'but I should never have thought you would care for that kind of literature.'

'Why not?—'

'Because, well, I should have thought it would have been too deep for you—'

'Really,' then after a pause, 'do you know *that* wasn't very polite—'

'Wasn't it? suppose I say then that I am agreeably surprised—'

'That's nearly as bad, if not quite, it sounds as if you expected me to read nothing but books like the "Daisy Chain," or "Laneton Parsonage."'

'Very excellent books too—'

'Oh, Paul! how *tiresome* you are, do you know I,' and then Miss Seaton is filled with confusion, she has called him by his Christian name and he is looking at her and smiling. 'I—er beg your pardon,' she says quickly in her childish way.

'What for?' asks he, pretending not to understand her.

'For calling you by your Christian name—'

'Well, and what harm was there?'

'You see,' she says deprecatingly, 'Mabel is always talking about you, and so I get into the habit of talking of you as Paul.'

Paul rises and standing in front of her says—'As I said before, where is the harm? I have never called you anything else but Philippa, or Lippa; I could not address you as Miss Seaton, it does not suit you one bit you know; now let us make it a compact from henceforth, I call you Lippa, and you call me Paul.'

'Very well,' replies she.

'What ever are you two doing here,' and the curtain is hastily drawn aside by Mabel. 'You look as grave as judges, come and have some strawberries and cream, Lady Dadford has gone.'

At the sound of strawberries, Lippa hastily rises, and they go into the front room, where Jimmy Dalrymple is.

'How do you do,' says Philippa, wondering how long he has been there. And then they attack the strawberries.

'I'm longing to know what you two were talking about,' says Mabel.

Paul laughs and replies, 'We were settling a very weighty matter, weren't we, Lippa?'

Philippa merely says 'Yes,' and longs to turn the conversation, for what may not Jimmy think.

In truth he feels an unaccountable overwhelming desire to know what the weighty matter was, but he is not to know, and therefore is kept on tenter hooks for some time.

'She came to ask us all to a cattle show and ball,' Mrs Seaton is saying.

'Who?' asks her brother.

'Lady Dadford; she particularly wants you.'

'I feel highly honoured, I'm sure—'

'Are you going?' says Lippa, turning to Dalrymple.

'I was asked, but I don't know whether I shall be able to get away,' he replies, still pondering over the 'weighty matter.'

'Only a few minutes ago you were telling Lady Dadford how pleased you would be to go, Mr Dalrymple; I did not know you were such a humbug,' cries Mabel.

Jimmy laughs.

'Mrs Boothly,' announces the servant. Philippa retires to the back drawing-room and Dalrymple follows her. 'I have not seen you for ages,' says he.

'Only a week, I think,' replies Lippa.

'Isn't that seven whole long days?'

'Short I call them, but what have you been doing?'

'Duty.'

'Oh!'

Then after a pause he says, 'I can't make up my mind about the Dadfords, shall I go?'

Lippa feels naughty. 'What difference could it make to me whether you went or not?' she says.

'None, I suppose,' replies he sadly.

'None whatever,' she repeats, 'unless perhaps you make yourself very disagreeable, then I must say I would rather you stayed away.'

'But,' says he, his face brightening, 'suppose I make myself very agreeable, what then?'

'Could you?' she asks coquettishly.

'Miss Seaton,' protests he, 'how cruel you can be.'

But she appears deaf, and enters the other room. Nevertheless she gives him the benefit of a lovely little smile when he goes away, which makes him settle at once as to whether he goes to the Dadfords or not. And of course he is the first person Lippa sees on arriving there, and who shall say that it does not cause her pleasure.

CHAPTER IV

'The fine fat bulls, the dear little sheep,
The fat piggy-wiggy wiggies all in a heap,
The beautiful Moo cows all in a row,
Jolly fine fun at the cattle show.'

Such a lovely day it is; the sun shining forth in all its glory, casting a touch of gold over everything, while a hush reigns supreme; that lovely stillness that hangs over the earth in the early morning before the work of the day begins.

Lippa scarcely took in what the ancestral home of the Dadfords was like, when she arrived last night, but waking early she dresses hastily in order to survey the surrounding country, an outing before breakfast she delights in, when all the world seems fresh and clean, and the humdrum business of life is barely begun.

Passing down the wide oak staircase she comes across a friendly housemaid who shows her the way through a conservatory to the garden, such a lovely garden it is, with its broad walks, its green velvety lawns and slopes, and its masses of old-fashioned dew beladen flowers, the perfume of which fills the morning air. Her spirits rise as she wanders on, drinking in with delight the surrounding beauty, so absorbed is she in it that she forgets there is such a person as Jimmy Dalrymple. Quack, quack, quack, go the ducks as she approaches the lake on which they disport themselves, and gazes down at the sky therein reflected and at her own image. But she is not admiring her youthful face and the curly golden hair that stands like a halo round it. No, she is sunk in a dream; the morning has called forth her greatest aspirations; the striving after the unattainable; that comes to us all sometime or other, when we feel that truly life is worth living, and that there is something beyond, so great that we cannot grasp it, but we feel it is there producing a great speechless longing within us while our hearts throb and our pulses stir till we could cry for joy.

Such a state as this Lippa has reached, when she is suddenly brought down from the elevated height to which her mind has soared, to the outward circumstances of life, by the squeaking of a window which is suddenly opened; she is so close to the house, that on looking up she recognises the brown head that is thrust out for a moment. 'Tis enough; the spell has been broken and she becomes aware that breakfast would be a very acceptable thing, so she wends her way back to the house. Of course everyone is full of the cattle show and the merits of Herefords, short horns, Devons and Kerrys are discussed together with Jersey creamers and separators. Most of the guests are old and uninteresting, and intend leaving on the following day to make room for the younger folk who can dance.

Dalrymple and Philippa are the only young people at present, besides, of course, Lady Anne and Chubby.

'I've ordered the dog-cart,' says the latter, in the course of breakfast, to Lippa, who is sitting next him, 'because I thought we might leave the old people to go by themselves. I've got an awfully good animal, which I should like you to see, what! My sister and Dalrymple will come too, and we can go where we please. That is to say unless, perhaps, you would prefer to drive in state in the landau. What!'

'No, indeed,' says Lippa, laughing.

'You're wise, I think,' replies Lord Helmdon. 'You don't know what my respected parent is like at a show, everything must be commented upon. I went with him once,—didn't get away for hours, and I said to myself—never again. By ourselves we can come and go just as we please. By-the-bye, mother,' he goes on, turning to Lady Dadford, 'I suppose you've asked the Lippingcotts to the ball. I met him yesterday, but he didn't say anything about it, eh what!'

'I really don't remember; have we, Anne?' says her ladyship.

Lady Anne produces a piece of paper whereon the names of the invited guests are inscribed, glances down it, and says 'No.'

'How dreadful.'

'It's a pity,' says Anne.

'Not too late yet,' suggests Chubby. 'Little Mrs Lippingcott is so awfully pretty and dances quite beautifully. It would be a shame if she wasn't asked.'

'Well; I will write now if you like,' says his mother, ready to do anything her 'dear' boy wishes.

'They only came back a week ago, I suppose, that is how they were forgotten.'

'And if I see them I'll say something pretty that will make up, what!'

'Do you really think you could?' says Dalrymple, from the other side of the table.

'Don't doubt it for a moment,' replies Chubby, 'Miss Seaton I know will verify my statement.'

When all the older folk have been packed off, the dog-cart appears and with it the 'awfully good animal,' which of course has to be admired, and viewed from all points, before the owner sees fit to start. Lippa, of course, has the place of honour, by the driver, much to Jimmy's disgust. There is no need to go into details of the show, all of which are more or less alike, with dogs of all sizes and breeds, barking in different keys, pigs grunting and squeaking, horses neighing, cows mooing, cocks crowing, ducks quacking; boys yelling out the price of catalogues, men requesting people to 'walk up,' and inspect their wares, which are all warranted to be the very best of their kind; and besides all this two brass bands which play two different tunes at the same time. If a deaf man suddenly recovered his hearing at a cattle show, I am sure he would wish himself deaf again. However, some people enjoy cattle shows, I do not, but that is neither here nor there.

Lord Dadford, J.P. for the county and owner of some fine short horns, is surrounded by gaitered and pot-hatted men, who all appear to be talking at once. Helmdon conducting Philippa and his sister with the ever constant Jimmy, carefully fights shy of his father.

'What luck to have met you,' he exclaims as they run up against a pretty woman, Mrs Lippingcott of course, and forthwith they launch into an eager conversation with humble apologies from him and earnest entreaties that she will grace the ball with her appearance, and with any one who may be staying with her.

'Oh, how do you do, Miss Seaton?' makes Lippa turn, who is in earnest conversation with Dalrymple, and see Harkness standing before her. She would have liked to give vent to a naughty little expression, but she merely bows saying—

'I had no idea of meeting you here, isn't it a lovely day?'

'Beautiful,' he replies, 'I am stopping with the Lippingcotts for a few days; really the country is quite delightful after London.'

'Delicious,' replies Lippa, moving on leaving Harkness gazing at her and Dalrymple; is that young beggar going to cut him out, it looks uncommonly like it. Lucky fellow he is, thinks the Captain, winning over that race last month when the odds were dead against him, and now—

'Thank goodness!' ejaculates Miss Seaton, finding herself free from her admirer.

'What for?' asks Dalrymple.

'Why, to get rid of him of course.'

'Poor man,' says Jimmy pensively.

'Wherefore?'

'Because he has evidently incurred your displeasure.'

'Oh,' with a little laugh, 'is my displeasure such a very dreadful thing.'

'It would be to me,' is the reply.

'Well, if you're very good, I will try and be pleased with you, it might be unpleasant if we—'

'Will it require a great deal of trying?'

'That depends,' says Miss Seaton, glancing up in his face, to find he is looking at her rather more earnestly than is necessary. But the conversation is interrupted by Lady Anne.

Poor Lady Anne, there is a romance connected with her life, that nobody knows of save her parents, and they have almost forgotten it. A romance in which a young officer figures prominently; when Lady Anne first came out she fell desperately in love with him, and he with her, they plighted their troth at a London ball; but her parents said she was too young to marry just then, and it was agreed to wait a year. But war broke out and his regiment was 'ordered to the front.' Oh! the sorrow conveyed in those words, how many, many went out like Lady Anne's lover and never returned, how many lives like hers were blighted in consequence. 'God bless you, Dick,' she had said the night before he started, 'and I hope you will come back soon.'

'Soon,' he had repeated, 'dearest, I may never come back again.'

He was right, for he fell on the field of A——, found dead where the fight had been fiercest; and Lady Anne's heart was broken. She did not die of grief, nor did she appear to the world as hopelessly crushed, but went on living just the same, with a feeling of aching emptiness, that is, oh, so hard to bear, and she shut away from prying eyes the picture of her young lover, and round her neck she hung the crystal heart he had given her, whereon his name was inscribed.—Dick.

CHAPTER V

'Love me, for I love you,' and answer me
'Love me, for I love you.'—CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

'Tis the night of the ball, dinner is over and the house party is collected in the hall, waiting the arrival of the guests. The fiddles are scraping away in the drawing-room, where the furniture having been taken away and the carpet removed, the floor looks inviting and 'is perfectly delicious' owns Philippa, having performed a *pas seul* thereon, before anyone was down. She looks extremely pretty to-night in a quaint, little white satin dress, her hair fluffed all round her head, and tied up with pale green ribbons.

At this moment she is striving in vain to button up one of Chubby's gloves. 'It's awfully good of you,' he says. 'I can't think why they are so tight, what—'

'If I don't button it this time,' she replies, 'I really can't try any more, for I have not got my own on yet, and I know they'll begin to dance in a moment.'

'You'll let me have the first, won't you?' he says.

'Certainly,' she answers, all her attention absorbed in the button which is just half in the button-hole, one little poke and 'there it's done,' she says.

But alas! it is *done* indeed, for there is an ominous crack, and a large split is seen right across it.

'What a nuisance,' says Helmdon, gazing at the torn article.

'Oh I hope it wasn't my fault,' says Lippa.

'No; not at all, I assure you—'

'Don't waste time then looking at it, fetch another quickly,' and Philippa begins hastily to cover her own bare hands. 'Chubby,' she calls after him, 'they're beginning to dance. I can't keep this one for you, the next one will do just as well, won't it?'

'Quite,' is the reply as he ascends the stairs three steps at a time; while she becomes aware of two men making for her, Harkness and Dalrymple, the former she feels will reach her first, and she has no desire to dance with him: so she suddenly feels that she ought to be nearer her sister-in-law, and edging her way through the crowd gains her chaperon's side, a second before Jimmy comes up.

'May I have this?' he says eagerly, and receiving an affirmative, he leads her off to the ball-room, where the "Garden of Sleep" waltz is echoing through the well-lighted apartment, and the air is fragrant with the scent of many flowers. Already a goodly crowd is there, mammas, elderly spinsters, girls of all sizes and ages, in satin, silks, and tulle; old men, middle-aged men, young men and mere boys are all collected there. In a second Dalrymple and Philippa join in the giddy dance; for what is more giddifying (if I may use such a word), than waltzing in a room full of people who have not summoned up courage enough to begin, round and round they go, till Miss Seaton at length says, 'I think I really must stop although the best part of the tune is just coming. We can't be like the river, can we, going on forever:'

'Men may come and men may go,'
'But I go on forever.'

She murmurs more to herself than to him, as they make their way to the conservatory, and then, 'Do you like poetry?' she asks.

'Pretty well, I don't read much of it.'

'I am so fond of it,' replies Philippa, settling herself comfortably on a sofa surrounded by cushions, 'I could read it all day.'

'Ah, you see you have more time to do what you like, but when a fellow has been at work all day, he doesn't feel inclined for poetry, you've got nothing to do except to read and do fancy work, I suppose.'

'That's a mistake that all men make, they think that girls have nothing to do all day, when they have quite as much as men if not more; you don't know anything about them. And I think poetry is the *most* restful thing to read when one's tired, you see our minds soar to higher things than yours, you study the *Racing Calendar* and the newspapers, don't you?'

'Generally, not always,' admits Jimmy.

'The *Racing Calendar*, *versus* Tennyson, Longfellow, or Mrs Browning; but I don't believe you're half listening to me,' says she, for he is gazing straight in front of him.

'I assure you I was,' he protests, 'I am in a crowd now, may I not muse on the "absent face that has fixed" me.'

'No, certainly not, you ought to be thinking of me,' this in a slightly aggrieved tone.

'How do you know I wasn't,' gazing at her earnestly.

'I'm not absent,' and then Philippa seeing what might be implied, blushes a rosy red, and rising says, 'We must go back now, I promised Lord Helmdon this dance, and he'll never find me here. Ah! there he is.'

'Are you so anxious to dance with him?' asks Jimmy in a would-be indifferent tone.

'Yes, of course,' she replies, 'I like him so much, don't you?'

'Oh, yes,' replies Dalrymple with equal indifference. And so the evening wears on and Miss Seaton is congratulating herself at having eluded Captain Harkness, when she suddenly finds him standing before her.

'Won't you give me a dance?' he says in his suave tone. 'I have been trying to speak to you all the evening—'

'Have you?' she replies, and not knowing quite how to get out of it. 'You may have the next one if you like,' she says.

'May I really? Then I shall find you somewhere about here?'

Lippa nods, and her partner, an aged baronet, claims her and they go through the intricacies of the lancers. Almost before the next dance has begun, Harkness appears; he dances beautifully and knows it too, but it is not long before he suggests a saunter in the garden.

Philippa consents, and forth they go into the cool night air. A hundred tiny lamps have been placed among the bushes, which shed a subdued light over the scene; charming corners have been arranged to sit in, while the splashing of the fountains mingles with the laughter and conversation of the company.

'What an interminable dance,' thinks Philippa, as having walked a good way round the garden, she finds herself once more outside the ball-room, and the same tune is still being played. She heaves a sigh of despair and raising her eyes meets those of Dalrymple, who is propping himself against a pillar. There is a look of reproach in them, and Lippa, though her conscience tells her she was unkind to him, feels an insane desire to make him jealous, and turns with an adorable smile to Harkness, not having heard a word of what he has just been saying; but he, thinking he has everything in his grasp, smiles, and leads her almost before she is aware, to a secluded corner.

'I—er I have been meaning to say something to you all this evening,' he begins, standing before her with his arms folded.

'Indeed,' replies Miss Seaton lightly, 'it can't be anything of great importance, or you would have said it before.'

'Not important,' this with a little more energy, 'why it is of vital importance; on it hangs the whole fate of my existence, Miss Seaton,' bending towards her, 'er—er Philippa, do you not know, have you not guessed that I love you, that to see you is necessary to my happiness, the first time I saw you—hear me,' as she makes as if to speak, 'you must know it, do you not see it in my eyes?' he is growing melodramatic and Lippa feels inclined to laugh, 'but one word, you love me, do you not, ah!' and he is about to seize her hand when she steps back from him saying,—

'I am afraid, Captain Harkness, you have made a mistake.'

'Mistake,' he replies, 'do you mean that you will not marry me.'

'Yes, I mean that I will *not* marry you.'

'Not marry me,' it is getting monotonous this repeating of her words, and she makes a movement of impatience, then all of a sudden his expression changes, 'I am afraid I put the question too soon,' he says, coming a little closer and taking hold of her hand, 'but do you love another?'

'Leave go,' she exclaims, 'I think you forget, what—'

'Who is it,' he goes on, not heeding her, 'is it Helmdon or Dalrymple?' he is so close that she can feel his breath on her cheek, 'ah, I can see by your eyes it is Dalrymple?'

This is too much, and with a sudden movement she raises her other hand and gives him a good box on the ear. He is so taken aback that he drops Lippa's hand, and she, thoroughly frightened, rushes down the path into the unlighted part of the garden, and falls headlong into the arms of Jimmy; who, consumed with despair, has sought refuge in solitude.

'I—er I beg your pardon,' says Philippa, starting back, 'I—I—' but sobs check her words.

'What is the matter?' asks he tenderly, his despair having vanished; the gentle tone of his voice makes her cry the more and so he does the thing that comes most naturally to him, without thinking of the consequences, for he puts his arm round her, and kisses her madly; and Lippa without resisting, leans her perturbed little head against his shoulder feeling unutterably happy.

'Why have you been running away from me all the evening?' he asks, when a perfect understanding has been made between them.

'I didn't,' she says indignantly, 'it was you who never came near me.'

A kiss is the answer to this, and then tenderly, 'But what were you crying about just now?'

'I was frightened rather—'

'What at, darling?' asks Jimmy, gazing down at the blushing face, which is being rubbed up and down against his coat sleeve.

'At—at what I'd done,' stammers Lippa.

'Something very dreadful, no doubt,' says he with a look that belies his words.

'Yes, you're quite right,' Miss Seaton answers, 'it *was* dreadful. I can't think how I did it, shall I have to beg his pardon?'

'His! whose?' asks Jimmy quickly.

'Captain Harkness,' is the whispered reply, while she digs a hole in the gravel path with the heel of her white satin shoe. 'I boxed him on the ear, I hardly knew what I was doing at the moment, and now I can't think how I could do it—you see he'd asked me to marry him.'

'Is that the usual way you refuse your suitors?' says Jimmy laughing. 'What a mercy I had not to suffer the same fate.'

'Now if I remember rightly,' replies Miss Seaton gravely, 'you haven't asked me to marry you.'

'What have I done then?' asks Dalrymple.

'You've told me you loved me, but that isn't a bit the same, you know.'

'No, of course not, but, dearest, you *will* marry me?'

'Silly boy,' is the reply, while she suddenly reaches up and kisses him, and then disengaging herself from his detaining arm hurries back to the house, whither he follows her a little more slowly.

CHAPTER VI

''Tis true, 'tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis, 'tis true.'—HAMLET.

It is breakfast time, but at present nobody has put in an appearance; whoever is punctual the morning after a ball! The drawing-room looks dreadful, all empty and bare, and the candles burnt down in their sockets. 'Ugh!' Lippa shudders as she pokes her head in, just to have a look at the place where Jimmy bade her goodnight. She does even more, for she goes and lays her head against a place on the wall, where she remembers he leant against, and as she does so a happy contented smile hovers round her mouth, and then laughing at herself, she hurries to the dining-room.

'What, no one down yet!' she exclaims, gazing round the empty room.

'Yes; I am,' replies a voice from outside, and Paul appears at the open window. 'Good-morning, how early you are,' he says.

'Only punctual,' replies Philippa; 'isn't it a lovely day again. I can't think how the others can be so lazy. Come into the garden, do.'

Paul acquiesces. He has taken a great liking to Miss Seaton. 'Did you like the ball?' he asks.

'Oh, so much,' replies she, 'wasn't it lovely. I wish it could come all over again.'

'Do you?' he says.

'Well, perhaps not quite all,' she answers, blushing suddenly at the remembrance of her interview with Harkness.

'Which portion could you do without. The quarter of an hour before you ran into the shrubbery and nearly knocked me down?'

'Did I?' is the reply.

'Indeed you *did*,' says Ponsonby, laughing, 'and you looked so fierce I was afraid to go after you and fled in the opposite direction, leaving you to vent your wrath on Dalrymple whom I had just left.'

'I am very glad you did,' says Lippa, with a little conscious laugh. 'Two's company, three's none.'

'Yes,' replies Paul, quietly, and then a pause ensues.

'Oughtn't I to have said that?' asks Philippa, suddenly looking up into his face. 'Because—well ... you see, if you'd been there—now, if I tell you something, promise to keep it a secret,' this very persuasively and slipping her arm through his.

'On my word and honour,' Paul answers.

'Well, Mr Dalrymple asked me—to—marry him—there!'

'What, Jimmy!' exclaims Paul. 'I'm so glad; he's quite the nicest fellow I know. I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart.'

'Thank you,' says Lippa, simply. 'But you won't tell anybody, will you? Nobody knows, not even Mabel—'

'But, my dear child, why did you tell *me*, of all people first?' asks he.

'I had to tell somebody, and I know George couldn't keep anything from Mabel, or Mabel from him.'

'I hope you will be very happy, but look, Lady Dadford is beckoning to us—'

'What early birds you are,' says her ladyship. 'I needn't ask if you are the worse for last night's dissipation, for you don't look it, either of you—'

'I'm sure Philippa will say that it did her an immense amount of good,' replies Paul, with a wink at Lippa, which makes her tremble in her shoes as to what may be coming next.

It has been arranged that the whole of the party should go for a picnic to a spot about five miles off. 'Just to get out of the way,' says Lord Dadford, 'while the house is being put straight again; sort yourselves, sort yourselves,' he adds, standing at the front door, surrounded by guests and vehicles. 'I reserve to myself the pleasure of driving Mrs Mankaster,' (the vicar's wife) for both he and his spouse, a portly lady, resplendent in stiff brown silk, have been invited to take part in the outing.

By degrees the carriages are filled and off they go, Lippa finding to her chagrin that she is seated by Paul in a dog-cart, Jimmy and Lady Anne behind, Lord Helmdon is on in front with some other people.

'I'm sorry for you,' says Ponsonby, 'but if you wish your secret to be kept from the others, you must not be seen too much together.'

Lippa sighs.

'So love-sick already,' says he laughing.

'How rude you are, I wasn't sighing a bit, I caught my breath.'

'Oh, I like that,' is the reply.

'I'm sure you can never have,' hesitatingly, 'been in love, have you?' and she glances up at him. 'I'm so sorry I said that,' she adds, noticing the pained look that comes into his eyes, and then a silence ensues.

'Look here, Lippa,' says he at length in rather a lower tone, 'don't you know, has no one told you that I was married five years ago.'

'Married?' exclaims Miss Seaton in astonishment, 'oh, I'm so sorry I said that.'

'It does not matter in the least,' he replies, 'but I should think no one has been more desperately in love than I was once.'

'She, your wife, is dead?' asks Lippa quietly.

'I would to Heaven she were,' is the quick reply. 'No, child, don't think of me as a lonely widower,' this with a laugh that is hard and grating, 'I'm worse than that.'

'Poor Paul,' says Lippa gently, while her eyes fill with tears, and she lays her hand on his unoccupied one, the hard look quits his handsome face, and he sighs.

'Good little soul,' he says possessing himself of it.

Meanwhile Dalrymple is devoured with curiosity as to what this earnest conversation can be about. He has listened patiently to Lady Anne, who has gone through all the books she has read lately, arguing on their merits and demerits, and now she is enlarging on the degenerating manners of the rising generation.

Jimmy puts in a 'Yes' or 'No,' or 'I quite agree with you,' every now and then, but for aught he knows he may be agreeing that red's white, and white is black. But at last he says something that does not suit Lady Anne for she says, 'Do you really mean to say you do?'

Jimmy feels caught; what in the name of fortune *does* he really mean to say, he has not the faintest idea, so he says—

'I'm very sorry, but I'm afraid I did not quite hear what you said, I—er have rather a bad headache.' (Oh Jimmy, Jimmy).

'Have you?' replies Lady Anne. 'I hope it is not a very bad one, you ought to have stayed at home; the best thing of course to do is to lie down; and have you ever tried Menthol, white stuff that you rub on your forehead; and then there is a certain kind of powder, I can't remember what they are called. Ah! I have it,' and Lady Anne who has been fumbling in her pocket produces a salts bottle. 'There,' she says, 'I have nothing else to offer you.'

'Thanks very much,' says Dalrymple, and feeling bound to use it, takes a vigorous sniff, but it is strong and proves too much for him, for he is seized with a violent choking.

'What's the matter?' inquires Ponsonby, glancing round. 'Lady Anne, what have you been doing to him?'

'Oh, it's only my salts bottle, he has a headache, you know,' she replies, while Jimmy looks decidedly embarrassed.

The day passes off very pleasantly, nothing has been forgotten with regard to the luncheon, and the weather is lovely, there is just enough wind to rustle through the trees and prevent the air from being sultry, the spot chosen for the repast is at the top of a hill which is covered with fir trees and tall green bracken, innumerable paths lead up and down and all round it, and at the summit a clearing has been made, and a small picturesque cottage has been built, with small diamond paned windows and a balcony running round two sides; the inmates, an old man and woman, who can provide water, are profuse in their greetings begging the company to sit in the balcony, and Lippa tired and sleepy with last night's exertion excuses herself from the members of the party who set out for a ramble, and takes advantage of the balcony and gives herself up to sleep: more than once a little smile hovers round her lips, and Dalrymple who has turned back under pretext of renewed headache, watches her for some time, then fearing to awake her, lights a cigar and strolls away. What a great deal of trouble and misunderstanding he could have prevented in awaking her,—but how could he tell.

Sometime later Philippa with a sigh of content opens her eyes, she is still too sleepy to think of moving, so she remains quite still, presently the sound of voices breaks upon her ears, but she does not heed them. 'Oh—how—comfortable I am,' she thinks and is just dropping off to sleep again when she hears her name spoken!

'Philippa,' someone is saying. 'Yes; she is a dear little girl.'

'That's Mab's voice. She thinks me a dear little girl, does she,' comments Miss Seaton.

'Poor child; she is so like what her mother was at that age. Does she know about her?'

Lippa recognises Lady Dadford's voice, but it never enters her head that she ought not to listen.

'No,' replies Mabel. 'You see she was such a baby at the time, and afterwards George thought it better that she should remain under the belief that she is dead; she is so very sensitive—'

'I daresay your husband is right,' says Lady Dadford. 'It was all very sad. At first, you know, the doctors had hopes that her reason would come back, but they gave it up after a year. Does your —'

But Philippa hears no more. She has listened breathlessly, her colour coming and going—What does it all mean? Is it true, is it true? The mother she had always thought of as long since dead, is she alive and *mad*! Oh! 'What shall I do?' she asks herself, while her brain feels on fire. 'Mad? Then I might go mad too! Oh, horrible thought! Jimmy, Jimmy, what would you say if you knew? Oh, it is all cruel, cruel—' And then Philippa sits very still and ponders over many things, till the voices of the others laughing and talking come nearer and nearer. With an effort she rises. 'I must not show that anything has happened, but oh! if I must give up Jimmy,' and with a little sob she leans her head against the wall for a moment, then stepping forward, she meets the others.

'Are you rested?' asks Lord Helmdon. 'I do believe you have been asleep, what!'

'Yes,' replies Lippa. 'I have been fast asleep—'

'Dreaming,' suggests Miss Appleby, a young lady given to sentiment.

'Of me, I hope,' puts in Chubby.

'Now, why *you* of all people, I should like to know,' says Dalrymple, at which they all laugh.

CHAPTER VII

Lippa is strangely silent on the way home and all the evening she avoids being alone with Dalrymple, but Jimmy gets uneasy and on saying Good-night adds in a low tone, 'Come into the garden early to-morrow, I want to talk to you.'

'Very well,' she replies, 'I have something to tell you too.' She says this so gravely, and flushes a little, that he ponders for some time on what she can have to tell him, and Philippa goes up to her bedroom, her head throbbing and with a wild desire to cry.

'Good-night, dear,' says Mabel, 'I am so tired I really cannot stay and talk to you to-night, and you, child, you look knocked up, go to bed at once.'

'Good-night,' replies Lippa, and having dispensed with the services of her maid she seems to have no intention of seeking her downy couch, she envelopes herself in a loose wrapper and drawing an armchair up to the window, appears to be contemplating the moon, but her thoughts are far

far away from it.

Poor little Miss Seaton, a great battle is going on within her; she will let no one know what she has overheard this afternoon, unless she explains all to Dalrymple and lets him decide as to what ... but no, she will just tell him it is impossible for her to marry him, ten to one if he knew all he would laugh at her fears, and marrying her, would in a few years have to consign his wife to a lunatic asylum; it will be the right thing not to let him have a chance of marrying her; and coming to this conclusion, she tries to forget the man she loves, and her heart is filled with compassion for her mother, and then she remembers Ponsonby's life story. 'How strange,' she murmurs, 'in one day to have learnt all this; but oh, how shall I tell Jimmy, and he will think I love somebody else, but I must do the right thing, I must and I will.'

The clock strikes one as she rises with a little shiver, and is soon in bed, but it is sometime before her eyes close, and even after she is asleep sobs check her breathing. Dear, good little heart it is always hardest to do what *seems* right, and it seems too, as if it will never be rewarded, but surely, surely it is in the end....

Drip, drip, drip, is what Dalrymple hears as soon as he wakes. 'Wet,' he says to himself turning round, 'no good getting up yet, Philippa is sure not to.' For ten minutes he dozes, and then with two or three loud yawns he pulls himself together, and at length attired in a faultless suit he opens his door. It is still what he calls early, (being half-past eight) and he meets no one as he descends. Whistling gaily, he opens the door of the drawing-room, and finds Philippa there already, standing by the window. She turns as he goes up to her, and when he is about to embrace her she draws back.

'Good-morning,' she says, looking up at him for a moment and then gazing steadily at the carpet; the pattern of which she remembers long afterwards.

'Good-morning,' he replies blankly, and then thinking that perhaps she is shy, he puts his hand on her shoulder, saying, 'Lippa, dearest, what is the matter?' There is an amount of concern in his voice that is almost too much for her, but she has made up her mind to tell him it is impossible for her to marry him, and cost what it may she will do it.

'Mr Dalrymple,' she begins in a low but perfectly calm voice, 'if you remember I told you last night that I had something to say to you—'

'Certainly,' he says, 'that is why I came down so early; but why have you changed so since yesterday?'

'That is exactly it, I have changed since yesterday,' says she, 'I—er—I think I led you to imagine that I would marry you, but—'

'But,' he echoes, bending towards her, 'you have not changed your mind, have you?'

'Yes I have,' replies Philippa clasping her hands tightly behind her back.

'Do you mean it?' he asks in a bewildered tone.

'Yes,' this very low.

'May I ask why you have changed?' and Dalrymple draws himself up and his voice is cold and studiously polite. 'Is it money,—I am not very well off I know, but I did not think you were the kind of girl to mind that?'

'Ah, you see I am different from what you thought, it is a good thing we found it out before it was too late.'

Jimmy looks at her curiously, and then catches her in his arms. 'Oh my dearest,' he says, 'you can't mean it, you could not be so cruel—'

For a second Lippa feels she cannot hold out any longer, but it is only for a second, and then freeing herself from his embrace she says slowly and distinctly—'I mean all I have said.'

'I must go then,' says Jimmy, a world of sorrow in his honest brown eyes.

'Yes,' she replies, not daring to look up till she hears the door shut behind him, and then she realises all she has done: sent away the man she loves, the one man who is 'her world of all the men'; sent him away thinking she is cruel and mercenary. She chokes back the tears that start to her eyes; the others must not know, must not even suspect, but oh the aching at her heart.

It goes on raining steadily all day, and every one is dull and depressed, even Chubby. Dalrymple suddenly discovers that it is absolutely necessary for him to be back at the barracks as soon as possible, and bidding farewell, decamps.

Lady Anne, despite the weather, tramps off to the village to preside at a sewing-class. Philippa is forbidden by Mabel to put her nose out of doors, who then retires to Lady Dadford's private boudoir where she spends the afternoon.

'What shall we do?' asks Lord Helmdon, gazing helplessly round on the remaining guests. 'Miss Seaton, suggest something, do!'

'I can't think of anything,' answers Lippa, longing for some distraction to her thoughts.

'Don't you think a little music would be nice,' says Miss Appleby, 'nothing enlivens one so much on a wet day.'

'Let us have some by all means,' says Helmdon. 'I say Tommy, I'm sure you'll honour us with a song, eh, what?'

Tommy is a very juvenile young man, with light hair parted down the middle, a red face, and pince-nez.

'Anything you like,' he responds gaily.

'Come along then,' and away starts Chubby to the drawing-room followed by the others. 'Now, ladies and gentlemen,' he begins having opened the piano, 'I give you fair warning that every one of you will have to contribute to the entertainment.'

'Catch me,' says George Seaton, and on the earliest opportunity slips away to the smoking-room.

Miss Appleby is called upon to begin and sings a dear little song with very few words in it.

'Tommy, it's your turn next,' says Paul, 'I'll accompany you!'

'Oh, thanks awfully,' and settling his pince-nez firmly on his very small nose, sings with an air of sweet simplicity—'Because my mother told me so,' which sends Chubby into shrieks of laughter.

When Philippa's turn comes, she goes to the piano knowing that Paul is watching her, she feels he has guessed that something is up, so tries to mislead him by singing a merry song, but he is not taken in. Helmdon produces a banjo and sings several nigger songs lustily.

'Do you know, Chubby,' says Tommy, 'do you know that you are just made for that kind of music, you'd do so well at the Christy Minstrels.'

'Ah, my boy,' replies he, 'I'm glad you've found an occupation for me in which I should excel, for it is more than I have done myself; but I'm afraid the sameness would bore me. If I do anything I shall go in for music-hall singing, there one would have more scope for one's dramatic talent.'

By degrees they all disperse, some to play billiards, others to write letters, and Philippa is left alone, seated on one of the deep window sills, a book in her hand, but her eyes are fixed on the distant horizon, where the sun has suddenly appeared from behind the clouds, and is shedding a yellow haze over the dripping trees.

So absorbed is she that she does not hear Paul come. He goes up to where she is, and says, 'What has happened?'

She starts and turning round replies, 'Nothing,' while a tell-tale blush dyes her cheeks.

'Yes, there is,' he persists, 'why did Jimmy leave so suddenly?'

'He told Lady Dadford that he must get back to the Barracks to-night,' she replies.

'Do you think I believe that?' says Paul.

'Why shouldn't you?'

'Now child, I know that something is wrong,' and Paul sits down by her side, 'you told me yesterday you had promised to marry him, why has he gone away to-day; you have not already disagreed?'

'I don't see that you have any right to question me like this,' she answers evasively, 'but I suppose I had better tell you that I am not going to marry Mr Dalrymple,' she says it so firmly that Ponsonby can see that she is not joking.

'Why not?' he asks.

'For many reasons,' is the reply. 'For one he has not much to live on, and—there are circumstances which would make it impossible—'

'Whew!—may I ask if the circumstances prevent him from marrying you or you him.'

'I think there is no occasion for me to answer you,' replies Lippa coldly, 'and I will beg you will mention to no one what I have told you either yesterday or just now.'

'I shall write to Dalrymple to-night,' says he meditatively.

'I hope you will do no such thing,' and Miss Seaton rises hastily. 'I think it would be extremely out of place for *you* to interfere in any way.'

There is a marked emphasis on the 'you' that makes Paul start while he bites fiercely the ends of his moustache, and Philippa walks quickly out of the room, rushes up to her own, and flinging herself on the bed gives way to tears. 'Oh dear, oh dear,' she sobs, 'why does everything go wrong and only a little time ago I was *so* happy, and now I have hurt Paul's feelings, and ...'

'Paul!'

Ponsonby on his way to bed is surprised at hearing himself called.

'Yes,' he replies.

'I want to tell you something,' is the answer.

The gas has been turned out and all the other men are just turning in for the night.

'What do you want?' he says, going into the sitting-room, from whence the voice issues, a solitary candle burns on the table, and discloses Philippa.

'You here?' he exclaims surprised.

'Yes,' she says. 'I am afraid I vexed you this afternoon, and I wanted to tell you I was sorry, and ... —'

'Don't think about it again, but really you know you ought not to be here—'

'I only waited to tell you that,' she says, turning towards the door feeling utterly miserable, and the tears that she has tried to keep back break forth, and covering her face with her hands she cries as though her heart would break.

Paul goes up to her. 'Philippa, my dear,' he says very gently, 'there is something very wrong, can't you tell me why Jimmy went away—'

'No, no,' she sobs. 'I told him to go, but I can't tell you why—'

'How cold you are,' he says. 'Stop crying and go to bed at once, or you will make yourself ill.'

'Very well,' replies she, meekly. 'But you [sob] you won't tell Mabel—'

'I won't tell a soul.'

'And you're not vexed with me?'

'No; why should I be. Good-night.'

'Good-night,' such a sad little face she turns to him, that he stoops and kisses it.

'What a child she is,' he thinks, as he watches her down the passage. 'I wonder what induced her to throw Jimmy over. Couldn't have been better off as regards a husband. Money! as if that would ever enter into her head. Can't make it out at all. She likes him I can see.'

For some time, Paul puzzles his handsome head about Philippa, and then when sleep has come, he dreams of the woman he loved; she to whom he gave his love, his faith, his all, only to be abused; the woman who has blighted his life. Oh! it is a strange world. It is like a puzzle that everyone tries to make, but does not succeed because the principal parts are missing. Will they ever be found, the missing links, the pieces of the puzzle, the answer to the 'whys' and 'wherefores?'

> 'We run a race to-day, and find no halting place,
> All things we see be far within our scope
> And still we peer beyond with craving face.'

CHAPTER VIII

In a few days they are back again in Brook Street, George, Mabel and Philippa. It is the beginning of September and anything more dreary and deserted than the parks could not be imagined. No one is in London. Who would be when the seaside is everything delightful and the moors are covered with heather and grouse? Philippa shudders as she looks out of her bedroom window into the mews, even that is deserted, a canary in a very small cage and a lean cat are the only living creatures to be seen.

'Well,' she says, 'it might almost be the city of the dead ...' here her meditations are interrupted by Teddy, who rushes in and flings his arms round her neck. 'How brown you are,' she exclaims.

'Yes, ain't I,' he answers. 'Me and Marie have been in the Square most of the days and it has been so hot, have you enjoyed yourself?'

'Yes, thank you,' replies Philippa.

'I don't think you have,' says Teddy, who is as sharp as a needle, 'because, well, you don't look very happy now.'

'That is just it perhaps, I am so sorry it is over.'

'Oh,' and Teddy goes to the window only half convinced, 'there's that canary,' he says, 'I watch him often and often, and never can see nobody feeding it. I asked Marie to let me go and see if it had got some seed; but she was cross and said I wasn't to—oh, Aunt Lippa, isn't it hot?'

'It is rather, but it must be nearly tea-time, let us have some tea and then go out.'

'Can't; Marie's gone to see her sister,' replies Teddy, trying to see himself in the knob at the end of the bedstead.

'Perhaps mother will come; but really Teddy do get off my bed, you are making it in such a mess,' and she rushes at him, seizing him in her arms, 'oh, what a dreadful little nephew you are.'

'Let go, let go,' he cries, between struggling and laughing, and then mischievously, 'You don't look half pretty now, you're quite red. I'll—tell Mr Dal—'

'Mr who?' asks Lippa, putting him down.

'Sha'n't tell you,' he says, making for the door, but Philippa is too quick for him, and placing her back against it, says in tones of mild reproof,

'Do you know, it is very rude to make personal remarks.'

'Is it?' he asks, 'well you see it was only to Mr Dalrymple, and I've known him for such a great many years, I met him yesterday, he was walking the same way as me, and—you've got a hair-pin coming out, Aunt Lippa.'

'Never mind that,' says she, adjusting the straying article, 'and—'

'Oh, him or I began, I don't 'xactly remember, but we talked about pretty persons, and he said he was glad he wasn't a pretty person, because they were nearly always nasty, and then I said they weren't, 'cos there's mother and you, and I said you're always pretty.'

'And what did he say?' asks Lippa.

'He said,' replies Teddy, in the gruffest voice he can assume, trying to imitate Jimmy, '"More's the pity," and now you see I can just tell him you don't look pretty a bit, when you're holding somebody in your arms.'

'You must not say anything of the kind,' says she; it would be useless to exact a promise from him, probably be the way to make him repeat the conversation word for word; but Philippa has found out what she wanted to know, namely, that Jimmy is in London, and it causes her for the moment exquisite pain, to feel that he is not so far away, for though the Metropolis is a large place, there is always the chance of meeting one's friends in the street.

After deep thought Philippa has made up her mind to tell no one, of all she has heard and of all that has happened in consequence. She can rely on Ponsonby keeping secret the little he knows of it; but what is hardest to bear is the having nothing to look forward to, for the future looks, oh, so dark and dreary. Sometimes she feels that it cannot be true, and she shrinks with horror from the remembrance of the fate that may be awaiting her. But Mabel does not notice that something has changed her; that her step is not so light as it was, or her laugh so gay. How little we know of each other, although living the same lives, seeing the same people and things; we have all got an inner existence which no one but ourselves knows anything about, it is so shadowy and unreal, that contact with the outer world would crush all the beauty and poetry of it.

'I think we might go to the sea somewhere,' says Mrs Seaton, one day as she and Philippa are sitting together under the trees in the park, while Teddy is hunting for caterpillars, 'it is really too unutterably dull here, and it would do that boy good to have a change, what do you say to a fortnight or three weeks at Folkestone?'

'It would be very nice, I should think,' replies Lippa, who is watching the ungainly not to say peculiar movements, of a stout elderly female who is taking equestrian exercise.

'We could get rooms at an hotel,' goes on Mabel, 'you know some cousins of mine are there; and George said that I might do anything I liked, while he's up in Scotland; do you really think it would be nice?'

'Yes, I do,' Lippa replies, feeling that one place is the same to her as another. The stout elderly female has bumped away, and she is staring straight in front of her, when suddenly the colour rushes to her face leaving it whiter than it was before.

'Why, there's Jimmy Dalrymple,' says Mabel, 'and I do believe he's not going to see us. I really think he might, it would be quite refreshing to talk to somebody else besides you—'

'Am I such a dull companion then?'

Mabel laughs good-naturedly.

There is not any doubt that Dalrymple will see them, for Master Seaton has observed him and rushing to the railings gesticulates violently, and the former attracted by some magnetic influence turns, hesitates for a moment and then crosses over.

'So glad to see you. Lippa and I were so afraid you were going to cut us,' says the unsuspecting Mabel. 'What are you doing in London now?'

'I have to be up at the barracks,' says he.

'Come and sit here, do, and tell us some news,' says she motioning him to the chair at her side.

Philippa has become deeply interested in one of her nephew's caterpillars, and beyond extending him a limp hand; pays no attention to Dalrymple, but her outward calm hides the tumult within, for her heart is throbbing violently.

At any other time and under any other circumstances, Dalrymple would be very willing to spend any length of time with Mabel, for he is very fond of pretty little Mrs Seaton and carrying on a mild flirtation with her would be the reverse of unpleasant to him, but to be so near the object of his affection, no, he couldn't do it, so excusing himself he raises his hat and passes on.

'He seems in a great hurry,' says Mabel turning to Lippa who is looking in exactly the opposite direction to the one Dalrymple has taken.

Her 'Yes,' and something in her expression opens Mabel's eyes to the fact that something is up, however she says nothing just then for Teddy would be sure to hear, but she intends to find out everything.

On the eve of their trip to Folkestone she begins to cross-examine her sister-in-law.

'Philippa, dear,' she says as soon as the coffee-cups have been taken away after their dinner and they are left alone. 'I am going to ask you something, which you must not mind, come nearer.'

Lippa who has been gazing out of the window into the gaslit street below turns slowly, and going up to Mrs Seaton sits down on a stool at her feet, she is looking very lovely in a pale blue tea-gown and the lamp-light falling on her golden hair.

'Well, Mab,' she says, 'is it a lecture or good advice, I'm not to mind?'

'Neither one nor the other,' is the reply, 'but I want to know if there is anything between you and —Mr Dalrymple. Well Lippa?' as there is no answer for a second—and then,

'Nothing,' she replies.

'Not at present perhaps,' suggested Mabel, 'but hasn't there been?'

'Why do you want to know?' asks Miss Seaton.

'Well, dear, you see it is awkward, as he comes here so often, and—'

'Like all other women you're dying of curiosity to know; own the truth!' and after a pause Lippa adds, apparently deeply interested in the point of her shoe, 'If you must know, he did ask me to marry him, but I said I couldn't,' here the shoe is drawn out of sight as though it had not found favour in its owner's eyes. Mabel is astonished, tries to see Lippa's face and not succeeding says,

'Do you mean that you do not like him?'

Not like him, oh, to be accused of that, not like him, when poor little soul she is desperately in love with him. Oh, Mabel! Mabel! why can't you guess? a few words from you would put everything right, and make two people happy, but such is life!

'He has not much to live on,' says Lippa evasively.

'Now, child, you don't think you are going to take me in like that,' and Mrs Seaton becomes quite vehement. 'What do you care about money, or know about it either.'

'I know there are girls who can fall in love,' is the answer. 'I knew one once who told me her idea of bliss was love in a cottage, but that wouldn't suit me at all. I shouldn't know how to get on without heaps of things that I could not have, if I married a poor man.' Lippa's fingers are doing great damage to the ribbons which are attached to her gown, and till they are reduced to a crumpled mess, she continues to take the beauty out of them, by folding and refolding them. Mabel is only half convinced and says no more to Philippa, but a long letter is written to dear George, begging him to come to them soon, and he enjoying himself vastly shooting and fishing does not come, and time passes on.

Philippa tries to forget Jimmy, and wonders how he is getting on, she has yet to learn that,—

> 'Man's love is a thing apart,
> 'Tis woman's whole existence.'

Love is forgotten and put on one side, for racing, shooting, hunting, etc., and it is well that it is so, for a love-lorn youth is a decided bore.

But James Dalrymple of the Guards has been more deeply wounded than he owns to himself, his love for Miss Seaton is more than a passing fancy, that causing pain for a short time, will be laughed over in about a year. Love Lippa, he does hopelessly, madly, and so he will till the end of the chapter.

Real true love is not a thing to be taken up and cast aside at will, like a broken toy; it may grow upon us or come suddenly, why we cannot tell, and although we hardly acknowledge to ourselves that Cupid, who has wrought so much harm as well as good in the world, has paid us a visit, yet we never feel quite the same again; maybe we are happier than we have ever been before, or else, and alas it happens to very many, that Eros' darts have only made a wound which might almost have been caused by a poisoned arrow; ah me! the healing takes a weary long time or maybe can never heal. Truly love is a dangerous thing.

CHAPTER IX

'I say, Mab, there's such a delightful monkey outside, do lend me sixpence?'

Mrs Seaton looks up from a telegram she is reading and says to Philippa, 'Never mind the monkey, I've just had this from George and—'

'Is he ill?' inquires Lippa.

'No, but—'

'Do give me the sixpence then, I will be back in a moment again.'

Mabel produces the coin, and Philippa having delivered it hurries back. 'He was so pleased,' she says, 'the dear little—' but her sister-in-law's face causes her to stop and inquire hastily, 'What has happened, do tell me?' her thoughts recurring at once to Jimmy Dalrymple.

'Well, dear,' says Mabel, 'George has telegraphed to me the death of—'

'Who?' asks Philippa, clutching at a chair near her.

'No one you ever knew,' replies Mabel, guessing the question that she would ask.

'Ah!' and Lippa breathes a sigh of relief, 'is it a friend of George's or Paul's?' 'wife' she is going to say but hesitates.

'No,' replies Mabel, 'it is someone who has been in an asylum for many years,' she pauses wondering how to go on when Philippa spares her the trouble by saying,

'My mother?'

'How did you guess?' says Mabel, surprised.

Lippa heeds her not. 'Somebody I never knew,' she murmurs to herself, 'somebody I never knew, and yet my mother; how strange. Tell me about her,' she adds, 'when, did she go—*mad*?'

'I thought you knew nothing about it,' says Mabel, 'your mother had a shock when you were two years old, which affected her brain, and of course at the time you were too young to understand and it was thought best not to tell you anything, even when you were older; but dearest, who told you of this, George and I were under the impression you knew nothing about it?'

'I overheard you talking about my mother to Lady Dadford. I know it was wrong, Mab, but I could not help it, and I thought that perhaps it would be just as well not to let you know. Was it wrong?'

Mrs Seaton finds it hard to reprove the owner of the face that is lifted to hers, with such a wistful look in the blue eyes. 'I think you ought to have told me,' she says gravely, 'it would have made no difference to anyone, but still it does not matter now; and we shall hear all particulars from George to-morrow; he says he is writing.'

There is a pause. Lippa is gazing out of the window, but her thoughts are very busy. Presently she says, 'Madness generally descends from father to son, doesn't it?'

Mabel, thinking she is alluding to George, says hastily, 'There is no necessity whatever—'

'Ah!' and Lippa clasps her hands together and looks eagerly at Mabel, 'then, then, ... there's no great likelihood of my going mad.'

Mabel looks at her. Is this then what she has been worrying about. 'There is no necessity whatever, the doctors said, insanity is not in your family at all; it was a shock your mother had when she was not very strong, so dear, please do not fancy foolish things like that.'

Lippa smiles. Oh! the joy of feeling that there is no impediment between her and Jimmy; it need never have been then, this time of separation, and yet probably it has been very wholesome for them both. But how to convey to him that she is ready, aye, and more than willing, to link her fate with his; there is nothing for it but to wait and see.

And time goes on, as it always does. Autumn passes away, and winter comes with its frost, snow and fogs, while Lippa waits for the day when Jimmy will know all, but just now her time is fully occupied, for the housekeeping has fallen upon her shoulders, as Mabel is up to nothing but hugging a little bundle with a red face, which made its appearance one day.

'Ain't you sorry she's a girl?' Teddy is saying as he is chaperoning his aunt to church on Christmas day, 'because, you know, she's sure not to like games.'

'It will be some time before she can play games,' replies Lippa, laughing; 'but you will have to be very good to her. What do you want her to be called?'

'Lots of names,' says Teddy. 'But look, Auntie; do look, there's Mr Dalrymple. Do you think he's going to our church?'

'I don't know at all,' she replies, trying to look unconcerned. 'We shall be there in a moment,

come along; it is rude to stare at people.'

She hurries her nephew up the aisle and into their pew, for fear of coming face to face with Jimmy; she remains a few moments on her knees, and so does not interfere with Teddy, who having hurried through his own private devotions, turns round and watches the stream of people passing in through the door. He suddenly nods and beckons, and when Lippa rises she finds that Jimmy is sitting one off her, only Teddy between. It is the first time she has seen him since her mother's death, and she wonders if he will speak when they get out of church, and why he ever came into their pew. But when the service is over, Teddy having sung lustily in his shrill voice, nothing awkward takes place.

'A merry Christmas,' he says.

'The same to you,' replies Philippa.

'Are you going to walk home?' he asks.

'No, we are going back in a hansom.'

Here Teddy interrupts with, 'Did you know I've got a sister, you'll come and see her, won't you?'

'I shall be delighted,' replies Dalrymple, looking at Lippa, who has turned her head away. 'May I come?' he asks in a low voice.

But Miss Seaton does not answer, as Lady Dadford suddenly appears, 'Ah! my *dear* child,' she exclaims, 'how is the sweet mother and the baby?'

So a long string of questions ensues, and Philippa answers them, feeling that Jimmy is watching her, and suddenly she meets his eye, and there is a look of entreaty in them that makes her smile back; such a dear little tender smile, that it causes Dalrymple to start, while a new life seems to course through his veins.

Ah! what a great deal a pretty woman's smile may do, of good and often alas of harm.

How many men have been lured on by a smile and only too late have awoke from its enchantment. Oh, women, women, some of you hardly take into consideration what a great part you take in the world's drama; with you it lies to make or mar the lives of the men, be they brothers, husbands, sons or merely friends; it is in your power to make them God-fearing, true gentlemen; and it is you too, who drag them down till they become mere lovers of pleasure, giving way to every vanity, forgetting *surely* that they are human beings, with immortal souls!

It is tea-time, and in Brook Street Lippa has just begun to pour out that delicious beverage for herself and her brother, when the door opens and Dalrymple walks in.

'Hullo,' says George, 'what an age it is since you have been near the house—'

'Yes,' replies Jimmy, rather lamely, taking Philippa's proffered hand.

'How do you do, again,' says she, 'you will have some tea, won't you?'

Jimmy says, 'Thanks,' and for a second or two there is an awkward pause, neither Lippa nor Dalrymple feeling quite at their ease, and George never speaks except it is necessary; but Teddy suddenly appears, and suggests that the baby ought to be visited, and after a long argument as to who it is like, remembers that he came with a message to the effect that his mother wanted to speak to his father.

'Why didn't you tell me before?' says George.

'I'd forgotten it,' replies his son placidly; nothing ever disturbs Teddy's peace of mind.

'You'll wait till I come back,' says Mr Seaton turning to Dalrymple, and the door shuts.

A little time is passed in uninteresting conversation on the weather and things in general, till every subject they can think of has been exhausted, when Lippa finds that Dalrymple is looking at her, she fiddles with her teaspoon in her cup and then raises her eyes to his, and finding them still fixed on her, returns to the teaspoon symphony, but he rises and leans against the mantelpiece.

'Philippa,' he says in a low tone, 'I have tried so hard to think badly of you, but to-day you looked so kindly at me, you did not do it for nothing, did you, Lippa tell me, will you bid me go away a second time? I am not rich, but I might sell out and get some more remunerative employment, and if you only knew how I love you—'

Miss Seaton has risen, her head bent down and slightly averted from her lover's ardent gaze. 'I—er—I,' she begins then pauses, and not knowing what to say she looks up, makes a step forward and is in Jimmy's arms.

'Oh,' she says, 'I thought it would all come right at last.'

'Dearest,' says he, 'tell me why were you so cruel before; you can't think what I've suffered?'

'So have I,' is the reply.

'But what made you do like that?'

'It's a long story, so don't you think we might as well sit—'

'Sweetheart,' is all he says pressing his lips to her brow.

And then Philippa explains all, for quite half-an-hour they remain alone, and then George, thinking they have been long enough together (he having come in and retired again unobserved in a very inauspicious moment) opens the door, at the same time giving vent to a very loud and prolonged cough.

CHAPTER X

'My dear, I can't tell you how glad I am,' and Lady Dadford bustles across the room to the sofa where Mabel is reposing, 'Where is the sweet girl?'

'Philippa? she is out now,' replies Mrs Seaton, 'but I expect she will be in soon.'

'Well, if I may, I should like to stay and see her,' says the old lady, 'but you are sure I shall not be tiring you; directly you feel you have had enough of me, say so, won't you?'

Mabel laughs and replies, 'I shall like you to stay very much, you have not seen baby yet; we cannot settle on a name. I should like it to be called Lilian, but both George and Lippa say it would be unlucky; he, you know, always hopes we may find her again.'

'And yourself, dear?' asks Lady Dadford.

'I think I have almost given up hope now. You know the body of a little child was found in a river, not far from L—— (where we were living then) and it answered so much to the description of Lilian; she was such a dear little thing. It is worse than if she had died at home and ...'

'Yes, yes, I understand,' says Lady Dadford, 'but I would not give up hope quite. I agree with the old proverb, "Hope on, hope ever," you know. But tell me about Philippa? very happy, I suppose.'

'Perfectly happy,' replies Mabel. 'I can't imagine her as a wife, she's such a child, but Jimmy is sure to take great care of her, and she has come into some money by her mother's death.'

'Ah yes! it must have been a very happy release, a very happy release,' and Lady Dadford shakes her head gravely. 'Did the dear child ever know anything about it?'

'Yes, she overheard you talking to me that day in the summer, when we went for a picnic, and she foolishly never said a word about it, but made up her mind that she could not marry anyone, because she might go out of her mind, so she refused Jimmy at first, and all this time she has been making both him and herself miserable.'

'Miserable, who is miserable?' asks Lippa, coming in followed by Dalrymple.

'No one, I hope,' says he, 'ah, Lady Dadford,' he continues on catching sight of her, 'how do you do?'

'Better, thank you,' she replies, she always makes a point of answering that foolish question, and invariably does so by saying 'Better'—she has been better for so long that she must have reached a most perfect state of health by now. 'Really much better; I came here to congratulate you: Lippa, my dear, you cannot think how pleased I am,' this accompanied by a kiss.

Lippa cannot think of anything to say and therefore remains silent.

'Anne would have come with me,' rattles on the old lady, 'she sent you all sorts of messages, but she had to go to a cooking class, and she felt sure you would understand that it was a case of duty before pleasure.'

'I shouldn't have thought it was a *duty* for a Marquis' daughter to learn cooking,' thinks Jimmy and something in the merriment depicted in his eyes causes Philippa to cast a reproachful glance at him, and then to enter heart and soul into the question of the use of cooking classes; it is some time before the old lady rises to depart, and then, of course, Mabel thinks it necessary that the baby should be visited so they mount to the nursery.

'Well, and what was the cause of the withering glance you directed at me about ten minutes ago?' asks Dalrymple, when they are left alone, Lippa and he.

'You know quite well,' she replies, removing her boa and settling herself comfortably before the fire, her feet resting on the fender.

'I declare I do not,' says Dalrymple, regardless of speaking the truth, for he loves to see Lippa indignant.

'More shame for you then, but you know quite well, you were laughing at Lady Dadford, and what's worse you tried to make me, I hope you are not in the habit of laughing at people, are you?

Because if you are I shall certainly not'—

'What?'

'Marry you.'

'Will you throw me over a second time; you will soon become expert at it?'

'Jimmy,' cries she, 'how can you talk like that.'

'You suggested it first,' says he.

'I said so conditionally.'

'Yes, and that was that I must not smile at anybody, and suppose I cannot help it, it being my nature to do so?'

Miss Seaton looks up at him and says, 'I sha'n't marry you, that's all'

'All,' repeats he, 'it's a good deal, I don't know what you could call more.'

Lippa smiles. 'Oh you silly boy,' she says, 'you look as grave as a judge. Mabel, if she happened to come in, would think we had been quarrelling already.'

'Then you intend doing so later on?' queries he.

'Certainly; we should be very dull if we didn't, besides there will be always the making up.'

'Oh what a child you are,' says he laughing, 'but do you really love me?'

'Of course,' replies she gaily, and then seeing how earnest he is she goes up to him and slipping her arms round his neck she says, 'there is one thing you have not done.'

'What is it?' asks he.

'You've never settled where we are to live.'

'And more important still, you will not settle when we are to be married.'

'Not just yet; you see I shall have to get some clothes, and they couldn't be ready before Lent, and it would be unlucky to be married then.'

'That will put it off for at least three months,' objects he.

'Yes—don't you think the end of June would do nicely?'

'It will have to I suppose, but it is a long time off.'

'Never mind, it will soon be gone,' says Miss Seaton sweetly.

'June be it then,' replies Jimmy. 'The leafy month of June.'

CHAPTER XI

> 'Thee will I love and reverence, evermore.'
>
> —Aubrey de Vere.

'There, Mab, I really can't write any more,' and throwing down her pen, regardless that it is full of ink, and that it alights on a photograph of Teddy, thereby giving him a black eye, Miss Seaton rises from the writing-table and flings herself into an armchair.

'Well, dear,' says Mabel, 'I said I would do them for you, after you are gone to-morrow, look at these little china figures, I don't believe you've glanced at them, they came from old Mrs Boothly and I fancy they are real Sévres—?'

'At it still,' interrupts George, poking his head in at the door, 'what it is to be on the eve of a wedding; I suppose you'll want a detective, and, oh, by the bye where are we going to dine?'

'In your room, I thought,' replies his wife, 'you see you can go to the club, and we shall not want much.'

'Fasting before a festival, I suppose,' says he; 'or perhaps you are afraid you will not be able to get into that new gown of yours.'

'How do you know anything about my new gown,' asks Mabel.

George laughs, 'I happened to see it put out for inspection in your room.'

'My room, what were you doing there?' begins Mabel, but he has departed.

'What can he have been doing?' she says.

'Go and see,' suggests Lippa, and Mabel filled with curiosity, hastens upstairs, but returns again

in a minute.

'Look, what the dear thing has given me,' she cries, holding up a little blue velvet case, 'I must go and thank him,' and down she goes to the smoking-room, 'George, you dear old boy,' she says, hugging him round the neck, 'isn't it lovely,' she goes on, turning to Philippa who has followed her.

'It is indeed,' says she, carefully examining the moonstone set in diamonds. 'Did you choose it yourself, George?'

'Didn't give me credit for so much taste, eh?'

'No, I don't think I did,' replies Lippa, quietly slipping out of the room.

She wants to be alone, to think a little, it all seems so strange and lovely; this time to-morrow she will be Mrs Dalrymple—Mrs Dalrymple! how funny it sounds—and Jimmy will be all her own, and they will go away together;—and she sinks into a dream of delight, seeing the future only as a golden mist through which she and her husband will pass side by side. And she suddenly falls upon her knees, and buries her golden head in her hands, and breathes forth an earnest prayer of heartfelt gratitude to the great God who orders all things.

> 'The Divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough hew them as we will.'

The next morning, her wedding day, dawns at length; the first thing she hears are some sparrows chirping outside, and anxious to see if it is fine, she goes to the window and draws up the blind, letting in a whole flood of crimson light.

It is one of those lovely days in London when there is just a little breath of wind stirring among the trees that prevents it from being sultry, and everyone seems to expand to the warmth and look happy. It is still quite early, two or three costermongers' carts are being wheeled along by their owners, fresh from Covent Garden; a lark belonging to the house opposite is singing merrily despite its small cage, and Lippa smiles as she recalls the old saying, 'Blessed is the bride whom the sun shines on.'

As sleep seems impossible and rather loud voices are heard from overhead, she throws a loose wrapper round her and goes up to the nurseries. Teddy is in his bath and no power on earth can persuade him to get out, in vain Marie gesticulates and calls him '*Un bien méchant gamin*,' Teddy knows he has the best of it, as whenever she comes near he throws water at her.

'Oh, Teddy! Teddy!' exclaims Philippa, opening the door, 'do be a good boy, or else you know, you could not be my page.'

Teddy, surprised at his aunt's sudden appearance, ceases to splash about and regards her gravely.

'I shall be your page if I'm good then,' he says.

'Certainly,' replies Philippa, 'get out of the bath now and after your breakfast you shall come to my room.'

Teddy looks longingly at the water and then at her, finally with a deep sigh he gets out of the bath and submits to being rubbed dry by Marie.

The morning wears on and five minutes after the appointed time Lippa calm and very lovely in her bridal attire, walks up the aisle of St P—— leaning on her brother's arm, and there before the altar takes James Dalrymple to be her husband, for better, for worse, till death them do part.

Into further details there is no need to go; weddings are all alike, you will say, except, of course, when you happen to be one of the chief parties concerned. There was of course, the orthodox best man, bridesmaids, and spectators, the lengthy signing of the register and last but not least Mendelssohn's wedding march. I wonder how the world could have got on without it!

'Well, I'm glad that's over, ain't you?' says Mrs Dalrymple, who is comfortably seated in a railway carriage, her husband opposite.

'Very,' replies Jimmy, looking unutterable things at her. 'I say though, how late you were. I thought you were never coming, and Helmdon had the fidgets.'

'It was exactly five minutes late,' says she, 'for George looked at his watch just before the carriage stopped, but do look at that woman, isn't she lovely?'

The train is stopping at one of the suburban stations, and the lady who has caught Lippa's attention is hurrying down the platform, trying to find a seat, holding a small child by the hand.

Jimmy pokes his head out of the window. 'By Jove,' he says, 'she is handsome. She's getting into a third class, doesn't look like it, does she?'

'No,' says Lippa, and then they forget all about her, till on reaching their destination, they see her

again.

'Hullo,' says Dalrymple, 'there's that woman again, I wonder who she is?' As they pass out of the station, she drops her umbrella, and Jimmy picking it up, restores it to her.

'Thank you,' she says, raising for a moment a pair of wonderful dark eyes to his face.

Lippa looks at her curiously, wondering what her life story is, and then they part, going in opposite directions.

Jimmy has a small house of his own, not far from C—— and only half-a-mile from the sea coast and quite close to 'The Garden of Sleep,' and here it is that he brings Lippa to pass the first days of their married life, days of almost perfect happiness. But, in course of time, as they are going to live together for the rest of their lives they come to the wise conclusion that an overdose of solitude to begin with, would be tedious, to say the least of it.

'It wasn't as if we were going to stop here long,' says Lippa one day. 'When we go back to London we must set to work to be very economical, and that will give me heaps to do; I can't bear being idle, can you?'

'I am afraid, dear, that I rather like it,' replies Jimmy, 'but you're not going to worry yourself over making both ends meet, are you? I dare say it will be rather difficult, but if we let this place, it will help us a little, and you said you wouldn't mind.'

'Mind,' and Lippa rises and goes up to him, kneeling down at his side, 'I shan't mind anything now, Jimmy,' she says.

'What does the "now" imply,' asks he, 'that you did once mind, eh?'

'Yes, I did, when you used to look so gravely at me, when we met in the street, I think my heart was nearly breaking, you know you tried to think I was a flirt, and—'

'Never mind now, sweetheart, it was blind of me not to see through it all, and if you only could have guessed how I was longing to take you in my arms, to ask you why you sent me away, you would not have looked so cold, and—'

It is her turn to interrupt this time, which she does by kissing him. 'Do you know,' she says, 'you nearly made me forget what I was going to say—'

'Is it of great importance?' asks he.

'Yes, it is. Don't you think it would be nice to ask Mabel and the children down here, and we might all go back to London together. I know Teddy would like the sands here; and there is plenty of room; shall we?'

Jimmy says yes, although he would have preferred to remain alone for a little longer.

There is something so nice in knowing that the lovely little person who is always with him, is his very own to take care of and protect against everything, for all the years that lie before them. And he fears to be disturbed, in case it may all prove a dream, and burst like a bubble with the slightest contact of the outer world. But a week later Mabel arrives accompanied by Teddy and the baby; George and Paul, whom Lippa has also begged to come, turn up, and the lovely days that follow, when the sun creeps into their rooms in the early morning enticing them out, where the hedges are covered with sweet smelling honey-suckle and the fields are carpeted with brilliant red poppies, and a walk will take them to the 'Garden of Sleep,' where among the tombstones and long grass they can watch the sea sparkling in a golden haze, and listen to the waves as they break on the yellow sands; where the birds are ever trilling forth their songs without words; those days for ever are stored in the minds of some of them as the loveliest summer man could wish for.

CHAPTER XI

'Love pardons the unpardonable past.'—Christina Rossetti.

It is six o'clock. The tea things have been taken away, and the occupants of the little drawing-room are all apparently lazily enjoying themselves.

Mabel has the baby on her knee, her husband is dozing in an armchair, Jimmy is sitting half-in half-out of the window, Paul is reading, and Philippa is lying on the sofa.

'Lippa,' says Dalrymple, 'sing us something.'

'What would you like?' she answers, rising slowly.

'Anything,' he replies.

She runs her fingers over the keys and then sings 'The Garden of Sleep.'

Paul closes his book as she begins, looking at her earnestly.

Why does she sing that song, so close as they are to the real spot; and why does it say 'the graves of dear women,' the only one he knows buried there is a little child. He rises abruptly as the song is finished, and passes through the French window into the garden. Philippa has begun something else. He pauses and listens.

'Why live when life is sad?
Death only sweet.'

Ah! thinks he, that is exactly it. What good is life to me!

The evening sun floods with a golden haze the road before him; he walks on, the distant sound of the waves coming up from the sands, and almost unconsciously he sings in a low voice,

'Did they love as I love
When they lived by the sea?
Did they wait as I wait
For the days that may be?'

And then, with a start he finds himself in 'The Garden of Sleep,' and just on the edge of the cliff, reaching over to pick some poppies is a child, a little girl with golden hair.

In an instant he is at her side, and without saying a word for fear of starting her, he catches her in his arms.

'Mummy, mummy, don't,' she cries, and then seeing that it is a stranger her anger is roused still more. 'Put me down, how dare lou touch me, me wants the flowers.'

'Now look here,' replies Paul. 'Do you know, you might have fallen over. It is very dangerous to go so near the edge. If I get you the flowers, promise me you will go away,'—no answer—so he puts her down, he picks the flowers, and gravely hands them to her.

'Sank lou,' she says, taking them in her little fat hand, 'sank lou, but I could have gottened them meself.'

Paul smiles, wondering who she reminds him of.

'What's lour name?' she asks suddenly.

'Paul,' he replies, promptly, 'what is yours, and who are you with?'

'I doesn't know what's my name is,' she answers, gravely, 'Mummy always calls me Baby, I'm wif Mummy. Does lou know Mummy?'

'I do not think I have that pleasure,' says he, 'but I should like to speak to her,' thinking to reprove her for her carelessness in letting the child wander about so far away.

'Vis way,' says the little girl catching hold of his hand, and turning down a path among the tombstones, 'Mummy always comes to a little tiny grave.'

Paul goes with her, wondering why he does so. When, why is it? that she is taking him to the grave of his.... And, good heavens! the person the child calls 'Mummy' is kneeling beside it, her head bent, apparently not hearing their approach.

'Oh, Mummy look,' cries the child, 'look what bootiful flowers me's gottened, him wouldn't let me get them meself. Look at him, Mummy,' she urges as the woman still kneels with lowered head, 'him's name is Paul.'

She raises her head at the name, and he starts back on seeing her face and looks at her for a moment with astonishment.

'Clotilde,' at length he says, and his voice is low, 'you here.'

Her head is once more bowed—

'You here,' he repeats, 'here at the grave of your child and'—with a slight pause 'mine. It is four years since I saw you last, and now to meet you like this.'

No sound comes from the kneeling figure. 'Where is ... he?' Paul asks in a hoarse unnatural voice.

'Dead,' she whispers.

'Ah!' and he breathes a sigh of relief, 'so you always come here,' he says, repeating the little girl's words, and then remembering her. 'Good God!' he cries, 'that child! speak, Clotilde, tell me,' he bends forward and touches her almost roughly, 'for Heaven's sake, speak, and say she is not your child, but no! I would rather not hear it,' and overcome by a strong emotion, he turns towards the sea, while a tumult of passionate strife rends his very soul.

Why had he saved the child. One minute more where she had been would be certain death, if he had only known who she was he would never have rescued her, and yet—and yet—what harm has the *child* done, that he should wish for her death like this.

Poor little innocent child, but who does she remind him of—not Clotilde, not that other, no it is Philippa she is like, what could it all mean.

A little tug at his leg interrupts his train of thought, and he becomes aware that the child is standing at his side, his first impulse is to push her away roughly, but the little thing is looking up at him so gravely. 'Mummy says,' she begins, 'that she doesn't know who I is, I'se Baby, and got losted years ago, but Mummy loves me.'

Paul returns quickly, 'Is this true?' he asks.

'Yes,' she replies slowly, 'quite true, I found her, and was never able to trace her parents; it is nearly three years ago now.'

'Three years, have you kept her,' he says, 'you! a woman with a past like yours, how—'

'Spare me! spare me!' she cries, 'have I not suffered enough, am I not suffering enough now, do not taunt me, I know well I deserve it; but I have always thought of you, as I saw you last, and your sad reproachful face has often stayed me from.... Last year, I thought I would go and seek you, I got as far as Brook Street, and there I saw you talking to a girl in a carriage, your back was turned to me, but I heard her say, "Poor woman, how ill she looks!" and I dared not speak to you; death was what I longed for, and I went to the river, but that girl's voice haunted me. "Poor woman," aye indeed! I *was* to be pitied; I had done wrong, but I would try to atone—but why am I telling you all this, you who ought to hate and despise me, I who have ruined your life. Oh! my God! my God! have mercy—' And with a paroxysm of grief, she lays her head on the little green mound.

A strange sight the old vicar sees as he passes through the long grass on his way to the church; a tall man in flannels gazing down on the figure of a woman, kneeling before him, divided only by a small grave, and a little golden-haired child looking at them wonderingly; he has spoken to the child before and now she leaves the other two and follows him into the sacred edifice.

The bell begins to toll for even-song, but neither Paul nor Clotilde move, so close they are together, only the past lies between them. A small cross marks the grave of their child, whereon his name, and age (but a few months) is inscribed.

Paul reads the inscription though he knows it only too well, and then he once more rests his gaze on the woman before him; the woman he once loved! nay, does still love, for a great desire to comfort her comes over him.

'Clotilde,' he says at length, 'let us forget the past. Come.'

He takes her by the hand and he leads her gently to the church, up the aisle they go, and side by side they kneel; and the old clergyman is not surprised to see them, and the little golden-haired child watches them from another pew.

CHAPTER XII

> 'I were but little happy, if I could say how much.'
>
> SHAKESPEARE.

Twenty-four hours have come and gone and have left everyone a day older, they are all in the garden, except Paul; a little golden haired girl is playing with Teddy, and Mabel watches them from a distance with a beaming smile. For a great happiness has come to her, the empty place in her heart has been refilled, for a strange and wonderful thing has happened; for only the evening before, her brother knocked at her bedroom door, as she was dressing for dinner, and on her saying, come in, he opened it, and said, 'Mabel, here is somebody I should like you to see.'

Somebody! yes indeed; and a small somebody too, somebody so like Philippa, somebody! who had a little gold locket with a turquoise in the centre. Ah! it seems too good to be true!

'Lilian!' Mabel calls, and then as the child does not take any notice, 'Baby—' The child turns and looks shyly at her mother; and emboldened by a sweet smile she runs and hides her head in her mother's gown, while the little hands are covered with kisses.

'You won't be afraid of me, will you?' asks Mabel, 'and you will love me very soon, I hope.'

'Ses,' is the answer, 'but I must love Mummy still.'

'Yes, dear, of course,' is the answer, 'Mummy, as you call her, is coming to see me this afternoon.'

Teddy has been watching from the distance, his nose has been altogether put out of joint, and it is rather a melancholy freckled face that Philippa catches sight of.

'Why, Teddy,' she says, 'come here and tell me what you were doing all the morning, and oh, Jimmy,' she says, turning to her husband, 'do be an angel and take baby back to the nursery, Mabel is so engrossed with Lilian.'

'Come along then, old woman,' and Jimmy lifts up his niece, 'but I say, Lippa, don't you think it would be just as well to be out of the way when Paul comes.'

'Perhaps it would,' answers she, 'and you had better take Teddy with you as well.'

Jimmy has just turned the corner of the house, when he runs straight into Paul and the lady he saw in the train.

There is no time to retreat, so he says, 'How do you do?' and the baby puts further conversation out of the question, by beginning to howl, Jimmy in the bottom of his heart feels thankful for it, though aloud he says, 'I must depart with this tiresome person, come along Teddy.'

The baby deposited in the nursery, he keeps out of the way till tea-time, when he finds them all seated round a table still in the garden.

Clotilde had at first refused to see anyone, but Paul persuaded her at length, 'Sooner or later, you must,' he had said, 'you know Mabel, and Lippa is a dear little girl.'

'But—' and Clotilde had looked up at her husband with those large dark eyes of hers 'they will—'

'The past will be forgotten,' was his reply, spoken sadly and quietly. And now she seems to be more at her ease.

'Have some tea, Jimmy,' says Philippa as he approaches.

'No thanks, it is too hot,' he replies.

'Come and sit then,' suggests Mabel pushing forward an empty chair, into which he sinks.

'Well, lazy boy, what have you been doing,' this from Lippa who is eating strawberries with apparent relish.

'Nothing,' is the yawned reply.

'Not even thinking of me,' and Lippa looks coquettishly at him from under her large shady hat.

'No, indeed, why should I, but you may as well spare me one strawberry.'

'Certainly not,' says she, 'this is my last one' (gradually raising it to her lips), 'not unless you say, you thought of me, all the time.'

'Oh, well, if you must! I thought of no one but you, I saw you in every one I met, even the gardener.'

'That's rude,' she says, 'but you may as well have this,' extending to him the coveted strawberry, with an adorable smile.

'What a silly child you are,' is all the thanks she gets.

But some one has driven up, in a very old fly, to the front door and Mrs Dalrymple is watching to see who it is.

'Chubby,' she exclaims as a man gets out clothed in an extraordinary check suit. 'No one else could have clothes like that.' There is no doubt about its being Lord Helmdon, he has caught sight of them and is coming towards them, looking decidedly hot and dusty.

'Do look at him,' says Paul, though there is absolutely no need, as they are all gazing at him.

'Hullo,' says Jimmy, 'who would have thought of seeing you here!'

'Eh! what,' is the inevitable answer.

'Dear Mrs Dalrymple,' he goes on, shaking her vigourously by the hand, 'I am stopping not far from here,—I thought you would not mind my coming over to see you, what!'

'She didn't say a word,' says Jimmy still reclining in the arm-chair, 'you didn't give her time.'

Mabel shakes with suppressed laughter, and Lippa's mouth is contorted into the most extraordinary shape, but she says calmly, 'I'm so glad to see you, won't you stop the night now you are here?'

'I'm afraid I can't, ah, how do you do?' he says to Mabel, 'well, Paul, pretty fit, eh?'

'Decidedly so,' replies he.

Clotilde has been sitting quite silent longing to get away, but Paul will not look at her, and, oh! what shall she do, Philippa is introducing her to the newcomer.

'Chubby allow me to introduce you to Paul's wife.'

'What!' he exclaims.

Jimmy who is in fear and trembling as to what he may say, kicks him violently on the shins under cover of the tablecloth, which sends him sprawling on his knees before Clotilde.

'I—er, I beg your pardon,' he says, 'but really, Jimmy, I wish you would keep your legs to yourself.'

'Me,' says Dalrymple, regardless of grammar and looking quite unconscious, 'never was further from doing anything else, in my life.'

'May you be forgiven,' whispers Lippa, who has observed it all—but aloud she says, 'Won't you have some tea.'

'No thanks, really not,' replies Helmdon, 'but if I may stay, we may as well tell the fly to go away.'

'Do,' says Dalrymple rising, 'have you got anything with you,' and together they go back to the house, where Jimmy explains all, including Clotilde, and the kick.

'Thanks, awfully, old man,' says Helmdon, 'I couldn't make it out a bit, what!'

The evening is lovely, and two and two they gradually leave the drawing-room, to Chubby, who, his body in one chair, and his legs in another, is wrapt in peaceful slumbers. Mabel and her husband walk slowly up and down, before the house discussing their children and friends.

Quite unconsciously Paul and Clotilde take their way to the little church, and pause not till they come to their baby's grave. The moon shines down on them, as side by side they stand on the edge of the cliff, the dark ocean stretching out before them, a type of the unknown future that will be theirs.

Paul becomes aware that she is crying, and says, turning her face up to his. 'My darling, dry your eyes, we have all done wrong, but it is no use dwelling on the past, a future lies before us, in which by God's help, we will try to atone for the past, "Heaven means crowned not vanquished when it says forgiven."' For all answer Clotilde goes close to him, and lays her sad weary head against his shoulder.

'Paul,' she murmurs, 'how good you are,' and then there is a silence more eloquent than words.

In the meantime Jimmy and Philippa hand in hand have reached a cornfield.

'Let us stop here,' she says seating herself on a stile.

'Very well,' he replies, following her example, 'only we must not stay out too late you know.'

'No, we won't,' says Lippa, 'but Jimmy, dear, don't you feel awfully happy, because I do.'

'Sitting on this stile,' queries he.

'No, of course not, don't be stupid, but,' and she puts her arm round his neck, 'everybody is all right, are they not? Mabel has her child back, Paul has Clotilde, and oh, Jimmy darling, I've got you.'

There is a little sob as she says this.

'Crying,' says he, placing his arm round her, 'if you cry when you're happy, what will you do, when there is really something to cry for, oh you silly child,' but the look in his eyes belies his words, and Lippa raising hers sees something in them, which makes her draw still closer, till their lips meet.

'Dearest,' he whispers.

And then a silence also falls on them, while the calm moon, unmoved at what she sees, still shines on the same, and the distant ripple of the waves breaking on the shore is all that is heard.

THE END

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