

The Lost Kiss.

I put by the half-written poem. While the pen idly trailed in my hand, Writes on—'Had I words to complete it, Who'd read it or who'd understand?' But the little bare feet on the stairway, And the faint, smothered laugh in the hall, And the eerie-low lisp on the silence, Cry up to me over it all.

LOVERS YET.

(By the author of "Madoline's Lover.")

CHAPTER XIX.

There were confusion and dismay in the stately home of the Earles. One sultry morning in August Lord Earle went out into the garden, paying no heed to the excessive heat. As he did not return to luncheon, the butler went in search of him, and found his master lying as one dead on the ground. He was carried to his own room, doctors were summoned in hot haste from far and near; everything that science or love, skill or wisdom, could suggest was done for him, but all in vain. The hour had come when he must leave home, rank, wealth, position, whatever he valued most—when he must answer for his life and what he had done with it—when he must account for wealth, talent, for the son given to him—when human likings, human passions, would seem so infinitely little.

seeing her grand-daughters, went to Dora's room, wishing for a long consultation with her, Dora received her with gentle, reverential affection. "I wish to see you first," said Lady Helena Earle, "so that we may arrange our plans before the children know anything of them. Ronald will return to England in a few months. Dora, what course shall you adopt?" "None," she replied. "Your son's return has nothing whatever to do with me."

wonderingly; "why will she not assume it?" "Your mother's tastes are simple and plain," replied Lady Earle. "Her wishes must be treated with respect." Dora did not give way until the two fair faces that had brightened her house vanished. When they were gone, and a strange, hushed silence fell upon the place, pride and courage gave way. In that hour the very bitterness of death seemed to be upon her.

CHAPTER XX.

It was a proud moment for Lady Earle when she led the two young girls through the line of servants assembled to receive them. They were both silent from sheer wonder. They had left Florence at so early an age that they had not the faintest remembrance of the pretty villa on the banks of the Arno. All their ideas were centered in the Elms—they had never seen any other home.

must each look your very best this evening. I have a note here—your father will be home to-night." The calm, proud voice faltered then, and the stately mistress of Earlescourt wept at the thought of her son's return as she had never wept since he left her.

CHAPTER XXI.

Once more Ronald Earle stood upon English shores; once again he heard his mother tongue spoken by all around him; once again he felt the charm of quiet, sweet English scenery. Seventeen years had passed since he had taken Dora's hand in his, and told her he cared nothing for all he was leaving behind him, nothing for any one in the world save herself—seventeen years, and his love-dream had lasted but two! Then came the cruel shock that had blinded him with anger and shame; then came the rude awakening from his dream when, looking his life bravely in the face, he found it nothing but a burden—hope and ambition gone—the grand political mission he had once believed to be his own impossible—nothing left to him of his glorious dreams but existence—and all for what? For the mad, foolish love of a pretty face. He hated himself for his weakness and folly. For that—for the fair, foolish woman who had shamed him so sorely—he had half broken his mother's heart, and had embittered his father's life.