

A DIFFICULT SITUATION;

OR, THE END CROWNS ALL.

CHAPTER III.—(Cont'd)

Her youth! In the glowing fire she seemed to see herself again as she had been fifteen years before, when Jasper first came into her life, when she had been a happy innocent girl of barely twenty summers. But it was not so much the picture of her own youthful face and form that rose before her now; it was the remembrance of the heart and character that had lain behind that bright young face. With what glad confidence she had been certain that only the very best could be waiting for her. With what a vehemence of love and passionate faith she had given herself to Jasper Martindale, beguiled by the fallacy that a face is the true index to the soul. Behind Jasper's undeniably beautiful face, her fancies had built a soul of equal beauty; beneath the passionate expressions he had poured out upon her, she had imagined a love as high and as broad as heaven. And then—then she had discovered, what in the bitterness of her soul she told herself all other women must sooner or later discover, that the feet of her idol were feet of clay, that her lover's beautiful face hid only a shrivelled soul devoid of beauty, that after the brief storm of his passion was over no love for her was left in his heart.

As her meditations reached this point there broke from her a low laugh, whose echoes roused her to see that Thompson had brought in the tea, and that the ordinary affairs of every day must go on as usual, even in a house to which death has lately come.

She poured out the tea and drank it mechanically, feeling that it was very strange not to be obliged to go and sit beside her husband's bed to relieve the hospital nurse. The sudden cessation of all those little duties of the sick-room that had become part of the household routine, brought home to her the irrevocable fact of Jasper's death as nothing else could have done. Once, during the course of her tea, Gertrude started violently, thinking she heard a sound overhead and that the nurse needed her help; but in a moment she remembered that all the ministrations to the patient were over, because Jasper was dead: Jasper had died that very morning—and she was a widow!

She put down her cup and turned again to the fire, once more allowing old memories to troop back into her mind: and most persistent amongst them all came the memory of her early married life, and of the man who in after days had broken her heart. The thought of the husband who lay dead in the great room overhead faded into oblivion; in those moments of remembrance her mind was filled only by the young husband whom she had loved. The garden in which he had wooed her came vividly before her eyes; once again she was walking across the velvet lawns and along its paths amongst the roses. Their petals were scattered at her feet by the June breezes; their fragrance filled the air, and the tall white lilies under the garden wall sent a waft of sweetness from their stately heads to greet her as she passed. At the end of the rose garden Jasper had asked her to be his wife; his touch on her hand; Jasper's voice in her ears—these had woven a magic halo about that summer afternoon, making it seem to the girl like the threshold of paradise, and Jasper himself, with his eager, impetuous wooing, had seemed the very prince of lovers to open for her the gate of that enchanted land.

Three months later she had walked down the nave of the little village church as Jasper's wife, and when he and she trod together a flowery path to the churchyard gate, she had been very sure that she was entering the very doors of heaven itself.

Over the first few months of her married life memory lingered with a tenderness re-awakened her by death, a tenderness which thrust all the intervening years into oblivion. Loving sorrow for the husband of her youth softened the bitterness which, a few hours earlier, had made death seem not an enemy, but a deliverer.

"I wonder," she thought presently, when the tea had been taken away, and she leant forward to look more intently into the red caverns among the coals—"I wonder whe-

ther anything I could have done would have made things different?—whether I—failed him, or disappointed him? Sometimes I think—if I could blame myself for any of the misery it would make it more endurable. But I can't—I can't! I did my best—I did all that a woman could do—and he just tired of me. I suppose all men are the same, or—no, not all—surely not all!"

Though she was alone, a flame of color flushed into her face, and she pushed back her chair and again began to move restlessly about the room, as though to thrust from her mind some thought that had intruded itself without her own wish. "Poor Jasper," she whispered under her breath, pausing before a large portrait in a silver frame. "I sometimes think that if the child had lived, you and I would never have drifted into all our misery! And yet—"

Her sentence broke off; she lifted the silver frame from the table and looked into the strikingly handsome face of the man in the photograph.

"How beautiful you were!" she said quietly as if speaking to a living being. "I do not think I ever saw anyone with such a beautiful face—and yet you broke my heart."

She put the picture back into its place, and the softness that had momentarily broken up the hard lines in her face did not leave it. She sat down in the arm-chair again, and a great tenderness came into her eyes.

"Perhaps it is not fair to judge him hardly," so her thoughts ran; "we have no right to judge the dead, who cannot defend themselves, and I think—I am sure that at the last he was sorry for all my pain! He remembered the child. Surely I can forgive him everything, because he remembered the child." The death of their one child, in early infancy, had been a blow to Gertrude Martindale, a blow not lightened by the fact that her husband had never seemed to her to grieve over the boy's death as a father should have grieved. For the baby's loss the mother's heart had ached unceasingly; but Jasper, so it seemed to her, never even remembered that they had had a child and his apparent indifference had rankled terribly in his wife's soul. But on his death-bed he had thought of their child, and this was a drop of joy now in the cup of misery.

Sitting before the boudoir fire, she recalled the moment on the previous evening, when he had awakened from a long spell of unconsciousness, to look at her with eyes that knew her. She was alone with him, and he put his hand weakly out towards her, making an effort to speak some words, which at first she failed to understand. Then, out of the thickly spoken mutterings, she managed, bending over him, to catch the words, "Promise—me." He repeated them twice, and the anxiety in his eyes smote his wife's heart with a sense of pain. "Yes, dear," she said gently, leaning yet nearer to him. "What is it you want me to do for you? Of course, I will do it."

The anxiety of his eyes lessened, a smile trembled about his lips, his hands still groped after hers.

"The child," he whispered; "take care—of the child! Promise—me—you—will—be good to the—child!"

When his words became clear to her, Gertrude's heart had yearned over him with some of its old tenderness. With a leap of the pulses she told herself that Jasper was thinking of their baby boy; she said to herself that she had misjudged him when she thought him indifferent. He must in reality have cherished the baby's memory; and now, in the hour of his own death, his memory lingered lovingly round their child, and fancied the boy was alive!

Her hand closed firmly over Jasper's groping hand: she spoke very gently, not wishing to disturb or excite him.

"Jasper dear, you can trust me to be good to the child; you know I should always be that." Her voice had faltered over the words; it was so hard to keep back the rising tide of emotion, as she thought what life might have meant for her if the child had lived. But her words only reached her husband's

ears, her emotion passed unheeded, and his hand feebly returned the pressure of hers.

"The child," he murmured again, "will be safe with you. I—was wrong all through—but the child—" Then his voice had died away into silence, and he drifted back into the unconsciousness which had been only temporarily broken, an unconsciousness from which he never awoke again. But the memory of those few moments of consciousness did much to soften the heart of Jasper's widow towards him: they were the moments upon which her thoughts lingered, as the November afternoon deepened into evening, and darkness crept over the outside world.

"It is easier to forgive him, easier to forget the pain, now that I know he remembered the child," Gertrude said to herself, when at last she rose from her chair to leave the boudoir. "I am glad; I wish I could tell him how glad I am that at the last he spoke to me of the child."

CHAPTER IV.

The funeral was over, the guests had departed, and Lady Martindale was left alone in the house, which was waking up to its normal existence. By her husband's will, made shortly after their marriage, the property was left to his child or children, with a substantial life allowance to his wife. But should no children survive the death of their father, the property was to be Lady Martindale's unreservedly until her death or second marriage, either of which eventualities would entail the transfer of the Martindale estates and fortune to Sir Jasper's cousin, Godfrey Martindale. In the natural course of events the title passed to this gentleman, and as his own property, Hambley Chase, lay only a few miles from Sir Jasper's house, Standon Towers, he was able to be of service to his cousin's widow during the first days of her widowhood.

But now Gertrude was alone; she had no near relations of her own, and she showed no eagerness to invite any of her late husband's distant relatives to share her solitude. Sir Godfrey, a man of quick and instinctive sympathy, perhaps understood and respected the complex feelings that prompted her wish for solitude, better than did other members of the family, and beyond coming to see her upon necessary business he left her much to herself.

"You will like to have a quiet time to go through Jasper's private papers," he said to her, two days after the funeral, "and for the present I shall not disturb you. If you come across anything important, let me know. I want you to feel I am always ready to help you."

Gertrude looked into his face with a smile. She and her husband's cousin had always been friends, and Godfrey was a strong rock to lean upon; yet she welcomed the prospect of the quiet days before her. She needed time in which to recover the balance of her mind, to adjust herself to the new conditions of her life.

The wintry sun shone into the library of Standon Towers on the morning set apart by Gertrude for unlocking the drawer of her husband's writing-table and going through his letters and papers. She and Sir Godfrey were the dead man's executors, but Sir Godfrey had begged her to look herself at Sir Jasper's private papers before he handled any of them, and Gertrude spent a busy morning in reading family letters and business papers, some of which could be torn up forthwith, whilst others were set aside for her co-executor.

There was nothing of special interest in the writing-table drawers, and Lady Martindale quickly turned from them to her husband's despatch-box, of which he had given her the key on the night when he was stricken with his last illness. As he had handed her the tiny key he had tried to speak; but consciousness simultaneously failed him, and that which he had intended to say to her remained for ever unsaid.

As she turned the key in the lock, she recollected with what wistfulness his eyes had sought hers on the night when she had taken the key from his trembling hand; she remembered how pitifully his face had worked, how terribly, but vainly, he had struggled to speak. The gravity of his sudden illness had put the remembrance of this incident from her mind, until this moment when, having unlocked the box, she lifted the lid and glanced inside it. A long ray of sunlight

Shiloh's Cure
quickly stops coughs, cures colds, heals the throat and lungs. . . . 25 cents.

The Old Folks
find advancing years bring an increasing tendency to constipation. The corrective they need is

"NA-DRU-CO" Laxatives

Entirely different from common laxatives. Pleasant to take, mild and painless. A tablet (or less) at bed-time regulates the bowels perfectly. Increasing doses never needed. Compounded, like all the 125 NA-DRU-CO preparations, by expert chemists. Money back if not satisfactory. 25c. a box. If your druggist has not yet stocked them, send 25c. and we will mail them.

NATIONAL DRUG & CHEMICAL COMPANY OF CANADA, LIMITED, MONTREAL. 22

Shipping Fever

Influenza, pink eye, epizootic, distemper and all nose and throat diseases cured, and all others, no matter how "exposed," kept from having any of these diseases with **SPOHN'S LIQUID DISTEMPER CURE**. Three to six doses often cure a case. One 50-cent bottle guaranteed to do so. Best thing for brood mares. Acts on the blood. 50c and \$1 a bottle. \$6 and \$11 a dozen bottles. Druggists and harness shops. Distributors—ALL WHOLESALE DRUGGISTS.

SPOHN MEDICAL CO., Chemists, Goschen, Indiana, U. S. A.

IT WILL ASTONISH YOU.



Everybody is astonished at the marvellous gain that comes to their home and to themselves by the use of

RAMSAYS PAINTS

Don't you think it would be better for you to enquire about these paints? Don't use poor paints—they cost too much. Don't use dear paints—they cost too much. Use Ramsay's Paints, sold at just the right price for correct painting. We issue a handsome booklet on house painting. You should have it. Write us for Booklet "B D". We will mail it free.

A. RAMSAY & SON CO., THE PAINT MAKERS, Montreal, Est'd. 1842

fell across the contents, shining brightly upon an oval metal object, lying exactly in the centre of the box, and with a faint feeling of curiosity Gertrude picked this up. But as she turned it over and saw its reverse side, a low exclamation broke from her, for there lay in her palm an exquisitely painted miniature of a young and very lovely girl. The blue eyes of the pictured face looked up into Gertrude Martindale's eyes with something of wistful appeal, yet the soft lips smiled radiantly, and happiness was plainly written upon the delicately-chiselled features whose coloring was the coloring of a briar rose in June. Gertrude stared dumbly at the miniature for many minutes, only one thought swinging backwards and forwards in her bewildered brain.

"Who is she?" That Jasper, her husband, had neglected her, ceased to love her, and broken her heart, she could not deny; but he was not the man to indulge in any vulgar intrigue; he had been far too proud to make his name a byword through any vulgar scandal, and his wife had not the smallest ground for believing that he had been otherwise than faithful to her throughout their married life. Fret and misery their life had held, but no unfaithfulness.

The lovely laughing face in the miniature seemed to mock at her; it seemed as if those smiling lips must be on the point of saying something to taunt her. And yet the pictured face held nothing but sweetness and joy.

Lady Martindale laid the miniature upon the table and turned back again to the box, half hoping, half fearing, that she would find in it some explanation: for she was sure there must be an explanation. She was certain that she would be able to discover the identity of the blue-eyed girl with the delicately lovely face; she would learn what relationship the girl bore towards Jasper. There would, there must be, some explanation.

The contents of the box were in strange confusion, and this she at once noticed and marvelled over, for her husband had been a man of methodical habits, and the papers in his drawers bore witness to his neatness and method. But the papers in his despatch-box had evidently been flung in haphazard: there was no order or arrangement amongst them; they bore the appearance of having been thrust into their place by a hurried hand, and the letter that lay directly under the place where the miniature had been was folded carelessly, and was without an envelope.

(To be continued.)

UNCLE HIRAM TO NEPHEW.

On the Advantage of Being Able to Make Up His Mind Quickly.

"You will find, Stevey," said Uncle Hiram to his hopeful nephew, "a great satisfaction and a great help in being able to make up your mind.

"Don't be a dilly dallyer, always

Here's a Home Dye
That ANYONE Can Use.



HOME DYEING has always been more or less of a difficult undertaking—Not so when you use

DYOLA
ONE FOR ALL KINDS OF GOODS

Send for Sample Card and Story Booklet #8 The JOHNSTON-RICHARDSON CO., Limited, Montreal, Can.

JUST THINK OF IT!
With **DY-O-LA** you can color either Wool, Cotton, Silk or Mixed Goods Perfectly with the **SAFE DYE**. No chance of using the **WRONG** dye for the Goods you have to color.

undecided, never knowing what you want to do. You don't want to jump at things without thought, you want to be sure you're right, but you don't want to be too long about it; you want to be able to make up your mind. Better to blunder now and then than to lack decision.

"This is the point to which some people can never bring themselves. They weigh things pro and con till they get confused and don't know what to do. This weighing things over, Stevey, when unduly prolonged not only confuses us, it saps and dissipates our very energy, literally leaves us weak and nerveless; we not only don't know what to do but if we did know we'd be powerless to do it; we'd have to wait and recuperate till our strength came back and our head came clear again.

"The ability to decide which some men possess is more or less a gift. Most of us are often in doubt, we don't know what to do; but you will find some men, a few clear headed and resolute men to whom we instinctively turn, who are never in doubt, whose discernment is always true, who always know what to do and who are always right. I hope, Stevey, that you will prove to be thus endowed.

"But whether or not this shall prove so, whether or not you shall discover yourself blessed with the gifts of sound common sense and a clear vision, don't dillydally over things. Make up your mind! In this power and this exercise you will find a great inward satisfaction and a great help, and so strengthened yourself you will be all the more helpful to other people."

Shiloh's Cure
quickly stops coughs, cures colds, heals the throat and lungs. . . . 25 cents.

SETTLERS' LOW RATES TO CANADIAN NORTHWEST VIA CHICAGO & NORTH WESTERN RY.

April 4, 11, 18 and 25 from points in Canada. Excellent train service via St. Paul or Duluth to Winnipeg. For full particulars address B. H. Bennett, General Agent, 46 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ont.