

# BEAUTY'S HOUR

## A PHANTASY

### CHAPTER I



REMEMBER very well the first time the strange thing happened to me: on a winter's day in January. I reached home tired, and sat down in front of the looking-glass to take off my hat; and remained looking, as I so often do, at my own unsatisfactory face.

Gerald Harman had come up to his mother's study that afternoon, while I was at work after lunch; ostensibly on business; really, because there was a frost which had driven him from Leicestershire to London, leaving him with nothing to do; and we had begun talking of irrelevant matters.

"A woman must be good," he said reflectively.

"Only a plain woman," said I. "Who has been behaving ill now?"

"I was generalizing; or, to be frank, I was thinking of Bella Sturgis."

"So am I. You surely don't expect her to possess all the virtues, *and* that face?"

"To be sure, the face is enough," answered he; and sat staring full at me; but thinking, as I knew, of Bella Sturgis.

"Does she amuse you?" I asked.

"Amuse me?" said Gerald. "I'm sure I can't say. One doesn't think about being amused when one is with her."

"She just exists, and that's enough," I suggested.

Possibly my voice was ironical; for Gerald looked at me then, with a sort of jerk.

"She's not intellectual, and she's not really sympathetic, and I don't *like* her one quarter as much as I do you, Mary," said he.

Now it is an understood thing that he is not to call me Mary; and so I reminded him; but he only answered that we had been over the ground

before, and that it was time I owned myself defeated. I was beginning to remark that nothing short of death would induce me to do so, when Lady Harman came in, and Gerald was somewhat abruptly dismissed.

"I wish that idle, mischievous boy would marry Bella, and settle down," said she.

"Yes," said I, and went on writing.

"Why, Mary, how ill you look!" she cried then. "Is anything the matter?"

I hate being told I look ill; it only means that I look ugly: but I answered cheerfully, "Nothing in the world;" and she, being easily satisfied, went off to another subject, which lasted till it was time for me to go away. The post of secretary to Lady Harman was not altogether a bed of roses: she has a wide range of interests, and a soft heart; but her other faculties are not quite in proportion. I was generally weary, by the time I reached home, with the endeavour to reconcile her promises and her practice in the eyes of the world—that most censorious of worlds, the philanthropic.

I repeated Gerald's words as I sat before the glass in my bedroom. "To be sure, the face is enough," he had said.

My own face, pale, with no salient points to make it even impressively ugly, gave me back the speech as I uttered it. I have neither eyelashes, nor distinction; I do not look clever, or even amiable; my figure is not worthy of the name; and my hands and feet are hopeless.

The concentrated bitterness of years swept over me; I loved Gerald Harman, as Bella Sturgis, with her perfect face, was incapable of loving; but my love was rendered grotesque by the accident of birth which had made me an unattractive woman. Given beauty, or even the personal fascination, which so often persuades one that it is beauty, I could have held my own against the world, in spite of my poverty, my lack of friends, or of social position. As things were, I saw myself condemned to a sordid monotony; ever at a disadvantage; cheated of my youth, and of nearly all life's sweeter possibilities. I was considered clever, by the Harmans, it is true; but the world in general, had it noticed me at all, would have refused to believe that such a face as mine could harbour brains. Gerald, I knew, had proclaimed in the family that Mary Gower had wits; and looked on me as his own special discovery: for though I had but a plain head on my shoulders, it was an accurate thinking machine; and could occasionally produce a phrase worthy of his laughter.

I have a certain dreary sense of humour which prevents my being, as a

rule, quite overwhelmed by this aspect of my life ; but on the January afternoon of which I write, I was fairly mastered by it ; and when Miss Whateley came up to light the gas, which she generally did herself, she found me with my head on the dressing-table, in an attitude of abject despair. Miss Whateley was my landlady ; and had been my governess in better days.

"My dear," said she, "what's the matter?"

"Only my face," said I.

"Glycerine is the best thing," said she, and began pulling the curtains.

She knew perfectly well what I meant.

"Whatty," said I, musingly, "how different my life would be if I were a pretty woman—though only for a few hours out of the twenty-four."

"Oh, yes," she answered. "Yet you might be glad sometimes when the hours were over."

I only shook my head ; and fell to looking into my own eyes again, with the yearning, stronger than it had ever been before, rising like a passion into my face.

Then something unforeseen happened : Miss Whateley, standing behind me, saw it ; and I saw it myself as in a dream. My reflected face grew blurred, and then faded out ; and from the mist there grew a new face, of wonderful beauty ; the face of my desire. It looked at me from the glass, and when I tried to speak, its lips moved too. Miss Whateley uttered a sound that was hardly a cry, and caught me by the shoulder.

"Mary—Mary—" she said.

I got up then and faced her ; she was white as death, and her eyes were almost vacant with terror.

"What has happened?" said I.

My voice was the same ; but when I glanced down at my body, I saw that it also had undergone transformation. It struck me, in the midst of my immense surprise, as being curious that I should not be afraid. No explanation of the miracle offered itself to me ; none seemed necessary : an effort of will had conquered the power of my material conditions, and I controlled them ; my body fitted to my soul at last.

"I'm going mad!" cried poor Miss Whateley.

"We can't both be mad," said I. "Don't be afraid ; tell me what I look like."

"You are perfectly beautiful," she gasped.

I began walking up and down the room : I was much taller, and my dress hung clear of my ankles ; when I noticed that, I began to laugh.

"Whatty, I've grown," I cried out.

She sat down. "Do you feel strange?" she asked.

"Just the same; only a little larger for my clothes. What are we going to do? Will it last?"

"I think you had better just sit down again, and wish yourself back."

"Never, never. If beautiful I can be, beautiful I will remain. Let us put down the hour and the date."

I took up my diary, and made a great cross against the day; then I noticed that the sun set at twenty-seven minutes past four; it was now twenty-five minutes to five.

"I wonder what we can do to prove to ourselves that we've not been dreaming, if I go back again?" I questioned.

"Let us first spend the evening as usual," answered Miss Whateley. "I will tell Jane that you are out, and that a young lady is coming to supper with me."

Jane was our one servant: her powers of observation were limited; and we did not think it would be difficult to deceive her. So the stranger, whose appearance seemed to bereave her of even her usual small allowance of sense, sat that night at Miss Whateley's table; at ten o'clock we slipped up to my bedroom; and when Jane's tread was heard in the room above, we breathed freely.

"She's gone to bed," said I. "Now we can brew tea, and keep ourselves awake. We must not sleep; that is imperative."

We did not sleep; though to poor Miss Whateley, who had no sense of a triumphant new personality to sustain her, the task must have been difficult.

Then, suddenly, at the hour of sunrise, I felt a sensation as of being in darkness, in thick cloud; from which I emerged with my beauty fallen from me like a garment.

We neither of us said anything. I was conscious only of a physical craving for rest and sleep, which overpowered me: I think Miss Whateley was struck dumb in the presence of a wonder she could not understand. We kissed one another silently; and I went to bed and slept for a couple of hours, a dreamless sleep.

## CHAPTER II

When I reached Lady Harman's that morning, I found the two girls, Clara and Betty, alone in their mother's study.

Betty, with the face of a Romney, and the manners of an engaging child, is wholly attractive: Clara is handsome too; she rather affects a friendship with me on intellectual grounds, which bores me: her theories are the terror of my life, being always in direct opposition to my own, for which I have to try and account.

But on this particular morning she had nothing more momentous on her mind than a dance, which her mother was giving the next evening.

"You *must* come to it," Betty cried. "It will be such fun talking it over afterwards. Onlookers always see most of the game, you know."

"You are very kind, Betty," I said. They had long ago insisted that I should call them by their Christian names. "Has it ever struck you that onlookers would sometimes like to be in the game, instead of outside it?"

Betty looked a little confused.

"Well, somebody must look on," said she. "And it's lucky when they see how funny things are; as you always do, Mary."

"Is there any particular game going on just now?" I inquired. "Can I be of any use?"

"There's Bella," said both girls.

I was very anxious to know the precise sum of Bella's iniquities. I shoved away my papers with an entire lack of conscience; and sat expectant.

"Of course Bella is very young," Clara began: she being about twenty-one herself. "One mustn't judge her too hardly."

"Has she been doing anything you would not have done yourself?" I asked.

Betty looked at me, and raised her eyebrows. Clara was apt to pose as an example to her younger sister.

"Well," said Clara, "if I were engaged to some one as nice as Gerald, and handsome, and well off, and all the rest of it, I don't think I'd encourage a little wretch like Mr. Trench."

Clara's social ethics are of a wonderful simplicity.

"Because you'd think it wrong?" I suggested.

"Well—so silly," said Clara.

"I think Bella has a perfect right to do as she likes," broke in Betty.

"She's *not* engaged to Gerald ; he hasn't proposed to her ; and he ought to, for she's awfully fond of him."

"I agree with you both," said I. "Miss Sturgis is silly, but not altogether to be blamed. Am I to observe her and Mr. Trench together, and report the phases of the flirtation to you?"

Yes : that was what they wanted.

"Do you seriously think I'm coming to your dance?" I went on. "Why, I haven't got a dress, or a face fit to show in a ball-room ; and I've not been to a ball for years."

They fought this statement inch by inch : they would lend me a dress ; my face didn't matter ; and after all, I was only twenty-eight, not really old. I ended the discussion by promising to go ; for an idea had flashed into my mind, that made me dizzy.

Supposing the other, the beautiful Mary, renewed her existence again that evening, might she not enjoy a strange, a brief triumph? Would there not be a perfect, though a secret pleasure in seeing the look in Gerald Harman's eyes, in surprising the altered tones of his voice? For beauty drew him like a magnet.

I fell into such a deep silence over this thought, that Clara and Betty grew weary, and went away ; and I did not see them again till luncheon-time.

There were three visitors : the man who was in love with Betty, and the man with whom Betty was in love ; the juxtaposition of the two always delighted me : I don't believe they hated one another ; but each believing himself to be the favoured lover, had a fine scorn for the other's folly. The third guest was Bella Sturgis.

Gerald sat at the end of the table, opposite his mother. As I have said, the frost kept him from hunting, and he was disconsolate. With him, as with many finely bred, finely tempered Englishmen, sport was a passion ; more, a religion. He put into his hunting, his shooting, his cricket, all the ardour, all the sincerity that are necessary to achievement : I respected this in him, even while it moved me to a kind of pity ; for I felt instinctively that though he might have skill and courage to overcome physical difficulties or danger, he was totally unfitted to cope with the more subtle side of life ; and would be helpless in the face of an emotional difficulty. On this day of which I write, he was evidently suffering from some jar to the even tenour of his life ; of which the continued frost was a merely superficial aggravation.

By his side sat Bella Sturgis : I looked at her with a more critical eye than usual : she had a great air of languid distinction ; everything about her was

perfect ; from the pose of her head to the intonation of her voice. She very rarely looked at me, and I don't think she had ever clearly realized who I was : I felt sure Gerald had not imparted his discoveries to her with regard to my wits. I never spoke at luncheon when she was there.

But to-day, the memory of that face in the glass the night before, made me reckless and audacious.

"I've been constituted the girl's special reporter to-morrow night," said I to Gerald. "I am to observe the faces, and the flirtations."

"Then you may constitute yourself my special reporter too," said he, gloomily.

"It will be the next best thing to dancing," I went on.

"Why don't you dance?" Miss Sturgis asked, lifting her eyes, and looking at me for an instant.

I confess I was a little surprised at the cleverness of her thrust.

"Because nobody asks me," I said, with a smile.

My candour had no effect on her : she turned to Gerald with an air that dismissed the whole subject. I noticed that he would hardly answer her ; and I supposed that the breach between them had widened. So she addressed herself to the man with whom Betty was in love ; thereby throwing the table into a state of suppressed agitation ; with the exception of Lady Harman, who professed to notice none of the details of domestic life : she left such things to the girls, or the servants ; and devoted herself to the care of people in Billingsgate, or in the Tropics, who had need of her, she said. But she was really kind ; and always had a joint for lunch, "because it was Mary's dinner ;" and though I often yearned for the other more interesting dishes, I never dared to suggest any deviation from beef and mutton : to-day it was mutton.

"Won't you have some more?" said Lady Harman. "I can't help thinking how much we waste. Some of my poor families would be so glad of this, and here's only Mary touches it."

"Oh, mother," said Betty, "your poor people are always starving ; and a leg more or less wouldn't make much difference."

"What's an arm or a leg, compared with a face?" said the young man who was in love with Betty, with his eyes fixed on her. His remark had no direct bearing on the subject, which he had but half followed ; and it sent her into a fit of suppressed laughter, with which Clara remonstrated in an undertone.

"I don't care," said the rebellious Betty. "It's Gerald's house, and as long as he doesn't mind my giggling, I shall giggle."

"I mind nothing," said the master of the house. His mood was obviously overcast. I saw Bella throw a look at him out of her deep eyes; the eyes of a woman who has always lived under emotional conditions. I began to realize dimly what such conditions might be like.

He got up, and pushed his chair from the table.

"Will you excuse me," said he. "I have an engagement."

"Do go," said Lady Harman, "you are always late, Gerald. I'm sure you ought to go at once."

Bella held out her hand to him.

"It's *au revoir*, not good-bye," said he, and did not take it.

That evening my transformation took place again; under the same conditions of ardent desire on my part.

"To-morrow," said I to Miss Whateley, "I shall go to the Harman's ball in the character of Mary Hatherley." Hatherley had been my mother's maiden name.

"But you have no dress," said Miss Whateley. "And how can you account for yourself?"

"I must do it," I cried. "You must think of some plan."

"Let us go," said she, "to Dr. Trefusis."

### CHAPTER III

Dr. Trefusis was the only man who had ever loved me. He was my father's great friend; but I feel sure he must once have been in love with my mother; at least, I can only account for his great affection for myself, on some such sentimental hypothesis. When my father died, four years ago, and I was involved in money difficulties, it was Dr. Trefusis who took me in, and eventually got me my secretaryship with Lady Harman. He wanted me to share his home; but this I refused to do; believing that his affection for me would not stand the test of losing his liberty, and his solitude.

When we reached his house, he was out; and we waited some time in the library.

"He won't believe us," Miss Whateley kept saying; and this seemed so likely, that I was shivering with nervousness when he at last came in.

"You won't believe it," said Miss Whateley, "but this is Mary Gower."

He looked very blank ; but recovering his presence of mind, turned to me and said,

“ A cousin, I presume, of my old friend, Mary Gower ? ”

“ Oh, Dr. Trefusis,” cried I, “ we have come to you with the most extraordinary story : don't you know my voice ? I *am* Mary ; but I have got into another body.”

“ The voice is Mary's,” said he, in the tone of one balancing evidence.

Then Miss Whateley began telling him what had happened : while I sat in silence, watching the mixture of wonder and scepticism on his face. I noticed also another look, when his eyes met mine, a look that was almost devout—he had always been a worshipper of beauty.

When the story was done, he began asking questions : my answers seemed unsatisfactory : we sat at last without speaking, while he looked at me, and drummed on the table.

“ You are very plausible people,” he said, at length ; “ but you can't expect me to believe all this ; though I'm at a loss to imagine why you should take the trouble to play such a practical joke on a poor old fellow like myself. Still, I'll not be ungracious, and grumble ; for it has given me a great deal of pleasure to see anything so charming in this dull place.”

He got up, as though he wished to end the interview.

I was in despair : his determination not to recognize me struck like a blow at my sense of identity : then the thought came : could I, by a supreme effort of will, induce a transformation under his very eyes ?

I held out my right hand—long and beautiful ; with delicate fingers, that yet were full of nervous strength.

“ That,” said I, “ is not the hand of Mary Gower.” He shrugged his shoulders.

“ It is not,” said he.

“ Look at it,” I cried.

Then came an awful moment during which I concentrated my whole will in a passion of energy ; the room went black ; I was dimly conscious that Dr. Trefusis had fallen on his knees by the table ; and was watching the hand I held under the lamp, with suspended breath : for it had begun to change ; some subtle difference passed over it, like a cloud over the face of the sun : its beauty of line and colour faded ; the long fingers shrunk, and widened ; the blue-veined whiteness darkened into a coarser tint ; the fine nails lost their shape, and grew ugly, stunted, and opaque.

Dr. Trefusis spoke no word : I felt his fingers were ice-cold as he turned

up my sleeve, and noted how the coarsened wrist grew into the perfect arm ; he held my hand, and swung it to and fro ; then he left the room abruptly, saying " don't move."

I sat still at the table : Miss Whateley came and stood by me.

" Mary," she said, " it must be wrong ; it is playing with some terrible power you don't understand."

" Probably we've all got it," I answered dreamily. " It is perhaps a spark of the creative force—but Dr. Trefusis and all his science won't be able to explain it."

Then the doctor came back, with instruments, and microscopes, and I know not what, and began to examine the miracle. At last he looked up at me.

" I can make nothing of it," said he. " But it is the hand of Mary Gower. That is beyond dispute. Now let it go back."

He held it in his own : this time the change was quicker ; and he dropped it with a shudder.

" Now do you believe me ?" I asked.

He answered, " yes ;" and sat lost in thought.

" You had better go home now," he said presently. " I must think over all this ; there must be some hypothesis—miracles don't happen—you must let me see you every day."

I never have understood, and never shall understand, the scientific theories which he had first built up, in order to account for what had happened to me. I was grateful for the curiosity and interest that my case roused in him, because they led him to help me in practical ways ; but any attempt at a scientific explanation of the mystery struck me as being irrelevant, and not particularly interesting. This attitude on my part at once amused, and irritated him ; he gave up trying to make me understand the meaning of his investigations ; and of the experiments which he made me try ; for it was not till later, that he came to look upon the matter as beyond any scientific solution ; and only to be accounted for on grounds which he would at first have rejected with scorn.

I pass these things over ; because I could not write of them intelligibly, and I might be doing Dr. Trefusis some injustice by an imperfect exposition.

On this occasion, I burst in suddenly, and scattered his reflections by declaring that I must go to the Harman's ball the next night, in my new character.

The idea seemed to divert him.

"Ha!" said he. "Mary Gower wants to taste the sweets of success, does she! Upon my soul, it would be worth seeing you, my dear. But it would be difficult to account for the sudden rising of such a star."

"Not if you took me, and chaperoned, and uncled me," I said.

He took a turn or two in the room.

"Why not?" he said then, with a laugh.

"Oh, Dr. Trefusis, would you really!" I cried out, and seized him by both hands.

He held them and looked at me oddly; he is a man of nearly sixty, and my old friend; so I could not be angry when he bent down and kissed me.

"I would do anything for a pretty woman," said he.

I felt a sudden pang: this was the first tribute offered to my beauty, and it hurt. Was Mary Gower beginning already to be jealous of Mary Hatherley?

We settled the matter, with jests and laughter. Dr. Trefusis has the spirit of a child, and the capacity for making abrupt transitions from the serious to the absurd; and he now entered into the plot as though it were a game; as though nothing had happened to unnerve and startle him but a short time before. I was to be his niece, a niece from the country; if further inquiries were made, and my non-appearance during the day had to be accounted for, I was to be a devoted art student; an eccentric; who gave her days to painting, and her evenings to pleasure. Miss Whateley's faint objections were soon silenced: we parted with a promise to meet the next morning; when the Harman household would be upset and I should not be wanted; to choose a ball dress.

"Not that that face of yours needs any artificial setting," were his last words.

"I only hope you won't repent all this," were Miss Whateley's, as we went up to bed.

#### CHAPTER IV

My father had taken me, as a young girl, to balls: I had sat out unnoticed, but observant; and it had seemed to me that, under apparently artificial conditions, women grouped themselves into three distinct types; which were almost primitive in their lack of complexity. The beauty; the woman whose claims to beauty are not universally acknowledged; and the plain woman.

The beauty always pleased me the most: she was unconscious; using her divine right of sovereignty with a carelessness only possible to one born in the purple; experience had bred in her a certainty of pleasing that made her indifferent to the effect she produced; which indifference made her the more effective. That she had her secret moments of scorn, I never doubted; a scorn of that lust of the eye which held her beauty too dear; and I wondered whether any such woman had ever felt tempted in some moment of outraged emotion, to curse the loveliness that men loved, careless of the heart, or head.

The woman with disputable claims annoyed me: she seemed to me like a queen dependent on the humour of the mob, from whose brows the uneasy crown might be torn, and trampled under foot; and then replaced at a caprice. She was uncertain of herself; too much affected by the opinions of others to be easy or unconscious. I was sorry for her too; I felt sure that she often married the man who thought her beautiful, out of gratitude; for she was always unduly grateful; her attitude towards the world being one of mingled depreciation and assertion.

As for the plain woman, had I not stood hand in hand with her outside the gates of Paradise all my life, the angel with the two-edged sword looking on us, with eyes that held both pity and satire! Oh, kind angel—stand aside, and let us look through the bars, and see gracious figures going to and fro; and listen to strange music, and to the sound of voices moved by a keen, sweet passion. We look; we fall back; and know the angel by his several names: Fate: Injustice: Mercy.

I had always recognized the subtle emotional intoxicant that is distilled from the atmosphere of a ball-room. It seemed to come in great waves about me, as I walked up the Harman's ball-room, followed by Dr. Trefusis.

He had written for permission to bring his niece, and they were prepared to see me. No, I am wrong; they were not prepared. Lady Harman was visibly taken aback; and Clara and Betty had something deferential in their manner, which showed a desire to be unusually pleasing. Then Gerald came forward. His eyes met mine, with the look of one who sees something he has long sought, and despaired of finding.

"Can you spare me a dance—" he asked, pausing at the name.

"My name is Hatherley," said I.

My voice struck him; he glanced at me with a puzzled expression, and hesitated—for a moment.

"I must have more than one," he said.

That was so like Gerald, I nearly laughed.

"The page is blank, you see," I answered.

He took advantage of my remark, and wrote his name several times in my programme. I have the programme still.

Dancing had begun again: a crowd had emerged from the stairs and the anterooms. A number of men were introduced to me; some of whom I had already seen at the house. The first with whom I danced was a Colonel Weston; I knew him, on Betty's authority, to be a beautiful dancer, but he was a head shorter than I, and I smiled involuntarily when he said, "Shall we dance?"

He caught my smile.

"Why are you so divinely tall, O daughter of the gods?" said he. "And from what Olympian height have you descended this evening? Why have I never met you before?"

"I will answer no questions," said I, "till we have danced. My feet ache to begin."

"Then they don't dance on Olympus?"

"The gods must come among the mortals to make merry," I said.

"For which thing let us be thankful," he answered. Then we moved away: I had been hitherto a bad dancer, but to-night I felt a spirit in my feet; and realized, for the first time, the mysterious joy of perfect motion. As we paused near the door, I saw Bella Sturgis coming slowly up the stairs. She did not take her eyes off me; I saw her question the man on whose arm she was leaning; but he looked at me, without answering. It was a revelation, that look in their eyes; I saw it repeated, in other faces, over and over again, as I walked slowly across the ball-room after the dance was over.

The next was with Gerald: my pulses beat thickly, and I was hardly conscious of the outside world, till we stopped dancing, and he led me into a little room, which I did not at the moment recognize as Lady Harman's study.

"And so I have met you at last," he said; and I asked him what he meant.

"Yours is the face I have been looking for all my life," he answered.

There was a strange simplicity in his voice, and words; as though he spoke on an impulse that overruled all conventions, all fear of offence.

"But what of the woman behind the face?" I questioned.

"Can I ever hope to know her?"

"If you know her, you will be disappointed: she is like any other woman."

He shook his head.

"I don't believe it. Tell me what she is really like."

I looked round vaguely, my thoughts intent on what I should say to him : then I suddenly noticed the pictures on the walls, and remembered that this was the room in which Mary Gower sat every day.

"She is not without heart, and she has a head that can think," said I.

"That is not like every other woman."

"Would you credit her with either, if she had another face?" I asked him.

Something in my voice struck him, for the second time ; he looked at me, with a quickened attention.

"The face is an indication of the soul, surely," he answered.

"That is a lie," said I. "A lie invented to cover the injustice done alike to the beautiful woman, and the woman who is not beautiful."

"Injustice?" he echoed.

"The thing is so simple," said I, with a bitterness I could not hide. "You place beauty on a pedestal ; her face is an index to her soul, you say : what happens if you find she does not possess the soul, which she never claimed to have, but which you insisted on crediting her with? You dethrone her with ignominy. The case of the other woman is as hard : she has a face that does not attract you, so you deny her the soul that you forced on the other one. She goes through life, branded ; not by individuals, I allow, but by public opinion. The *vox populi* is the voice of nature, 'tis true ; but nature is very hard, very ruthless."

I stopped : Gerald sat looking at me, with a rapt gaze, but I saw he had not listened to a word I said. The Hungarian band had begun playing again in the ball-room. As I listened, and watched the phantastic whirl of the dancers through the open door, they seemed to me to symbolize the burden of all the ages : desire and satiety ; illusion and reality ; dancing hand in hand, to a music wild and tender as love ; sad and stern as life : partners that look ever in one another's eyes, and dance on, in despite of what they see.

"Let us go and dance too," said Gerald.

I have no very clear recollection of the rest of that evening : there was unreality in the air, and a glamour, and an aching pain. Men and women said gracious things to me ; yet seemed to watch me with cruel faces ; I was only conscious, at the last, of an imperative desire to fly, to hide myself, to escape even from Gerald's presence ; and to be alone.

O. SHAKESPEAR.

(To be continued.)