"We shall meet again in a year," says he, with a settled determination in his tone.

"No, no! I refuse to listen to that. To-day will see my own happy little tour at an end. Remember always that it was my doing," says she, feverishly. "I should like you to remember that. Even though I am a most worthless woman, I did that one good deed. It should count for me. Go—go now!"

"To return!" says he, doggedly. "In the meantime, if ever you should want me—I shall leave you an address. . . . I shall send it to you by post. It will find me always. It will be sent on to me."

"I shall not want you!" says she, her head bent, her hands tightly folded on her knees.

"That is the first time you have ever said what was not true to me," says he. "Is it not so?"

"Perhaps? But how about others?" She lifts haggard, defiant eyes to his. "Do you think I have not known how to lie? There! there! there!" wearily. "I am not worth so great a coil." Some phrases belonging to her old life at the theatre still cling to her.

"In a year," says he, "I shall return. That time I will give you to make up your mind as to whether you will link your fate with mine, or— — But there is no alternative. I will not suggest one. You love me and I love you. Our love is strong enough to blot out all the past. In the meantime"—for the first time he approaches her and takes her hand—"you will not forget me."

"I pray God that in that time you will forget me," returns she.

"Pray for something else. You will not get the desired answer to that. Pray for something possible. I shall go abroad next week; we shall be better apart for a little while until you have time given you in which to arrange your thoughts. This is June. The 21st of June. Some day like this next year you shall hear from me. I shall send you a sign to say I am coming."

"A sign!"

"Yes. It sounds rather second-class, doesn't it?" says he, with a most mournful attempt at a smile. "What Colin would say to his Phyllis. But I'll leave it so! And the sign shall be pansies, such as these," touching the bunch of drooping purple things at her throat. "They shall be a sign from me to you that I am coming."

"Ah!" says she, sharply. "They are for death!"

"No! For thoughts."

"For death. I've always heard. These purple blossoms are made to lie on graves. You have chosen a proper symbol. Death! It is the one thing left me to hope for!"

"Don't talk like that," says he, roughly. "We will change the sign, then."

"No," hastily; "no; let it be so. I like it. It is your own choice. I like it! And, after all, what does it matter? I shall not get those pansies!"

"You think I shall forget?"

"I hope you will forget."

"But you do not think it. I see." There is a touch of triumph in his tone. "After all, you understand me," says he. She is deathly pale.

"You said you were going," says she, looking at him. She is evidently trying to command herself. She is so white that he fears she is going to faint.

"Yes, I am going." He takes her in his arms and holds her close against his breast.

"Good-by, my soul!" says he.

She hardly returns the embrace, and even struggles a little as if to release herself. He lets her go.

"Janet! Remember!" says he in a hoarse whisper. She makes a little vague gesture that he can not understand, and turns aside. He moves toward the door. Suddenly a faint sound reaches him. He turns.

She is standing where he had left her, holding out her arms to him.

"Oh, Pasco! Oh, darling! Oh!—one moment!"

Could there be a worse moment than that? He asks himself that question when she has at last pushed him from her, and he finds himself walking home through the soft evening air, with happiness lying a dead thing behind him.

(To be Continued.)

Complete Story.

Hide and Seek.

Assuredly Godfrey Morland had at last achieved his triumph. It had come to him after long waiting and much labour. Here was a picture to capture the eyes of the critics and the heart of humanity. It was large and bold, for his genius loved a wide canvas, but withal it was painted with the patient fidelity of a miniature even to the tint on the petal of the primrose and the gleam on the wing of the goldfinch.

So close was the scene and so real that as one stood by the picture the branches seemed to hang out into clear air, and one was tempted to lean forward and dip a lazy hand in the flow of the limpid water. The heart ached with vague longings at the calm loveliness of the scene.

Three years ago the artist sat before a wide, vacant canvas and dreamt it all, and behold, after three years of patient labour, his vision took form and light and beauty, and was visible to the eyes of the world. When his artist friends praised his picture—more by their eyes than by their lips—or when he stood alone in his vacant studio gazing almost reverently on his masterpiece, as a thing distinct from himself, his heart rejoiced with the triumph of artistic creation.

But success meant more even than artistic triumph for the young painter. It meant human love and happiness as well. The face of the maiden in the picture with the rose-leaf cheeks and eyes of forget-me-not blue, was no ideal beauty. Alice Lyle, who had loved him when the world frowned, was now to share his triumph.

No petty rivalries marred the full and rounded harmony of his happiness. His comrades all rejoiced with him in his triumph, and Ernest Beauchamp, his chief and dearest friend, was most hearty of all in his rejoicing. Yet here, perhaps, if anywhere, a little twinge of jealousy might fairly have been pardoned, for Ernest and Godfrey were brother artists, and had worked together, and Ernest had easily distanced his friend at first. His work was of that light and graceful school, with a touch of sardonic humour that appealed to the fashionable world. His reputation was quickly made and easily held; but now, with a picture that appealed to the human heart, Godfrey had outdistanced him for ever.

Nor was Ernest less his rival in love than in art. It was he who had first found Alice Lyle amid the roses of a country rectory, and he had wooed her in his own sportive fashion, half jest, half earnest, till Godfrey came and saw and won. But his sunny temper was unruffled. He was loudest in his praise of the great picture, and he insisted that he should be his friend's best man at the approaching marriage.

The picture which still stood in the artist's studio soon grew to be the common talk of the artistic world of London. The dealers flocked to the place as miners to a newly-discovered gold country. Foremost amongst them all came the king of picture dealers, Jacob Goldmirk. A staid looking man was Jacob, but his life was full of excitement and adventure. He had discovered miracles in reputed daubs. He had bought old masters for old songs in every corner of Europe, and made the fortune of a score of picture dealers, while he had made his own bigger than all the rest combined.

Godfrey had refused all offers for his masterpiece till after the exhibition. In his heart he loathed the thought of parting with it; but Goldmirk had purchased a battle piece which Godfrey had painted just before. It was a fine bold canvas, a shade smaller than the last, and full of life and power; but the subject, the charge of the Irish brigade at Fontenoy, had hurt the susceptibilities of the British public, and so the picture had hung unsold. Now Goldmirk purchased it for a fair price.

"A fashionable painter, my dear fellow," he said, "may paint just what he likes and it is sure to sell. You'll be the fashion presently."

They had a little supper in the studio to celebrate the purchase, Ernest Beauchamp, Jacob Goldmirk, and Godfrey. They sat late without lamps till the white light stole in through the broad window and found here and there bits of colour and life and beauty on the pictures round the walls.

Mr Goldmirk bubbled over with good humour like the champagne he sipped so freely; but Ernest Beauchamp was in a meditative mood, and looked out silently through the open window, bathing his soul, as he said, in the moonlight. The room grew chilly, and Goldmirk at last called him to shut the window and fasten it like a good chap. Godfrey added, "I don't want burglars after the picture."

The words have a certain importance in view of what followed.

Next morning after breakfast Godfrey started for the country. He was under promise to bring Alice to afternoon tea and a last look at the masterpiece before it went to be framed.

He left at eleven. About half-past twelve Mr Goldmirk called to see him, and was told he had gone to the country.

"I'll wait for him," he said, "in the studio."

He threw off his light overcoat, planted a chair opposite his purchased battle piece, planted himself astride on it, lit a huge cigar, and was left smoking.

He was smoking still, but had drawn a fat picture catalogue from his pocket and was noting the prices with a stump of lead pencil when Godfrey and Alice came into the studio two hours later.

Goldmirk started from his seat and turned his round, good-humoured face half over his shoulder.

"Halloa, Godfrey!" he cried. "So you have sent the masterpiece to be framed already. Beg pardon, didn't see you had a lady with you. How d'ye do, Miss Lyle."

But Godfrey Morland did not hear the last words, for one quick glance told him that the easel at the far end of the room was vacant. His picture was gone!

"Heavens! it has been stolen!" he gasped out.

He turned pale as a ghost, and Alice clung trembling to his arm; but the shrewd picture-dealer kept his wits about him.

"Nonsense, man," he said; "don't look so frightened, Miss Lyle. One cannot steal a big picture like that as easily as a postage stamp. It may have been shoved somewhere out of the way. Let us have a look round."

The honest confidence in his face and voice were as a cordial to Godfrey. They all three made a search of the room; but their hopes quickly evaporated. The picture was nowhere to be found. They found, indeed, a large wooden frame on which the canvas had been stretched lying against the wall without any attempt at concealment. The picture had not been cut, but stripped from the frame by drawing the tacks that held it. Not a particle of the canvas remained. Lying on the floor close to the window were a claw-headed hammer, a turnscrew, and a sharp scissors. The meaning of the hammer was plain enough, but the scissors puzzled them at first.

Godfrey startled the others by a sudden cry as he came to the window. The fastening was undone. He threw up the sash and found a knotted rope hanging from the iron work of the balcony into the street. There was a running noose on the rope, and apparently it had been flung up from the street until it had caught in over the spiked heads of the railing of the balcony. The method, at least, of the robbery now seemed plain enough. But who was the thief?

A moment afterwards Alice made a still more startling discovery. It was a large, handsome mother-of-pearl button, which Godfrey instantly recognised as a button from the brown velvet studio jacket of his friend, Ernest Beauchamp.

He took it from Alice's hand gingerly.

"I don't believe a word of it," he cried vehemently, answering the unspoken accusation in his own mind.

"Don't believe what?" said Goldmirk, coming up to him. "Oh!"

He looked suspiciously at the button which Godfrey held in the palm of his hand, and which he instantly recognised.

"What is that?" asked Alice.

"Only a button from Mr Beauchamp's jacket," Goldmirk said.

"Oh, no, he didn't do it; he couldn't do it!" cried the girl passionately.

"We'll soon know," added Godfrey, and he sat down to his writing-table and scribbled a note.

"What are you writing?" Goldmirk asked cautiously.

"A note telling Ernest the picture has been stolen."

"Do you think it safe—to warn him?"

"Perfectly. I'd pledge my life he'll come. But I'll write a line to Scotland Yard at the same time."

"One moment before you stand up," said Alice, glancing over his shoulder. "There is a very clever woman—a lady detective, Miss Dora Myrl. I have heard wonderful stories about her. You might ask her to come."

Godfrey wrote a third note. Alice directed it, and all three were despatched with the servant.

"Take a hansom, John, and lose no time."

While John was away yet another discovery was made, this time by Miss Lyle. In the bottom of an old cupboard she found a pile of strips and scraps of canvas cut small with a sharp scissors and smeared here and there with paint.

For a moment Godfrey was chilled with the thought that his great picture had been cut to pieces; but a second glance told him that the pile was not a twentieth part of the bulk of the canvas of the picture, and the fragments were let lie without more notice where they were found.

Ernest Beauchamp was the first to arrive, pale and wild-eyed with excitement.

"Stolen!" he cried, excitedly. "Impossible! Why, it was here while we were at supper last night. Who was in the studio since then?"

Mr Goldmirk turned on him angrily.

"I was," he said, "for two hours. I came about twelve, and I was here when Godfrey returned at two. I