There was a long pause. When he spoke again, his voice had regained its usual composure. "But it has taken me years already, Geoffrey, and it will be another three before I can finish it, maybe I shall not live to see it finished. I am so weak. I can only write such a short time, and sometimes not for weeks. If I die too soon," he smiled, "you must take it in hand. Do you remember writing was always your future, your ambition,—and I never thought of it in those days, and now you are living the practical busy life, and I am the dreamer of dreams."

His unconsciousness and simplicity almost overcame Geoffrey; he was silent as he took the oars and rowed him back to the little cottage. They sat far into the night, Roger giving him a brief outline of the scheme of the last part of his story, and long after the lame man had laid his head on his pillow Geoffrey was sitting at his writing table, eagerly, feverishly scribbling down notes of the great story he had heard that day, in order, he told himself, to be able to remember it, to recognise it, when years hence he should come across it in print. But beneath, behind, the devil was lurking, was urging him on with terrible temptation, although at present it was only a thought far back in his mind, unrecognised by himself. He spent a sleepless night, the intense pathos of his friend's words to him coupled with the envious and jealous thoughts which came to him in the silence of the night, or rather early morning, were drawing him different ways, and he was thankful for the broad prosaic daylight. But the pleasure of his visit had vanished. Telling his friend he was called back to London by one of the many letters which waited for him on the breakfast table, he took his departure.

"You've done me a world of good," Roger said, "as he walked down with him to the ferry. "I shall be able to go back, and do much better work. Come again one day."

Geoffrey wrung his hand and departed. All through the long journey back he was struggling with good and evil, and in the end evil predominated.

During the months which followed, Society mourned the absence of Geoffrey. He was busy, was his answer when railed on his misanthropical propensities. But when eight months afterwards it leaked out that the great novel of the moment, written under a nom de plume, was in reality the work of Geoffrey Vandurgh, the world understood and appreciated. Publishers, literary men, fashionable women, all alike flocked round him, and railed him and reproached him for trying to hide his name from them. It was in vain he endeavoured to keep up the deception. He was only laughed at for his diffidence and humility.

But far away in Valentia Island one man knew and understood the reason. Roger Gordon had been struck by the title of the book advertised, and had procured a copy. It had arrived one morning, and he had undone it at breakfast with curious fingers. But the first few pages had been sufficient to send away his breakfast untasted. The servant wondering at the unusual silence, softly opened the door, and had caught the words, "Mine own familiar friend." But his master called to him to get the boat ready, he was going out. The order was nothing unusual; Roger was in the habit of going out on fine days drifting close to the shore in his boat, but as his servant handed him the oars that morning there was a look on his face he had never seen before. He was so struck by it that he begged him to let him come, but Roger for the first time in his life answered him with impatience. So he pushed the boat off, and went back to his work. The lame man rowed out of reach of the land into what he knew to be deep water, and then from under his coat he pulled the manuscript of his book, that manuscript on which his life's energy had been expended—all to no purpose. There was an expression of agony on his face as his thin fingers grasped it lovingly for a moment, but only for a moment, a resolute look came over his mouth, he dropped it over the side of the boat. There was just the sound of the splash, a few large bubbles came to the top, and then stillness. He did not wait; rowing back, he went to his little room, that room which had known him for eight long years, which had witnessed his hopes, his loneliness. His table was as usual, his pen ready for work, his paper piled up alongside for a fresh chapter. All seemed asking him to come. Suddenly he realised that his work was all over. His life had no more interest, could have no more interest, that between him and death lay only the dreary days of waiting; he laid his head down and sobbed aloud: his heart was broken.

* * * * * * *

In the midst of his success, Geoffrey Vandurgh was not happy. The still small voice of conscience was beginning to make itself felt. For six months he stifled it—he filled his life to the full, he had never been so brilliant, so apparently gay. But his nights were terrors to him. In his sleep he would wake up suddenly to that sound of the lapping of the water against the boat. In the early morning his face bore signs of what he had suffered, but still he was driven on—on. Several times he took up his pen to write to his friend, but each time he threw it down again. It was impossible. He knew there was nothing he could ever say, nothing he could ever do which could compensate for the evil he had wrought, though sometimes the craving to know of Roger, to hear his voice, to beg his forgiveness almost overwhelmed him.

So the months drifted on, and nearly a year later one morning in "The Times," he saw the announcement of Roger's death—just the simple fact. He could not get away at the moment, but a month later he found himself once more at Valentia; the house was shut up with a board up to let; the pretty garden was already a prey to weeds, and there was nothing to tell that Roger had ever lived there, save the new mound of grass which the sexton showed him.

Ah, God! he was punished—his life was one living lasting reproach. All his success, his money, his life itself he would have given for a word of forgiveness from his friend which could never come.

Some years later a book appeared. There was no nom de plume even attached to it, only initials. The title was "Dead Sea Fruits." The thoughtful people read it, and marvelled at the suffering contained in it. The careless threw it aside, and said it was impossible. But in it Roger's broken heart was avenged.

Complete Story.

A Sheet of Grey Note Paper.

By EMILY IDAH FARNUM.

"Bess!"

"Don't call me 'Bess,' my name is Elizabeth; and, considering the publicity of our surroundings, I think it would be more dignified, not to say respectful, for you to address me as Miss Richards."

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Mr Vernon, as he seated himself at the table and surveyed the small, irate person, who was viciously banging her typewriter. "You'll smash your machine, Bess—ahem! Miss Richards—if you keep that up."

The young woman stopped, folded her hands and bestowed on Mr Vernon a withering glance from a pair of sapphire blue eyes.

"Can't you see I'm busy?" she demanded ominously. "You've been here once before to-day. What do you want?"

"To talk with you," replied Mr Vernon imperturbably.

"One would think I were here for the sole purpose of entertaining people," Miss Richards remarked sarcastically. "I've had to settle two extremely impertinent men already this morning. I beg of you not to make the third."

"What did they say to you?" inquired her visitor in a tone which boded no good for them were they in his vicinity.

"Oh," wearily, "one dictated two letters, and on the strength of it asked me to go out driving with him; the other desired my company at luncheon."

"The scoundrels!" growled Mr Vernon savagely. "Give it up, Bess, and marry me."

"I don't know why it is," continued Miss Richards, declining to take any notice of his offer, "but nine men out of ten, if they bring me one dollar's worth of work, think they may stay and bore me for an hour. The tenth always imagines I'm hungry or pining for a drive."

"I really think this play will net you at least twenty," interrupted Mr Vernon, in a blended tone of meekness and mischief, taking a roll of manuscript from his pocket, "and, according to your statement, Bess, I'm liable to bore you for twenty hours. Still, if you prefer the drive or——"

"Let me see it!" cried Elizabeth eagerly. "Oh, Dave, is it your new play?"

"Yes," replied Mr Vernon, handing her the manuscript, "but I really wish, my dear girl, you would be more respectful when you address me. My name is David, and, in a public place like this"—with a comprehensive glance around the room which contained only himself and Miss Richards—"I really think it would be more dignified for you to say Mr Vernon."

"Oh, bother!" retorted Elizabeth, making a naughty face. After which expressive remark, she plunged into the manuscript and became utterly oblivious to Mr Vernon's presence.

They had met two years before at Cornell. It was Elizabeth's first year and David's last. He had a sister, who was in her class, and the two girls became very intimate. Naturally the brother came in for his share of attention, and, as naturally, he fell a victim to the charms of his sister's friend.

Before the close of the year Elizabeth had to resign all thoughts of a college education. The death of her father and the condition of his affairs made it necessary for her to assume the support of her mother and little brother. She had made herself proficient in stenography be-