

went; I had begun to care too much for you, and life was hard. Now I may say it. For a time, when that great shock came into my life, weak with the pain of losing you, I lost all sense of thought and power; then it all came again—the love—the pain. Did you ever forget?"

"Never, love, never!" I drew her closer to me. In her long white gown, her slight bare arms where the sleeves fell back, she was ethereally lovely.

"It is three years since you came into my life—three years ago we began to be an interest to each other."

"You love me!" I said. "Oh, say it again, Veronica!"

There was a little questioning look in her face.

"Do you want me to wait for you?" she asked, "or is there another? She spoke with a smile. "There was another once," she said.

"Yes," I said, "there was another once."

Then her two arms, like clinging doves, wound themselves around my neck.

"Where is she?" Veronica asked, tenderly; "in Heaven, waiting, too?"

"I think she is in Heaven—I believe it."

"And you have been my faithful knight," she said, "all these years?"

Very quietly I laid her on her cushions and watched beside her till late in the evening. Then she promised me at last that if it would make me happier she would be my wife, so that I could watch over her to the last.

The doctors said that if she chose to go so long a journey she might be taken to Lochseye. She wished to die in my home.

We were married in her own room, for she was too ill to go to church. She wore by my wish a white shadow-like gown and veronica flowers, those blue purple veronicas which grow by the sea.

She was half sitting up, at her back I had placed a great lilac-hued cushion as support. Her little son and daughters knelt by her, dressed in white. The clergyman was her brother, and he loved her dearly. His voice faltered as he wished her happiness. Just before the ceremony began I noticed she still wore her wedding ring and the witch's eyes. I told her to take them off. She shook her head and whispered to me:

"No, no. Arthur was their father," pointing to the children; "you would not have me show his memory such disrespect."

I understood and loved her more for this. But she took off the witch's eyes and placed it on her right hand.

"Let it stay there," she said. "It has brought me a blessing."

So she had her wish, as those who wear this ring must ever have.

Next day we set out on our long journey to Lochseye. She was very tired and ill as we drove through the glen to Lochseye. We arrived very quietly; no one was to know of our arrival. I carried her through the hall and to her own sitting-room. She never spoke, she only smiled. As I placed her on the sofa she took my hand:

"I have never been so happy in my life before."

And there in that room, which had been my mother's, I watched by my wife. She was the gentlest being; she could never speak much, and often through the long nights I used to hold her up in my arms fearing she would never see the dawn again.

How we learnt to know and love each other during those calm beautiful weeks.

The oak panelled room had been arranged all to her wish and will. She liked to be looking out over the old Scotch park, and watch the sunset behind the great fir trees. She worked with slight, tired fingers, her last piece of needlework, a satin quilt, thick and soft like the materials of long ago, and wove into it many dark leaves and violets; and when at last it was finished she worked in the corner, "Veronica Lindsay, her last work."

But she never finished the last word and the needle still hangs to the violet thread. She was very happy. Often when reading or writing by her I would look up and find her eyes watching me with a look of infinite

tenderness. But the shade of Death was always beside us, though for a little while he lingered before he claimed her.

Her picture hangs on the wall where I write, above the sofa, where she always lay, white and spirit-like, with the eyes grown too large for the face, smaller than the faces of her children. She was painted lying on her sofa, propped up by those heliotrope cushions, the pearly-blue work lying on her knees, and the white gown she always wore.

"It is seldom," I said, "darling, that two are allowed to be so absolutely happy on earth."

I spoke cheerfully, but I seemed to see the presence of Death already in the room.

"Yes," she answered, softly, "we two have found the Ideal, and the finding of the Ideal means death. Lancelot, you live in the presence of death. Your mother, your friends, and now your wife."

lined, so we ventured to take her out in a pony chair for a little.

"Now let me wait a little."

I have never loved my home as I did that day. The old castle stood up high over the deep, dark blue loch—great fir trees protected us from the sea winds, but they were sea winds of the southern coast. Below the house lay the flower garden, but no flowers were there, except the violets below the warmest wall.

On Veronica's knee lay a great nosegay of hot-house flowers I had gathered her as we went through the garden. Never your garden, beloved.

The inexpressible glory of a winter morning lay over all, the feeling of frost through the brilliant sunshine.

"Lancelot, I love our home, and I like to think I shall lie here through ages as Veronica Lindsay."

I knew she was taking her last look all round. The children came round the corner of the garden, happy, loving creatures. They all came to her and kissed her, very care-

"Leaving you, leaving you, beloved—yes—but we must meet."

Her soul and mine were one, her being and mine were one. "Death, that needs not sob or sigh," was standing by us. He came very quietly—her lips on mine, my arms around her. When I laid her back on her pillow Death had taken away the soul of Veronica.

They had covered her all over with the blue veronica flowers, but inside her sweet hand I had hidden a spray of heliotrope.

"So hush, I will give you this leaf to keep; I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!"

There, that is our secret, go to sleep. You will wake, remember, and understand."

I kissed her just before they laid down the lid—I was a little while alone by her, and all her little children cried outside. Through her had come my suffering, through her had come my crown—my crown on earth and, God grant His grace, in the After-life.

I knew, I felt, I heard the voice of my wife saying to me:

"I am with you, my Lancelot."

The beautiful body of Veronica lies in my old churchyard, and her children are as mine. I sit sit here and wait, and I am growing old. The violets cluster round her grave, in spring and autumn days, and I know she is waiting for me, and the time is long for both.

In the long evenings, when Veronica's children, those who remain with me, have gone away and left me alone, in the midnight hours, I dream over my past life and sometimes the angel Cynthia, and often the beloved wife, come to me, and in their radiant eyes I read that both are in Paradise. Only in Cynthia's eyes there is nothing but the spiritual peace and rest of one whose soul is satisfied, of one who has found Him Whom on earth she sought always, if from afar. But in the eyes of my Veronica, in whose grave my heart sleeps, there is just the touch of wistfulness as of one who waits.

(The End.)



On very sunny warm days I would take her round the paths.

"But what were the other deaths compared to this?" I answered, and as I spoke, a knife seemed to pass through my very soul.

"Ah, Lancelot! dear husband of heart and soul, it will be long for you, and long for me—"

On very sunny warm afternoons, wrapped in furs, I would take her round the walks and paths and garden so that she should know her home, however slightly.

"Dear Lancelot!" she would say, looking at me with tears on her eyelashes, "can't you understand why we are never given lasting happiness? Heaven would be such a weariness alone after this. Still, still, there will be the Lord of Life and Death. Will He make up for all that I am leaving?"

She used sometimes to see the cottage people, the oldest favourites of the village, who had known my mother.

"Her ladyship is a lovely lady, but she is dying fast, that is sure," I heard afterwards they used to say.

One November morning the sun shone so warmly that she asked me to take her out once again. She was covered from neck to foot with her sea-kin cloak, and that, too, was fur-

fully and tenderly. Even Arthur, who was going to school at Christmas, was very soft and gentle to her.

That evening late as I sat beside her, I saw her face more ashen white, and the look of death creep over her face.

"There is no jealousy of Cynthia now," she said to me. "I shall be nearest to you as your wife perhaps, and yet, who knows? If you belong to her I shall know it is right. But we shall sometimes remember these days together. Soon, very soon, I shall know what is the Hereafter. If I meet Cynthia I will speak of you—there is no marrying or giving in marriage there, as we understand it, only spiritual love and peace."

How lovely she was as she lay looking at me; this was a painless hour. For the rest, it was suffering un-speakable.

"These have been days of such happiness," she said, "Even for a little while in this life we have been recompensed for putting away the human and seeking the divine in my murd'ring days. Now the reward is great beyond words."

I could not speak; she laid her hand on my head, my face was buried in her cushions.



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