

gave to this lane a grave suggestion of a cloister.

The two walked gravely as those who have long ago left behind them the heartburnings and the desires of life, and yet in truth he was a man in whom passion was strong and who saw the body hiding the soul as much as he realised the soul behind the body, and she, for all her talk of cloisters, her persistent striving after satisfying friendships, was at heart as she described it; only a nun joyfully and a little fearfully breaking loose at moments. She moved quickly as the wind stirred her hair, and waved her long skirts about her feet, and brought a soft flush to a face men called lovely, not for any regularity or perfection of beauty, but because of a subtle appeal to a man's emotions always lurking there, hiding in the corners of her lips, and always ready, only half hiding, in her pretty eyes. In his heart the man was saying, "How much I loved you once, how much I love you again."

"How peaceful it is," she said; "just to-day we two walking together, talking together, as in the past."

She was always hovering on the brink of dangerous allusion. She was always like a child longing to play with fire.

The man believed himself proof against her elusive seductiveness.

She knew that at any rate, though he no longer loved her, that she was a woman whom a man would not easily turn into a friend.

"I think," he said, "that what is far sadder than the memory of the once has been is the curse of the thought of what might have been."

Then she wondered if he was thinking of all life might have been had they but met before it was too late. But with a woman's tact she forbore to speak. After all it was well she did not speak, for he was thinking almost as much of another woman. And yet he was thinking of her too. And she was the one walking beside him now. They were both trying to persuade themselves and each other that the cloister of friendship was a sweeter, happier abode than the bye-ways of love.

And all the time they were both disloyal, he to the woman he was going to marry, to whom he had long been secretly engaged, though the woman he walked with this winter afternoon knew it not.

And she? She was only partially disloyal, for the ache of her heart at the coldness of the man for whose sake she had given up the friendship of the man beside her now.

"We will have many such afternoons," he said. "Our tastes suit."

"They used to!"

"Why not now?"

"Autres temps autres moeurs." Her voice had that pretty accent of mockery which had been her safeguard, her curse, perhaps, all her life.

He had no idea that she had an idea. The intuitions of the most inconsequent women are often keener than those of the most intellectual men. He (his name was Ian) looked at her. She

(her name was Iris) was well aware of that glance.

"I don't understand. Which 'autres temps'?"

"Oh, if you forget it is not for me to remember!"

Nor was it. How could he guess that rivers of tears had flowed from her lovely eyes to swell the ocean called "Love's Grave." The grave where all loves drown themselves sooner or later.

two, and one was Iris, were together in a wave-rocked boat. He looked at his long-past danger with yearning. Iris had been so very sweet to be in danger with, to be endangered for.

They walked back to her home in the twilight. Both were in that silent state of excited nerves which lead to danger had either willed it.

As she poured out his tea, and he lying back against her silk cushions received it from her hands with the

from which her intuition told her that there could be but one awakening, had tossed her back from the stormy sea of love to the shore of friendship.

Could she find in her lover of long ago a friend for to-day? She wondered!

Lian looked at her sitting in the shaded lamplight beside him. He remembered without an effort how seductive she had been to him. How he had reluctantly torn himself from her because of honour, and because she had willed it so, and he remembered her tears—and his own, for some men do shed tears, when all life is a great upheaval because of a woman's scruples. And how he had found comfort with Lillian!

And after a while he had found that his friendship with Lillian meant love. Lillian, worth twenty frivolous Irises. "Shall I tell her now about Lillian?" In his man's vanity he imagined—not imagined, but perhaps fancied—that she wished to light up the ashes of a dead love. Was he so very unwilling that they should be rekindled?

Iris said softly, "Is it not just like old days, our having tea together in a winter afternoon? It is so long ago, and yet I never forget!"

"I do not forget!" he said.

"They were sweet," she persisted, "those days, they were sweet!"

He could not answer. Why did she persist? She ought to know. She must be told about Lillian, or he might be disloyal—to Lillian.

"I sometimes regret those days," she said, with her tantalising sweetness.

"Oh, don't regret! Why should you regret?"

"Oh, why should I?" she said.

He fancied she was weary of her love of years; he was so unworthy as to fancy she wished to lure him back. Lure him back? Could he have seen into her heart just then!

"He's welcome to all the love all the Lilians in the world can give him if only I had not lost the love I have lived for." And in her anguish she would not have heeded whose heart she broke, now her own was broken, this man or another's. But for him she had no thought, nor for anything, except that his friendship might console her in her desolation. She did not consider that he was not free to give either love or friendship—as she meant friendship—as he meant it perhaps. She wondered at his reluctance, vaguely wondered.

"We will have many such afternoons," he said, as he at last rose to go. Her hand lay in his in lingering good-bye. Her eyes looked into his as of old. He remembered Lillian's eyes, probably glancing at the clock at that moment, wondering why he was so late.

"Yes, many, many such afternoons," she said. Her sweet face was very near his. But he remembered Lillian, and Iris remembered—oh! when did she ever forget—another.

As he went down the lamp-lit street and looked up, in and afar, at the starry sky, he thought of the star-like eyes of Iris. They had been



"What man's friendship could compensate for the loss of your love?"

"Our tastes are the same," he resumed after a pause. "I think our tastes suit better than mine and Lillian's!"

Lillian was his other friend. There was a close friendship; Iris knew the fact of his friendship with Lillian and imagined the rest.

Ian naturally, being a man, imagined neither Iris nor Lillian guessed at his feelings for both. Iris represented forbidden fruit of love frustrated by honour to another man, and that man his friend.

Lillian represented peaceful domestic love—the light at eventide, the haven of the storm-tossed boat. Yet man-like he sometimes looked back to the stormy gleam lit sea, where

intimacy of old, he, with something of the old passion rising in thought, were it well to speak? And she—moving about the room after giving him his tea, taking off her hat and gloves, looked with eyes suddenly filling with tears, at the picture of the man she loved. There had been years when he loved her—years that made her oblivious to everything else—oblivious to friends, to everything on earth except him, and to keep as she had won his love.

And now the coldness, the awful coldness, that had succeeded to those sweet years of warmth and love. And now, to hope against hope, and now to cheat herself with idle dreams,



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