

waves of despair silenced her cries. Then a greed of jealousy tore her, and presently she was aware of the pleasant hum of voices around her again, and the soft strains of a waltz from a further room. She answered several greetings quite pleasantly, talked coherently to her stout old bean who had the knack of always finding her in a crowd, and all the time her dual self was asking: "How can I keep him?" and her hope was in the goodness of the other woman's face!

Her temperate judgment reasserted itself through the keen passion of the hour. She reached and grasped the truth—her unknown rival was good!

With a strange fascination Caroline watched her all the evening, moving her position with apparent naturalness as Geraldine went from place to place. Her own manner changed; she felt so horribly agitated that by a sort of mental necessity she covered her agitation by converse with one and another. Frank joined her, but a spirit of restlessness seemed to possess him also, and presently Caroline found herself alone again.

The rooms were stifflingly hot. In company with her host she made her way to a glassed-in balcony, where at his suggestion she rested while he went away to send her some refreshment, as she had declined to face the crowded supper-room. The balcony was sweet with the fragrance of hot-house flowers and plants, and under the cover of concealing shrubs Caroline stood and looked out over the moonlit bay.

It was one of those still warm nights that are not unfrequent in the earliest spring in Australia. The sky was darky blue and cloudless, spangled with stars. The white waves breaking on the sands wafted their briny perfume to the watcher. The long line of lights of pier and shore running out into the silver haziness claimed her gaze, but it was only her physical eyesight that was engaged; her mind was occupied with the loveliness of the woman her husband loved.

In the pauses of music and dancing feet the long "sw-ish" of the waves reached

and soothed her unconsciously. Then with that peculiar feeling which Howard's nearness always gave her, she turned and saw him approaching Geraldine, who held a small court of the most distinguished men in the room.

Caroline's curiosity was aroused—how would these two meet? Howard stood waiting as he had waited for herself so often, but there was almost a fierce look of impatience in his eyes, and the line between his brows was cut deep. Presently the other men gave way, and with the quick movement that Caroline knew signified his decision was made regarding some point, he stepped forward, and with a word or two almost of command, judging by his face, he held out his arm to Geraldine. She turned her eyes to him for a moment with an expression gravely sweet, rose and took the proffered arm without a word.

The action bereaved Caroline; it had seemed their married prerogative to command and obey, Howard's right and her own. There had been a settled rest in his fealty to her; if he had not loved her, at least she had been the one woman in his world. His infinite solitudes had been her own!

Geraldine's head, with its wealth of dusky hair, was held proudly as she came on, turned slightly from the man beside her, as if in chagrin or disdain. Howard's face was inscrutable save to his wife; to her eyes the mask of coldness was not impene-trable.

Before she knew his intention he led his companion straight to the balcony, and following him as closely as he could steer his way was someone with a glass of lemonade. Caroline found herself inanelly inclined to laugh at the comical gravity of the man's face as though to present the iced drink to her unspilt was of the first importance!

Geraldine's gleaming skirts almost touched her as she passed. The throbbing of her heart made Caroline faint; she stood for a moment to recover command of her trembling limbs, and in that moment lost