

sanctum, but by degrees he awaited her coming, and whilst he considered her keen interest in social and political affairs "an abnormal appetite," he could not resist playing the pleasant part of mentor to the craving of so receptive a mind.

* * * * *

It was in this mortal old house that the realistic dreams began. Dreams, in which one, as if raised from the dead, called her by name, and lured her to purple shades, or sunny meads, the touch of whose hand sent a thrill to her heart, and in whose grey eyes all the sweetness and grief of life and death were wedded. This shadow spoke of love—yet Andrea cried "If you are Love—come not any more—wait—wait until my soul is free." But he had answered in such pale anguish, "So long have I waited," that she awoke in tears. And yet again as she heard his voice she caught up the diaphanous fabrics which clung about her, and ran with bare feet over the cowslip flowers, very careful not to crush their sunny peeps. Sometimes he came out of the purple distance—and yet again he was waiting in blinding light beside the mill.—Once at parting he whispered "*If you come not, I will come to you.*"

* * * * *

One day at dusk the philosopher passed her a letter.

"Fix a time," he said casually.

She went to the window to read it. Her heart leapt. It was signed "Rivière."

"Why trouble to see him," she suggested.

The philosopher peered at her.

"He has ideas," he said, then he added "Is he married?—I hope not—girl delicate—invite him, five o'clock any day."

Any day!

Andrea took up a quill—it hovered over the paper. Then she wrote as desired, in clear and finely-formed letters, the invitation for any day. When it was signed, she enclosed, addressed and sealed, this fateful letter, and slipped into the corridor with it in hand. The post box was in the hall, but as she passed the library she caught the glow of fire. She went within and closed the door. On the rug she knelt and held her hand towards the flame—the light shone through, the letter slipped from her hold—for clearly revealed in letters of gold, the words flashed out "*If you come not, I will come to you.*"

She snatched the envelope from the hearth—almost flew downstairs—and thrust it into the box.

She caught a glimpse of her face in a glass. She started. It was so alert with the light of being.

ETHEL G. FENWICK.

(To be continued.)

A sentence near the end of last week's chapter after being approved by the Editor, was rendered unintelligible by a printer's error. It should read: "rejoicing in the toothpricks their desertion had left her to endure."

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

HILDA LESSWAYS.*

An extraordinary woman is chronicled in these pages, and one who is in a measure attractive, yet more repellent. She is the old story of a round peg in a square hole and one feels that if she had found her niche she would have perhaps possessed the charm she lacks. But it is more likely that she was temperamentally incapable of satisfaction—stormy, restless and ambitious.

Book I deals with her start in life.

"Hilda hated domestic work, and because she hated it she did it passionately and thoroughly. That afternoon, as she emerged from the kitchen, her dark defiant face was full of grim satisfaction in the fact that she had left a kitchen without the slightest indication that it ever had been or ever would be used for preparing human nature's daily food."

She was twenty-one. She was in trouble, and her trouble was that she wanted she knew not what. If her mother had said to her squarely: "Tell me what it is will make you a bit more contented and you shall have it, even if it kills me!" Hilda would have answered, with the fervour of despair: "I don't know! I don't know!"

"Mrs. Lessways went to bed in the placid expectancy of a very similar day on the morrow, and of an interminable succession of such days. The which was incomprehensible and offensive to Hilda."

And there were only those two.

Mrs. Lessways would complain that it was not what Hilda said, but "It's your tone," she said grievously.

Hilda had a consciousness of herself which is more than self-consciousness. Alone she would invent conversations with her mother, silencing the foolish woman with unanswerable sarcastic phrases. Often she would say to herself volup-tuously: "No, I will nurse my grievance; I'll nurse it, and nurse it, and nurse it."

On her own initiative she obtains a post as clerk to the editor of a new paper.

"What was she? Nothing but a clerk at fifteen shillings a week. Ah! but she was a priestess. She was a pioneer. No young woman had ever done what she was doing. She was the only girl in the Five Towns that knew shorthand."

So it may be seen that the date of this story is fixed at some years back.

Hilda finds an outlet in her hero worship of Mr. Cannon, the editor, who, to say the truth, was no hero, but something not far removed from a scoundrel. We are even told that "she walked off rapidly, trying to imitate the fine free, defiant bearing of Mr. Cannon."

After the death of her mother, the summons to whose death-bed she neglects, she is nervously conscious of her lack of filial duty. "She felt in

*By Arnold Bennett. (Methuen & Co., London.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)