

clamped to the social wheel. But the tall villa, now she came fairly to dwell within its ridiculous portals, through its isolation, not to say ostracism, freed her effectively if somewhat ironically from the wheel.

It gave her leisure and the accessibility to impressions which in persons of temperament leisure confers.

She felt delicately alive, delicately aware, in every nerve, at every point.

There was a "sly" atmosphere about the villa.

Her husband became aware of a subtle difference in her. He had been explaining to her that he thought he saw a way back to Grosvenor Square, and all that it stood for. He lifted his head sharply and nervously, catching the distant howl of the wolves in the Zoo.

"Confound the brutes!" he said in sudden anger, and "For goodness sake, Fan, give up watching for things that aren't there! Pray don't let it grow upon you. I tell you I don't like it. It gives me the creeps."

He could when he chose be a vastly engaging person. She acknowledged as much, "but tonight he had interfered with an atmosphere which she had begun to recognise, and to anticipate with half fearful delight. A presence felt rather than seen."

When Morris announces his intention of going abroad for six months to seek his fortune, she was by no means displeased.

Would she accompany him? She would willingly. The offer was regretfully by Morris declined, to the relief of both.

"Let me have my own way," Frances said, her mothlike eyes strangely alight.

"And aren't we both just bluffing?" she thought to herself. "How very hateful!"

While on a visit to her relatives, in Morris' absence she had learned of an ancestor, Lord Oxley, who had lived with his mistress, a certain beautiful Flora Cressidy in the tall villa.

"She had been too deeply dipped," according to Lady Lucia, to get a divorce, and Lord Oxley was madly infatuated with her. She vanished one fine morning with one of her former lovers and he could not make up his mind to live without her.

"And so—shot himself," Frances said very softly.

This then, was the answer to the "sly" attitude of the house. "Her thoughts flew forward with a splendour of tenderness to the tall villa and to Alexis, Lord Oxley, whose soul was, she believed, held there in thrall."

When the taxi came first in sight of the house after the happy grandeur of Napworth and the quiet dignity of Allenby Lodge, she seemed to detect a grimacing smirk as though it mocked her high souled fervour.

Not to-night, but to-morrow at five o'clock and not till then—having made herself ready in body and soul, she would enter the drawing-room and wait.

She sat at the piano and gave herself to the weaving of dim-coloured pensive harmonies, and, when at the end of half an hour the doors on to the gallery silently opened, and as silently shut, she took the strange event calmly.

Just perceptible through the mournful, now fading evening light she saw an upright shadow—that of a man tall in height—standing behind her. At the same time she felt a chill draught of air shiver her transparent drooping sleeves and stir the small stray curls upon the nape of her neck.

The gist of this remarkable story is that Frances became enamoured of her ghostly visitor as he more and more divulged himself to sight and sense.

The rumours of her husband's unfaithfulness abroad barely troubled her as she became absorbed in this spiritual love. She sets herself to obliterate the unhappy past which caused the soul of Alexis to roam.

She finally begs him not to come back until he has permission, to lead her across the bridge while it still bears.

"Will you try, most beloved," she tenderly insisted, "will you try?"

He came back as she asked.

Frances, without any shock of surprise, not only saw the figure of Lord Oxley, but for the first time distinctly saw his face. "Ah, our bridge still carries then!" she cried. "Will it bear us both? Can I too cross it?"

"You have already crossed it," he told her.

While she stood close beside him, her ghostly hands in his, his ghostly lips on hers, the silver grey clad woman still rested happily smiling, her mothlike eyes wide open, in the gilt arm-chair beside the fireplace. H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

June 25th.—Professional Union of Trained Nurses. Monthly Meeting Public Health Section. 17, Evelyn House, 62 Oxford Street, W.1. 5.30 p.m.

July 2nd.—Colindale Hospital, The Hyde, Hendon, N.W. 1. Unveiling of the Memorial to Hendon Nurses in the Nurses' Home. Tea. Meeting of the Nurses' League.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE PREVENTION OF INFANT MORTALITY AND NATIONAL BABY WEEK COUNCIL.

Conferences on Maternity and Child Welfare will be held in connection with Baby Week celebrations as follows:—

Leeds, in the Philosophical Hall, on Wednesday, June 30th.

Manchester, in the Mayor's Parlour, on Thursday, July 1st.

Brighton, in the Permanent Art Gallery, Church Street, on Friday, July 2nd.

Bradford, in the Queen's Hall, on Tuesday, July 6th.

Wrexham, in the Church House, on Wednesday, July 7th.

Crewe, in the Council Chamber, on Friday, September 10th.

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