CHAPTER XIII

TWO QUESTIONS, AND THE ANSWER

At length the light began to fade, and for that day their experiments were over. In token of their conclusion twice Stella rang the electric warning bell which was attached to the aerophone, and in some mysterious manner caused the bell of its twin instrument to ring also. Then she packed the apparatus in its box, for, with its batteries, it was too heavy and too delicate to be carried conveniently, locking it up, and left the church, which she also locked behind her. Outside it was still snowing fast, but softly, for the wind had dropped, and a sharp frost was setting in, causing the fallen snow to scrunch beneath her feet. About half-way along the bleak line of deserted cliff which stretched from the Dead Church to the first houses of Monksland, she saw the figure of a man walking swiftly towards her, and knew from the bent head and broad, slightly stooping shoulders that it was Morris coming to escort her home. Presently they met.

"Why did you not wait for me?" he asked in an irritated voice, "I told you I was coming, and you know that I do not like you to be tramping about these lonely cliffs at this hour."

"It is very kind of you," she answered, smiling that slow, soft smile which was characteristic of her when she was pleased, a smile that seemed to be born in her beautiful eyes and thence to irradiate her

whole face; "but it was growing dreary and cold there, so I thought that I would start."

"Yes," he answered, "I forgot, and, what is more, it is very selfish of me to keep you cooped up in such a place upon a winter's day. Enthusiasm makes one forget everything."

"At least without it we should do nothing; besides, please do not pity me, for I have never been happier in my life."

"I am most grateful," he said earnestly. "I don't know what I should have done without you through this critical time, or what I shall----" and he stopped.

"It went beautifully to-day, didn't it?" she broke in, as though she had not heard his words.

"Yes," he answered, "beyond all expectations. We must experiment over a greater distance, and then if the thing still works I shall be able to speak with my critics in the gate. You know I have kept everything as dark as possible up to the present, for it is foolish to talk first and fail afterwards. I prefer to succeed first and talk afterwards."

"What a triumph it will be!" said Stella. "All those clever scientists will arrive prepared to mock, then think they are taken in, and at last go away astonished to write columns upon columns in the papers."

"And after that?" queried Morris.

"Oh, after that, honour and glory and wealth and power and--the happy ending. Doesn't it sound nice?"

"Ye--es, in a way. But," he added with energy, "it won't come off. No, not the aerophones, they are right enough I believe, but all the rest of it."

"Why not?"

"Because it is too much. 'Happy endings' don't come off. The happiness lies in the struggle, you know,--an old saying, but quite true. Afterwards something intervenes."

"To have struggled happily and successfully is happiness in itself. Whatever comes afterwards nothing can take that away. 'I have done something; it is good; it cannot be changed; it is a stone built for ever in the pyramid of beauty, or knowledge, or advancement.' What can man hope to say more at the last, and how few live to say it, to say it truly? You will leave a great name behind you, Mr. Monk."

"I shall leave my work; that is enough for me," he answered.

For a while they walked in silence; then some thought struck him, and he

stopped to ask:

"Why did Layard come to the Dead Church to-day? He said that he was going home, and it isn't on his road."

Stella turned her head, but, even in that faint light, not quickly enough to prevent him seeing a sudden flush change the pallor of her face to the rich colour of her lips.

"To call, I suppose; or," correcting herself, "perhaps from curiosity."

"And what did he talk about?"

"Oh, the aerophone, I think; I don't remember."

"That must be a story," he said, laughing. "I always remember Layard's conversation for longer than I want; it has a knack of impressing itself upon me. What was it? Cemetery land, church debts, the new drainage scheme, or something equally entrancing and confidential?"

Under this cross-examination Stella grew desperate, unnecessarily, perhaps, and said in a voice that was almost cross:

"I cannot tell you; please let's talk of something else."

Then of a sudden Morris understood, and, like a foolish man, at once

jumped to a conclusion far other than the truth. Doubtless Layard had gone to the church to propose to Stella, and she had accepted him, or half accepted him; the confusion of her manner told its own tale. A new and strange sensation took possession of Morris. He felt unwell; he felt angry; if the aerophone refused to work at all to-morrow, he would care nothing. He could not see quite clearly, and was not altogether sure where he was walking.

"I beg your pardon," he said in a cold voice, as he recovered himself; "it was most impertinent of me." He was going to add, "pray accept my congratulations," but fortunately, or unfortunately, stopped himself in time.

Stella divined something of what was passing in his mind; not all, indeed, for to her the full measure of his folly would have been incomprehensible. For a moment she contemplated an explanation, then abandoned the idea because she could find no words; because, also, this was another person's secret, and she had no right to involve an honest man, who had paid her a great compliment, in her confidences. So she said nothing. To Morris, for the moment at any rate, a conclusive proof of his worst suspicions.

The rest of that walk was marked by unbroken silence. Both of them were very glad when it was finished.

It was five o'clock when they reached the Abbey, so that there were two

hours to be spent before it was time to dress for dinner. When she had taken off her things Stella went straight to her father's room to give him his tea. By now Mr. Fregelius was much better, although the nature of his injuries made it imperative that he should still stay in bed.

"Is that you, Stella?" he said, in his high, nervous voice, and, although she could not see them in the shadow of the curtain, she knew that his quick eyes were watching her face eagerly.

"Yes, father, I have brought you your tea. Are you ready for it?"

"Thank you, my dear. Have you been at that place--what do you call it?--the Dead Church, all day?"

"Yes, and the experiments went beautifully."

"Did they, did they indeed?" commented her father in an uninterested voice. The fate of the experiments did not move him. "Isn't it very lonely up there in that old church?"

"I prefer to be alone--generally."

"I know, I know. Forgive me; but you are a very odd woman, my dear."

"Perhaps, father; but not more so than those before me, am I? Most of them were a little different from other people, I have been told."

"Quite right, Stella; they were all odd women, but I think that you are quite the oddest of the family." Then, as though the subject were disagreeable to him, he added suddenly: "Mr. Layard came to see me to-day."

"So he told me," answered Stella.

"Oh, you have met him. I remember; he said he should call in at the Dead Church, as he had something to say to you."

Stella determined to get the conversation over, so she forced the pace. She was a person who liked to have disagreeable things behind her. Drawing herself up, she answered steadily:

"He did call in, and--he said it."

"What, my dear, what?" asked Mr. Fregelius innocently.

"He asked me to marry him, father; I think he told me with your consent."

Mr. Fregelius, auguring the very best from this openness, answered in tones which he could not prevent from betraying an unseemly joy.

"Quite true, Stella; I told him to go on and prosper; and really I hope

he has prospered."

"Yes," said Stella reflectively.

"Then, my dear love, am I to understand that you are engaged to him?"

"Engaged to him! Certainly not," she answered.

"Then," snapped out her justly indignant parent, "how in the name of Heaven has he prospered?"

"By my refusing him, of course. We should never have suited each other at all; he would have been miserable if I had married him."

Mr. Fregelius groaned in bitterness of spirit.

"Oh, Stella, Stella," he cried, "what a disappointment!"

"Why should you be disappointed, father dear?" she asked gently.

"Why? You stand there and ask why, when I hear that my daughter, who will scarcely have a sixpence--or at least very few of them--has refused a young man with between seventeen and eighteen thousand pounds a year--that's his exact income, for he told me himself, a most estimable churchman, who would have been a pillar of strength to me, a man whom I should have chosen out of ten thousand as a son-in-law----" and he

ceased, overwhelmed.

"Father, I am sorry that you are sorry, but it is strange you should understand me so little after all these years, that you could for one moment think that I should marry Mr. Layard."

"And why not, pray? Are you better born----"

"Yes," interrupted Stella, whose one pride was that of her ancient lineage.

"I didn't mean that. I meant better bred and generally superior to him? You talk as though you were of a different clay."

"Perhaps the clay is the same," said Stella, "but the mind is not."

"Oh, there it is again, spiritual and intellectual pride, which causes you to set yourself above your fellows, and in the end will be your ruin. It has made a lonely woman of you for years, and it will do worse than that. It will turn you into an old maid--if you live," he added, as though shaken by some sudden memory.

"Perhaps," said Stella, "I am not frightened at the prospect. I daresay that I shall have a little money and at the worst I can always earn a living; my voice would help me to it, if nothing else does. Father, dear, you mustn't be vexed with me; and pray--pray do understand that

no earthly thing would make me marry a man whom I dislike rather than otherwise; who, at least, is not a mate for me, merely because he could give me a fine house to live in, and treat me luxuriously. What would be the good of such things to me if I knew that I had tarnished myself and violated my instincts?"

"You talk like a book--you talk like a book," muttered the old gentleman. "But I know that the end of it will be wretchedness for everybody. People who go on as you do about instincts, and fine feelings, and all that stuff, are just the ones who get into some dreadful mess at last. I tell you that such ideas are some of the devil's best baits."

Stella began to grow indignant.

"Do you think, father, that you ought to talk to me quite like that?" she asked. "Don't you know me well enough to be sure that I should never get into what you call a mess--at least, not in the way I suppose you mean? My heart and thought are my own, and I shall be prepared to render account of them; for the rest, you need not be afraid."

"I didn't mean that--I didn't mean anything of the sort----"

"I am glad to hear it," broke in Stella. "It would scarcely have been kind, especially as I am no longer a child who needs to be warned against the dangers of the world."

"What I did mean is that you are an enigma; that I am frightened about you; that you are no companion; because your thoughts--yes, and at times your face, too--seem unnatural, unearthly, and separate you from others, as they have separated you from this poor young man."

"I am what I was made," answered Stella with a little smile, "and I seek company where I can find it. Some love the natural, some the spiritual, and each receive from them their good. Why should they blame one another?"

"Mad," muttered her father to himself as she left the room. "Mad as she is charming and beautiful; or, if not mad, at least quite impracticable and unfitted for the world. What a disappointment to me--what a bitter disappointment! Well, I should be used to them by now."

Meanwhile, Morris was in his workshop in the old chapel entering up his record of the day's experiments, which done, he drew his chair to the stove and fell into thought. Somehow the idea of the engagement of Miss Fregelius to Stephen Layard was not agreeable to him; probably because he did not care about the young man. Yet, now that he came to think of it quietly, in all her circumstances it would be an admirable arrangement, and the offer undoubtedly was one which she had been wise to accept. On the whole, such a marriage would be as happy as marriages generally are. The man was honest, the man was young and rich, and very soon the man would be completely at the disposal of his brilliant and

beautiful wife.

Personally he, Morris, would lose a friend, since a woman cannot marry and remain the friend of another man. That, however, would probably have happened in any case, and to object on this account, even in his secret heart, would be abominably selfish. Indeed, what right had he even to consider the matter? The young lady had come into his life very strangely, and made a curious impression upon him; she was now going out of it by ordinary channels, and soon nothing but the impression would remain. It was proper, natural, and the way of the world; there was nothing more to be said.

Somehow he was in a dreary mood, and everything bored him. He fetched Mary's last letter. There was nothing in it but some chit-chat, except the postscript, which was rather longer than the letter, and ran:

"I am glad to hear the young lady whom you fished up out of the sea is such an assistance to you in your experiments. I gather from what I hear--although you haven't mentioned the fact--that she is as beautiful as she is charming, and that she sings wonderfully. She must be something remarkable, I am sure, because Eliza Layard evidently detests her, and says that she is trying to ensnare the affections of that squire of dames, her brother Stephen, now temporarily homeless after a visit to Jane Rose. What will you do when you have to get on without her? I am afraid you must accustom yourself to the idea, unless she

would like to make a third in the honeymoon party. Joking apart, I am exceedingly grateful to her for all the help she has given you, and, dear, dear Morris, more delighted than I can tell you to learn that after all your years of patient labour you believe success to be absolutely within sight.

"My father, I am sorry to say, is no better; indeed, although the doctors deny it, I believe he is worse, and I see no prospect of our getting away from here at present. However, don't let that bother you, and above all, don't think of coming out to this place which makes you miserable, and where you can't work. What a queer menage you must be at the Abbey now! You and the Star who has risen from the ocean--she ought to have been called Venus--tete-a-tete, and the, I gather, rather feeble and uninteresting old gentleman in bed upstairs. I should like to see you when you didn't know. Why don't you invent a machine to enable people at a distance to see as well as to hear each other? It would be very popular and bring Society to utter wreck. Does the Northern star--she is Danish, isn't she?--make good coffee, and how, oh! how does she get on with the cook?"

Morris put down the letter and laughed aloud. Mary was as amusing as ever, and he longed to see her again, especially as he was convinced that she was really bored out there at Beaulieu, with Mr. Porson sick, and his father very much occupied with his own affairs. In a moment he made up his mind; he would go out and see her. Of course, he could ill

spare the time, but for the present the more pressing of his experiments were completed, and he could write up his "data" there. Anyway, he would put in a fortnight at Beaulieu, and, what is more, start to-morrow if it could be arranged.

He went to the table and began a letter to Mary announcing that she might expect to see him sometime on the day that it reached her. When he had got so far as this he remembered that the dressing bell had already rung some minutes, and ran upstairs to change his clothes. As he fastened his tie he thought to himself sadly that this would be his last dinner with Stella Fregelius, and as he brushed his hair he determined that unless she had other wishes, it should be as happy as it could be made. He would like this final meal to be the pleasantest of all their meals, and although, of course, he had no right to form an opinion on the matter, he thought that perhaps she might like it, too. They were going to part, to enter on different walks of life--for now, be it said, he had quite convinced himself that she was engaged--so let their parting memories of each other be as agreeable as possible.

Meanwhile, Stella also had her reflections. Her conversation with her father had troubled her, more, perhaps, than her remarks might have suggested. There was little between this pair except the bond of blood, which sometimes seems to be so curiously accidental, so absolutely devoid of influence in promoting mutual sympathies, or in opening the door to any deep and real affection. Still, notwithstanding this lack of true intimacy, Stella loved her father as she felt that he loved her,

and it gave her pain to be forced to cross his wishes. She knew with what a fierce desire, although he was ashamed to express all its intensity, he desired that she should accept this, the first chance of wealthy and successful marriage that had come her way, and the anguish which her absolute refusal must have entailed upon his heart.

Of course, it was very worldly of him, and therefore reprehensible; yet to a great extent she could sympathise with his disappointment. At bottom he was a proud man, although he repressed his pride and kept it secret. He was an ambitious man, also, and his lot had been confined to humble tasks, absolutely unrecognised beyond his parish, of a remotely-placed country parson. Moreover, his family had been rich; he had been brought up to believe that he himself would be rich, and then, owing to certain circumstances, was doomed to pass his days in comparative poverty.

Even death had laid a heavy hand on him; she was the last of her race, and she knew he earnestly desired that she should marry and bear children so that it might not become extinct. And now this chance, this princely chance, which, from his point of view, seemed to fill every possible condition, had come unawares, like a messenger from Heaven, and she refused its entertainment. Looked at through his eyes the position was indeed cruel.

Yet, deeply as she sympathised with him in his disappointment, Stella never for one moment wavered in her determination. Marry Mr. Layard! Her

blood shrank back to her heart at the very thought, and then rushed to her neck and bosom in a flood of shame. No, she was sorry, but that was impossible, a thing which no woman should be asked to do against her will.

The subject wearied her, but as brooding on it could not mend matters, she dismissed it from her mind, and turned her thoughts to Morris. Why, she did not know, but something had come between them; he was vexed with her, and what was more, disappointed; she could feel it well enough, and--she found his displeasure painful. What had she done wrong, how had she offended him? Surely it could not be--and once again that red blush spread itself over face and bosom. He could not believe that she had accepted the man! He could never have so grossly misunderstood her, her nature, her ideas, everything about her! And yet who knew what he would or would not believe? In some ways, as she had already discovered, Mr. Monk was curiously simple. How could she tell him the truth without using words which she did not desire to speak? Here instinct came to her aid. It might be done by making herself as agreeable to him as possible, for surely he must know that no girl would do her best to please one man when she had just promised herself to another. So it came about that quite innocently Stella determined to allay her host's misgivings by this doubtful and dangerous expedient.

To begin with, she put on her best dress--a low bodice of black silk relieved with white and a single scarlet rose from the hothouse. Round her neck also, fastened by a thin chain, she wore a large blood-red

carbuncle shaped like a heart, and about her slender waist a quaint girdle of ancient Danish silver, two of the ornaments which she had saved from the shipwreck. Her dark and waving hair she parted in the middle after a new fashion, tying its masses in a heavy knot at the back of her head, and thus adorned descended to the library where Morris was awaiting her.

He stood leaning over the fire with his back towards her, but hearing the sweep of a skirt turned round, and as his eyes fell upon her, started a little. Never till he saw her thus had he known how beautiful Stella was at times. Quite without design his eyes betrayed his thought, but with his lips he said merely as he offered her his arm,--

"What a pretty dress! Did it come out of Northwold?"

"The material did; I made it up, and I am glad that you think it nice."

This was a propitious beginning, and the dinner that followed did not belie its promise. The conversation turned upon one of the Norse sagas that Stella had translated, for which Morris had promised to try to find a publisher. Then abandoning the silence and reserve which were habitual to him he began to talk, asking her about her work and her past. She answered him freely enough, telling him of her school days in Denmark, of her long holiday visits to the old Danish grandmother, whose memory stretched back through three generations, and whose mind was stored with traditions of men and days now long forgotten. This particular saga,

she said, had, for instance, never been written in its entirety till she took it down from the old dame's lips, much as in the fifteenth century the Iceland sagas were recorded by Snorro Sturleson and others. Even the traditional music of the songs as they were sung centuries ago she had received from her with their violin accompaniments.

"I have one in the house," broke in Morris, "a violin--rather a good instrument; I used to play a little when I was young. I wish, if you don't mind, that you would sing them to me after dinner."

"I will try if you like," she answered, "but I don't know how I shall get on, for my own old fiddle, to which I am accustomed, went to the bottom with a lot of other things in that unlucky shipwreck. You know we came by sea because it seemed so cheap, and that was the end of our economy. Fortunately, all our heavy baggage and furniture were not ready, and escaped."

"I do not call it unlucky," said Morris with grave courtesy, "since it gave me the honour of your acquaintance; or perhaps I may say of your friendship."

"Yes," she answered, looking pleased; "certainly you may say of my friendship. It is owing to the man who saved my life, is it not,--with a great deal more that I can never pay?"

"Don't speak of it," he said. "That midnight sail was my one happy

inspiration, my one piece of real good luck."

"Perhaps," and she sighed, "that is, for me, though who can tell? I have often wondered what made you do it, there was so little to go on."

"I have told you, inspiration, pure inspiration."

"And what sent the inspiration, Mr. Monk?"

"Fate, I suppose."

"Yes, I think it must be what we call fate--if it troubles itself about so small a thing as the life of one woman."

Then, to change the subject, she began to talk of the Northumberland moors and mountains, and of their years of rather dreary existence among them, till at length it was time to leave the table. This they did together, for even then Morris drank very little wine.

"May I get you the violin, and will you sing?" he asked eagerly, when they reached the library.

"If you wish it I will try."

"Then come to the chapel; there is a good fire, and it is put away there."

Presently they were in the ancient place, where Morris produced the violin from the cupboard, and having set a new string began to tune it.

"That is a very good instrument," said Stella, her eyes shining, "you don't know what you have brought upon yourself. Playing the violin is my pet insanity, and once or twice since I have been here, when I wanted it, I have cried over the loss of mine, especially as I can't afford to buy another. Oh! what a lovely night it is; look at the full moon shining on the sea and snow. I never remember her so bright; and the stars, too; they glitter like great diamonds."

"It is the frost," answered Morris. "Yes, everything is beautiful to-night."

Stella took the violin, played a note or two, then screwed up the strings to her liking.

"Do you really wish me to sing, Mr. Monk?" she asked.

"Of course; more than I can tell you."

"Then, will you think me very odd if I ask you to turn out the electric lamps? I can sing best so. You stand by the fire, so that I can see my audience; the moon through this window will give me all the light I want."

He obeyed, and now she was but an ethereal figure, with a patch of red at her heart, and a line of glimmering white from the silver girdle beneath her breast, on whose pale face the moonbeams poured sweetly. For a while she stood thus, and the silence was heavy in that beautiful, dismantled place of prayer. Then she lifted the violin, and from the first touch of the bow Morris knew that he was in the presence of a mistress of one of the most entrancing of the arts. Slow and sweet came the plaintive, penetrating sounds, that seemed to pass into his heart and thrill his every nerve. Now they swelled louder, now they almost died away; and now, only touching the strings from time to time, she began to sing in her rich, contralto voice. He could not understand the words, but their burden was clear enough; they were a lament, the lament of some sorrowing woman, the sweet embodiment of an ancient and forgotten grief thus embalmed in heavenly music.

It was done; the echoes of the following notes of the violin fainted and died among the carven angels of the roof. It was done, and Morris sighed aloud.

"How can I thank you?" he said. "I knew that you were a musician, but not that you had such genius. To listen to you makes a man feel very humble."

She laughed. "The voice is a mere gift, for which no one deserves credit, although, of course, it can be improved."

"If so, what of the accompaniment?"

"That is different; that comes from the heart and hard work. Do you know that when I was under my old master out in Denmark, who in his time was one of the finest of violinists in the north of Europe, I often played for five and sang for two hours a day? Also, I have never let the thing drop; it has been the consolation and amusement of a somewhat lonely life. So, by this time, I ought to understand my art, although there remains much to be learnt."

"Understand it! Why, you could make a fortune on the stage."

"A living, perhaps, if my voice will bear the continual strain. I daresay that some time I shall drift there--for the living--not because I like the trade or have any wish for popular success. It is a fact that I had far rather sing alone to you here to-night, and know that you are pleased, than be cheered by a whole opera house full of strange people."

"And I--oh, I cannot explain! Sing on, sing all you can, for to-morrow I must go away."

"Go away!" she faltered.

"Yes; I will explain to you afterwards. But please sing while I am here to listen."

The words struck heavy on her heart, numbing it--why, she knew not. For a moment she felt helpless, as though she could neither sing nor play. She did not wish him to go; she did not wish him to go. Her intellect came to her aid. Why should he go? Heaven had given her power, and this man could feel its weight. Would it not suffice to keep him from going? She would try; she would play and sing as she had never done before; sing till his heart was soft, play till his feet had no strength to wander beyond the sound of the sweet notes her art could summon from this instrument of strings and wood.

So again she began, and played on, and on, and on, from time to time letting the bow fall, to sing in a flood of heavenly melody that seemed by nature to fall from her lips, note after note, as dew or honey fall drop by drop from the calyx of some perfect flower. Now long did she play and sing those sad, mysterious siren songs? They never knew. The moon travelled on its appointed course, and as its beams passed away gradually that divine musician grew dimmer to his sight. Now only the stars threw their faint light about her, but still she played on, and on, and on. The music swelled, it told of dead and ancient wars, "where all day long the noise of battle rolled"; it rose shrill and high, and in it rang the scream of the Valkyries preparing the feast of Odin. It was low, and sad, and tender, the voice of women mourning for their dead. It changed; it grew unearthly, spiritualised, such music as those might use who welcome souls to their long home. Lastly, it became rich and soft and far as the echo of a dream, and through it could be heard

sighs and the broken words of love, that slowly fell away and melted as into the nothingness of some happy sleep.

The singer was weary; her fingers could no longer guide the bow; her voice grew faint. For a moment, she stood still, looking in the flicker of the fire and the pale beams of the stars like some searcher returned from heaven to earth. Then, half fainting, down she sank upon a chair.

Morris turned on the lamps, and looked at this fair being, this chosen home of Music, who lay before him like a broken lily. Then back into his heart with a chilling shock came the thought that this woman, to him at least the most beautiful and gifted his eyes had seen, had promised herself in marriage to Stephen Layard; that she, her body, her mind, her music--all that made her the Stella Fregelius whom he knew--were the actual property of Stephen Layard. Could it be true? Was it not possible that he had made some mistake? that he had misunderstood? A burning desire came upon him to know, to know before he went, and upon the forceful impulse of that moment he did what at any other time would have filled him with horror. He asked her; the words broke from his lips; he could not help them.

"Is it true," he said, with something like a groan, "can it be true that you--you are really going to marry that man?"

Stella sat up and looked at him. So she had guessed aright. She made no pretence of fencing with him, or of pretending that she did not know to

whom he referred.

"Are you mad to ask me such a thing?" she asked, with a strange break in her voice.

"I am sorry," he began.

She stamped her foot upon the ground.

"Oh!" she said, "it hurts me, it hurts--from my father I understood, but that you should think it possible that I would sell myself--I tell you that it hurts," and as she spoke two large tears began to roll from her lovely pleading eyes.

"Then you mean that you refused him?"

"What else?"

"Thank you. Of course, I have no right to interfere, but forgive me if I say that I cannot help feeling glad. Even if it is taken on the ground of wealth you can easily make as much money as you want without him," and he glanced at the violin which lay beside her.

She made no reply, the subject seemed to have passed from her mind. But presently she lifted her head again, and in her turn asked a question.

"Did you not say that you are going away to-morrow?"

Then something happened to the heart and brain and tongue of Morris Monk so that he could not speak the thing he wished. He meant to answer a monosyllable "Yes," but in its place he replied with a whole sentence.

"I was thinking of doing so; but after all I do not know that it will be necessary; especially in the middle of our experiments."

Stella said nothing, not a single word. Only she found her handkerchief, and without in the least attempting to hide them, there before his eyes wiped the two tears off her face, first one and then the other.

This done she held out her hand to him and left the room.