

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE GLAMOUR FADES.

After all, the rosy love-making and marrying and Epithalamy are no more than the dawn of things, and to follow comes all the spacious interval of white laborious light. Try as we may to stay those delightful moments, they fade and pass remorselessly; there is no returning, no recovering, only--for the foolish--the vilest peep-shows and imitations in dens and darkened rooms. We go on--we grow. At least we age. Our young couple, emerging presently from an atmosphere of dusk and morning stars, found the sky gathering greyly overhead and saw one another for the first time clearly in the light of every-day.

It might perhaps witness better to Lewisham's refinement if one could tell only of a moderated and dignified cooling, of pathetic little concealments of disappointment and a decent maintenance of the sentimental atmosphere. And so at last daylight. But our young couple were too crude for that. The first intimations of their lack of identity have already been described, but it would be tedious and pitiful to tell of all the little intensifications, shade by shade, of the conflict of their individualities. They fell out, dear lady! they came to conflict of words. The stress of perpetual worry was upon them, of dwindling funds and the anxious search for work that would not come. And on Ethel lay long, vacant, lonely hours in dull

surroundings. Differences arose from the most indifferent things; one night Lewisham lay awake in unfathomable amazement because she had convinced him she did not care a rap for the Welfare of Humanity, and deemed his Socialism a fancy and an indiscretion. And one Sunday afternoon they started for a walk under the pleasantest auspices, and returned flushed and angry, satire and retort flying free--on the score of the social conventions in Ethel's novelettes. For some inexplicable reason Lewisham saw fit to hate her novelettes very bitterly. These encounters indeed were mere skirmishes for the most part, and the silences and embarrassments that followed ended sooner or later in a "making up," tacit or definite, though once or twice this making up only re-opened the healing wound. And always each skirmish left its scar, effaced from yet another line of their lives the lingering tints of romantic colour.

There came no work, no added income for either of them, saving two trifles, for five long months. Once Lewisham won twelve shillings in the prize competition of a penny weekly, and three times came infinitesimal portions of typewriting from a poet who had apparently seen the Athenaeum advertisement. His name was Edwin Peak Baynes and his handwriting was sprawling and unformed. He sent her several short lyrics on scraps of paper with instructions that he desired "three copies of each written beautifully in different styles" and "not fastened with metal fasteners but with silk thread of an appropriate colour." Both of our young people were greatly exercised by these instructions. One fragment was called "Bird Song," one "Cloud

Shadows," and one "Eryngium," but Lewisham thought they might be spoken of collectively as Bosh. By way of payment, this poet sent, in contravention of the postal regulations, half a sovereign stuck into a card, asking her to keep the balance against future occasions. In a little while, greatly altered copies of these lyrics were returned by the poet in person, with this enigmatical instruction written across the cover of each: "This style I like, only if possible more so."

Lewisham was out, but Ethel opened the door, so this indorsement was unnecessary, "He's really only a boy," said Ethel, describing the interview to Lewisham, who was curious. They both felt that the youthfulness of Edwin Peak Baynes detracted something from the reality of this employment.

From his marriage until the final examination in June, Lewisham's life had an odd amphibious quality. At home were Ethel and the perpetual aching pursuit of employment, the pelting irritations of Madam Gadow's persistent overcharges, and so forth, and amid such things he felt extraordinarily grown up; but intercalated with these experiences were those intervals at Kensington, scraps of his adolescence, as it were, lying amidst the new matter of his manhood, intervals during which he was simply an insubordinate and disappointing student with an increasing disposition to gossip. At South Kensington he dwelt with theories and ideals as a student should; at the little rooms in Chelsea--they grew very stuffy as the summer came on, and the accumulation of the penny novelettes Ethel favoured made a

litter--there was his particular private concrete situation, and ideals gave place to the real.

It was a strangely narrow world, he perceived dimly, in which his manhood opened. The only visitors were the Chafferys. Chaffery would come to share their supper, and won upon Lewisham in spite of his roguery by his incessantly entertaining monologue and by his expressed respect for and envy of Lewisham's scientific attainments. Moreover, as time went on Lewisham found himself more and more in sympathy with Chaffery's bitterness against those who order the world. It was good to hear him on bishops and that sort of people. He said what Lewisham wanted to say beautifully. Mrs. Chaffery was perpetually flitting--out of the house as Lewisham came home, a dim, black, nervous, untidy little figure. She came because Ethel, in spite of her expressed belief that love was "all in all," found married life a little dull and lonely while Lewisham was away. And she went hastily when he came, because of a certain irritability that the struggle against the world was developing. He told no one at Kensington about his marriage, at first because it was such a delicious secret, and then for quite other reasons. So there was no overlapping. The two worlds began and ended sharply at the wrought-iron gates. But the day came when Lewisham passed those gates for the last time and his adolescence ended altogether.

In the final examination of the biological course, the examination that signalled the end of his income of a weekly guinea, he knew well

enough that he had done badly. The evening of the last day's practical work found him belated, hot-headed, beaten, with ruffled hair and red ears. He sat to the last moment doggedly struggling to keep cool and to mount the ciliated funnel of an earthworm's nephridium. But ciliated funnels come not to those who have shirked the laboratory practice. He rose, surrendered his paper to the morose elderly young assistant demonstrator who had welcomed him so flatteringly eight months before, and walked down the laboratory to the door where the rest of his fellow-students clustered.

Smithers was talking loudly about the "twistiness" of the identification, and the youngster with the big ears was listening attentively.

"Here's Lewisham! How did you get on, Lewisham?" asked Smithers, not concealing his assurance.

"Horribly," said Lewisham shortly, and pushed past.

"Did you spot D?" clamoured Smithers.

Lewisham pretended not to hear.

Miss Heydinger stood with her hat in her hand and looked at Lewisham's hot eyes. He was for walking past her, but something in her face penetrated even his disturbance. He stopped.

"Did you get out the nephridium?" he said as graciously as he could.

She shook her head. "Are you going downstairs?" she asked.

"Rather," said Lewisham, with a vague intimation in his manner of the offence Smithers gave him.

He opened the glass door from the passage to the staircase. They went down one tier of that square spiral in silence.

"Are you coming up again next year?" asked Miss Heydinger.

"No," said Lewisham. "No, I shall not come here again. Ever."

Pause. "What will you do?" she asked.

"I don't know. I have to get a living somehow. It's been bothering me all the session."

"I thought--" She stopped. "Will you go down to your uncle's again?" she said.

"No. I shall stop in London. It's no good going out of things into the country. And besides--I've quarrelled rather with my uncle."

"What do you think of doing?--teaching?"

"I suppose it will be teaching, I'm not sure. Anything that turns up."

"I see," she said.

They went on down in silence for a time.

"I suppose you will come up again?" he asked.

"I may try the botanical again--if they can find room. And, I was thinking--sometimes one hears of things. What is your address? So that if I heard of anything."

Lewisham stopped on the staircase and thought. "Of course," he said. He made no effort to give her the address, and she demanded it again at the foot of the stairs.

"That confounded nephridium--!" he said. "It has put everything out of my head."

They exchanged addresses on leaflets torn from Miss Heydinger's little note-book.

She waited at the Book in the hall while he signed his name. At the iron gates of the Schools she said: "I am going through Kensington

Gardens."

He was now feeling irritated about the addresses, and he would not see the implicit invitation. "I am going towards Chelsea."

She hesitated a moment, looking at him--puzzled. "Good-bye, then," she said.

"Good-bye," he answered, lifting his hat.

He crossed the Exhibition Road slowly with his packed glazed bag, now seamed with cracks, in his hand. He went thoughtfully down to the corner of the Cromwell Road and turned along that to the right so that he could see the red pile of the Science Schools rising fair, and tall across the gardens of the Natural History Museum. He looked back towards it regretfully.

He was quite sure that he had failed in this last examination. He knew that any career as a scientific man was now closed to him for ever. And he remembered now how he had come along this very road to that great building for the first time in his life, and all the hopes and resolves that had swelled within him as he had drawn near. That dream of incessant unswerving work! Where might he have reached if only he had had singleness of purpose to realise that purpose?...

And in these gardens it was that he and Smithers and Parkson had sat



on a seat hard by the fossil tree, and discoursed of Socialism together before the great paper was read....

"Yes," he said, speaking aloud to himself; "yes--that's all over too. Everything's over."

Presently the corner of the Natural History Museum came between him and his receding Alma Mater. He sighed and turned his face towards the stuffy little rooms at Chelsea, and the still unconquered world.