

# THE LIGHT SEEKERS; BY LADY AGLAND.

**W**e were a small party one winter night in the great Atlantic liner that was crossing to New York.

The weather had been cold and stormy, so that all those who could do so deferred their passages in hope of improvement. We left Queenstown in a gale of wind and snow, but the next day the weather moderated and about thirty of us assembled in the saloon for the great dinner with which the steamship company tried to make amends for our lost feast at home.

Among the passengers the most noteworthy to my thinking was an old man with a snow white beard and vivid blue eyes. To say that they were blue is hardly correct—they were more the color of electric light. If one may use such a comparison; or, to put it in another way, their light was so intense that it was hardly possible to realize what was the color of the pupils.

This old man sat just opposite me, so I had good opportunity for noticing as he sipped and drank nothing but water. He also rarely spoke, but his eyes were constantly turned toward the curtained portholes, as if he could watch the waves, whose thunder he heard as they dashed themselves against the ship's side.

"It is a dark night," I said at length.

"Dark to those who cannot see," he replied, and repeated into silence so profound that I did not like to disturb him again.

When dinner was over at length a few of us younger men lighted our cigars and walked up and down the deck, but the piercing wind soon drove me in and I sat down quietly in the music saloon, where about a dozen of both sexes had collected round the piano and had been singing carols. The music was just over when I entered, but apparently story telling had begun, and I listened with the usual thrill to the usual tales of the supernatural, which are seldom told at first hand, and therefore lie open to all sorts of explanations and emendations.

Presently there was a pause and then a young girl turned to the old man, who was seated, silent, in a corner, and said to him: "Have you no strange experiences to relate? I cannot help fancying that you have. May we not hear them?"

Her voice was musical and her manner gentle. The old man answered her: "If you will, my dear—but it is a story you will not understand."

"Never mind, tell us," they all cried, and he began:

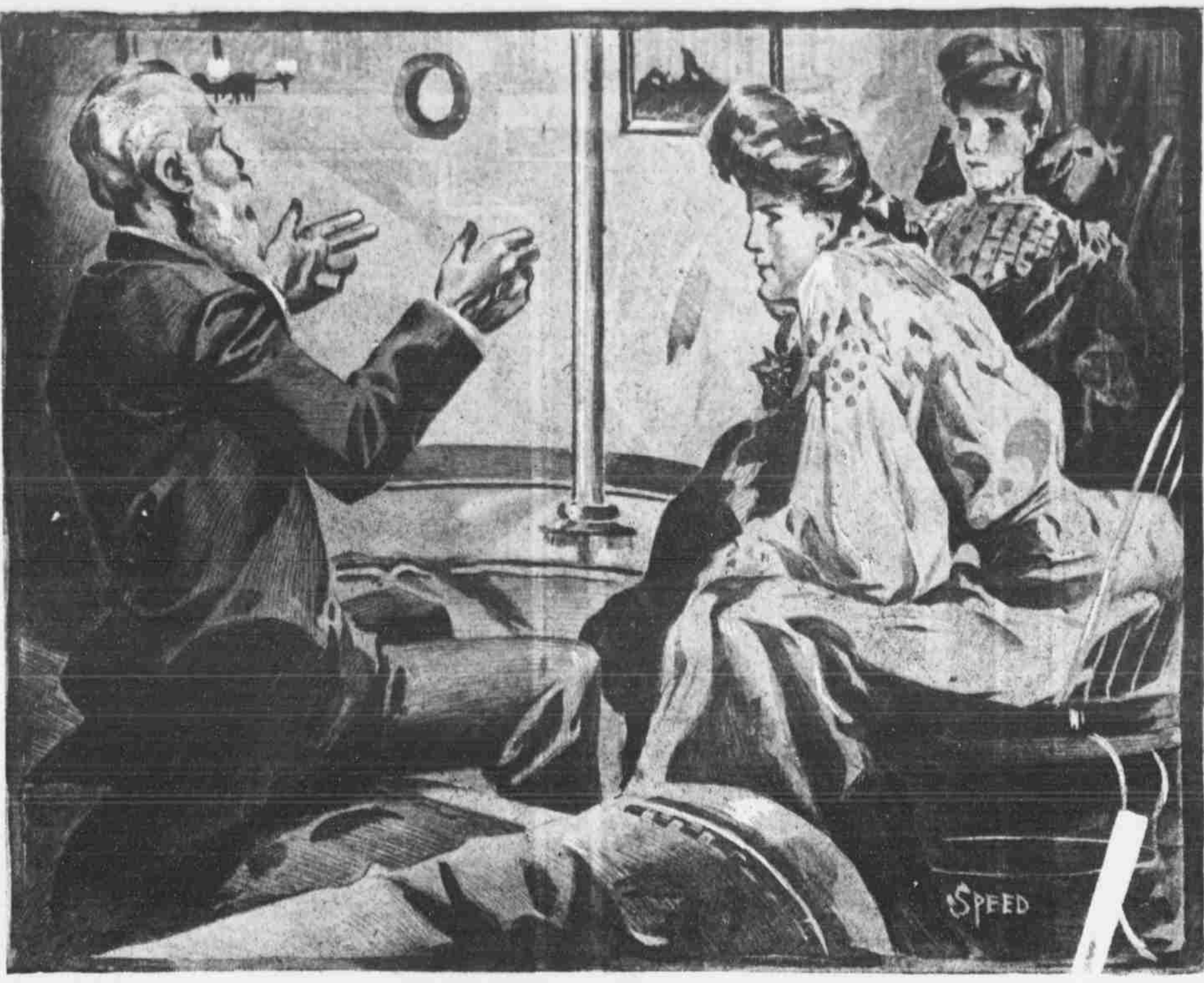
"I was born in a manufacturing city in the north of England. My parents were prosperous folk, and as I was the only son I was expected to learn and carry on the business. Unfortunately I had no aptitude for it, and after many struggles I told my father I could sit at the desk no longer. I tried to explain to him that material things, the ordinary occupations of life, failed to interest me, that the arts of civilization were thrown away upon me—except indeed in one particular.

Where I was concerned an indifference vanished. As a child I would never sleep in the dark. As a boy, morning after morning I would creep out of bed and watch the sunrise, and would walk any distance to see the sun set. Even with artificial light it was the same. A display of fireworks was to me rapture, and a line of street lamps gave me sensations of pleasure I could never explain to other people.

As I grew older the different processes by which light is manufactured became of absorbing interest to me, and at length I implored my father to put some one else in his business and to give me sufficient money to enable me to follow my own inclination. He was angry at first, but eventually gave a grudging consent, and for a few years I went about the world in a state of indifference, visiting sorts of all used for lamps, besides the manufacture of gas and electric light. I made many experiments and some useful inventions, but the intensity of the light was never sufficient to satisfy me. Nothing dazzled me, no brilliancy wearied my eyes or brain, I only longed for more light.

Having learned all I could be taught in England and the United States of the practical working of artificial light I studied all the scientific works I could get hold of which had any bearing on my favorite subject, and one day in the British museum I hit upon an old book which turned my thoughts in a fresh direction. It was a mystical treatise, written in medieval Latin, and the difficulty I had in understanding it increased my desire to know more of the light of the soul, which enables him to perceive, as in a mirror, the light of the eternal. He then described how by a life of purity and asceticism the gross body of man might become clearer and clearer, till the inward light shone through it as through a crystal vase, and ended by an account of some ancient Christian sect of which a remnant still to be found in the Arabian desert, who had always practiced austerities and devotions to such an extent that, though living in caves and underground places of the earth, for fear of persecution, they needed no artificial light, but were to themselves their own illumination.

"This little book fired me at once with an eager desire to visit Arabia, however if this sect were yet in existence, but before I could start there were many preparations to make. I knew nothing of the language or customs of the country through which I must travel, and it was many months before I felt myself well equipped for my journey. As I was at length about to start my mother fell ill and died. She had always regretted my refusal to carry on my father's business, and had never expressed much sympathy with my investigations, but just before her death she started all the watchers round her bed by suddenly exclaiming, quite audibly, while she pointed at me: 'He is right. The light is there.' They were the last



"ALAS! RAYS FROM HER WERE FEW AND FAINT."

intelligible words she uttered. I shall soon know what she meant."

The old man paused, but no one spoke; a sort of awe, at his manner rather than his words, seemed to have fallen upon us. "Do I weary you?" he asked, after a moment; "I must make the rest of my story, shortly."

"No, no," we cried, "tell us everything."

He smiled indulgently, as a father does at his little children's curiosity, and began again in the same low, clear voice: "After my mother's funeral I left England and traveled by sea to Aden. There I made my arrangements, collected camels and other necessities, and started off into the interior, where I remained for three years. I need not go into the details of those wanderings, for they do not concern my story; suffice it that I could find no trace of the sect of which my little book had spoken. True, its geographical directions had been of the vaguest, and in some part of the globe these mysterious people might yet be living; but it seemed on the whole more probable that they had died out and that further search was useless."

"I should perhaps have given up in despair had not my servants suddenly deserted me and so placed retreat out of the question. The fact was that the remittance from my father, on which I had always depended, was for some reason in arrears, and I could not pay them fully until I had agreed, still less give them an increase for which they had been clamoring. They wished to remain in the city, where I was collecting provisions for a fresh start, but I thought I had persuaded them to go with me for one month longer under the promise that I would then return and pay them; for by that time another post from England would have arrived. We did, in fact, make our start as usual, and I had no reason to suspect they were contemplating any treachery, when, on waking at day-break on the fourth morning, I found myself absolutely alone in the desert—not a man nor a camel could be seen; they had left me nothing but a bunch of dates and a bottle of water, besides a small amount of money I had in my waist belt and a little compass I always carried."

"You can imagine my feelings of dismay! Around me was the limitless desert, above me the pitiless sky. Apparently the only possible thing was to retrace my steps towards the city, which was three days' journey to the northeast; whether I should ever reach it was another

question. But something seemed to hinder me from going back; on the contrary, I rose and walked during the early morning hours in a southerly direction; then I rested till the moon rose, and walked again. But I was aware I made but little progress, and with the utmost economy I could only make my provisions last two days.

"I would gladly have finished the water that first evening, but I struggled on through the second day; want of nourishment, however, began to make my head swim, and I was obliged to finish the dates and the lukewarm liquid left at the bottom of the skin bottle. With the rising sun, the agonies of thirst awoke me from my sleep of exhaustion, and how I passed through those hours of unbearable heat I know not—I pray that none of you may ever have such an experience. When the sun went down I was so dazed and faint that I could hardly stand; my skin was burning, my tongue dry and swollen; but a faint sound roused me from my stupor, and to my astonishment I saw a white pigeon fluttering about in front of me. There was no other living thing in sight, except a vulture, which, as I noticed with sick horror, was hovering about my head. But the pigeon! that must mean some human habitation close by! If I could find it, there might still be hope for me. So much I could understand, though my head felt as if all the catarrhs of earth and all the winds of heaven were rushing through it. I realized I must make one more effort, and I tottered on a few paces after the bird, then stumbled and fell, and I remember no more."

"At this point the old man paused again, and said, with a smile: "Up to now I have told you nothing you need think incredible. The rest of my tale is also true, but you will not believe it. Shall I proceed?"

"There was a slight movement in the circle. One elderly lady excused herself from remaining, saying she was tired, and would hear the rest of the story from her niece in the morning; and one or two men took the opportunity of departing at the same time; but the lady's niece, the young girl who had asked the old man to begin, never took her eyes from his face, and looking at her he resumed his story.

"It was some days, I believe, before I recovered consciousness, and when I did I found myself in what appeared to be a cave; the atmosphere was cool and pure, and through an opening I could see the waving of a palm tree and I heard the sweet sound of falling water. I was dressed in clean white linen, and was lying on a mat, with a pitcher of water on the sanded floor beside me. The light at first seemed dim, but perfectly clear; it was different from any light I had seen before; it pervaded the atmosphere like sunlight, but it did not come from the sun. The tone of it was infinitely satisfying, but there did not seem to be enough of it, and my old craving for 'more light' awoke with greater force than the natural longings for food and drink. As I lay and watched, almost too weak to move, a veiled figure came towards me—a woman, no doubt. She uttered a cry of joy on seeing that I was conscious and at once gave me a drink, and as she moved a curious thing—the light in the cavern seemed to increase, a sort of luminous haze floated around her; and then it suddenly flashed across me: 'Here are the people you have come to seek! This is the goal of your pilgrimage!'

"The woman said something in a tongue I could not at first understand; then I realized it was Greek—not the modern Greek of the bazaars, nor yet the English Greek I had been taught at school, but something more like the Greek of the New Testament—a fine language in any of its forms indeed, but more than beautiful to me as she spoke it. That woman—her name was Zoe—became a second mother to me. To her tender care I owe my recovery to health and strength, and to her influence with her people I was indebted for what I cared infinitely more, my instruction in the mysteries I had come so far to seek.

"The sect consisted of perhaps twenty or thirty families, scattered in various oases of the desert and in a few outlying valleys where the water supply was sufficient to allow of cultivation. They lived a simple life, owning just enough sheep and goats to support themselves, but chiefly occupied in the traditional studies which had survived so many centuries of change and disturbance in the world around. Persecuted from time to time by their wild Moslem neighbors, they had yet been protected from complete extinction, and the secret they had acquired was handed down from generation to generation as a religious possession, and always treated as a sacred thing, to be carefully guarded from the knowledge of the profane and unbelieving.

"When Zoe, going out for water in the evening, found me unconscious a few hundred yards from her door, had bent on her sister's entertainment, embarked on an unending series of small dinners, evenings at the theater, dances, boating parties, and every sort of amusement—all of which included him. Some- what to her sister-in-law's surprise, Ray also seemed bent on a course of gaiety, and accepted every invitation with a reckless disregard for work as surprising as it was unusual.

"Only just this once," she said to herself—"only this one chance; and then, if all is over, life shall never mean anything but work again. Surely a child like Nelly can never satisfy him now! She amuses him, just as a child would; but a man wants more than that in a wife."

Everything did not quite begin and end in dancing and gaiety even for Nelly in those days, which appeared to Ray a never ending whirl. The ordinary intimacy which springs from frequent meetings had to a certain extent thawed the ice between her and Lovell, and she talked well on most subjects, he had found. But, however interesting the conversation it was Nelly's lovely, laughing face Ray felt that he was always studying; Nelly's voice for which he listened.

The season was nearly over, and in the dusk of a summer evening Ray entered Mrs. Desmond's drawing room, hoping that chance might at least have brought one other visitor besides herself. The room was empty, and she sat down to dream and wait in the twilight. Outside, the murmur of a well known voice told her who was there, though no words reached her, and she felt nervous now at meeting the man she had hoped to find. She sat listening in the dusk to the far away hum of the busy city. The voices in the balcony sank lower and lower, until presently the speaker began walking up and down, and distinct on the evening air came the low, subdued words as they passed:

"Doing something? Is that your ideal, too? Years ago it was a woman who must do something who sent me away. The pain is over now, but I want to teach my wife myself what to do. Is she going to let me, sweet one? Can she give me any hope?"

The two moved slowly away, and Ray, with a tremulous, smothered sob, softly left the room.

ing been attracted to my prostrate form by the unsteady fluttering of her favorite white pigeon, she at once called her husband and son, who carried me in and laid me in the cool cavern, where I presently revived. When I could speak they questioned me as to my race and religion, and when I explained that I was actually searching for their settlement that I might become their disciple, they were overcome with joy and surprise; but before they would admit me as a member of their family and a bearer of their mysteries, I was obliged to go through a sort of novitiate, living for some months an almost solitary life, and submitting to hard and serious study, as well as to rules of food, drink, and sleep, which to one fresh from English luxury would have seemed extreme asceticism, but which came easily enough to me after my long wanderings in the desert.

"Meanwhile I never saw Zoe unveiled, and though I knew there were young girls in the family, I saw none of them. The oriental rule of seclusion for women was in full force, and of course I respected it absolutely. But at length my period of probation was drawing to an end, and Zoe's husband, Philip, took me before they would no longer hold me back from full knowledge of their mysteries. If I would take his daughter Rhoda for my wife and thus become one of the family; but he added that it was their custom, when a marriage was proposed, for the man and maiden to meet once and converse, as by this means only could their mutual preference, or the reverse, be ascertained, and he therefore invited me to join them in their evening meal that day.

"Now, though I had not been taught, nor discovered the secret which I had come to examine, my perceptions had grown much more acute during the months that had passed since my illness, and I could now see that the faint luminosity I had noticed round Zoe's form was produced by millions of tiny rays flashing out from her in all directions; and not only from her did these rays proceed, but also from Philip and their son, and indeed from any one with whom I conversed. To my intense joy I began to be conscious that similar rays were emitted from myself, and that I was now never in the dark, but that a beautiful radiance surrounded me even in the blackest night. It was when I told Philip this one day, that he said my probation was over, and that only one test more remained for me. It was to this test that I must submit that night.

"When I entered the cavern, where the simple meal was spread, Zoe led me up to her daughter's side and I saw Rhoda for the first time.

The old man passed his hands over his eyes, as if the memory were almost too much for them. Then he said simply: "To see her was to love her, my whole soul seemed to go out to meet her. I was aware of flashing rays from me seeking for return rays from her, but alas! those rays from her were few and faint. We said but little to each other; she watched me from under her heavy eyelids, and now and then a friendly spark seemed to warm my heart and thrill through all my veins; but I realized in a moment that complete sympathy was wanting; I had failed in that last test, and in bitterness of spirit I withdrew that night to my solitary abode.

"Next morning Philip came to me. His face was grave, and his voice sad. "It is useless at present, my boy, he said. Something stands between you and Rhoda. Question your heart; maybe some forgotten but reputed fault of your youth is there, which the maid feels, though you do not. But do not despair; you have all but conquered, you may yet win." All day I sat in gloomy thought, and at last I decided to return to England and visit my father. Philip approved of my resolution, and I made my preparations at once. My farewell with Zoe was painful in the extreme, but she assured me I should come back and that all would yet be well.

"I cannot describe to you what I suffered on returning to what is called civilization. The dirt and noise—the terrible waste of time, littered away on useless struggles after luxury and amusement—the awful contrasts between rich and poor—these things affected me almost beyond endurance. But I found my father needed me; he was feeble and ailing, and I remained with him till his death. In the end he said he forgave me for the trouble and disappointment I had caused him, and as he spoke I felt Rhoda's eyes upon me, though so many hundred miles away, and immediately after the funeral I returned to Arabia.

"Rhoda had waited for me. There was now no obstacle to our marriage, nor to my complete initiation into the mysteries of the learning of the light seekers, and I lived among them for twenty years that passed as one day of perfect happiness.

"Then Rhoda died, and I was obliged to wander overseas. It has been my duty to travel over the world and examine the last developments of western science, that we might test them and see if we had anything to learn. But as regards light we know more than those who have discovered radium and we have the secret of the origin of matter. Much I have written in a book; but this I will say: Matter begins and ends in light, and one day the world will learn that light alone is worth seeking after. But the secret can only be fully understood by the pure in heart."

"He smiled at the young girl, then rose, and swiftly went down the stairs.

We never saw him again.

Next morning his cabin was found empty. There was not a trace of him to be discovered anywhere. The passengers said he was crazy and had jumped overboard in the night, but the watch were certain that they would have seen him if he had come on deck. The steward indeed declared that when walking along the passage late at night he had noticed a curious light in the old man's cabin, which had startled him so much he had almost called the captain, but that when he looked again all was dark, and he thought he must have been mistaken.

However that may be, no explanation of the stranger's disappearance was ever discovered.

## Cured by Fire. The Fate of a Bachelor Girl. By Anna George. Cheap and Pretty Wear for Outings.

**Strange Way in Which Thomas Herring Recovered Use of Voice.**

**L**IVING in bed helpless and paralyzed in a little room above a hairdresser's shop, was an old man. At a glance it was plain to see that something was amiss with him; yet only a few hours back he had never known what it was to suffer illness. But now the blow had come, and come, too, without the least warning. Only yesterday it seemed an age since then—he had awakened, feeling as well as one not half his years. And then strange things happened all around him, and a thick veil hid the sunlight from his eyes.

When consciousness returned, the old man was still in bed. Beside him, gazing with anxious and tearful face, sat his daughter. He tried to move. A cold horror came upon him—his strength had left his limbs. Strive as he would he could not move a limb. He would have cried aloud, but the cruel illness that had stricken him had also taken his voice.

"A tap came at the door, and the doctor entered.

"Hopeless," he heard him murmur. "He will never regain his voice."

It was 8 o'clock on the second evening. Duak had begun to fall. The light from the lamp fell on the face of the old man. His eyes were closed and he was evidently asleep. Suddenly a loud crash resounded through the room. The helpless man awoke. Aghast with horror, he saw the lamp lying overturned and ablaze upon the floor. He tried to shout for help, to scream; but all in vain. The flames had seized upon the curtains. Soon all would be over. Powerless to move or stir to save himself, he could see the fire licking up the wall oil and creeping slowly nearer to his bed.

A sudden commotion arose in the shop below. A gleam of hope came to the helpless old man. He listened intently. The half shrieked word of "Fire!" mingled with a cry of horror from his daughter, reached his ears. Help was at hand.

Footsteps bounded up the stairs, excited hands threw open the door, and he saw his son-in-law rush into the room.

One glance at the horror mangled face of the old man told him that he had not come too late. Seizing the water jug he threw the contents upon the curtains, then, stamping furiously, succeeded in stifling the flames.

And, now the danger was past, he turned to the white faced man.

"Thank goodness you are safe!" he gasped.

The old man smiled. Now the terrible danger was past he felt that something had changed within him.

"You only came just in time," he answered, in words so clear that all could understand.

The shock had restored to him his voice.

Such is the romance of Thomas Herring, who lives in Hackney, England. Since his terrible experience his power of speech has completely returned.

**T**HE turning point in her life had come to Ray Desmond, and half realizing what it meant, half shrinking from the decision she must make, he persisted to sleep before her while she listened to the old, old story—the tale of "bon camaraderie," of unconventional hours and meals, of rapid expeditions in any and every direction, and of hard work it is true, but work which she loved. And in exchange, the deep, low tones of the man's voice in her ear, offering her ease and pleasure, the probable dullness of domesticity, and last, the love of a man who knew what love meant.

"Darling," he whispered, "are you afraid? I want you now and always! Say 'Yes,' sweetheart! I cannot give you up!"

Again the silence, while the man looked down at the slight, slender, gray-haired girl against the mantelpiece, and his face grew stern and white as he waited for his answer.

"It is love, love, love that makes the world go round!" And yet the girl had fought so hard to reach her goal. Was anything worth giving it all up for now?

"I can't," she said at last.

And the man's lips tightened as he looked at her.

"Why not? At least I may have a reason."

The tone, more than the words, stung, and the color drained into her face, as with equal brevity she answered:

"It is not good enough!"

"Thank you! That is quite sufficient, and I can only express my regrets."

"You do not understand me."

"Fardon me. I think your meaning is quite clear. I am only sorry for the stupidity which prevented my seeing before what you have so clearly explained."

"It is not what you offer me, but what I must give up."

"I imagine it comes to much the same thing. Whatever it is, the result is the same. It only remains to say good-by, and to go on our respective ways."

His voice choked a little over the last words, and his brown eyes had lost their brightness. For a moment he touched her hand, and then she was alone, listening drearily to the departing footsteps.

The May sunshine flooded the pretty room, resting lovingly on the big bow of flowers standing wherever space could be

found for them, and shining on papers—papers everywhere. Resting, too, on the soft, brown fluffiness of Ray's hair, and the small foot which tapped restlessly as she sat lost in a dream.

Three years ago she had set her heart on being a writer, and for three years she had fought not only for success, but against that web of conventionality with which girls in her position are fenced in; against the petty social laws in which her mother so delighted and which faced Ray at every turn. She had won her laurels at least—a permanent position on the staff of a paper, a recognized position among women who write, and as much society of the kind she most enjoyed as she had time for. The exchange, as she had said, seemed hardly good enough.

The life of a lawyer's wife—a Mrs. Nobody, with no individually and nothing to do, every interest given up for the sake of one man who had but a few months come into her life. And yet, deep down there lurked an uncomfortable suspicion that the man might have been worth it, after all.

"And do you really know him, Ray? Couldn't you send him a card for my party next week?" asked Mrs. Desmond, Ray's pretty sister-in-law, as she sat in the most luxurious of armchairs, sipping her tea and looking up at Ray, who had dropped in on her way home one afternoon.

"I knew him five years ago," said Ray, dreamily; "but of course he was an ordinary individual then. Nobody dreamed that he would become famous in those days."

"That is always so tiresome," murmured Mrs. Desmond. "If we could only know beforehand which of one's friends will become famous we would never lose sight of them until it came on! You really might send him a card, though, Ray. Every one is talking of his wonderful successes, and I have my sister Nelly up for her first season, and she is longing to see him."

"Give me the card," said Ray, shortly.

Mrs. Desmond's party was as crowded as her parties usually were, and there about 12 o'clock Ray found herself, to her own surprise. Dances were not much in her line, but a wish to see again the only man who had ever come between her

and her work had been too strong, and hopes of she knew not what had brought her.

She stood in a group of people near her sister-in-law, watching the arrivals and looking her best, as she knew. Excitement had deepened the color in her cheeks, and the dead black of her dress, relieved only by some scarlet poppies on her shoulders, showed the exquisite whiteness of her skin, and was a good background for the pretty face and daintily poised head.

Mrs. Desmond was an old acquaintance, I think, and she had, at last, in Mrs. Desmond's clear voice.

And, turning, she found herself shaking hands with the tall, bronzed man who had changed so little and yet so much in those few years.

The few words of greeting over, and he moved, after his hostess, as the lion of the evening, while Ray heard again in imagination his words in her ears: "Say 'Yes,' sweetheart—I cannot give you up," and in that moment realized what she had thrown away.

An evening party of regrets, however, is an impossibility to a pretty and well known woman, and Ray's card, full for every dance, left no time for reminiscences. Only over the heads of her partners did she get glimpses of Lovell in the distance, and always, as it seemed to her, in close proximity to Nelly, Mrs. Desmond's pretty sister. Ray felt the evening a failure, and was sore at heart over the hopes she knew she had built on it.

"I hear you have become a celebrated woman since we met last, Miss Desmond. You must let me congratulate you."

Ray colored as she thought of the fulfillment of her heart's desire.

"I think the congratulations should be on my side," she said. "What wonders you have accomplished!"

And she glanced half shyly into the grave face beside her.

"Thanks," he said briefly. "I wanted work, and was fortunate enough to get it."

"Are you going back?" she could not resist asking.

"Yes; I am only home for a short rest."

And he turned to greet some old acquaintance.

Life from that evening seemed to Ray to center around Lovell. Mrs. Desmond

## The Inside of the Bodice.

**W**HAT to wear on a short outing is a question that is better answered by deciding on an outfit which has ever so little of a jacket or the imitation of one than by wearing a shirt waist suit.

For a visit of a day or two one of the simplest and least expensive suits possible, and yet one that is in the best of taste, is a little black and white checked gown of cotton voile. The little cape bolero, which is a cross between a cape and a bolero, trimmed with ruffles of the same, is an inexpensive way to make this gown and which is certainly far more comfortable and less expensive than a coat. With this you wear a white linen shirt waist, a white sailor hat and white silk gloves, with dull black oxford ties, and a change of white canvas ones in the suit case, with also a low cut summer evening frock for dinner, and pumps, and one of the filmy evening scarfs, which may be in demand for dancing.

There are several dark materials in the shops which have been overlooked during the summer, but which are being grabbed eagerly for train suits for just the kind of fall wear. One is a dark blue percale, which can be had in beautiful shades and which comes at 12 or 15 cents a yard, and the other is a beautiful colored crach which is especially in demand for traveling, and which is lovely in combination with tan stockings and shoes. There is also a nice and homely green black crach which is dull finished and which is used not only for mourning, but by many women who like black and who relieve it by white Irish lace collars and cuffs or those of heavy embroidery.

DECIDEDLY new way of finishing off the inside of a waist and also of giving a good line to the figure is the pinked ruffle. These encircle the arm seams and are sewed to the lengthwise seams of the dress linings with the result that they fill out all the hollows in the figure, they help in giving good lines to a décolleté gown, while in several rows up the inside of the bodice they improve slight figures to a charm. For invisible bustles nothing can exceed three or four inch ruffles, one over the other; and a gradation of smaller ones, also in rows. These sets of ruffles are now often divided and set in on each side of the skirt.

Another Enoch Joyce story by Tom Gallon on this page next week.