

***IAN  
MACLAREN***



***AFTERWARDS,  
AND OTHER  
STORIES***

**Ian Maclaren**

# **Afterwards, and Other Stories**

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# AFTERWARDS

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## I

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**H**e received the telegram in a garden where he was gazing on a vision of blue, set in the fronds of a palm, and listening to the song of the fishers, as it floated across the bay.

“You look so utterly satisfied,” said his hostess, in the high, clear voice of Englishwomen, “that, I know you are tasting the luxury of a contrast. The Riviera is charming in December; imagine London, and Cannes, is Paradise.”

As he smiled assent in the grateful laziness of a hard-worked man, his mind was stung with the remembrance of a young wife swathed in the dreary fog, who, above all things, loved the open air and the shining of the sun.

Her plea was that Bertie would weary alone, and that she hated travelling, but it came to him quite suddenly that this was always the programme of their holidays—some Mediterranean villa, full of clever people, for him, and the awful dulness of that Bloomsbury street for her; or he went North to a shooting-lodge, where he told his best stories in the smoking-room, after a long day on the purple heather; and she did her best for Bertie at some watering-place, much frequented on account of its railway facilities and economical lodgings. Letters of invitation had generally a polite reference to his wife—“If Mrs. Trevor can accompany you I shall be still more delighted”—but it was understood

that she would not accept “We have quite a grudge against Mrs. Trevor, because she will never come with her husband; there is some beautiful child who monopolises her,” his hostess would explain on his arrival; and Trevor allowed it to be understood that his wife was quite devoted to Bertie, and would be miserable without him.

When he left the room, it was explained: “Mrs. Trevor is a hopelessly quiet person, what is called a 'good wife,' you know.”

“The only time she dined with us, Tottie Fribbyl—he was a Theosophist then, it's two years ago—was too amusing for words, and told us what incarnation he was going through.

“Mrs. Trevor, I believe, had never heard of Theosophy, and looked quite horrified at the idea of poor Tottie's incarnation.

“'Isn't it profane to use such words?' she said to me. So I changed to skirt dancing, and would you believe me, she had never seen it?

“What can you do with a woman like that? Nothing remains but religion and the nursery. Why do clever men marry those impossible women?”

Trevor was gradually given to understand, as by an atmosphere, that he was a brilliant man wedded to a dull wife, and there were hours—his worst hours—when he agreed.

*Cara mia, cara mia*, sang the sailors; and his wife's face in its perfect refinement and sweet beauty suddenly replaced the Mediterranean.

Had he belittled his wife, with her wealth of sacrifice and delicate nature, beside women in spectacles who wrote on

the bondage of marriage, and leaders of fashion who could talk of everything from horse-racing to palmistry?

He had only glanced at her last letter; now he read it carefully:—

“The flowers were lovely, and it was so mindful of you to send them, just like my husband. Bertie and I amused ourselves arranging and rearranging them in glasses, till we had made our tea-table lovely. But I was just one little bit disappointed not to get a letter—you see how exacting I am, sir. I waited for every post, and Bertie said, 'Has father's letter come yet?' When one is on holiday, writing letters is an awful bore; but please just a line to Bertie and me. We have a map of the Riviera, and found out all the places you have visited in the yacht; and we tried to imagine you sailing on that azure sea, and landing among those silver olives. I am so grateful to every one for being kind to you, and I hope you will enjoy yourself to the full. Bertie is a little stronger, I'm sure; his cheeks were quite rosy to-day for him. It was his birthday on Wednesday, and I gave him a little treat. The sun was shining brightly in the forenoon, and we had a walk in the Gardens, and made believe that it was Italy! Then we went to Oxford Street, and Bertie chose a regiment of soldiers for his birthday present. He wished some guns so much that I allowed him to have them as a present from you. They only cost one-and-sixpence, and I thought you would like him to have something. Jane and he had a splendid game of hide-and-seek in the evening, and my couch was the den, so you see we have our own gaiety in Bloomsbury.

“Don't look sulky at this long scribble and say, 'What nonsense women write!' for it is almost the same as speaking to you, and I shall imagine the letter all the way till you open it in the sunshine.

“So smile and kiss my name, for this comes with my heart's love from

“Your devoted wife,

“Maud Trevor.

“P.S.—Don't be alarmed because I have to rest; the doctor does not think that there is any danger, and I'll take great care.”

“A telegram.” It was the shattering of a dream. “How wicked of some horrid person. Business ought not to be allowed to enter Paradise. Let's hope it's pleasure; perhaps some one has won a lot of money at Monte Carlo, and wishes us to celebrate the affair.

“Whom is it for? Oh! Mr. Edward Trevor; then it's a brief by telegraph, I suppose. Some millionaire's will case, and the Attorney-General can't manage it alone. What a man he is, to have briefs in holiday time.

“There it is, but remember, before you open it, that you are bound to remain here over Christmas at any rate, and help us with our theatricals. My husband declares that a successful barrister must be a born actor.”...

An hour later Trevor was in the Paris express, and for thirty hours he prayed one petition, that she might live till he arrived. He used to have a berth in the Wagon Lit as a matter of course, and had begun to complain about the champagne in the dining-car, but the thought of comfort made him wince on this journey, and he twice changed his



carriage, once when an English party would not cease from badinage that mocked his ears, and again because a woman had brown eyes with her expression of dog-like faithfulness. The darkness of the night after that sunlit garden, and the monotonous roar of the train, and the face of smiling France covered with snow, and the yeasty waters of the Channel, and the moaning of the wind, filled his heart with dread.

Will that procession of luggage at Dover never come to an end? A French seaman—a fellow with earrings and a merry face—appears and reappears with maddening regularity, each time with a larger trunk. One had X. Y. on it in big white letters. Why not Z. also? Who could have such a name? That is a lady's box, black and brown, plastered with hotel labels. Some bride, perhaps... they are carrying the luggage over his heart. Have they no mercy?

The last piece is in, and the sailors make a merry group at the top of the gangway. They look like Bretons, and that fellow is laughing again—some story about a little child; he can just hear *Ma petite*....

“Guard, is this train never to start? We're half-an-hour late already.”

“Italian mail very heavy, sir; still bringing up bags; so many people at Riviera in winter, writing home to their friends.”...

How cruel every one is! He had not written for ten days. Something always happened, an engagement of pleasure. There was a half-finished letter; he had left it to join a Monte Carlo party.

“Writing letters—home, of course, to that idolised wife. It's beautiful, and you are an example to us all; but Mrs.

Trevor will excuse descriptions of scenery; she knows you are enjoying yourself.”

Had she been expecting that letter from post to post, calculating the hour of each delivery, identifying the postman's feet in that quiet street, holding her breath when he rang, stretching her hand for a letter, to let it drop unopened, and bury her face in the pillow? Had she died waiting for a letter that never came? Those letters that he wrote from the Northern Circuit in that first sweet year, a letter a day, and one day two—it had given him a day's advantage over her. Careful letters, too, though written between cases, with bits of description and amusing scenes.

Some little sameness towards the end, but she never complained of that, and even said those words were the best. And that trick he played—the thought of the postman must have brought it up—how pleasant it was, and what a success! He would be his own letter one day, and take her by surprise. “A letter, ma'am,” the girl said—quite a homely girl, who shared their little joys and anxieties—and then he showed his face with apologies for intrusion. The flush of love in her face, will it be like that to-night, or... What can be keeping the train now? Is this a conspiracy to torment a miserable man?

He thrusts his head out of the window in despair, and sees the guard trying to find a compartment for a family that had mistaken their train.

The husband is explaining, with English garrulity, all the station hearing, what an inconvenience it would have been had they gone in the Holbom Viaduct carriages.

“Half an hour's longer drive, you know, and it's very important we should get home in time; we are expected....”

For what? Dinner, most likely. What did it matter when they got home, to-day or next year? Yet he used to be angry if he were made late for dinner. They come into his compartment, and explain the situation at great length, while he pretends to listen.

A husband and wife returning from a month in Italy, full of their experiences: the Corniche Road, the palaces of Genoa, the pictures in the Pitti, St Peter's at Rome. Her first visit to the Continent, evidently; it reminded them of a certain tour round the Lakes in '80, and she withdrew her hand from her husband's as the train came out from the tunnel. They were not smart people—very pronounced middle-class—but they were lovers, after fifteen years.

They forgot him, who was staring on the bleak landscape with white, pinched face.

“How kind to take me this trip. I know how much you denied yourself, but it has made me young again,” and she said “Edward.” Were all these coincidences arranged? had his purgatorio begun already?

“Have you seen the *Globe*, sir? Bosworth, M.P. for Pedlington, has been made a judge, and there's to be a keen contest.

“Trevor, I see, is named as the Tory candidate—a clever fellow, I've heard. Do you know about him? he's got on quicker than any man of his years.

“Some say that it's his manner; he's such a good sort, the juries cannot resist him, a man told me—a kind heart

goes for something even in a lawyer. Would you like to look....

“Very sorry; would you take a drop of brandy? No? The passage was a little rough, and you don't look quite up to the mark.”

Then they left him in peace, and he drank his cup to the dregs.

It was for Pedlington he had been working and saving, for a seat meant society and the bench, perhaps.... What did it matter now?

She was to come and sit within the cage when he made his first speech, and hear all the remarks.

“Of course it will be a success, for you do everything well, and your wife will be the proudest woman in London.

“Sir Edward Trevor, M.P. I know it's foolish, but it's the foolishness of love, dear, so don't look cross; you are everything to me, and no one loves you as I do.”

What are they slowing for now? There's no station. Did ever train drag like this one?

Off again, thank God... if she only were conscious, and he could ask her to forgive his selfishness.

At last, and the train glides into Victoria. No, he had nothing to declare; would they let him go, or they might keep his luggage altogether.

Some vision was ever coming up, and now he saw her kneeling on the floor and packing that portmanteau, the droop of her figure, her thin white hands.

He was so busy that she did these offices for him—tried to buckle the straps even; but he insisted on doing that It

gave him half an hour longer at the Club. What a brute he had been....

“Do anything you like with my things. 'I'll come tomorrow... as fast as you can drive.”

Huddled in a corner of the hansom so that you might have thought he slept, this man was calculating every foot of the way, gloating over a long stretch of open, glistening asphalt, hating unto murder the immovable drivers whose huge vans blocked his passage. If they had known, there was no living man but would have made room for him... but he had not known himself.... Only one word to tell her he knew now.

As the hansom turned into the street he bent forward, straining his eyes to catch the first glimpse of home. Had it been day-time the blinds would have told their tale; now it was the light he watched.

Dark on the upper floors; no sick light burning... have mercy... then the blood came back to his heart with a rush. How could he have forgotten?

Their room was at the back for quietness, and it might still be well. Some one had been watching, for the door was instantly opened, but he could not see the servant's face.

A doctor came forward and beckoned him to go into the study....

It seemed as if his whole nature had been smitten with insensibility, for he knew everything without words, and yet he heard the driver demanding his fare, and noticed that the doctor had been reading the evening paper while he waited; he saw the paragraph about that seat What work those doctors have to do....

“It was an hour ago... we were amazed that she lived so long; with any other woman it would have been this morning; but she was determined to live till you came home.

“It was not exactly will-power, for she was the gentlest patient I ever had; it was”—the doctor hesitated—a peremptory Scotchman hiding a heart of fire beneath a coating of ice—“it was simply love.”

When the doctor had folded up the evening paper, and laid it on a side table, which took some time, he sat down opposite that fixed, haggard face, which had not yet been softened by a tear.

“Yes, I'll tell you everything if you desire me; perhaps it will relieve your mind; and Mrs. Trevor said you would wish to know, and I must be here to receive you. Her patience and thoughtfulness were marvellous.

“I attend many very clever and charming women, but I tell you, Mr. Trevor, not one has so impressed me as your wife. Her self-forgetfulness passed words; she thought of every one except herself; why, one of the last things she did was to give directions about your room; she was afraid you might feel the change from the Riviera. But that is by the way, and these things are not my business.

“From the beginning I was alarmed, and urged that you should be sent for; but she pledged me not to write; you needed your holiday, she said, and it must not be darkened with anxiety.

“She spoke every day about your devotion and unselfishness; how you wished her to go with you, but she had to stay with the boy....

“The turn for the worse? it was yesterday morning, and I had Sir Reginald at once. We agreed that recovery was hopeless, and I telegraphed to you without delay.

“We also consulted whether she ought to be told, and Sir Reginald said, 'Certainly; that woman has no fear, for she never thinks of herself, and she will want to leave messages.'

“‘If we can only keep her alive till to-morrow afternoon,’ he said, and you will like to remember that everything known to the best man in London was done. Sir Reginald came back himself unmasked to-day, because he remembered a restorative that might sustain the failing strength. She thanked him so sweetly that he was quite shaken; the fact is, that both of us would soon have played the fool. But I ought not to trouble you with these trifles at this time, only as you wanted to know all....

“Yes, she understood what we thought before I spoke, and only asked when you would arrive. 'I want to say “Good-bye,” and then I will be ready,' but perhaps....

“‘Tell you everything?’ That is what I am trying to do, and I was here nearly all day, for I had hoped we might manage to fulfil her wish.

“No, she did not speak much, for we enjoined silence and rest as the only chance; but she had your photograph on her pillow, and some flowers you had sent.

“They were withered, and the nurse removed them when she was sleeping; but she missed them, and we had to put them in her hands. 'My husband was so thoughtful.'

“This is too much for you, I see; it is simply torture. Wait till to-morrow....

“Well, if you insist Expecting a letter... yes... let me recollect... No, I am not hiding anything, but you must not let this get upon your mind.

“We would have deceived her, but she knew the hour of the Continental mails, and could detect the postman's ring. Once a letter came, and she insisted upon seeing it in case of any mistake. But it was only an invitation for you, I think, to some country house.

“It can't be helped now, and you ought not to vex yourself; but I believe a letter would have done more for her than... What am I saying now?

“As she grew weaker she counted the hours, and I left her at four full of hope. 'Two hours more and he'll be here,' and by that time she had your telegram in her hand.

“When I came back the change had come, and she said, 'It's not God's will; bring Bertie.'

“So she kissed him, and said something to him, but we did not listen. After the nurse had carried him out—for he was weeping bitterly, poor little chap—she whispered to me to get a sheet of paper and sit down by her bedside.... I think it would be better... very well, I will tell you all.

“I wrote what she dictated with her last breath, and I promised you would receive it from her own hand, and so you will. She turned her face to the door and lay quite still till about six, when I heard her say your name very softly, and a minute afterwards she was gone, without pain or struggle.” ...

She lay as she had died, waiting for his coming, and the smile with which she had said his name was still on her face. It was the first time she did not colour with joy at his



coming, that her hand was cold to his touch. He kissed her, but his heart was numbed, and he could not weep.

Then he took her letter and read it beside that silence.

“Dearest,—

“They tell me now that I shall not live to see you come in and to cast my arms once more round your neck before we part. Be kind to Bertie, and remember that he is delicate and shy. He will miss me, and you will be patient with him for my sake. Give him my watch, and do not let him forget me. My locket with your likeness I would like left on my heart. You will never know how much I have loved you, for I could never speak. You have been very good to me, and I want you to know that I am grateful; but it is better perhaps that I should die, for I might hinder you in your future life. Forgive me because I came short of what your wife should have been. None can ever love you better. You will take these poor words from a dead hand, but I shall see you, and I shall never cease to love you, to follow your life, to pray for you—my first, my only love.”

The fountains within him were broken, and he flung himself down by the bedside in an agony of repentance.

“Oh, if I had known before; but now it is too late, too late!”

For we sin against our dearest not because we do not love, but because we do not imagine.



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Maud Trevor was a genuine woman, and kept her accounts with the aid of six purses. One was an ancient

housewife of her grandmother's, which used to be equipped with silk and thread and needles and buttons, and from a secret place yielded to the third generation a bank note of value. This capacious receptacle was evidently intended for the household exchequer, whose transactions were innumerable, and whose monthly budget depended for success on an unflinching supply of copper. Another had come from her mother, and was of obsolete design—a bag closed at both extremities, with a long narrow slit in the middle, and two rings which compressed the gold into one end and the silver into the other. This was marked out by Providence for charity, since it made no provision for pennies, and laid a handicap of inconvenience on threepenny bits. It retained a subtle trace of an old-fashioned scent her mother loved, and recalled her mother going out on some errand of mercy—a St Clare in her sacrifices and devotion. Purse three descended from her father, and was an incarnation of business—made of chamois leather with a steel clasp that closed with a click, having three compartments within, one of which had its own clasp and was reserved for gold. In this bank Maud kept the funds of a clothing society, whose more masterly bargains ran sometimes into farthings, and she was always haunted with anxiety lest a new farthing and a half-sovereign should some day change places. A pretty little purse with ivory sides and silver hinges—a birthday gift of her girlhood—was large enough to hold her dress allowance, which Trevor had fixed at a most generous rate when he had barely four hundred a year, and had since forgotten to increase. One in sealskin had been a gift of engagement days, and held the savings of the year against

birthday and Christmas presents—whose contents were the subject of many calculations. A cast-off purse of Trevor's had been devoted to Bertie, and from its resources came one way or other all he needed; but it happened that number six was constantly reinforced from the purse with the ivory sides.

Saturday afternoon was sacred to book-keeping, and Maud used her bed as a table for this critical operation, partly because it was so much larger than an escritoire, but chiefly because you could empty the purses into little pools with steep protecting banks. Of course if one sat down hurriedly there was great danger of amalgamation, with quite hopeless consequences; and Trevor held over Maud's head the chance of his making this mistake. It was his way, before he grew too busy, to watch till the anxious face would suddenly brighten and a rapid change be made in the pools—the household contributing something to presents and the dress purse to Bertie, while private and public charity would accommodate each other with change. Caresses were strictly forbidden in those times of abstruse calculation, and the Evil One who stands at every man's elbow once tempted Trevor to roll the counterpane into a bundle—purses, money, and all—but Maud, when he confessed, said that no human being would be allowed to fall into such wickedness.

Trevor was obliged to open her wardrobe, fourteen days after the funeral, and the first thing he lighted upon was the purses. They lay in a row on an old account-book—a motley set indeed—but so absurd and tricky a spirit is pathos, they affected him more swiftly than the sight of a portrait Was

ever any one so faithful and conscientious, so self-forgetful and kind, so capable also and clever in her own sphere? Latterly he had sneered at the purses, and once, being vexed at something in a letter, he had told Maud she ought to have done with that folly and keep her accounts like an educated woman. "A girl of twelve would be ashamed."... What a merciless power memory wields. She only drooped her head,... it was on the sealskin purse the tear fell, and at once he saw the bend of the Wye at Tintern where he had surprised her with the gift of that purse. He was moved to kiss away that tear, but his heart hardened. Why could she not be like the women he knew?... Well, he would not be troubled any longer with her simple ways... he could do as he pleased now with the purses.... A bitter madness of grief took possession of him, and he arranged them on the bed.

One was empty, the present purse, and he understood... the dress purse, of course, a little silver only... the rest had gone that he might have something beautiful.... He knew that it must be done sooner or later, and to-day was best, for his heart could be no sorer.... Yes, here they were, the ungiven gifts. For every person, from himself to the nurse; all wrapped in soft white paper and ready in good time.... She used to arrange everything on Christmas Eve... this year he had intended to stay at Cannes,... there would just have been Bertie and his mother, now... But he must open it—an inkstand for his study in solid brass, with pens and other things complete—he noted every detail as if to estimate its value. It came back to him how she had cunningly questioned him about his needs before he left for Cannes, till he grew impatient. "Don't bother me about ink-

bottles," Yes, the very words, and others... the secret writing of memory came out in this fire of sorrow. "Why won't women understand that a man can't answer questions about trifles when he has work on hand?" He could swear to the words, and he knew how Maud looked, although he did not see.

"Don't go away; you promised that you would sit beside me when I worked—hinder me? I suppose you are bidding for a kiss; you know the sight of your face inspires me."... That was ten years ago... he might have borne with her presence a little longer.... She never would come again... he would have no interruptions of that kind....

Her gloves, sixes—what a perfect hand it was (smooths out the glove). His memory brings up a dinner table. Mrs. Chatterby gives her opinion on Meredith's last novel, and helps herself to salt—he sees a disgusting hand, with stumpy fingers, and, for impudence, a street arab of a thumb. A vulgar little woman through and through, and yet because she picked up scraps from the monthlies, and had the trick of catch-words, people paid her court And he had sometimes thought, but he knew better to-day... of all things in the world a glove is the surest symbol. Mended, too, very neatly... that he might have his hansoms.

It was the last thing he ever could have imagined, and yet it must be a diary—Maud's diary! Turns over the leaves, and catches that woman's name against whom he has suddenly taken a violent dislike.

"January 25. Was at Mrs. Chatterby's—how strange one does not say anything of her husband—yet he is the nicer of the two—and I think it will be better not to go again to

dinner. One can always make some excuse that will not be quite untrue.

“‘The dinner is in honour of Mr. Fynical, who is leaving his College and coming to live in London, to do literary work.’ as Mrs. Chatterby has been explaining for weeks, ‘and to give tone to the weeklies.’

“‘The younger men are quite devoted to him, and we ought all to be so thankful that he is to be within reach. His touch reminds one of,’—I don’t know the French writer, but she does not always give the same name. ‘We hope to see a great deal of him. So delightfully cynical, you know, and hates the bourgeoisie.’

“‘I was terrified lest I should sit next Mr. Fynical, but Mrs. Chatterby was merciful, and gave me Janie Godfrey’s father. Edward says that he is a very able man, and will be Lord Chancellor some day, but he is so quiet and modest, that one feels quite at home with him. Last summer he was yachting on the west coast of Scotland, and he described the sunset over the Skye hills; and I tried to give him a Devonshire sunrise. We both forgot where we were, and then Mrs. Chatterby asked me quite loud, so that every one looked, what I thought of ‘Smudges.’

“‘The dinner-table seemed to wait for my answer, and I wish that the book had never come from the library, but I said that I had sent it back because it seemed so bitter and cruel, and one ought to read books which showed the noble side of life.

“‘You are one of the old-fashioned women,’ she replied. ‘You believe in a novel for the young person,’ with a smile that hurt me, and I told her that I had been brought up on

Sir Walter Scott I was trying to say something about his purity and chivalry, when I caught Mr. Fynical's eye, and blushed red. If I had only been silent,—for I'm afraid every one was laughing, and Edward did not say one word to me all the way home.

“February 20. Another ordeal, but not so unfortunate as the last. The Browne-Smythes are very kind friends, but I do think they are too much concerned about having clever people at their house. One evening Mrs. Browne-Smythe said she was happy because nothing had been talked about except translations of Homer. A certain guest was so miserable on that occasion that I begged Edward to leave me at home this time, but he said it would not be Greek again. It was science, however, and when we came in Mrs. Browne-Smythe was telling a very learned-looking person that she simply lived for fossils. A young lady beside me was talking about gases to a nervous man, who grew quite red, and tried to escape behind a table. I think she was wrong in her words, and he was too polite to correct her. To my horror, he was obliged to take me in to dinner, and there never could have been two people more deserving of pity, for I was terrified of his knowledge, and he was afraid of my ignorance. We sat in perfect silence till a fatherly old man, quite like a farmer, on my left, began to talk to me so pleasantly that I described our country people, and was really sorry when the ladies had to leave. Edward says that he is one of the greatest discoverers in the world, and has all kinds of honours. We became so friendly that he has promised to take tea with me, and I think he does not despise my simplicity. How I long to be cleverer for Edward's

sake, for I'm sure he must be ashamed of me among those brilliant women. I cannot blame him: I am proud of my husband.

“May 15. I am quite discouraged, and have resolved never to go to any charitable committee again. Miss Tabitha Primmer used shameful language at the Magdalene meeting to-day, and Mrs. Wood-Ruler showed me that I had broken Law 43 by giving a poor girl personal aid. It seems presumptuous on my part to criticise such able and diligent workers, but my mother never spoke about certain subjects, and it is agony for me to discuss them. When the vicar insisted on Sunday that thoughtful women were required for Christian service to-day, and that we must read up all kinds of books and know all kinds of painful things, my heart sank. It does not seem as if there was any place left for simple folk like me. Perhaps it would be better to give up going out altogether, and live for Edward and Bertie. I can always do something for them, and their love will be enough reward.

“Nov. 30 I have not slept all night, for I made a dreadful mistake about a new book that every one is reading, and Edward was so angry. He did not mean all he said, but he never called me a fool before. Perhaps he is right, and it is hard on him, who is so bright Sometimes I wish-” And then there was no writing, only a tear mark....

Afterwards he opened the letters that had come since her death, and this is what he read:

“My dear Trevor,—

“The intelligence of Mrs. Trevor's death has given me a great shock of regret, and you will allow me to express my sympathy. Many men not given to enthusiasm had told me



of her face and goodness, and before I had seen your wife I knew she was a very perfect type of womanliness. The few times I met her, Mrs. Trevor cast a certain spell over me—the nameless grace of the former days—and I felt myself unworthy in her presence. Once when a silly woman referred to one of the most miserable examples of decadent fiction, your wife spoke so nobly of true literature that I was moved to thank her, but I gathered from her face that this would not be acceptable. It seemed to me that the mask had fallen from a beautiful soul, and one man at least, in whom there is too little reverence, took the shoes from off his feet. Pardon me if I have exceeded, and

“Believe me,

“Yours faithfully,

“Bernard Fynical.”

The next was from the F.R.S.

“My dear Sir,—

“It is quite wrong for me, a stranger, to intrude on your grief, but I am compelled to tell you that an old fellow who only spoke to your wife once, had to wipe his spectacles over the *Times* this morning. It came about this way. The lady I had taken in to dinner at the Browne-Smythes gabbled about science till I lost my temper, and told her it would be a good thing if women would keep to their own sphere. Your wife was on the other side, and I turned to her in despair. She delighted me by confessing utter ignorance of my subject, and then she won my heart by some of the loveliest stories of peasant life in Devonshire I ever heard, so full of insight and delicacy. If the parsons preached like that I would be in church next Sunday. She put me in mind

of a sister I lost long ago—who had the same low, soft voice and honest, trusty eyes. When she found I was a lonely man, your wife had pity on me, and asked me to call on her. But I had to go to America, and only returned two days ago. I intended to wish her a Happy New Year, but it's too late. I cannot get you out of my mind, and I thought it might comfort you to know how a fossil like myself was melted by that kind heart “Believe me, my dear sir,

“Your obedient servant,

“Archibald Gilmore.”

The third was also from a man, but this time a lad in rooms whom Trevor had seen at the house.

“Dear Mr. Trevor,—

“You perhaps know that Mrs. Trevor allowed me to spend an hour with her of an evening, when I felt downhearted or had any trouble, but no one will ever know how much she did for me. When I came up to London my faith began to go, and I saw that in a short time I would be an Agnostic. This did not trouble me so much on my own account as my mother's, who is dead, and made me promise something on her death-bed. So I bought books and heard sermons on unbelief till I was quite sick of the whole business. Mrs. Trevor took me to hear your own clergyman, who did not help me one bit, for he was too clever and logical; but you remember I came home with you, and after you had gone to your study I told Mrs. Trevor my difficulties, and she did me more good than all the books. She never argued nor preached, but when I was with her one felt that religion was a reality, and that she knew more about it than any one I had met since I lost my mother. It is a shame to trouble you

with my story when you are in such sorrow, and no one need tell you how noble a woman Mrs. Trevor was; but I could not help letting you know that her goodness has saved one young fellow at least from infidelity and worse.

“You will not mind my having sent a cross to put on the coffin; it was all I could do.

“Yours gratefully,

“George Benson.”

There was neither beginning nor end to the fourth letter, but it was written in a lady's hand.

“I am a clergyman's daughter, who left her father's house, and went astray. I have been in the Inferno, and have seen what I read in *Dante* while I was innocent. One day the old rectory rose up before my eyes—the roses hanging over my bedroom window; the birds flying in and out the ivy; my father on the lawn, aged and broken through my sin—and I resolved that my womanhood should no longer be dragged in the mire. My home was closed years ago, I had no friends, so I went in my desperation to a certain Institute, and told my case to a matron. She was not unkindly, but the committee were awful, without either sympathy or manners; and when an unmarried woman wished to pry into the details of my degradation—but I can't tell a man the shame they would have put upon me—my heart turned to flint, and I left the place. I would have gone back to my life and perished had it not been for one woman who followed me out, and asked me to go home with her for afternoon tea. Had she said one word about my past, I had flung myself away; but because she spoke to me as if I were still in the rectory, I could not refuse. Mrs. Trevor never once

mentioned my sin, and she saved my soul. I am now a nurse in one of the hospitals, and full of peace. As long as I live I shall lay white flowers on her grave, who surely was the wisest and tenderest of women." Trevor's fortitude was failing fast before this weight of unconscious condemnation, and he was only able to read one more—an amazing production, that had cost the writer great pains.

“Honoured Sir,—

“Bill says as it's tyking too much on the likes o' me to be addressing you on your missus' death, but it's not her husband that will despise a pore working woman oo's lost her best friend. When Bill 'ad the rumatiks, and couldn't do no work, and Byby was a-growing that thin you could see thro' 'im, Mrs. Byles says to me, 'Mrs. 'Awkes, you goes to the Society for the Horganisation of Female Toilers.' Says I, 'Wot is that?' and she declares, 'It's a set of ladies oo wants to'elp women to work, and they 'ill see you gets it' So I goes, and I saw a set of ladies sitting at a table, and they looks at me; and one with spectacles, and a vice like an 'and-saw, arsk me, 'Wot's yer name?' and "Ow old are you?' and "Ow many children have you?' and 'Are your 'abits temperate?' And then she says, 'If you pay a shilling we 'ill put your nyme down for work has an unskilled worker.' 'I 'avn't got a shilling, and Byby's dyin' for want of food.' 'This ain't a Poor 'ouse,' says she; 'this is a Booro.' When I was a-going down the stairs, a lady comes after me. 'Don't cry, Mrs. 'Awkes,' for she had picked up my name. 'I've some charring for you, and we'll go to get something for Byby.' If ever there was a hangel in a sealskin jacket and a plain little bonnet, but the true lady hall hover, 'er name was Mrs. Trevor. Bill, he