

would have passed each other as strangers. His hair was growing gray; on hers there was no longer a golden sheen. His face was tanned with wind and weather; the pink and white of her complexion faded to an ivory pallor, and his heart ached when, struggling against an impulse of pitying tenderness, he paid his two guineas, gave the name of his chum as his own, and stipulated that he should be allowed to come several times before the miniature was finished, in order to give the artist hints on 'coloring.' Then he went back to the hotel, posted his chum's portrait to 'Miss Diana Leeson,' and for the first time since he had been in England ate his dinner as if he had been hungry.

The next day, for the simple reason that he had nothing better to do, at least that was his version of the matter, he made his way to the cottage, laughing in a shame-faced fashion as he thought of the amusement it would have afforded old Fred could he have heard his friend and the artist gravely discussing the color of his eyes, the exact shade of his hair, the improvement that might be effected by the substitution of a more amiable expression for the frown, partly due to the chum's dislike to being 'taken,' partly to the glaring light of the open-air sitting. But when on five successive days the Hendon omnibus dropped John Everill at the same spot, and John Everill, with the same deprecating air, informed Miss Leeson that he was not quite sure that his description of his friend's nose or chin had been sufficiently clear on the preceding day, why Di the younger began to indulge in irreverent remarks concerning the unnecessary fuss that was being made about the likeness of a very commonplace person, and that person 'only a man,' remarks heard by Di the elder with the tolerance of thirty-six for nineteen. However, the painting of a miniature, even the miniature of a dead chum, cannot occupy more than a certain length of time, so at last John had to confess that nothing more could be done. Indeed, he knew that the sight of that carefully-shaded portrait would have moved his friend to a paroxysm of unholy mirth.

'It has given you a great deal of trouble,' he said, looking across at Miss Leeson.

'I never find my work a trouble,' she answered, 'and I'm glad you're pleased.'

'The other photograph will not make as good a picture as this.'

'Perhaps you don't know its possibilities. At any rate, I shall do my best.'

'Oh! I am sure of that, and only hope you won't be tired. Doing one's best generally means hard work.'

With a little smile Miss Leeson glanced at the rugged features of the speaker.

'It may seem hard at times,' she assented, 'but I believe you would be one of the last to shirk it—on that account.'

'I hope so. A man who can't do his duty in the world deserves to be kicked out of it.'

'And you would administer the same rough justice to women?'

'That's a subject I haven't studied,' he answered quietly. 'Out there,' waving his hand as if Australia were at the end of the garden, 'out there I met very few women. Why, I haven't talked to a woman as I've talked to you for over sixteen years. That afternoon I came here with your niece my temerity alarmed me to such an extent that when you spoke I felt inclined to say, "Yes, ma'am." Did I say it?'

'Not that I remember,' she laughed, little suspecting that this stern-looking man sometimes descended to frivolity just because he was anxious to banish the too persistent gravity from her tired eyes. 'As you are so afraid of women,' she continued, 'I take it for granted that it's a man's photograph you wish me to copy.'

'Yes. It's one I found amongst my friend's belongings. Personally, I don't think it worth keeping. He thought differently.'

'And for that reason you value it. Even in small things you are a loyal friend, Mr. Jephson. Oh, by the way,' she went on, 'now that the miniature's finished, I should like to enter it in my list of work. It sounds disrespectful to write "portrait of a man," but you've never mentioned your friend by name.'

'No,' and John Everill walked to the window, ostensibly for the purpose of freeing a fly that was entangled in the mesh of a curtain. 'No, we seldom addressed each other by name. It was always "chum" or "old man," unless we felt particularly lively, and then it was "young 'un."'

'I see,' she said softly, fearing that her chance words had awakened some painful memory. 'Then I think I shall write "Portrait of my Chum."'

For the rest of that day John was preoccupied, a severe critic might have said moody. The plan he had

considered a masterpiece of diplomacy suddenly appeared so clumsy that he fancied it might even savor of impertinence. Little as he knew of women, he had lately contrived to learn something of their ways, when, the painting having been put aside for a few minutes, he had seemingly taken refuge in his newspaper. He had also found out that the elder Di was saving up to buy the younger one a new summer frock, while the latter one had a little box half full of three-penny pieces intended for the purchase of a more comfortable 'artist's chair,' all this lately-gained knowledge having taught him to be very tender in his dealings with the two Di's.

But the fact was, so both aunt and niece were firmly persuaded, that John's means were almost as straitened as their own. They made no secret of their little economies, whilst they carefully avoided any references to his address. It was, they thought, so probable that he would not like others to know where he was obliged to live, and the result of his care of his 'circumstances' betrayed itself the day after the chum's portrait was finished, when John took his usual seat by the table on which Miss Leeson's painting materials were spread out.

'It's not often that I have two miniatures to paint for the same person within so short a time,' she began, with a little hesitation.

'No?' interrogatively.

'And I really think I ought to make some small difference in the terms.'

'Oh, of course; I didn't believe it was enough. Shall we say five guineas for this one?' asked John, forgetting himself. 'And—'

'I was going to suggest something quite the reverse,' interrupted Miss Leeson, the flush on her face making her look five years younger. 'Tradespeople often allow a reduction for a quantity. Artists ought to do the same. I shall charge you a guinea for this miniature.'

'We'll talk about that later on,' and from a shabby blue envelope John drew a photograph and laid it on the table.

Then followed a pause, during which Miss Leeson, the woman, rather than Miss Leeson, the artist, looked at the photograph with hungry eyes.

'Your friend had this—a long time?' she said at last.

'A very long time,' answered John, truthfully enough. 'It was given to him by a young fellow whom he nursed through a bad illness.'

'And what became of him?'

'Do you mean the young fellow? Oh, when my chum last saw him he was as well as—as I am.'

'And,' doubtfully, 'and successful?'

'Yes, after a while. Of course luck doesn't come to everybody just at first, and when it does come, it takes some time to make a fortune.'

'Oh, I understand all that.' Here Miss Leeson put down the photograph and took up her palette. 'I have a fancy,' she said slowly, 'that it helps me to know something of the character of the people whose portraits I paint. What did your chum think of this friend of his?'

'Oh, he always spoke well of him.'

'And he found him grateful?'

'Yes, I'll answer for that. He'—nodding at the photograph—'was certainly grateful. A man must act as if he thanked a friend for saving his life, even though the life mayn't be all roses and honey.'

'You seem to know a good deal about the young man.'

'I do. There was a time,' said John grimly, 'when I found him and his affairs a bit trying.'

'Well, do you know,' with an attempt to speak lightly, 'though I'm getting so old, I haven't lost my liking for stories—real live stories. Suppose you amuse me whilst I mix my paints by telling me what you can remember of my new subject.'

'Oh, his story wasn't original, and he—didn't find it—amusing.'

'No.'

'He was just twenty-five when that likeness was taken, and although he had only £130 a year, and although no one but a lunatic could hope to keep a wife on that, he fell madly in love.'

'Are you sure it was—madly?'

'He thought so, and I take it he ought to have known.'

'Ye-es. Go on, Mr.—Jephson.'

'Well, he found the lady's father more practical than himself, so he gave up his situation, sold all his superfluous possessions, and went out to Australia, where,