

Atherton read on: "These are the questions which I ask myself in my despair. She is free, now; but am I free? Am I not rather bound by the past to perpetual silence? There are times when I rebel against these tortures; when I feel a sanction for my love of her, an assurance from somewhere that it is right and good to love her; but then I sink again, for, if I ask whence this assurance comes—I beseech you to tell me what you think. Has my offence been so great that nothing can atone for it? Must I sacrifice to this fear all my hopes of what I could be to her, and for her?"

Atherton folded up the letter, and put it back into its envelope, with a frown of exasperation. "I can't see what should have infatuated Halleck with that woman. I don't believe now that he loves her; I believe he only pities her. She is altogether inferior to him: passionate, narrow-minded, jealous—she would make him miserable. He'd much better stay as he is. If it were not pathetic to have him deifying her in this way, it would be laughable."

"She had a jealous temperament," said Clara, looking down. "But all the Hallecks are fond of her. They think there is a great deal of good in her. I don't suppose Ben himself thinks she is perfect. But—"

"I dare say," interrupted her husband, "that he thinks he's entirely sincere in asking my advice. But you can see how he *wishes* to be advised."

"Of course. He wishes to marry her. It isn't so much a question of what a man ought to have, as what he wants to have, in marrying, is it? Even the best of men. If she is exacting and quick-tempered, he is good enough to get on with her. If she had a husband that she could thoroughly trust, she

would be easy enough to get on with. There is no woman good enough to get on with a bad man. It's terrible to think of that poor creature living there by herself, with no one to look after her and her little girl; and if Ben—"

"What do you mean, Clara? Don't you see that his being in love with her when she was another man's wife is what he feels it to be—an indelible stain?"

"She never knew it; and no one ever knew it but you. You said it was our deeds that judged us. Didn't Ben go away when he realized his feeling for her?"

"He came back."

"But he did everything he could to find that poor wretch, and he tried to prevent the divorce. Ben is morbid about it; but there is no use in our being so."

"There was a time when he would have been glad to profit by a divorce."

"But he never did. You said the will didn't count. And now she is a widow, and any man may ask her to marry him."

"Any man but the one who loved her during her husband's life. That is, if he is such a man as Halleck. Of course, it isn't a question of mere right and wrong, of gross black and white—there are degrees, there are shades; there might be redemption for another sort of man in such a marriage; but for Halleck there could only be loss—deterioration—lapse from the ideal. I should think he might suffer something of this even in her eyes—"

"Oh, how hard you are! I wish Ben hadn't asked your advice. Why, you are worse than he is! You're *not* going to write that to him?"

Atherton flung the letter upon the table, and drew a troubled sigh. "Ah, I don't know! I don't know!"

THE END.

## THE STATUE.

THERE was a statue, only common clay,  
Which in the sunshine stood one summer day,  
And just through one brief magic hour—I'm told,  
Because the sun shone so, seemed finest gold.

There was a hero, hero but to one,  
Who had his gilded hour beneath Love's Sun,  
And then, Ah me! the sunshine died away,  
And left the hero—bare, dull, common clay.

L'ENVOI.

ARE you the hero, or are you the sun?  
A word, *mon ami*, and my fable's done.  
If you must blame,—be just, and blame the sun.

*Frances Hodgson Burnett.*