

# The Dedication

By Fred M. Simpson

## PERSONS REPRESENTED

Lucy Rimmerton. Harold Sekbourne

Scene I—The period is 1863

*The sitting-room in Lucy Rimmerton's lodgings. She is seated in front of the fire making some toast.*

*Lucy.* There! I think that will do, although it isn't anything very great. [*Rises.*] What a colour I must have! Harold says I always manage to toast myself very much better than I do the bread. [*Lights the gas, and begins arranging some flowers on the table.*] His favourite flowers; I know he will be pleased when he sees them. How strange it is that he should really care for me!—I, who am so commonplace and ordinary, hardly pretty either, although he says I am. I always tell him he might have done so much better than propose to a poor governess without a penny.—Oh, if only his book proves a success!—a really great success!—how glorious it will be! Why doesn't the wretched publisher

publisher make haste and bring it out? I believe he is keeping it back on purpose. What dreadful creatures they are! At first—squabble, squabble, squabble; squabble about terms, squabble about this, another squabble about that, and then, when everything is finally arranged, delay, delay, delay. “You must wait for the publishing season.” As though a book were a young lady whose future might be seriously jeopardised if it made its *début* at an unfashionable time.

[*The door opens, and Harold bursts into the room.*]

*Harold.* It's out, it's out; out at last.

*Lucy.* What, the book! Really! Where is it? Do show it to me.

*Harold.* Do you think you deserve it!

*Lucy.* Oh! don't tantalise me. Have you seen it? What is it like!

*Harold.* It is printed, and very much like other books.

*Lucy.* You are horrid. I believe you have it with you. Have you?

*Harold.* And what if I say yes?

*Lucy.* You have. Do let me see it.

*Harold.* And will you be very good if I do!

*Lucy.* I'll be angelic.

*Harold.* Then on that condition only—There! take it gently. [*Lucy snatches it, and cuts the string.*] I thought you never cut string?

*Lucy.* There is never a never that hasn't an exception.

*Harold.* Not a woman's, certainly.

*Lucy.* Oh! how nice it looks! And to think that it is yours, really and truly yours. “Grace: a Sketch. By Harold Sek-bourne.” It's delicious! [*Holding the book, dances round the room.*]

*Harold.*

*Harold.* I shall begin to be jealous. You will soon be more in love with my book than you are with me.

*Lucy.* And why shouldn't I be? Haven't you always said that a man's work is the best part of him?

*Harold.* If my silly sayings are to be brought up in evidence against me like this, I shall——

*Lucy.* You shall what?

*Harold.* Take the book back.

*Lucy.* Oh, will you? I should like to see you do it. [*Holds it behind her.*] You have got to get it first.

*Harold.* And what are you going to give me for it?

*Lucy.* Isn't it a presentation copy?

*Harold.* It is the very first to leave the printer's.

*Lucy.* Then you ought not to want any payment.

*Harold.* I do though, all the same. Come—no payment, no book.

*Lucy.* There, there, there!

*Harold.* And there.

*Lucy.* Oh! don't! You'll stifle me. And is this for me; may I really keep it?

*Harold.* Of course you may; I brought it expressly for you.

*Lucy.* How nice of you! And you'll write my name in it?

*Harold.* I'll write the dedication.

*Lucy.* What do you mean?

*Harold.* You shall see. Pen and ink for the author! A new pen and virgin ink!

*Lucy.* Your Authorship has but to command to be obeyed.

*Harold.* [*Sitting down, writes.*] It is printed in all the other copies, but this one I have had bound specially for you, with a blank sheet where the dedication comes, so that in your copy, and yours alone, I can write it myself. There.

*Lucy.*

*Lucy.* [*Looks over his shoulder and reads.*] "To my Lady Luce." Oh, Harold, you have dedicated it to me!

*Harold.* Who else could I dedicate it to? although 'tis—  
 "Not so much honouring thee,  
 As giving it a hope that now  
 It may immortal be."

*Lucy.* It is good of you.

*Harold.* [*Writes again.*] "Harold Sekbourne"—what's to-day?—oh, yes, "3rd November, 1863."

*Lucy.* And will people know who the "Lady Luce" is?

*Harold.* They will some day. The dedication in my next book shall be "To my Lady Wife."

*Lucy.* I wonder if I shall ever be that. It seems so long coming.

*Harold.* I don't mind when it is—to-morrow, if you like.

*Lucy.* Don't talk nonsense, although it is my fault for beginning it. And now sit down—no, here in the arm-chair—and you shall have some nice tea.

[*She makes and pours out the tea as Harold talks.*]

*Harold.* You won't have to wait long if this proves a success: and it will be one. I know it; I feel it. It isn't only that everybody who has read it, likes it; it's something else that I can't describe, not even to you; a feeling inside, that—call it conceit if you like, but it isn't conceit; it isn't conceit to feel confidence in oneself. Why, look at the trash, the arrant trash, that succeeds every day; you will say, perhaps, that it succeeds because it is trash, that trash is what people want—they certainly get it. But no book that ever had real stuff in it has failed yet, and I feel that—Ha! ha! the same old feeling mentioned above. Don't think me an awful prig, Luce. I don't talk to anybody else as I do to you; and if you only knew what a relief it is to  
 me

me to let myself go a bit occasionally, you would excuse everything.

*Lucy.* You have a right to be conceited.

*Harold.* Not yet. I have done nothing yet ; but I mean to. [*Takes up the book.*] I wonder what will become of you and your fellows ; what will be your future ? Will you one day adorn the shelves of libraries, figure in catalogues of "Rare books and first editions," and be contended for by snuffy, long-clothed bibliomaniacs, who will bid one against the other for the honour of possessing you ? Or will you descend to the tables of secondhand book-stalls marked at a great reduction ; or lie in a heap, with other lumber, outside the shop-front, all this lot sixpence each, awaiting there, uncared for, unnoticed, and unknown, your ultimate destination, the dust-hole ?

*Lucy.* You are horrid. What an idea !

*Harold.* No, I don't think that will be your end. [*Puts down the book.*] You are not going to the dustbin, you are going to be a success. No more hack work for me after this. Why, supposing only the first edition is sold, I more than clear expenses, and if it runs to two—ten—twenty editions, I shall receive—the amount fairly takes my breath away. Twentieth thousand ; doesn't it sound fine ? We shall have our mansion in Grosvenor Square yet, Luce ; and that charming, little old house we saw the other day up the river—we'll have that, too ; so that we can run down here from Saturday to Monday, to get away from London fog and nastiness. Yes, I am going to be rich some day—rich—in ten years' time, if this book gets a fair start and I have anything like decent luck, I shall be the best known author in England. [*Rises.*] The son of the old bookseller who failed will be able then to repay those who helped him when he wanted help, and, more delightful thought still, pay back those with interest

who did their best to keep him down, when they could just as easily have helped him to rise. I am going to have a success, I feel it. In a few weeks' time I'll bring you a batch of criticisms that will astonish you. But what is the matter? why so silent all of a sudden? has my long and conceited tirade disgusted you?

*Lucy.* No, not at all.

*Harold.* Then what is it?

*Lucy.* I was only thinking that—[*hesitates*].

*Harold.* Thinking what? About me:

*Lucy.* Yes, about you and—and also about myself

*Harold.* That is just as it should be, about us two together.

*Lucy.* Yes, but I was afraid——

*Harold.* [*Smiling.*] Afraid! what of?

*Lucy.* Nothing, nothing really. I am ashamed that—let me give you some more tea.

*Harold.* No, thanks. Come, let me hear, make a clean breast of it.

*Lucy.* I can't, really; you would only laugh at me.

*Harold.* Then why deny me a pleasure, for you know I love to laugh?

*Lucy.* Well, then—if you become famous—and rich——

*Harold.* If I do; well?

*Lucy.* You won't—you won't forget me, will you?

*Harold.* Forget you, what an idea! Why do I want to become famous? why do I want to become rich? For my own sake? for the sake of the money? Neither. I want it for your sake, so that you can be rich; so that you can have everything you can possibly want. I don't mind roughing it a bit myself, but——

*Lucy.* No more do I: I am sure we might be very happy living even here.

*Harold.* No, thank you; no second pair fronts for me, or,  
rather,

rather, none for my wife. I want you to forget all about this place, as though it had never existed; I want you to only remember your giving lessons as a nightmare which has passed and gone. I want you to take a position in the world, to go into society——

*Lucy.* But, Harold——

*Harold.* To entertain, receive, lead——

*Lucy.* But I could never lead. I detest receiving. I hate entertaining——

*Harold.* Except me.

*Lucy.* I often wonder if I do. You are so clever and I——

*Harold.* Such a goose. Whatever put such ideas into your head? Why, you are actually crying.

*Lucy.* I am not.

*Harold.* Then what is that? [*Puts his finger against her cheek.*]  
What is that little sparkling drop?

*Lucy.* It must be a tear of joy, then.

*Harold.* Which shall be used to christen the book!

*Lucy.* Oh, don't—there, you have left a mark.

*Harold.* It is your fault. My finger wouldn't have done it by itself. Are you going to be silly any more?

*Lucy.* No, I am not.

*Harold.* And you are going to love me, believe in me, and trust me?

*Lucy.* I do all three—implicitly

*Harold.* [*He kisses her.*] The seal of the trinity. [*Looks at his watch.*] By jove, I must be going.

*Lucy.* So soon?

*Harold.* Rather; I have to dine in Berkeley Square at eight o'clock, at Sir Humphrey Mockton's. You would like their house, it's a beauty, a seventeenth or eighteenth century one, with such

a gorgeous old staircase. He's awfully rich, and just a little bit vulgar—"wool" I think it was, or "cottons," or some other commodity; but his daughter is charming—I should say daughters, as there are two of them, so you needn't be jealous.

*Lucy.* Jealous? of course I am not. Have you known them long?

*Harold.* Oh! some little time. They are awfully keen to see my book. I am going to take—send them a copy. You see I must be civil to these people, they know such an awful lot of the right sort; and their recommendation of a book will have more weight than fifty advertisements. So good-bye. [*Takes his overcoat.*]

*Lucy.* Let me help you. But you are going without noticing my flowers.

*Harold.* I have been admiring them all along, except when I was looking at you.

*Lucy.* Don't be silly.

*Harold.* They are charming. Sir Humphrey has some orchids just the same colours; you ought to see them; he has basketsful sent up every week from his place in Surrey.

*Lucy.* No wonder my poor little chrysanthemums didn't impress you.

*Harold.* What nonsense! I would give more for one little flower from you, than for the contents of all his conservatories.

*Lucy.* Then you shall have that for nothing.

*Harold.* Don't, it will destroy the bunch.

*Lucy.* What does that matter? they are all yours.

*Harold.* You do your best to spoil me.

*Lucy.* [*Pins the flower into his button-hole.*] Don't talk nonsense. There!

*Harold.* What a swell you have made me look!

*Lucy.*

*Lucy.* Good-bye ; when shall I see you again ?

*Harold.* Not until Sunday, I am afraid ; I am so busy just now. But I'll come round early, and, if fine, we'll go and lunch at Richmond, and have a good walk across the Park afterwards. Would you like it ?

*Lucy.* Above all things, but—but don't spend all your money on me.

*Harold.* Bother the money ! I am going to be rich. Good-bye till Sunday.

*Lucy.* *Au revoir* ; and while you are dining in your grand house, with lots of grand people, I am going to enjoy a delightful evening here, not alone, as I shall have your book for company. Good-bye.

Six Months elapse between Scene I. and Scene II.

### Scene II—The Scene and Persons are the same

*Lucy is dressed as before ; she is seated. Harold is in evening dress, with a flower in his button-hole ; he stands by the fireplace.*

*Harold.* Well, all I have to say is, I think you are most unreasonable.

*Lucy.* You have no right to say that.

*Harold.* I have if I think it.

*Lucy.* Well, you have no right to think it.

*Harold.* My thoughts are not my own, I suppose ?

*Lucy.* They are so different from what I should have expected you to have that I almost doubt it.

*Harold.*

*Harold.* Better say I have changed at once.

*Lucy.* And so you have.

*Harold.* Who is saying things one has no right to say now?

*Lucy.* I am only saying what I think.

*Harold.* Then if you want to have the right to your own thoughts, kindly let me have the right to mine. [*Walks to the window.*] I can't prevent people sending me invitations, can I?

*Lucy.* You need not accept them.

*Harold.* And make enemies right and left, I suppose?

*Lucy.* I don't want you to do that, and I don't want either to prevent your enjoying yourself; but—but, I do want to see you occasionally.

*Harold.* And so you do.

*Lucy.* Yes, very—perhaps I should say I want to see you often.

*Harold.* And so do I you, but I can't be in two places at once. This is what I mean when I say you are unreasonable. I must go out. If I am to write, I must study people, character, scenes. I can't do that by stopping at home: I can't do that by coming here; I know you and I know your landlady, and there is nobody else in the house, except the slavey and the cat; and although the slavey may be a very excellent servant and the cat a most original quadruped, still, I don't want to make elaborate studies of animals—either four-legged or two. One would imagine, from the way you talk, that I did nothing except enjoy myself. I only go out in the evenings.

*Lucy.* Still you might spare a little time, now and then, to come and see me, if only for half an hour.

*Harold.* What am I doing now? I gave up a dinner-party to come here to-night.

*Lucy.* Do you know it is exactly a month yesterday since you were here last?

*Harold.*

*Harold.* I can't be always dangling at your apron-strings.

*Lucy.* Harold!

*Harold.* If we are going to be married, we——

*Lucy.* If?

*Harold.* Well, when, if you like it better; we shall see enough of one another then. I have written to you, it isn't as though I hadn't done that.

*Lucy.* But that is not the same thing as seeing you; and your letters, too, have been so scrappy. [*Harold throws himself into the arm-chair.*] They used to be so different before your book came out.

*Harold.* I had more time then.

*Lucy.* I sometimes wish that it had never been published at all, that you had never written it, or, at all events, that it had never been such a success.

*Harold.* That's kind, at all events—deuced kind and considerate!

*Lucy.* It seems to have come between us as a barrier. When I think how eagerly we looked forward to its appearance, what castles in the air we built as to how happy we were going to be, and all the things we were going to do, if it were a success, and now to think that——

*Harold.* [*Jumps up.*] Look here, Lucy, I'm damned if—I can't stand this much longer! Nag, nag, nag! I can't stand it. I am worked off my head during the day, I am out half the night, and when I come here for a little quiet, a little rest, its—[*Breaks off suddenly.*]

*Lucy.* I am so sorry. If I had thought——

*Harold.* Can't you see that you are driving me mad? I have been here half an hour, and the whole of the time it has been nothing but reproaches.

*Lucy.* I don't think they would have affected you so much if you hadn't felt that you deserved them!

*Harold.*

*Harold.* There you go again ! I deserve them—[*laughs harshly*]. It is my fault, I suppose, that it is the season ; it is my fault that people give dinner-parties and balls ; it is my fault, I suppose, that you don't go out as much as I do ?

*Lucy.* Certainly not ; although, as a matter of fact, I haven't been out one single evening for the last three—nearly four—months.

*Harold.* That's right ; draw comparisons ; say I'm a selfish brute. You'll tell me next that I am tired of you, and——

*Lucy.* Harold ! don't, don't—you—you hurt me ! Of course I never thought of such a—[*she rises*—You are not, are you ? I—I couldn't bear it !

*Harold.* Of course I am not. Don't be so silly. [*He sits.*]

*Lucy.* It was silly of me, I confess it. I know you better than that. Why, it's rank high treason, I deserve to lose my head ; and my only excuse is that thinking such a thing proves I must have lost it already. Will your majesty deign to pardon ?

*Harold.* [*Testily.*] Yes, yes, that's all right ! There, look out, you'll crumple my tie.

*Lucy.* I am so sorry ! And now tell me all about your grand friends and——

*Harold.* They are not grand to me. Simply because a person is rich or has a title, I don't consider them any "grander" than I—by jove, no ! These people are useful to me, or else I shouldn't stand it. They "patronise" me, put their hand on my shoulder and say, "My dear young friend, we predict great things for you." The fools, as though a single one of them was capable even of forming an opinion, much less of prophesying. They make remarks about me before my face ; they talk of, and pet, me as though I were a poodle. I go through my tricks and they applaud ; and they lean over with an idiotic simper to the dear friend next to them

them and say, "Isn't he clever?" as though they had taught me themselves. Bah! They invite me to their houses, I dine with them once a week; but if I were to tell them to-morrow that I wanted to marry one of their daughters, they would kick me out of the room, and consider it a greater insult than if the proposal had come from their own footman.

*Lucy.* But that doesn't matter, because you don't want to marry one of them, do you? Was that Miss Mockton with you in the Park last Sunday?

*Harold.* How do you know I was in the Park at all?

*Lucy.* Because I saw you there.

*Harold.* You were spying, I suppose.

*Lucy.* Spying? I don't know what you mean. I went there for a walk after church.

*Harold.* Alone?

*Lucy.* Of course not, I was with Mrs. Glover.

*Harold.* Your landlady?

*Lucy.* Why not?—Oh! you need not be afraid. I shouldn't have brought disgrace upon you by obliging you to acknowledge me before your grand friends. I took good care to keep in the background.

*Harold.* Do you mean to insinuate that I am a snob?

*Lucy.* Be a little kind.

*Harold.* Well, it is your own fault, you insinuate that—

*Lucy.* I was wrong. I apologise, but—but—[*begins to cry*].

*Harold.* There, don't make a scene—don't, there's a good girl. There, rest your head here. I suppose I am nasty. I didn't mean it, really. You must make allowances for me. I am worried and bothered. I can't work—at least I can't do work that satisfies me—and altogether I am not quite myself. Late hours are playing the very deuce with my nerves. There, let me kiss  
away

away the tears—now give me your promise that you will never be so foolish again.

*Lucy.* I—I promise. It is silly of me—now I am all right.

*Harold.* *Giboulées d'Avril!* The sun comes out once more, the shower is quite over.

*Lucy.* Yes, quite over; you always are so kind. It is my fault entirely. I—I think my nerves must be a little upset, too.

*Harold.* We shall make a nice couple, sha'n't we? if we are often going to behave like this! Now, are you quite calm?

*Lucy.* Yes, quite.

*Harold.* That's right, because I want you to listen patiently for a few minutes to what I am going to say; it is something I want to talk to you about very seriously. You won't interrupt me until I have quite finished, will you?

*Lucy.* What is it? not that—no, I won't.

*Harold.* You know we talked about—I mean it was arranged we should be married the beginning of July—wasn't it?

*Lucy.* Yes.

*Harold.* Well, I want to know if you would mind very much putting it off a little—quite a little—only till the autumn? I'll tell you why. Of course if you *do* mind very much, I sha'n't press it, but—it's like this: the scene of my new book is, as you know, laid abroad. I have been trying to write it, but can't get on with it one little bit. I want some local colour. I thought I should be able to invent it, I find I can't. It is hampering and keeping me back terribly. And so—and so I thought if you didn't mind very much that—that if I were to go to France for—for six months or so—alone, that—in fact it would be the making of me. I have never had an opportunity before; it has always been grind, grind, grind, and if I am prevented from  
going

going now, I may never have a chance again. What do you say?

*Lucy.* But why shouldn't we be married as arranged, and spend our honeymoon over there?

*Harold.* Because I want to work.

*Lucy.* And would my being there prevent you? You used to say you always worked so much better when I was——

*Harold.* But you don't understand. This is different. I want to work *hard*, and no man could do that on his honeymoon—at least I know I couldn't.

*Lucy.* No, but— And—and till when did you want to put off our—our marriage? Until your return?

*Harold.* Well, that would depend on circumstances. You don't suppose I would postpone it for a second, if I could help it; but— Until my return? I hope sincerely that it can be managed then, but, you see, over there I shall be spending money all the time, and not earning a sou, and—and so we *might* have to wait a little bit longer, just until I could replenish the locker, until I had published and been paid for my new book.

*Lucy.* But I have given notice to leave at midsummer.

*Harold.* Has Mrs. Duncan got another governess!

*Lucy.* No, but——

*Harold.* Then you can stop on, can't you! They will surely be only too delighted to keep you.

*Lucy.* Yes—I can stop on. [*He tries to kiss her.*] No, don't; not now.

*Harold.* And you don't really mind the postponement very much, do you?

*Lucy.* Not if it will assist you.

*Harold.* I thought you would say that, I knew you would. It will assist me very much. I shouldn't otherwise suggest it. It  
does

does seem too bad though, doesn't it? To have to postpone it after waiting all these years, and just as it was so near, too. I have a good mind not to go, after all—only, if I let this chance slip, I may never have another. Besides, six months is not so very long, is it? And when they are over, then we won't wait any longer. You will come and see me off, won't you? It would never do for an engaged man to go away for even six months, without his lady love coming to see him start.

*Lucy.* Yes, I will come. When do you go?

*Harold.* The end of next week, I expect; perhaps earlier if I can manage it. But I shall see you before then. We'll go and have dinner together at our favourite little restaurant. When shall it be! Let me see, I am engaged on—I can't quite remember what my engagements are.

*Lucy.* I have none.

*Harold.* Then that's settled. Good-bye, Luce; you don't mind very much, do you? The time will soon pass. You are a little brick to behave as you have done. [*Going.*] It will be Monday or Tuesday next for our dinner, but I will let you know. Good-bye.

*Lucy.* Good-bye.

Thirty Years elapse between Scene II. and Scene III.

Scene

Scene III—Lucy Rimmerton, Agnes Rimmerton  
(her niece)

*A well-furnished comfortable room in Lucy Rimmerton's house. She is seated in front of the fire, in an easy-chair, reading. The door opens, without her noticing it, and Agnes comes in, closes the door gently, crosses the room, and bends over her.*

*Agnes.* A happy New Year to you, Aunt Luce.

*Lucy.* What ! Agnes, is that you ? I never heard you come in. I really think I must be getting deaf.

*Agnes.* What nonsense ! I didn't intend you should hear me. I wanted to wish you a happy New Year first.

*Lucy.* So as to make your Aunt play second fiddle. The same to you, dear.

*Agnes.* Thank you. [*Warms her hands at the fire.*] Oh, it is cold ; not here I mean, but out of doors ; the thermometer is down I don't know how many degrees below freezing.

*Lucy.* It seems to agree with you, at all events. You look as bright and rosy as though you were the New Year itself come to visit me.

*Agnes.* [*Laughs merrily.*] So I ought to. I ran nearly all the way, except when I slid, to the great horror of an old gentleman who was busily engaged lecturing some little boys on the enormity of their sins in making a beautifully long slide in the middle of the pavement.

*Lucy.* And what brought you out so early ?

*Agnes.* To see you, of course. Besides, the morning is so lovely  
it

it seemed a sin to remain indoors. I do hope the frost continues all the holidays.

*Lucy.* It is all very well for you, but it must be terribly trying for many people—the poor, for instance.

*Agnes.* Yes. [*A pause.*] Auntie, you don't know anything, do you, about how—how poor people live?

*Lucy.* Not so much as I ought to.

*Agnes.* I didn't mean *very* poor people, not working people. I meant a person poor like—like I am poor.

*Lucy.* [*Smiling.*] Don't you know how you live yourself?

*Agnes.* Of course I do, but—I was thinking of—of a friend of mine, a governess like myself, who has just got engaged; and I—I was wondering on how much, or, rather, how little, they could live. But you don't know of course. You are rich, and—

*Lucy.* But I wasn't always rich. Thirty years ago when I was your age—

*Agnes.* When you were my age! I like that! why you are not fifty.

*Lucy.* Little flatterer. Fifty-two last birthday.

*Agnes.* Fifty-two! Well, you don't look it, at all events.

*Lucy.* Gross flatterer. When I was your age I was poor and a governess as you are.

*Agnes.* But I thought that your Aunt Emily left you all her money.

*Lucy.* So she did, or nearly all; but that was afterwards. It isn't quite thirty years yet since she came back from India, a widow, just after she had lost her husband and only child. I was very ill at the time—I almost died; and she, good woman as she was, came and nursed me.

*Agnes.* Of course, I know. I have heard father talk about it. And then she was taken ill, wasn't she?

*Lucy.*

*Lucy.* Yes, almost before I was well. It was very unfair that she should leave everything to me ; your father was her nephew, just as I was her niece, but he wouldn't hear of my sharing it with——

*Agnes.* I should think not indeed ! I should be very sorry to think that my father would ever allow such a thing. Although, at the same time, it is all very well for you to imagine that you don't share it, but you *do*. Who pays for Lillie's and May's and George's schooling ? Who sent Alfred to Cambridge, and Frank to——

*Lucy.* Don't, please. What a huge family you are, to be sure.

*Agnes.* And last, but not least, who gave me a chance of going to Girton ? Oh, we are not supposed to know anything about it, I know, but you see we do. You thought you had arranged it all so beautifully, and kept every one of us entirely in the dark, but you haven't one little bit.

*Lucy.* Nonsense, Agnes, you——

*Agnes.* Oh, you are a huge big fraud, you know you are ; I am quite ashamed of you. [*Lucy is going to speak.*] You are not to be thanked, I know ; and you needn't be afraid, I am not going to do so ; but if you could only hear us when we are talking quietly together, you would find that a certain person, who shall be nameless, is simply worship——

*Lucy.* Hush ! you silly little girl. You don't know what you are saying. You have nothing to thank me for whatsoever.

*Agnes.* Haven't we just ? I know better.

*Lucy.* Young people always do. So you see I do know something of how "the poor" live.

*Agnes.* Yes, but you were never married.

*Lucy.* No, dear.

*Agnes.* That is what I want to—— Why weren't you married ?

married? Oh, I know I have no business to ask such a question: it is fearfully rude I know, but I have wondered so often. You are lovely now, and you must have been beautiful when you were a girl.

*Lucy.* No, I wasn't—I was barely pretty.

*Agnes.* I can't believe that.

*Lucy.* And I am not going to accept your description of me now as a true one; although I confess I am vain enough—even in my present old age—to look in the glass occasionally, and say to myself: “You are better-looking now than you ever were.”

*Agnes.* Well, at all events you were always an angel.

*Lucy.* And men don't like angels; besides—I was poor.

*Agnes.* You were not poor when you got Aunt Emily's money,

*Lucy.* No, but then it was too—— I mean I then had no wish to marry.

*Agnes.* You mean you determined to sacrifice yourself for us, that is what you mean.

*Lucy.* I must have possessed a very prophetic soul then, or been gifted with second sight, as none of you, except Reginald, were born. But to come back to your friend, Agnes; has she no money?

*Agnes.* No, none.

*Lucy.* Nor he?

*Agnes.* Not a penny.

*Lucy.* And they want to get married?

*Agnes.* Yes.

*Lucy.* And are afraid they haven't enough.

*Agnes.* They certainly haven't.

*Lucy.* Then why don't they apply to some friend or relative who has more than enough; say, to—an aunt, for instance.

*Agnes.*

*Agnes.* Auntie !

*Lucy.* And what is his name ?

*Agnes.* Geo—— Mr. Reddell.

*Lucy.* And hers is ?

*Agnes.* Oh, I never intended to tell you. I didn't mean to say a word.

*Lucy.* When did it happen ?

*Agnes.* Three days ago. That is to say, he proposed to me then, but of course it has been going on for a long time. I could see that he—at least I thought I could see. But I can hardly realise it yet. It seems all so strange. And I *did* intend telling you, I felt I *must* tell somebody, although George doesn't want it known yet, because, as I told you, he—and so I haven't said a word to father yet ; but I must soon—and you won't say anything, will you ? and—and oh, I am silly.

*Lucy.* There, have your cry out, it will do you good. Now tell me about Mr. Reddell. What is he ?

*Agnes.* He is a writer—an author. Don't you remember I showed you a story of his a little time ago ?

*Lucy.* I thought I knew the name.

*Agnes.* And you said you liked it ; I was so pleased.

*Lucy.* Yes, I did. I thought it clever and——

*Agnes.* He *is* clever ; and I do so want you to know him. He wants to know you, too. You will try to like him, won't you, for my sake ?

*Lucy.* I have no doubt I shall.

*Agnes.* He is just bringing out a book. Some of the stories have been published before ; the one you read was one, and if that proves a success then it will be all right ; we shall be able to get married and——

*Lucy.* Wait a minute, Agnes. How long have you known him ?  
The Yellow Book—Vol. I. L *Agnes.*

*Agnes.* Over a year—nearly two years.

*Lucy.* And do you really know him well? Are you quite certain you can trust him?

*Agnes.* What a question! How can you doubt it? You wouldn't for a minute if you knew him.

*Lucy.* I ought not to, knowing you, you mean. And supposing this book is a success. May it not spoil him—make him conceited?

*Agnes.* All the better if it does. He is not conceited enough, and so I always tell him.

*Lucy.* But may it not make him worldly? May he not, after a time, regret his proposal to you if he sees a chance of making a more advantageous—

*Agnes.* Impossible. What a dreadful opinion you must have of mankind. You don't think it really, I know. I have never heard you say or hint anything nasty about anybody before.

*Lucy.* I only do it for your own good, my dear. I once knew a man—just such another as you describe Mr. Reddell to be. He was an author, too, and—and when I knew him his first book was also just about to appear. He was engaged to be married to—to quite a nice girl too, although she was never so pretty as you are.

*Agnes.* Who is the flatterer now?

*Lucy.* The book was published. It was a great success. He became quite the lion of the season—it is many years ago now. The wedding-day was definitely fixed. Two months before the date he suggested a postponement—for six months.

*Agnes.* How horrible!

*Lucy.* And just about the time originally fixed upon for the wedding she received a letter from him—he was abroad at the time—suggesting that their engagement had better be broken off.

*Agnes.*

*Agnes.* Oh, the brute ! the big brute ! But she didn't consent, did she ?

*Lucy.* Of course. The man she had loved was dead. The new person she was indifferent to.

*Agnes.* But how—but you don't suggest that Mr. Reddell could behave like that ? he couldn't. He wouldn't, I feel certain. But there must surely have been something else ; I can't believe that any man would behave so utterly unfeelingly—so brutally. They say there are always two sides to every story. Mayn't there have been some reason that you knew nothing about ? Mayn't she have done something ? She must have been a little bit to blame, too, and this side of the story you never heard.

*Lucy.* Yes—it is possible.

*Agnes.* I can't think that any man would deliberately behave so like a cad as you say he did.

*Lucy.* It may have been her fault. I used to think it might be—just a little, as you say.

*Agnes.* Well, it sha'n't be mine at all events. I won't give any cause—besides even if I did—— Oh, no, it is utterly impossible to imagine such a thing !

*Lucy.* I hope it is, for your sake.

*Agnes.* Of course it is ; of that I am quite certain. And you don't think it is very wrong of me to—to——

*Lucy.* To say Yes to a man you love. No, my dear, that can never be wrong, although it may be foolish.

*Agnes.* From a worldly point of view, perhaps ; but I should never have thought that you——

*Lucy.* I didn't mean that. But love seems to grow so quickly when you once allow it to do so, that it is sometimes wiser to—— but never mind, bring him to see me, and—and may you be happy. [*A long pause.*]

*Agnes.*

*Agnes.* You are crying now, Auntie! You have nothing—

*Lucy.* Haven't I? What, not at the chance of losing you? So this is what brought you out so early this morning and occasioned your bright, rosy cheeks? You didn't only come to see me.

*Agnes.* To see you and talk to you, yes, that was all. No, by-the-by, it wasn't all. Have you seen a paper this morning? No? I thought it would interest you so I brought it round. It is bad news, not good news; your favourite author is dead.

*Lucy.* I am afraid my favourite authors have been dead very many years.

*Agnes.* I should say the author of your favourite book.

*Lucy.* You mean—

*Agnes.* Sir Harold Sekbourne. [*Lucy leans back in her chair.*] He died last night. Here it is; here is the paragraph. [*Reads.*] "We regret to announce the death of Sir Harold Sekbourne, the well-known novelist, which occurred at his town house, in Prince's Gate, late last evening." Shall I read it to you?

*Lucy.* No—no, give me the paper. And—and, Agnes, do you mind going down to Franklin's room, and telling her that receipt you promised her?

*Agnes.* For the Japanese custard? Of course I will; I quite forgot all about it. There it is. [*Gives her the paper, indicating the paragraph with her finger, then goes out.*]

*Lucy.* [*Sits staring at the paper for a few seconds, then reads slowly.*] "Sir Harold had been slightly indisposed for some weeks, but no anxiety was felt until two days ago, when a change for the worse set in, and despite all the care, attention, and skill of Drs. Thornton and Douglas, who hardly left his bedside, he never rallied, and passed peacefully away, at the early age of fifty-eight, at the time above mentioned. It is now thirty years ago since the  
deceased

deceased baronet published his first book, 'Grace : a Sketch,' which had such an immediate and great success. This was followed nearly a year afterwards by 'Alain Treven,' the scene of which is laid in Brittany ; and from that time until his death his pen was never idle. His last work, 'The Incoming Tide,' has just been published in book form, it having appeared in the pages of *The Illustrated Courier* during the last year. Despite the rare power of his later works, disclosing thoroughly, as they do, his scholarly knowledge, his masterly construction, vivid imagination, and his keen insight into character and details of every-day life, they none of them can, for exquisite freshness and rare delicacy of execution, compare with his first publication, 'Grace : a Sketch.' We have before us, as we write, a first edition of this delightful story, with its curiously sentimental dedication 'To my Lady Luce,' which in the subsequent editions was omitted. A baronetcy was conferred on Sir Harold by her Majesty two years ago, at the personal instigation, it is said, of the Prime Minister, who is one of his greatest admirers, but the title is now extinct, as Sir Harold leaves no son. He married in June, 1866, a daughter of the late Sir Humphrey Mockton, who survives him. His two daughters are both married—one to Lord Duncan, eldest son of the Earl of Andstar ; the other to Sir Reginald de Laver. His loss will be greatly felt, not only in the literary world, but wherever the English tongue is spoken and read."

[Lucy goes to the bookcase, takes out a book, and opens it.  
Agnes comes in.]

Agnes. Franklin is silly. I had to repeat the directions three times, and even now I doubt if she understands them properly. [Comes behind Lucy and looks over her shoulder.] Why, I never knew you had a first edition. [Lucy starts and closes the book, then opens it again.] May I look at it? But this is written ;  
the

the ink is quite faded. "To my Lady Luce. Harold Sek-  
bourne, 3rd November, 1863." What a strong handwriting it  
is! Luce! how strange that the name should be the same as—  
[*Looks suddenly at Lucy.*] Oh, Auntie, forgive me. I never  
dreamt—— I am so sorry.