

**AFTER
TO-MORROW**

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After To-morrow by Robert Smythe Hichens

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ROBERT SMYTHE HICHENS

**AFTER
TO-MORROW**

AFTER TO-MORROW

BY
THE AUTHOR OF
"THE GREEN CARNATION"

ILLUSTRATED



NEW YORK
THE MERRIAM COMPANY
67 FIFTH AVENUE



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AFTER TO-MORROW.

CHAPTER I.

IN his gilded cage, that hung between pale-green curtains over the window-boxes that were full of white daisies, the canary chirped with a desultory vivacity. That was the only near sound that broke the silence in the drawing-room of No. 100 Mill Street, Knightsbridge, in which a man and woman stood facing one another. Away beyond this twittering voice sang in the London streets the muffled voice of the season. The time was late

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afternoon, and rays of mellow light slanted into the pretty room, and touched its crowd of inanimate occupants with a radiance in which the motes danced merrily. The china faces of two goblins on the mantelpiece glowed with a grotesque meaning, and their yellow smiles seemed to call aloud on mirth; but the faces of the man and woman were pale, and their lips trembled and did not smile.

She was tall, dark, and passionate-looking, perhaps twenty-eight or thirty. He was a few years older, a man so steadfast in expression that silly people, who spring at exaggeration as saints spring at heaven, called him stern, and even said he looked forbidding—at balls.

At last the song of the canary was broken upon by a voice. Sir Hugh Blake spoke very quietly. "Why not?" he said.

"I don't think I can tell you," Mrs. Blair answered, with an obvious effort.

"You prefer to refuse me without giving a reason?"

"I have a right to," she said.

"I don't question it. You cannot expect me to say more than that."

He took up his hat, which lay on a chair, and smoothed it mechanically with his coat-sleeve. The action seemed to pierce her like a knife, for she started and half extended her hand. "Don't!" she exclaimed. "At least wait one moment. So you belong to the second class of men?"