

## Shadow of Love – Fourth Extract – Arthur Nicholls and Charlotte

**CHARLOTTE:** Arthur, you asked me if I would marry you. I gave you the reply that best seemed to fit the circumstances at the time.

**ARTHUR:** Have those circumstances altered?

**CHARLOTTE:** To this extent: you may continue to hope, but I promise you nothing. And only so much hope as this: **were** you to marry me, there would need to be conditions.

**ARTHUR:** Conditions? If only you would marry me, you could apply any conditions you wanted. Can it really be true that...?

**CHARLOTTE:** Arthur, I suggest you hear what the conditions are.

**ARTHUR:** Of course. I'm sorry.

**CHARLOTTE:** Firstly, you should not anticipate our marrying in the near future.

**ARTHUR:** A lengthy period for an engagement would be very sensible, I agree.

**CHARLOTTE:** Neither should you announce that we are engaged until I feel it is appropriate to do so. *(Brief pause)* It must also be a condition that were anything to happen to me, since my health is, as you know, uncertain, that you would feel bound, despite all that has happened, to take care of my father until ... for as long as is necessary.

**ARTHUR:** This would be a small price to pay...Not that you are likely to...What else?

**CHARLOTTE:** You must agree that, were I to die before you, you would have no right to my estate. My father is particularly insistent that this be the case.

**ARTHUR:** Does he really consider that I only wish to marry you for your money?

**CHARLOTTE:** Nevertheless, it is a stipulation without which Father would oppose any prospect of our marrying. *(Pause)* I do not know how readily you will agree to my final condition. It is this. I fear my health is now too fragile ever to risk falling pregnant. I apologise for speaking so openly about a delicate matter but it is advice I have received from more than one source. Were we to marry, I must insist, though strictly it does not accord with what The Bible teaches, that there can be no ...physical...intimacy between us.

**ARTHUR:** No...intimacy?

**CHARLOTTE:** These are my conditions. I am sorry for the sufferings you have undergone – and sorry, too, that I can offer you no greater consolation.

**ARTHUR:** It is enough, Charlotte. Better than I could once have hoped for. Perhaps, in time....but, yes, I am willing to agree to these terms. How could I not?

***ARTHUR** smiles gently, then offers to kiss **CHARLOTTE**. She offers her cheek.*