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LOVE STORY MAGAZINE

EVERY WEEK

JULY 17, 1926

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Georgette Mac Millan

Margaret Gibbons Mac Gill

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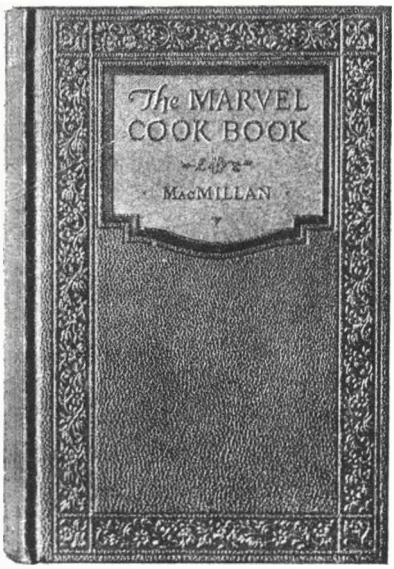

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Love Story Magazine

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY

Vol. XXXIX **Contents for July 17, 1926** **No. 2**

CONTINUED STORIES

NOVELETTE AND SHORT STORIES

POETRY

"HIS SECRET WIFE," by Georgette MacMillan, will begin soon in Love Story Magazine

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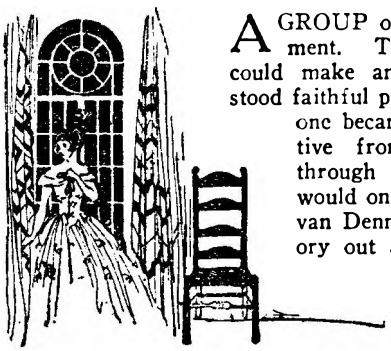
Have You a Stolen Hour?

CORALIE was a princess, and she had everything her heart desired, everything except freedom! Freedom had never been hers. She had never been free to do as she chose; everything was decided for her. Every hour of the day, every minute of her time, was filled with engagements. At last, her parents had arranged her marriage! She was to marry the Archduke Leopold, whom she had never seen. She had one hour, one stolen hour before her engagement to him was to be announced. Dressed as a Quaker girl, she went to a ball masque and there she met the man she loved. They spent the stolen hour together and then parted, forever, they thought, but was it? Read "Her Stolen Hour," by Rhea Jewett, in LOVE STORY MAGAZINE next week. It is a wonderful story.

* * *

CAN a career take the place of marriage? Elizabeth Grant, an actress and portrayer of child rôles, felt that it could. After ten years, however, she was not so sure; she seemed to have lost her hold on the public. But just when she felt most out of it, two things happened. The applause came back stronger than ever and her lover proposed again after ten years. Did she accept him or continue her career? You will find the answer in "For Applause," a charming little story by Jesse F. Gelders. Get next week's LOVE STORY MAGAZINE and read it.



* * *

ALL the Forrester men were cold-hearted! Old Allen Forrester had been a hard man; his heart was so cold that it chilled every one and froze their feeling for him. Although he had been dead for a great many years, his cold spirit lived on. The very room that he occupied was as cold and damp as a tomb, and fire could not take off the chill. Over Wayne Forrester, his grandson, his sinister influence hung heaviest. It became so strong that it threatened to destroy Shirley Temple's love for him until—but let Ethel Donoher tell you the story next week in "The Cold Heart," in this magazine.

* * *

TO the world Margaret Warren was a happy bride with everything that money could buy. She had all the necessities and even the luxuries of life, but—her husband's heart belonged to another girl, and she had taken it to the grave with her! Even on their honeymoon, Luther had been called away for a few hours, leaving Margaret waiting at the station for him, and she sent her bridal flowers to be laid upon the still form of the woman her bridegroom loved. Her honeymoon was delayed one hour that her bridegroom might look for the last time upon the features he loved.

And yet no word of reproach came from her lips—no echo of the pain that tortured her heart was reflected in her eyes.

Such a girl was this one called Margaret, whom Georgette MacMillan has made the heroine of her newest story, "His Child." Get next week's LOVE STORY MAGAZINE and read this thrilling tale.

* * *

A GROUP of young men had an argument. They decided that nothing could make any difference if true love stood faithful portal at the gate of life. If one became disfigured and unattractive from an exterior standpoint through accident or sickness, love would only be strengthened. Jimmie van Denning decided to try the theory out and test the girl he loved. The effect? Read "A Woman's Test," by Victor Thorne, next week! It's good!

* * *

DRAKE SMITH approved of the family budget plan, but Leta Jewett did not. She said that they couldn't marry until they had something more definite than just Drake's salary to live on. Then an uncle of Leta's, so long forgotten as to be almost mythical, left her a legacy. It changed Leta so much that Drake could not understand her. All hopes of their little home that they had planned for so long seemed to vanish, but just when things looked most hopeless along came a real-estate dealer named Valentine, who used big red hearts on his signs. Read "A Broken Heart," by Emma S. Forster, next week in this magazine and see what red hearts can do.

* * *

THE serials will be "The One-woman Man," by Vivian Grey, and "The Tragic Bride," by Margaret Gibbons MacGill. There will be a treat in poetry, too. Don't miss "If," by L. Ozelle Mathis, or "Malice," by Celia Cheesman.

LOVE STORY MAGAZINE

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

Vol. XXXIX **July 17, 1926** **No. 2**

The Girl who was Loved Too Well

By

Violet Gordon

JIMMY GROVE was hitting the clouds, for not only had he been permitted to take Polly Dufresne to the Yacht Club dance, but he had just learned that young Birks—who for the last three weeks had been rushing Polly in great style—was leaving town tonight. At the very moment one of the crowd was proposing a toast.

"To Tony Birks," he cried, "a right good fellow!. May he come back to Harrowsmith before he forgets us. And meantime may he have the luck of——"

The youth's eloquence forsook him, he could think of nothing pat. A girl tittered, and some of the men offered helpful suggestions. But it was Tony himself who came to the rescue of his own toast.

"The luck of a Jimmy Grove!"

"Hear, hear!" at least twenty male voices murmured; and a laugh, not exactly joyous, broke out to be instantly suppressed.

Jimmy was puzzled. This was too deep for him. He was elated because Tony Birks was leaving town and because Polly had allowed him to bring her to the dance, but otherwise his luck for some years had been against him.

"Since when has your luck become a toast?" a girl asked, her expression as blank as his own.

"Search me," he returned. His eyes sought the sparkling white-gold queen of Harrowsmith holding court across the room. Polly was unusually flushed, and Jimmy knew she was annoyed about something. The next instant the music had commenced again and Polly was borne off in Tony's arms.

Later that night when Jimmy was driving her home he remembered the incident.

"What in thunder made Tony wish himself my luck? And what's the matter with all the fellows, anyway?"

"Why—er—what do you mean?" Polly seemed occupied with the clasp of her coat.

"Just that there's something going on

I don't quite get. The fellows have acted—well, sort of sore at me for a long time now. And you couldn't miss how they laughed at that toast!"

Polly sighed. "Don't ask me, Jimsy. I think it's all your imagination. People often say funny things without any meaning." She dismissed the subject. "Isn't this a darling car?" She nestled ever so slightly against Jimmy's arm, and that young man's thoughts ran wild.

The night was dark and still, dead quiet save for the faint rumble of the engine. Somewhere to the side the hedge was drenched with honeysuckle.

"Sweetness," he whispered, "do you think you can ever love me even a quarter as much as I love you? I've been offered a junior law partnership with Torrence, of Port Dickson. Won't you come with me, Polly dear? I've been asking you now three years, and I'm going to keep right on asking you till you say yes. Don't say you can't leave Uncle John. He can live with us."

"Since when has your luck become a toast?" a girl asked, her expression as blank as his own.

Polly drew away and glanced up at Jimmy's earnest young face. It was handsome, boyish and strong, in keeping with his fine athletic frame. Almost any girl in town would have taken Jimmy to her heart with any encouragement. But Jimmy had eyes for no one but Polly, and Polly treated him like a door mat.

"Don't be a silly old thing," she jibed softly. "Of course I can't marry you. I don't believe I'll ever marry at all,"

this with a side glance to mark the effect. "But just the same, Jimsy, you know I couldn't bear to have you leave me. You won't take that horrid old job in Port Dickson, will you?"

And she coaxed so charmingly that Jimmy, half hating himself for his weakness, gave in as usual. Polly had always made use of him, and it looked as though she always would, though Jimmy was not even dimly aware of the extent to which she used him.

For a while after this conversation she was very kind. Jimmy basked in sunshine and wove impossible dreams. Then the customary thing, the thing of which he constantly lived in dread, happened again. A new man came to Harrowsmith; and Polly, with pretty gestures and consoling promises, threw Jimmy into the discard.

Grant Wallace was a young doctor. He was good looking in a sharp, brisk fashion; he had manners and clothes that made the village youths anxiously question their own; he had an air of assurance which few could equal. All the girls thought him remarkable. But Doctor Wallace hardly noticed them. As surely as an unwary fly walks into a spider's web, he fell a swift victim to Polly's smile.

His courtship was fast and furious; faster, indeed, and more furious than Polly secretly cared for. Her happy knack of keeping a man at safe arm's length for a pleasant period of dancing and fun seemed to fail her.

One day, fearing that things were going beyond her control, she remembered her old safeguard, Jimmy. Grant had asked permission to call this afternoon, and his tone had implied a special reason for the visit. With a flash of foresight she dropped a note to Jimmy asking him to forget his stupid old law office, bring his camera over, and take pictures with her. She was going to her aunt's in Boston for a week and she wanted to say good-by to him.

"You may stay for dinner," she added kindly. "We'll have heaps of fun. Why, I haven't seen you for ages, Jimsy dear."

She gave the note and a dime to the little boy next door; then, with true feminine inconsistency, arranged her curls at a provoking angle, dabbed a very little choice perfume behind her ears, and slipped her small person into an organdie frock of lively cerise. Presently she passed through her uncle's well-kept garden to a rose-bowered pergola. The pale roses, she reasoned, would make a pretty contrast to her new frock. She hoped her cavaliers would arrive at about the same time.

But Fate had other plans. At a quarter past four Grant's car drew up before the gate, and the young doctor vaulted over the low fence. He caught a glimpse of the gay frock in the pergola, and before Polly could say a word he invaded her nest and took her boldly in his arms.

"Sweetheart," he told her, "I love you—and that's that. You love me, don't you, dear?" With the fingers of his left hand he tilted her face backward; his lips pressed hers in a swift, ardent kiss.

Polly was momentarily stunned. Though no one in Harrowsmith would have believed it she had never permitted any man to kiss her. Now she reacted with a quick sense of outrage. She struggled away from that close embrace, face flaming.

"How dare you! How dare you kiss me!"

Grant was astounded. A repulse was the last thing he had expected. "B-but," he stammered, "you love me, don't you, Polly?"

By this time she was vigorously dabbing a small cerise handkerchief across her lips. "No," she cried. "No. I h——"

Then she paused. Except for the fact that she had been caught unpre-

pared, this was a situation she had handled many times—handled very successfully. And she had always parted from her adorer in friendliness tinged with agreeable sadness. Polly did not believe in violent scenes. Above all she loved to be a tantalizing memory. She melted suddenly and transferred the cerise handkerchief from her lips to her eyes.

Though no one would have believed it Polly had never permitted a man to kiss her. She struggled away from the close embrace, face flaming.

"Oh, how could you misunderstand me so dreadfully! I never dreamed you really loved me—or I should have told you b-before!"

Grant's first dismay had worn off. There was a dash of anger in the glance that studied Polly. "You've given me no reason to think you objected to me," he reminded her ungallantly. "Most people would say you had encouraged me."

"But I didn't. I thought you were a stranger here and—and I wanted to be friendly. How could I know you were f-falling in love? Men say they can't stand girls who always think they are serious."

She had made use of this argument before. There was enough truth in it to make a man stop and think. Grant could not immediately think of a deadly comeback. So Polly continued:

"And I l-liked you so much. I thought we were such good friends. Why do you have to spoil it all?"

"But"—Grant forgot his anger in renewed entreaties—"if you like me, why can't you marry me?"

Her eyes dropped to fingers that were intertwining nervously. "It's a secret."

"A secret?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean you're engaged to some other fellow?"

She did not answer immediately. Then: "You won't tell?"

"No," rather dejectedly.

"Well—I'm going to marry—Jimmy Grove."

"Jimmy Grove!" The young doctor's voice rose in his amazement—not that Jimmy was undesirable, but that he should endure so much slighting. For a while there was silence. Then he asked: "But do you really love him?"

It seemed impossible for Polly to answer. To do her justice she hardly analyzed what meaning she intended to

convey. She had been spoiled from birth, first by parents who idolized her, and after their death by an even more indulgent uncle. There were plenty of fine things about Polly, but at the present moment they were not in evidence. She knew only that tears were an effective finale to such scenes; and because her eyes were covered she did not see the faint gleam in Grant's.

He took her hand and patted it tenderly. "Try to forget what I said, dear. Of course I'll be your friend. And just to prove you forgive me won't you let me take you to the Carters' dance to-night—that is, if Jimmy doesn't mind?"

"Of course Jimmy wouldn't mind," she began, at which Grant could barely conceal his scorn of such a spineless lover. "I mean, he always wants me to enjoy myself. But I can't go to the dance because I'm going to Boston to-night. Aunt Grace has invited me for a week."

Grant considered this. "Very well. Let me drive you."

"But"—Polly was not sure she wanted this—"I don't believe Uncle John would like——"

"Bother Uncle John!" was the impatient interruption. "Just go to the station as though you were taking the train. I'll be there waiting to the right of the platform steps, and you'll step into my car instead of the train. Come now, you owe me this after the way you've treated me."

"What's that?" Polly started slightly and looked about.

"Probably a bird in the vines. Don't bother about that, Polly. Tell me—won't you come?"

She gave in, but she was not tremendously pleased. Grant accepted her relations with Jimmy too lightly. When he had gone it occurred to her that Jimmy was evidently not coming.

"Perhaps he didn't get the note in time," she mused. "Anyway, I can't get out of letting Grant drive me to-night."

Two hours later, after refusing her uncle's escort, she kissed the old man good-by and taxied alone to the station. To her relief it was crowded with farmers' families, all strangers. She seized her suit case, glanced hurriedly about—by this time it was fairly dark—and slipped into the open door of the car by the right of the platform steps. She had forgotten her first disinclination for the adventure. Now she was mildly thrilled.

"Drive fast, Grant. Some one might notice."

He laughed, with one hand tucked a light robe about her, and shot into the road. The car seemed to pulse with eagerness. The trees, like dancing satyrs, flew past, and Polly felt the cool summer night kiss her flushed cheeks. It was pleasant to be popular and pretty and to do the things that less fortunate girls could never experience.

Mile after mile of ribbonlike curves unwound. The car entered a belt of pine woods, then sped past a group of farms. Suddenly Polly reached out a questioning hand.

"Are you sure this is the right way?"

In the rush of air that forked them she could barely hear the answer, but she gathered that the old highway was being repaired. Again she lost count of time in the excitement of speeding. The air was sweet with pine and occasional patches of clover. The stars pricked through a moonless sky like rapier points. Polly grew sleepy and dozed. All at once she realized that they had stopped.

"Are we there?" she wondered drowsily, and let herself be helped to the ground. The sound of lazy waves struck upon her ear. She peered about in surprise and saw the rim of a lake. An owl hooted in desolate fashion from a stretch of wood behind her.

"Where are we?" she asked quickly.

"On Echo Lake."

The words in themselves were startling enough. Echo Lake was a lonely body of water miles from the main road to Boston. But it was the voice that struck Polly with sudden panic. She leaned forward and stared into the face of the man who had brought her here—met two eyes shining in the starlight.

"Jimmy Grove!" Her gasp was almost a scream.

Again the man laughed, a cool, impersonal little sound. "Yes, that's me."

"Where is Grant Wallace?" she choked.

"At the Carters' dance, I believe. I told him I'd drive you myself to-night. Of course, considering I'm your fiancé, he couldn't very well object."

"My—my fiancé!" Polly swayed. Jimmy caught her by the arm and steadied her. "Did he tell you?" she asked faintly.

"No, hardly. But he certainly knows. This afternoon I dropped round to see you, and just as I was about to join the party in the pergola I overheard you tell Wallace of our engagement. So, obviously, he knows all about it."

"You mean to say you deliberately listened?" Polly was white with rage.

"Well—er—you see I was tremendously interested. What you said explained why all the fellows seem to think I'm lucky—Tony Birks and eighteen or twenty others of the old home crew. It looks as though you had confided in almost every one but me. And I'll say this for you, Polly, it was quite a good method of getting rid of troublesome admirers without any hard feelings. But there's just this against it: I don't believe in long engagements, and it's high time we were married." He drew something that crackled from his pocket.

"I have a marriage license here," he continued ingenuously, "and I know a minister who lives two miles north."

"You surely don't think I'd marry a man who would kidnap me?" Polly stormed. "Why, I wouldn't do that, Jimmy Grove, if I lived to be a thousand. How dare you bring me to this wild place!"

Jimmy pointed forward; some distance away Polly saw the outline of a canoe half launched, a solitary figure standing beside it.

"We must hurry," he said, "or it will be morning before we make camp."

Had her humble slave of many years gone mad? Naturally Polly resisted. "I won't go a step with you," she cried.

"You are going with me wherever I choose to take you," was the cool rejoinder, "until you are ready to return to Harrowsmith as my wife. You have made use of me for longer than you can remember. Now it's my turn."

The girl's lips, ordinarily like a sweetheart rose, parted in a scream.

"No use tiring yourself," said Jimmy placidly. "There isn't a soul within earshot. Come, my dear, if you won't walk quietly I'll have to carry you."

"Oh!" Polly could hardly believe her ears. Jimmy, her doormat!

But for the time being she was beaten, and she knew it. Presently she rested against cushions and listened to the steady *dip, dip* of two paddles. What was to become of her? Why, had Jimmy suddenly turned into a fiend?

At last the canoe nosed itself upon a sand bank, and a minute later Polly stood on firm ground. She watched her companions pitch the tents and make camp by lantern light. They even lit a small fire and boiled water over it. Jimmy invited her to have some tea and sandwiches, but she haughtily refused.

"I'll never touch a crumb of food as long as you keep me here," she swore rashly.

"Hunger strike," was the unfeeling rejoinder. "Lots of people have died doing that." Jimmy helped himself to a large sandwich and passed the plate to his helper.

She did not waken till the sun was high in the heavens. She was hungry with the hunger of those who sleep in the open.

"You brute!" said Polly, on the verge of tears.

The third member of the party, a tall, gaunt creature in corduroy knickers and felt hat, led her to the larger of the two tents. Polly entered and saw two beds, smelling of balsam.

"You and me sleeps here, madam," said her guide.

Polly turned amazed eyes upon the person beside her. Yes, Jimmy had indeed gone mad. Her tent mate appeared unconcerned enough, however—merely pulled off two heavy boots and removed the felt hat.

"Mercy!" gasped Polly. "I thought you were a man."

The woman grinned. "I'm Minnie

Hanson, madam. Mebbe you've heard of me from Mr. Grove. Me and my man, Buck, guides tourists through these parts. If you need more blankets, holler out. You can call me Minnie."

Though she had been bred in the country, this was the first time Polly had ever passed a night in a tent, and the experience unnerved her. The strange sounds, the stealthy prowl of small animals, the flap of a bat's wings —all these were magnified into a menagerie of dangers. Once she heard Jimmy shoo something away. For a minute she had all she could do to keep from calling out to him.

About dawn she fell asleep and did not waken till the sun was high in the heavens. She was hungry with the hunger of those who sleep in the open.

"It's a grand day, miss, and I'll bet you're hungry. The boss has caught some trout, and you can have 'em fried with bacon and buttered toast and camp coffee soon as you're dressed," said Minnie, appearing at the opening of the tent.

Polly's throat ached for the feel of these good things. Never before had food sounded so attractive. But she turned her back heroically.

"No?" Minnie was disappointed. "Then mebbe you'd like a swim. The boss said to give you this." She threw a bathing suit on the bed.

Polly had taken no vow against bathing. She put on the suit and wrapped her coat around herself. Presently, seeing no sign of Jimmy, she was in the water swimming with long, sure strokes toward the horn of the bay. If only she could escape into what lay beyond she might see a boat and signal for help!

She was a fairly good swimmer. In time she actually reached her objective and turned into a second cove; but there were no boats in sight. She strained her light body through the water.

"Great day, isn't it?" a pleasant voice inquired. "It's a long time since we went swimming together, isn't it, Polly? What do you think of Minnie—fine, big woman, isn't she?"

Polly could have wept. From the corner of her eye she could see Jimmy keeping stroke with her and almost abreast. He seemed to have materialized out of nowhere. She refused to answer him and dejectedly turned back to the camp beach; while all the time he chatted light-heartedly about his morning's fishing, about the porcupine he had chased away in the night, and other casual topics. Jimmy, with his splendid physique, always looked wonderful in the water; and this fact irritated Polly not a little.

Alone at last in her tent she dressed and sat stubbornly on the bed. Here, she decided, she would remain—forever, if necessary. The tent opening flapped in the breeze and a delicious aroma of food was wafted through. Polly drew in her breath sharply. Starvation, she had discovered, was torture, acute torture.

"Dinner's ready," a voice called cheerily—Jimmy's voice. And in the silence that followed she knew that Minnie was serving him.

Unsteadily Polly rose, passed from the tent. "Jimmy, you're a brute," she sobbed.

"The trout's fine," said Jimmy, passing her a plate.

Night came, and another morning dawned. A week passed, a week in which Polly violently hated Jimmy, but lived with him constantly by her side. All the time he treated her as though they were the best of friends, and yet, all the time she felt that beneath his velvet speech lay the grimness of a Tartar. If he wished revenge for the years in which she had humiliated him, he was getting it.

Only once he referred to his love for her, and that was on a day when,

for sheer loneliness, she felt she must talk or die. He had pointed out a peculiar bird's nest hidden in a low crotch of a tree. Polly, forgetting her rôle of sphinx, reached up to touch it.

"I'm too short by three inches," she complained.

Jimmy's eyes softened mysteriously. "You're exactly the height of a man's heart," he told her.

She avoided his disturbing eyes and took refuge in argument. "I thought you admired fine, big women."

"So I do," he admitted. "But I love a small one."

"You have a strange way of showing it," she returned, and walked away to join Minnie.

The camp was situated on a point at one end of the long, narrow lake. One day Polly noticed a spiral curve of smoke rising from somewhere near the opposite shore.

"Campers," she thought, and straightway commenced to plan. Somehow she would escape and throw herself upon the mercy of these strangers. Whatever they did they could never make her as furious as Jimmy could.

When she went to bed that night she kept on most of her clothes and pretended to fall into a sound sleep. Minnie, reassured, soon dropped into a heavier nap than she had yet permitted herself, for the woman's devotion to Jimmy was untiring. Polly waited, however, for nearly an hour before she crept stealthily from the tent, shoes in hand, and tiptoed to the shore. Jimmy's quarters, she noticed, were wrapped in silence.

During the last week Polly had learned a great deal about the management of a canoe. To-night, aided by a sickle moon, she pushed the narrow craft off with almost no noise. A light breeze sped her passage, and in half an hour she ran her prow up on the opposite bank.

A little nervous at finding herself alone near midnight in a strange wood, she nevertheless pushed through the pine trees in the direction from which she had seen the smoke coming up. Soon she noticed a faint light which gradually resolved itself into a dwindling camp fire. Polly, behind a big tree, saw the figure of a man lying beside the fire, a pipe in one hand. Seized with inexplicable panic, she turned to run, but her foot caught against an outjutting root and she fell.

Instantly she knew that the camper had risen and was coming toward her. Probably he was carrying a gun.

"Oh, please," Polly entreated, "don't shoot!"

All at once she felt a hand on her arm; a light flashed in her face.

"Good heavens!" said a startled but familiar voice. "Polly!"

For the solitary camper was Grant Wallace.

With reaction from her fright the girl fell against his shoulder. She let him lead her to the dying fire, and beside it she told him with wild indignation of her past week's experience, and in return learned that up till now no one in Harrowsmith had suspected that she was not with her Aunt Grace in Boston.

"But"—Grant ran his fingers through his hair in a bewildered fashion—"you are engaged to Grove! Why in thunder should he run off with you?"

"Because—because," she stammered, "he thought I was making him wait too long. But tell me," changing the subject, "what you are doing here?"

"Fishing over the week-end. I got a chap to relieve me at Harrowsmith. Sometimes a fellow likes to get off by himself for a few days. I was lying here thinking of you, when an angel stumbled in on me."

An angel! Polly knew she was anything but that. The knowledge came to her in a flash. Grant leaned forward and grasped her hands.

"You don't love this Grove fellow;

any one can see that. Give him up, dear, and marry me. I love you."

Polly was desperate. "Yes, yes," she rashly agreed. "Only take me home. Take me at once."

Grant caught her to him and, for the second time in his life, kissed her.

She struggled fiercely. "Wait, wait," she begged, "until we get home."

He regarded her questioningly. "But you will marry me? You have promised."

"Don't bargain," she implored. "Of course I will."

"Very well." He turned the light on his wrist watch. "I'll fetch my car from Jenning's farm. I can run it up to within half a mile of here. You won't be afraid to stay alone, will you? You can get some rest."

Polly was more than willing to avoid further discussion. She went into the little one-man tent and lay down. For a while she listened to Grant working round the camp and making preparations to leave. Just before she fell asleep she heard him go off through the bush.

Her dreams were troubled, filled with nightmares. She thought she was a prisoner and that some one had come to strangle her. Suddenly she found that it was difficult to breathe and that her arms were pinioned. She awoke to the fact that she was rolled in a blanket and being lifted in strong arms.

Her struggles were of no avail. Presently she was placed in a canoe and the blanket removed from her face.

"It's quite all right," said Jimmy pleasantly. "I told you I would use force if necessary."

A pearly dawn was breaking in the east; it revealed the dim outline of Jimmy's broad shoulders.

"I could gladly kill you," said Polly, with all the rage of a little wild cat. And she continued to storm at him with unabated fury while the canoe rushed swiftly through the daybreak.

"You are naughty but adorable." Jimmy smiled at her, and said nothing more.

When they were midway between camps her curiosity overcame her. She asked him how he had followed her without a boat.

"Swam for it," he explained, glancing at his wet clothes. "I noticed the smoke here yesterday, so Minnie and I thought you had probably headed in this direction."

"It's a wonder you weren't drowned." Despite herself Polly was a little startled.

"You were out of luck," he returned. "I weathered it."

"Nevertheless, Grant will come back for me," she said. "This is his camp."

To her delight she could see she had surprised him. The effect was so marked that she went on:

"I told him all about you, and I promised to marry him. I find that I love him."

This, she believed, would be the most crushing thing she could say. But she was not prepared for the full effect it had on him. The color drained from Jimmy's lips. He seemed in a moment to have changed to an utterly different man. He laid down his paddle and leaned forward to study her.

"Is that the truth, Polly? Do you mean that you really do love Wallace?"

"Yes," she flung back, "I do."

Jimmy's whole face went gray. There was silence for a few minutes; then he said:

"I see. I've made a mistake. Of course, if you love him, I'll take you back to him. And to ease your mind, you won't see me again. I'll accept Torrence's offer in Port Dickson. I can only say that I'm sorry, Polly."

It was all rather bewildering. In the flicker of an eye she had got her own way. What had made Jimmy change?

She asked him.

He smiled at her, a vague, unhappy smile. "Polly," he said, "I've always loved you—every hair on your head, every curve of your face, your little hands—and, well, since you confess you love Wallace, it probably seems strange, but I secretly belived you cared for me, that we were made for one another."

She did not answer, and he continued: "When I heard of the way you had been treating me all these years—pretending we were engaged in order to put other poor devils off—I sort of exploded. Any man would. But at the same time I still thought you loved me. I believed that fact gave me the right to give you a lesson. Perhaps when you're older, dear, you'll understand and forgive me."

He had turned the canoe. His shoulders were dejected, but he pulled steadily for the opposite shore. Polly, who was still far from reformed, craftily put out a timid hand.

"Jimmy, I'm not afraid of you any more. Won't you take me home instead? I'd rather go with you than Grant."

The sorrow, the tenderness in Jimmy's face was instantly wiped from it. "Does that mean that you're still trifling?" he asked sternly. "Are you playing a double game with Wallace now instead of with me? You said you loved him."

"So I do." Polly was so frightened she hardly knew what she was saying. "But I'd rather go to Uncle John."

Anger flamed bright in Jimmy's young face. She never forgot the scorn in his eyes at that moment.

"If that's what you want, Wallace is the man for the job. He's straight enough. You can surely trust him."

She knew there was no further use in protesting. In the last few weeks she had learned something of the iron under Jimmy's sweetness. She quailed before it. And yet she felt a strange, new respect for him. For the first time in her thoughtless young life she was questioning herself; her own past actions and self-centered scheming. It was like lifting a mask and finding an unknown face beneath it. Tears beaded Polly's eyes, but with new pride she concealed them.

The sun was flaming apricot and rose across the eastern horizon as they neared land. Presently they heard a shout, and Grant Wallace waded out to them.

"What does this mean?" he demanded of Jimmy. "If you've annoyed her again, you'll answer to me!"

Jimmy's eyes flashed. "It means that she loves you, otherwise you'd never touch her. And as for answering to you, I'm ready whenever you are."

Polly's hands flew to her head. "Let's forget it all," she implored. "I'm not worth a fight. Take me home, Grant."

Across Grant's shoulder, as he waded to shore with her, she saw the canoe slide back across the lake. Jimmy's strong arms worked the paddle, but his shoulders drooped. There was something desperately forlorn in the picture.

With an ache in her heart and a sob on her lips she turned her face, and instantly Grant kissed her. His anger against Jimmy made him almost fierce, and he crushed Polly to him in a way that terrified her.

"Do let me down!" she commanded. "I want to go home. Wait until then."

Reluctantly Grant obeyed, and they walked together through a strip of wood to his car. Further down the road they stopped for breakfast at Jenning's farm, then continued their journey.

It seemed to be a day of mishaps. First one tire and then another went off with a bang. Twice Grant was forced to change them in the increasing heat of the day. The double catastrophe did not improve his temper, and when he rejoined Polly after the last mishap he looked hot and cross.

Mentally she compared him with Jimmy who was always cool and sweet-tempered under petty misfortune.

But Polly was relieved that she did not have to talk. She leaned back and let her thoughts run away with her. Yes, she had got rid of Jimmy. He would never bother her again. Beautiful bits of country shot past her as the machine forged on toward Harrowsmith; but for a while Polly could see only one thing: Jimmy sending her from him; Jimmy disappearing in the sunrise with dejected shoulders and averted eyes.

She remembered Tony Birks and hosts of others whom she had made genuinely unhappy. Their ghosts crowded round her with eyes of reproach. But she was to marry Grant Wallace——

She stole a sidelong glance at him. His face looked heavy and sullen. That was because she had refused to kiss him again until they got home, because she had joined only half-heartedly in his recriminations of Jimmy.

At noon, near the journey's end, it became unbearably sultry. Polly's head ached and she asked for a glass of water. Grant stopped near a little creek and brought her some in a folding cup. She raised it to her lips, then suddenly paused.

A car bearing three men, one old Doctor Wright, of Harrowsmith, was approaching. The doctor recognized Grant and the girl and pulled up.

"Hello, Wallace. Hello, Polly. I thought you were with your Aunt Grace!"

Polly very nearly dropped her cup in her embarrassment. "I was just taking a drive with Doctor Wallace," she stammered lamely.

Grant drew attention from her by going over to the other car and shaking hands with his colleague. "I've been taking a few days' leave—fishing and jaunting," he said casually.

Doctor Wright dropped his voice. "Just got word that a fellow had shot himself over at Echo Lake. Don't know who he is, but I've brought the sheriff along."

A few more brief exchanges, then: "Well, so long, Polly," in a louder tone, and the big car moved on.

But Polly had gone white as death. "A fellow shot himself over at Echo Lake!" The words, not intended for her ears, had nevertheless reached them. Jimmy was now the only camper at Echo Lake. Was the man who had shot himself—Jimmy?

The horror of the thought paralyzed her. Grant, coming toward her, stopped and stared in surprise.

"What's the matter, Polly?"

She stretched out her hands with an agonized gesture. "What did he tell you about that man, Grant? I heard some of it. Was it—Jimmy?" Her voice broke in a sob.

"Great Scott, no!" Grant looked startled. "Don't think such things. We'll hurry on home."

"No, no," desperately from Polly. "We'll go back and find out. Perhaps he isn't dead yet. Perhaps——"

But Grant's face had darkened. "We'll do nothing of the sort!" he said with stony determination. "What would people say? We're going home at once!"

He was only a few paces away, and in a second he would reach the car. At that moment Polly's eyes blazed with determination.

"Look out, Grant!" she cried.

Like a flash she was in his seat, her hands and feet busy with starter and brakes. Jimmy himself had taught her to run this kind of car, and she now showed a surprising efficiency. The machine lurched forward just as Grant reached it. He was almost flung to the road before he regained his balance, and by that time Polly was well out of his reach.

"Have you gone crazy?" he shouted after her in impotent wrath.

But she could not even hear him. She raced the car two hundred yards ahead, made her turn on the edge of a field, and dashed back past him at such speed that he had no chance to spring on the running board. Polly was headed grimly in the direction Doctor Wright and the sheriff had taken.

The early afternoon was hot as a blister, but she did not feel the heat. Luckily there was no more trouble with the car, and she made the journey back to Jenning's farm in almost half the time it had taken Grant. But fast as she drove she did not overtake the old doctor's car, which was much faster.

She did not pause at the farm, but hurried along the rough little road to the lake. When it became impassable, she left the car and ran through the wood on foot, scratching her hands and ankles on the brambles. But she neither saw the blood nor felt the pain. Jimmy was hurt—not for a minute would she think he was dead—and if she could only reach him and tell him that she loved him, he would get better.

As she had hoped she found Grant Wallace's canoe upturned by the lake. She righted it and dragged it to the water, then embarked on her frenzied journey. Had Jimmy shot himself because of her? If he had, she would never draw a happy breath again.

Some distance from land she felt water oozing round her knees, and on looking down realized that the canoe was leaking badly. Grant had probably known of this when he made no attempt to pursue her after Jimmy had abducted her this morning. Polly had nothing to bale with except her hat, which was of straw. She scooped up some of the water and threw it overboard, afterward paddling harder than ever.

Nearly halfway across the lake, after several balings, she acknowledged the hopelessness of her position. The water was rising steadily; in a minute her small craft would be swamped.

"But I will not turn back!" she vehemently declared. "Jimmy swam to me this morning; I'll swim to him now. He needs me."

A small wave washed over the gunwale of the canoe. Polly pulled off her shoes and slipped into the open lake. But despite the strength of her spirit, she was already exhausted and weak. Her clothes clung impedingly to her, and when she tried to remove her skirt she went under the water and choked. Struggling, she tried to regain her breath; the sun shone in her eyes, and it was a miracle that she did not drown.

But Polly's desperate purpose did not alter. Somehow she kept afloat, moving blindly in a circle. If she must die, she would die better than she had lived.

A voice shouted faintly, then drew nearer and nearer. Presently she felt an arm encircle her, and she was drawn through the lake with her head above water.

At first it was impossible to speak or even to see. Every ounce of her strength went toward preserving consciousness. "I must be ready to help Jimmy; I must be ready to prove that I love him," she kept repeating to herself.

All at once she knew that her rescuer had touched bottom. She was carried in his arms through water that gradually became shallower. The pressure was removed from her chest and she could gasp out a few words.

"Don't bother about me," she panted. "Jimmy Grove; he's shot; take me to him at once."

The figure that held her paused abruptly. "Polly!" cried a familiar voice. "Do you mean to say you've done all this just to reach me?"

The voice trembled with emotion.

And the next instant she stared into the kind eyes of her own Jimmy be-

Polly's purpose did not change. If she must die, she would die better than she lived.

fore she broke down on his breast in a passion of tears. "Jimmy, I thought you were hurt—dying!"

"Polly, darling, you precious little sweetheart! I was dying for you!"

But Jimmy was not the man to keep on with honeyed phrases when there was work to be done. He lighted a fire near the door of his tent, gave Polly some old camping clothes to wear while her own dried, and changed his own things. He made hot tea, and at last, dry and warm, they settled down before the fire. Polly curled herself in the crook of Jimmy's arm and told him the story of her journey with Grant and of the conversation with Doctor Wright that had frightened her so.

"My precious little love!" Jimmy's lips were on hers. "Minnie found the poor chap who had shot himself while I was abducting you this morning. He was a greenhorn who thought it was duck season, and his gun backfired."

"Was he killed, Jimmy?"

"No, dear. When I got back I heard Minnie shouting for me. He was shot above the knee, and she had made a tourniquet. We didn't dare move him, so I had Minnie go on home in the canoe, as I had planned, and telephone for a doctor from the nearest farmhouse. I stayed with the poor fellow until Doctor Wright and the sheriff got here. They took the man back with them. Wright says he'll get over it. Then I came back to camp and saw some one struggling in the lake. I didn't dream it was you, darling. I'll never forget how I felt when I recognized you."

Polly buried her face against his shoulder with a little sob. "Oh, Jimmy, you'll never know what I've been through to-day; if you live to be a hundred you'll never know how much I love you!"

Of course he was rapturous. "But why did you——" He faltered, for what he wanted to say was hard to put into words.

"I know," said Polly, hiding her golden head in shame. "I've been a horrid, horrid girl all my life, Jimmy.

I thought it was fun to—to be admired and to have men in love with me. I deserved a terrible punishment, and I got it, dear. I got it when I thought you had shot yourself."

"Don't say a word against yourself, Polly. I won't have it."

"But it's true, Jimmy. I've surely been repaid, even for hurting poor Grant, although I know his heart isn't really broken. But, after all"—the eyes she raised to his were utterly adoring—"I wasn't as mean to you as I seemed to be, dearest, for I never really lied to any of those men about you. I didn't say we were engaged; I said I was going to marry you, because"—her chin trembled—"that's what I always meant to do some time. I'll marry you tonight if you still have that license."

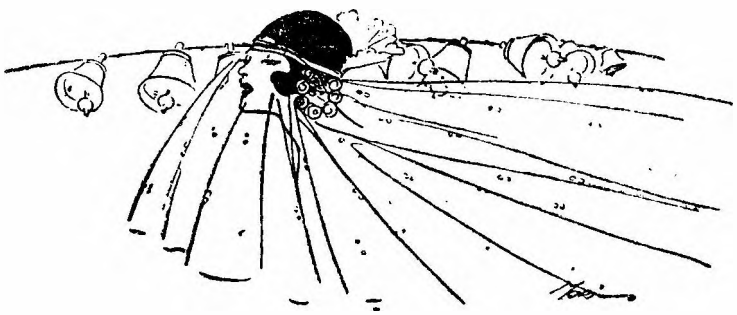
Jimmy felt as if it were all a dream.

"Will you really, Polly dearest?" he asked. "You'll forgive me for keeping you here, a prisoner?"

"I'll never forgive you if you don't keep me a prisoner," she answered.

"Sweetheart," he said, gathering her in his arms and kissing her madly, "Buck Hanson will be here with the canoe by sundown. He was to have come back in Minnie's place. We'll cross over to a village a few miles from here, and when we go back to your uncle you'll be——"

"I'll be Mrs. Jimmy Grove," said Polly, joyously.



FORGIVE ME

FORGIVE me that I love you
With a fire of eternal flame,
That in mine ears no music sounds
So sweet as your dear name.
Forgive me that I build a shrine
Within my heart's iron door,
And worship only you therein,
Forgetting those before.

Forgive me that I wear your face
In miniature disguise,
Carved in the chalice of my mind,
Reflected in my eyes.
Forgive my love that is so strong,
Remembering you and I
Once knew an understanding peace,
For my love cannot die!

L. OZELLE MATHIS.

L2B

Shifting Sands

Part 4

by Margaret Gibbons MacGill

CHAPTER XXVIII—(*Continued.*)

LIZZIE CARSON was busily engaged in tying the child's sash into a bow at the back, and in consequence, her face was hidden from Daisy. If it had not been averted, Daisy would have seen the face of her supposed mother blanch with fear.

"Mother, how could these have been my clothes if I was your only child, and you never saw me from the age of four months until I was past twenty?"

Daisy's voice was not hard or suspicious. It was simply curious.

Her question gave the guilty, wretched woman an idea for a satisfactory answer.

"You were not the only child, Daisy. You had a sister, but she died, when she was about five."

It was a lie, for Betty Carson was very much alive, and happily married, and none knew it better than her mother, who had been to see her only a day or two ago, while Daisy was at afternoon school.

"I see. Oh, I am so sorry. Poor mother!" and, believing her, Daisy took the thoroughly ashamed woman in her strong young arms.

"Lily looks as nice as any of them, now, doesn't she, Mr. Turner?" laughed Daisy, as she led the now suitably attired little girl into the room where the party was to be held.

"She does, that," was the widower's hearty response, and Daisy was obliged to smile at the simple directness of his question to her mother, when a lull occurred in the wild fun which the children made for themselves.

"Meaning no offense, madam, might I ask if you be a widow?"

Daisy felt more than glad of the pale-blue blouse and the neat black skirt that she had made in her spare time for her mother. She marveled at the pink blush which, starting beneath Lizzie Carson's chin, spread upward all over her face until it lapped the roots of her nicely dressed brown hair.

"After all, she's only forty-four—why shouldn't she? I'm sure the man looks nice and honest, and the little girl is a sweet child," thought Daisy, as she allowed herself to be blinded for a game of blindman's buff.

She caught scraps of low-toned conversation from the corner where her mother sat beside Ben Turner.

"Foreman of a city gang in constant work, with seventy-five dollars a week, and extra for overtime," was one thing that reached her alert ears.

"Well, I'm sure my daughter and me would only be too glad to mend your bits of things if you would like to bring them around, Mr. Turner, or else send them with little Lily to school. Lily is one of your regular pupils, isn't she, Daisy?" she called out as Daisy came in their direction.

"Yes, mother," was all that Daisy replied, as she moved off, preferring to leave the little scene to work itself out.

As she chased the children, causing endless laughter by her purposeful mistakes, her thoughts sped into the future, and she visualized a whole lifetime in a few short minutes, as rapid thinkers will.

If the friendship begun that afternoon deepened into something more, she could safely leave her mother, with a husband, a home, and a little stepdaughter to hold her to life, while she tried to get work abroad, perhaps in Egypt, so as to be near her beloved Aunt Mary.

Thoughts of Martin came crowding into her mind with painful persistence. His image came before her and refused to be banished.

"He never answered my letter; probably Ailsa is engaged to him by now."

The thought was bitter, and the possibility seemed a far from remote one, so, with a determined effort to throw off the cloud of depression which threatened to engulf her, Daisy tore the bandage from her eyes, and rushed among the delighted children with the news that she was a lion and wanted a fine fat boy or girl for her supper that night.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Martin Eversley sat at a small table in the little sitting room which he occupied at the Grove Inn. As he finished signing his name to a printed agreement, a little sigh escaped his lips.

There were new lines around his mouth and eyes that had no business there; if Martin had been happy, if he had been carefree as in the days before he had known of the existence of Daisy Harland, his naturally buoyant temperament would have led him to rejoice in the good fortune that had come his way during the last two years.

On the table before him lay two agreements, and he had just signed the one which gave him the greater pleasure. It was from one of the best-known publishing firms in the world, who had not only taken his first book—which was practically his own autobiography—but had signed an agreement with him for another one.

The other agreement was for a boxing match—the heavyweight championship in fact, with a purse of twenty thousand dollars.

Win or lose, it was to be his last match, his farewell to the ring, and he paid no heed to the fighting experts who raved and stormed at him, telling him that he was a criminal to forsake the art which he so worthily adorned, which could so ill afford to loose him.

"Want to write books? Pah! Leave that to the old women in trousers whose job it is," was the contemptuous advice of those whose library consisted solely of the walls of the Garden.

Martin had acquired a fair amount of fame as a fighter. His publishers were banking a good deal on the huge advertisement which the forthcoming match would give him as an author. They intended to publish his book on the day of the match.

Portraits of himself in training, and all sorts of stories, true and fictitious, had filled the newspapers for several weeks. If he could have known that every one had been faithfully cut out with loving hands, and carried about everywhere, and sometimes, when nobody was near, cried over, the clouds would have been chased from Martin Eversley's fine face like autumn leaves in the wind.

He drummed with his long, lean fingers on the coarse green table cloth, and a weary little smile crept around his lips.

"It's funny that I don't care two straws for all this now that it's come," he said, and his mind dwelt for a moment on the amount which stood in his name in the local bank, the little motor car which was the only indulgence that he permitted himself, and the possibilities contained in the two contracts that he had just signed.

He was entering on a new chapter of his life, and he was alone; that was what was the matter with him.

He wanted somebody to share things with, somebody who would look up to him and think him wonderful. Yes, that is the sole secret of keeping a man's love—somebody who would coax him into buying pretty frocks and hats, and shoes. In a word, he wanted a woman's love and companionship.

But woman in the abstract would not do. His feminine horizon had narrowed down to one, and she, for all he knew, was now the wife of another man.

He had neither seen nor heard from Ailsa Graham since the embarrassing evening in Miss Harland's cottage, and nobody seemed to have heard from Daisy.

He surmised that she was married to Gerald Graham, and that the mother who had so coolly turned up after twenty years was provided for by them.

"If I could only see her, only know whether or not she is happy with Graham," Martin sometimes said, wistfully, but there seemed no possibility of his wish being fulfilled until fate, which shuffles the cards of destiny for kings and commoners without any regard for either, took a hand in the game.

It was the day before the boxing match, and Martin had chosen to drive his little car to New York instead of going by train.

He had satisfied his manager that he was at the very top of his form, and had received the satisfactory news that the advance sales of his book had been so heavy that the first edition was exhausted. He declined to lunch either with his manager or his publisher, and drove straight from the latter's office to Orchard Street to see what kind of neighborhood Daisy's mother had lived in.

Martin was very much a man of the world, and he had lived in places compared with which the East Side was like paradise; but, to think of Daisy in such surroundings even for an hour made him almost grateful for the fact that she was married to Gerald Graham, and of course, out of them.

He drove slowly and carefully toward the hotel on Broadway where he was stopping, and a holdup at Times Square caused a double line of motor vehicles to collect behind the policeman on traffic duty.

A taxicab had drawn up on Martin's left, and, glancing casually through the

window at the occupants he saw something which caused the blood to rush to his head in a mad, singing torrent. The pulses leaped in his veins, and his splendid body swayed toward the taxi for a moment, just as the driver, more alert than Martin, obeyed the policeman's signal to proceed.

In the taxi had been Gerald Graham, and, sitting close to him with her head on his shoulder, and her hand held tightly in his, was a beautiful girl, who, if Martin had been better up in such matters, might have been easily recognized as a queen of that particular art known as musical comedy.

There was no mistaking their attitude. If they were not lovers, general opinion would have had it that they should have been!

"I'll smash him to a jelly, the beast—not married six months, and kissing another woman in a taxi!" he muttered, savagely. A sudden, fierce, cruel decisiveness illuminated his face. It was as if steel bands had suddenly been tightened! He turned his car in the same direction as that taken by the taxi but it had been joined by at least half a dozen other cabs, and the futility of trying to single out the one he was after soon became apparent.

Martin turned his car back and ate his dinner in the hotel dining room quite mechanically. His mind was on the sight that he had just seen, and his heart was aching for Daisy. Between these emotions, proper appreciation of food was impossible.

"She's so little, so unlike other girls, to bear such a blow," he told himself, quite unconscious of the fact that the same sentiments are always expressed by men in love regarding the object of their devotion.

When Martin got into the train at the Grand Central that was to take him to Weatherley Towers, he knew that he was injuring his prospects for the forthcoming match. Such excitement as would be bound to ensue from the interview between himself and Gerald Graham and possibly a sight of Daisy would be very bad for him. But, somehow, he felt that it would be far worse to have to fight through the match knowing that he had let slip the opportunity for bringing his former employer to his senses.

He had given up the idea of thrashing him. That was his first crude, elemental impulse, though an essentially masculine one.

But that would rebound upon Daisy, and hurt her, he decided, when his first tempestuous anger had cooled, and that he could never bring himself to do.

He meant to reason with Gerald Graham, as one man to another, remind him of what sort of a girl he had succeeded in winning for his wife, and point out that if he persisted in riding in taxicabs with young women in his arms, he was bound to be found out sooner or later. Instead of himself, it might easily have been a friend of Daisy's who had looked into the window of his taxi, and so on.

"Don't know how he'll take it; don't much care, hang him!" muttered Martin, as he swung his way up the broad graveled path which led to Weatherley Towers.

CHAPTER XXX.

Mrs. Graham and her family were assembled in the drawing-room, waiting for the single maid, who now represented the staff at Weatherley Towers, to summon them to dinner.

"Dinner, Mason?"

Mrs. Graham asked the question sharply, querulously; her eyes burned and glowed in her deathly white face with a fierceness that would have warned a medical man of approaching trouble.

The maid shook her head as she approached.

"Not just yet, madam. There's a

gentleman in the hall who says he must speak to Mr. Gerald at once. Says it's urgent."

"Who is it?" asked Gerald, easily, looking up from the sporting paper which lay across his knees.

"Mr. Martin Heverfield, I think the name was," replied the girl, who, in her brief passage between the hall and the drawing-room, had forgotten the name.

There was, however, sufficient likeness to cause Mrs. Graham to start to her feet, and exclaim, "If it is that prize-fighting person, Gerald, I refuse to receive him."

Ailsa, who was looking over a fashion book with her sister, suddenly grew pale.

Gerald gave an impatient exclamation.

"Don't be so artificial and stagey, mater. You seem to forget that we are living in the twentieth century—not in the mid-Victorian period," he said, as he crossed the room to the door.

Martin was waiting beneath the ancient lamp which but dimly lighted the great hall, and beneath the yellow light his face was hard-set and grim.

Gerald Graham had many faults, but harboring grudges was certainly not one of them.

He advanced toward Martin with outstretched hand.

"How do you, Martin?" he said.

From the first he had called his protégé by his Christian name.

"How do you feel for to-morrow night? I've staked my last fiver on you, my boy," he said, as cheerily and unconcernedly as if the home of his boyhood was not about to be sold over his head, and his financial outlook as dark as it could be.

"The young waster!" muttered Martin beneath his breath, ignoring the outstretched hand, which, to begin with, was hardly tactful.

Gerald Graham flushed, and his manner, from being amiable, became cold and curt.

"What can I do for you?" he asked, shortly.

"Is there a place where we can talk undisturbed for five minutes?" said Martin, replying to the question by asking another.

"Certainly," Gerald Graham led the way to the library.

"Well?" he said, without asking Martin to sit down.

"I saw you this morning. I was in that holdup at Times Square. I was able to see into your cab," said Martin, coming at once to the point.

A puzzled expression, as if he was trying to recall something, crept into Gerald Graham's eyes.

"Well?" he said, again, in a tone of amused toleration.

His voice seemed to act on Martin like a tinder applied to a trail of gunpowder. His eyes fairly blazed in his white face. He choked down the impulse to drive his fist into the cool face before him, because, even through the rising tide of his anger, the thought of Daisy's nearness was with him.

But his voice trembled as he came close, and, looking the other man squarely between the eyes, said, in a tone that men so rarely use in talking to one another that it cuts deeply where there is even the faintest spark of goodness—and Gerald Graham was by no means a bad man.

"Is that all you've got to say—well?" he said, unconsciously imitating the other's tone. "Why, man, instead of driving through the public streets with some other woman in your arms, you ought to be down on your knees thanking God for your wife."

Martin's voice quivered with emotion. If only the chance to love and serve Daisy had been his!

Gerald Graham threw back his sleek head with a laugh that lasted fully thirty seconds.

When he stopped, it was to find Martin standing over him with doubled fists.

"If it weren't for your wife, I'd knock your head off!" he said, thickly.

"But, man alive, I haven't got a wife, not yet, at any rate!" said Gerald Graham, still struggling with the impulse to laugh. "That was little Dolly Hale you saw me with; she's in the 'Follies,'" he said, easily. "When things are a bit more settled, I'm going to pop the question, seeing that you had all the luck in the other quarter," he finished, with a meaning glance.

"Why, what's up, Martin—not feeling groggy, are you?" he said, getting up and pouring out a whisky and soda from a cabinet.

Martin was standing with his hands dropped helplessly at his side, on his face the scared expression sometimes seen in timid children.

"No, I'm all right. Tell me that again, that you haven't a wife?" he said, speaking in hurried, breathless jerks.

"Certainly, if you want to hear it over again. I haven't a wife, but that is due to the fact that the girl I wanted —and you know who I mean, Daisy Harland—threw me over, saying that she preferred to marry you. I'm going to marry Dolly, if she'll have me, because she's a bright little thing, and a good sort at the bottom, just the kind of girl to be a good pal to a man so long as he did the straight thing by her."

Gerald Graham stopped to light another cigarette, and looked curiously at his visitor, whom he had never seen so agitated since he had known him.

"Everything all right, now? Satisfied?" he asked, in quizzical tones.

"Where is Daisy, and who told you that she cared for me? Why, man, I'd give every hope I possess for confirmation of that," said Martin, hoarsely, and there was something in his voice and eyes that caused the other man, formed in a more delicate, transparent mold, to turn away, feeling, for a reason which he was powerless to define, a little ashamed.

Gerald Graham was not of the type from which the great lovers of the world are drawn. Skimming the cream off the surface of life was quite enough for him. He loved Daisy Harland, and if she would have had him, he would have married her and made her quite a pleasant, indulgent husband.

But he knew, instinctively, who was the finer, better man, the most likely to make the life of any woman a perfect poem of happiness by the depth of his love and devotion. Though he could never hope to emulate, he could, at least, admire, and this he did, in full measure.

Leaning over the table, he gripped Martin's hand, and there was no hint of laughter or sarcasm in his voice as he said, "Go in and win, my boy. Out of all the men I've ever known, if I had to choose Daisy Harland's husband I'd choose you, in spite of the hardness of your fists," he finished, with a sly, reminiscent smile. "It was Daisy herself who admitted that you were the reason for breaking off our engagement, and as far as her whereabouts are concerned, well, I've only had one letter from her since she left Lynton, and that was when she sent back my ring. I didn't want it, and told her so, but she insisted on returning it. Ah, here it is."

Martin did not glance at the letter itself, his eyes only pounced, with eaglelike swiftness, upon the address, neatly written in the top left-hand corner.

His face fell. It had been written from Orchard Street.

"I've been there. She's left, along with her mother," he said, sadly.

"But I'll find her, if I have to search every street and alley for her," he went on, getting to his feet, as if in prepara-

tion for an immediate search of New York's innumerable streets and avenues.

"Better by far advertise in the personal columns of the newspapers; all women read them," said Gerald Graham, better up in feminine psychology than Martin.

"It's too late to get back to New York to-night, and you don't want to tire yourself with walking, with what's before you to-morrow. Won't you stay and pick a bone with us, and go up by the first train to-morrow?" said Gerald Graham, in a tone of warm friendliness.

In ten minutes, having apologized to Mrs. Graham and her daughters for his lack of evening attire, Martin was seated at the dinner table, beside Ailsa, whose appetite for the meal was utterly destroyed.

Never had Martin been so arresting. She felt his presence to her very finger tips, and yet he said very little.

It was a difficult meal. Mrs. Graham seemed to have determined upon a policy of well-bred freezing, and only her son's cleverness at small talk kept the conversational ball rolling.

Martin felt the chill in the atmosphere, but it was absolutely powerless to hurt him. Within he was all warm and glowing, and so happy that he had the utmost difficulty in refraining from the impulse to do absurd, boyish things. He wanted to stand on his head, turn cartwheels, shout at the top of his voice for joy! He felt as young as the spring, and as wildly happy as a lark on a summer morning.

He had entered into his man's kingdom of love. Somewhere in the world was Daisy, his love, and he felt that no harshness meted out to him by others could ever again cause him pain.

With the knowledge of what was before him on the morrow, Martin did his best to sleep when he retired to bed, in one of the drafty guest rooms.

But sleep was impossible. The joy-birds were singing too loud a song in his heart. It was almost dawn when he dropped into a light slumber, and it seemed that he had scarcely closed his eyes before he was awakened by the smell of smoke, and the sound of crackling flames.

Just as he finished flinging on a few clothes, he heard the sound of a shout at the end of the long corridor which led to his room, and the next moment Gerald Graham, breathless, dashed into his room.

"The house is on fire, Martin! There's no hope of saving it, for the old place will burn like firewood. It seems to have started in the cellars. Come and help us get out what we can."

Martin's brain was instantly alert. He dashed after Gerald and very quickly saw that he had already lost his head.

"Go down and collect some men, and turn in the alarm at the fire station. I'll set to and do what I can while you are gone," he said, taking the lead almost instinctively.

With a feeling of intense gratitude, Gerald Graham rushed off to obey orders.

Martin found the women already gathered on the grounds, huddled together in a frightened, shivering mass.

Ailsa, whom one would have thought quite capable of meeting an emergency, suddenly subsided into hysterics. Only Mrs. Graham, who was, curiously enough, attired just as she had been the night before, in her favorite dinner gown of silk brocade, with Mechlin lace at neck and wrists—was calm. She looked exactly like one of the figures in a medieval canvas come to life as she stood watching the flames licking the ancient woodwork of Weatherley Towers with a vague smile on her death-white face.

The sentence that Martin overheard, spoken in a low, tense voice, made him

look sharply at her, and caused him, as the result of that look, to make her his first care.

"My home is saved—saved—no outsider can ever live in it now. Fire is a great foe, but a greater friend."

A hazy suspicion of the truth darted into Martin's brain, but the whole truth was never known, so cleverly had Mrs. Graham concealed her tracks.

Not even Julia Milburn's cleverness could revive a dead passion. She would not advance a penny of her large fortune to save the home for which Mrs. Graham had schemed and fought, and even broken the law.

By a superhuman effort, she had kept the holders of the mortgage from foreclosing for six months, but none of her schemes for saving it had materialized and then came the determination to destroy rather than yield.

The absence of servants made it quite easy for her to make her preparations unobserved and, as the property was well insured, probably the owners were not so inconsolable as they might have been.

Martin did the work of half a dozen men during the fiercest hours of the fire. A journalist, who lived in the vicinity, made the most of his splendid luck by describing, in moving language, how Martin Eversley, the young pugilist-author, risked his life to save a little Pekingese, the pet of Miss Ailsa Graham, which had been left in her bedroom.

The newspapers were full of the fire at Weatherley Towers, and much sympathy was expressed for the Graham family, but especially for Gerald Graham, for the news of the revoking of his great-uncle's will had been public property.

"Honestly, I can't pretend to be sorry that the old barn's gone up in smoke," the object of journalistic sympathy told Martin, a couple of hours before the match. "It had a bad influence on mother. It made her forget that some consideration was due the living as well as the dead. The girls didn't have half a chance, for she's never taken them about," he went on, and there was a note of deep satisfaction in Gerald Graham's voice as he finished. "I'm going to take her and the girls across to France for a bit, and when we come back, we'll try for a jolly little apartment in New York. I start my job in a month's time, and with one thing and another, we ought to be able to make a go of it. I say, Martin," he added, anxiously, "I've got all I could scrape together on you to-night. Be a good chap and pull it off, won't you?"

Martin's reply was hardly scholastic, but it was certainly forceful as he said, brimming over with the confidence which, a few hours later, won him a triumphant victory, "You just bet your life I will."

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was very rarely that Daisy permitted herself the luxury of a newspaper to read in the train on her way to school. She generally waited until she got there, when one was passed around during the morning recess.

But Martin's name had been prominent in headlines in every newspaper for days past, and the picture papers promised to devote a special section to the fight.

He had won. "Of course he would win," Daisy told herself, with the blind, unquestioning faith which most women possess, and so the news did not thrill her at all.

But she gloried in the adjectives which were applied to him, personally.

"Clean," "a sportsman through and through," "a thousand pities that the ring has to lose so splendid a fighter," and so on.

There was not one discordant note.

The only paragraphs that had brought tears to Daisy's eyes, and a

wild, unconquerable ache to her heart were those in the newspapers of the previous day, which had described him risking his life for the sake of Ailsa Graham's dog!

"He'll be able to marry her now," was Daisy's first thought, as her mind reverted to the large sum of money which Martin had won by his victory.

A stab of jealousy pierced her heart, as her imagination ran riot, and drew for her a mental picture of Martin as he probably was, at that moment.

Ailsa would be with him, congratulating and sympathizing all in a breath. She did not visualize Martin as having been badly hurt, because the newspapers said that he had had a walk-over.

"She is with him, and they will be kissing each other, and arranging for their wedding! Oh, I wish I could either die or forget."

Daisy's way lay past a large bookstore. She was already late for school, but recklessness took possession of her when she saw a whole window devoted to a show of Martin's book which, with characteristic simplicity, he had called "My Own Story." Assistants had worked overtime to dress the window as soon as the result of the match was made known. The enterprising publisher had hit upon the happy idea of getting Martin to have two photographs taken, one at his writing table and the other in his training clothes. Altogether, the term pugilist-author, which was to stick to Martin throughout a great part of his literary career, seemed most apt.

A mist of tears blinded Daisy as, hardly knowing what she did, she stumbled into the shop and asked for a copy of the book.

"You are the first customer this morning, madam. You wish young Eversley's book? I've read it myself and it's certainly worth the money! A man's book, every word of it," said the salesman, enthusiastically, as he took Daisy's two dollars and wrapped the book.

The minute she got outside Daisy tore off the paper and string, and opened the book. Then a sob caught her throat, and into her puzzled eyes there crept the ghost of a smile as she read the inscription on the first page.

"Dedicated to one I loved and lost, D. H.," she read, with an ever deepening sense of bewilderment.

A church clock chimed the half hour. Her class would be waiting, but she did not care. It was doubtful if she even remembered her vocation at that moment.

"I wonder if he received the letter which I sent to him at the hospital?" Daisy unwittingly stumbled upon the right explanation, but of course she was unaware of the fact. It would certainly never occur to her that anybody could be so utterly lost to all sense of decency as to burn another person's letter.

It was nearly ten o'clock when she eventually reached school, but her flushed face and bright eyes, coupled with her slightly strained manner, caused the principal, whose hobby was emergency ambulance work, to thrust a thermometer beneath Daisy's unwilling tongue.

"H'm! You've got a headache, of course?" she queried, looking very kind but capable, as she spoke.

As it seemed as if a million little hammers were knocking at Daisy's head, she was able to say yes truthfully.

"I thought so. Better go home and stay there for a couple of days. Slight touch of flu, I should think. No, don't argue, but go at once, and stop in at the doctor's on your way," and, ordering another teacher to take over her class, Daisy was sent home almost as if she had been a pupil instead of a teacher.

But Daisy did not go home. Spring was in the air; Central Park was only

a short distance away, and she was eager to read the book which was hers —hers, and not Ailsa Graham's.

It was a poor, petty enough triumph over the girl who would be the biggest influence in Martin's future, and it brought no lasting sense of satisfaction.

She wanted Martin. To the uttermost corner of her loving, honest little heart she wanted him. He made her as jealous as a squaw, and as proud as a cave woman. He set her pulses quivering, dancing, daring, dreaming, and even if she could, she would not call back that which had been so sweet to give.

Under the shade of a birch tree just trembling into leaf, Daisy opened Martin's book. She sat with her eyes riveted to its pages, absolutely unconscious of the passing of time, until she finished the last page.

It was a wonderful book. It was a man's book for men, as the shopkeeper had said, but a man's book is always a woman's book too, and that was why the book would be an overwhelming success.

Daisy walked out of the Park, but all the busses were crowded and she felt she would rather walk than stand and wait.

Having decided to walk, she got out some pennies to purchase a newspaper from the little boy who passed, shouting the latest news. Generally, of late, a newspaper contained something that her eager hands could cull; a portrait, a paragraph, sometimes a whole article written by Martin himself.

There was a feast to-day for the excited girl, a portrait, and an account of his thought processes in the ring, written by himself and signed with a facsimile of his own handwriting.

But there was something more, besides. Daisy eagerly read the announcement of a movie house on upper Broadway to the effect that they were showing the pictures of the big fight, exactly as it had taken place the previous night. She ran all the way to the subway and could scarcely conceal her impatience at the necessary stops at stations.

She took a seat in the orchestra so as to get the best possible view. When the picture began, her emotions almost overcame her and she dug her nails into the upholstery of her seat so as to prevent herself from shouting aloud all the pride that was in her heart.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Thanks, but I feel quite fit. It's never the day after that one feels a gruelling in the ring, it's generally on the third day or so."

Martin Eversley was speaking, and, with the exception of a big bruise on his forehead, and a cut on his chin—which, after being skillfully treated, looked as if it might be a shaving mishap—his handsome face was quite uninjured. Nearly all his punishment had been received on places far more vital than his face, and it was not quite true to say that he felt absolutely fit.

"But I feel fit enough to find my little girl, if she is to be found at all in this wilderness of a city," he told himself, grimly, as he carefully adjusted a velour hat so as to hide the disfiguring bruise, and then turned to face his trainer with a laugh.

"I'm sorry, too, that it's good-by, Joe, but, if ever I do alter my mind, I promise that no other trainer shall come within fifty miles of knocking me into shape," and with a final handclasp, accompanied by a generous acknowledgment of his services, Martin Eversley dissolved the last link which bound him to a life that he was determined to put behind him.

It was impossible for him to rest, impossible for him to enjoy the fruits of his efforts while Daisy Harland lived in the same city, unmarried because she loved him, and probably thinking that

all his own avowals of love had not been sincere, since he had not sought her out, and claimed her for his own.

His first visit was to his publishers. They received him with beaming smiles and chuckles of satisfaction.

"The second edition is exhausted, the third is entirely booked, and the fourth is making headway. It was a splendid move to publish yesterday. By the way, how do you feel? Oh, but you must come down and see our staff of packers at work on your stuff," the director said, without waiting for anything so trivial as a reply to his question regarding Martin's condition.

But a girl whose back reminded him faintly of Daisy passed by the window, and, without a word of apology to the astonished publisher, Martin rushed out of the office without another word.

He overtook the girl, but it was not Daisy, and he walked on mechanically, not caring where he went, choosing the streets which contained the greater number of women.

Eventually, he found himself on upper Broadway, and at the corner of One hundred and Twenty-third Street a line of people outside a movie house barred his way. The traffic in the street was too dense to allow him to walk around the crowd, so, because it was the easier way, he moved with it.

Suddenly, his own name arrested his ear. Then he understood.

A big poster, depicting himself in fighting attire, surrounded by photographs of the match, was just inside the doorway, and all these people were paying their money and crowding and jostling each other to see him.

It would be idle to deny that a sense of exultation filled Martin's heart. Only a cynically superior person is indifferent to the homage of his fellows —and Martin Eversley was almost boyishly youthful in some respects.

He pushed his way in with the others, and bought a ticket. He, too, wanted to see himself as others saw him with the least difficulty. A tall girl in a dark-blue frock uniform escorted him to a seat which was only four rows removed from the girl whose memory was enough to thrill him.

The crowded audience waited more or less impatiently while a trivial fill-in picture was shown, and a murmur of satisfaction passed through the house when at length patience was rewarded and a close-up of Martin, and then of his opponent, appeared on the screen.

The wild storm of clapping and stamping, together with a cheer from some boys who had stolen an afternoon from school to come, thrilled through the young ex-pugilist as he sat quietly in the darkness. He found that he was only able to nod in reply to an observation made by the man at his side.

"Fine chap, ain't he?" said the picturegoer, who would have been half crazy with excitement if he had known the identity of his neighbor.

A hush fell over the house as the fight commenced, and the people started to follow the eagle-swift movements of the combatants, and the most interested of them all was the man who was seeing himself for the first and last time.

The newspapers had described the fight as disappointingly brief, but it is extremely doubtful if the gentlemen who made these peevish criticisms from the stalls would have cared to have endured such a ceaseless rain of blows for longer than five rounds, which was the length of the fight's duration.

To Daisy, watching the screen with dry mouth, aching eyes, and a heart which seemed to miss a beat every time that a blow went home, it seemed as if a whole eternity were being lived through while Martin's opponent, whom, with true feminine lack of logic, she fiercely hated, punched and pommeled and made great red welts on his white skin.

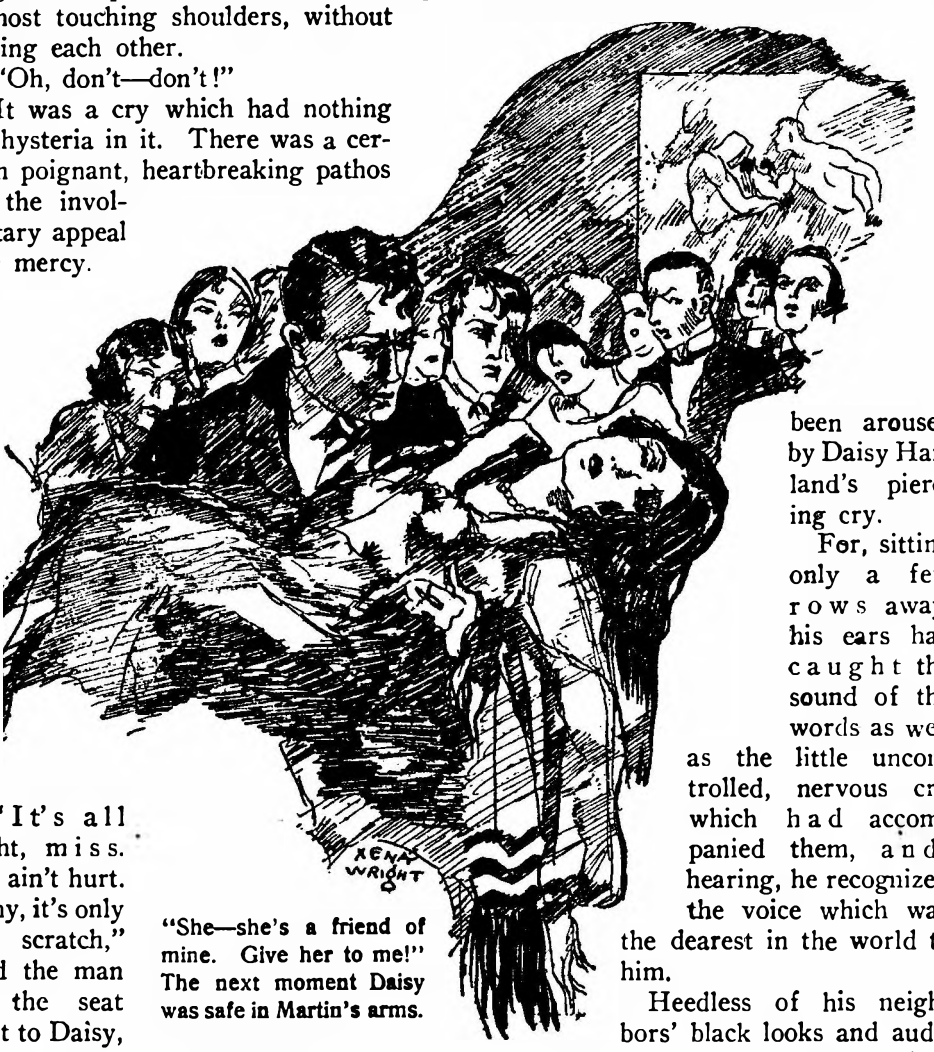
It was the blow that cut the skin

above Martin's left eye, causing the blood to flow, that proved too much for Daisy's endurance.

It was the blow that led to her own ultimate happiness, for, except for the scene that followed, she and Martin might have passed out of the building, almost touching shoulders, without seeing each other.

"Oh, don't—don't!"

It was a cry which had nothing of hysteria in it. There was a certain poignant, heartbreaking pathos in the involuntary appeal for mercy.



"She—she's a friend of mine. Give her to me!" The next moment Daisy was safe in Martin's arms.

"It's all right, miss. He ain't hurt. Why, it's only a scratch," said the man in the seat next to Daisy, just as much absorbed as she, yet putting out a hand to steady her as she seemed to be falling across him.

He put out the other hand when he divined what had happened.

"Fainted, she has," he told the woman beside him, who immediately got up and made way for him to pass out into the aisle, as he was carrying the slight little form in his arms. He had only proceeded a step or two when his path was blocked by a tall, broad figure which bore down upon him like a miniature hurricane, holding out arms which were trembling with the fierce tumult of emotion that had been aroused by Daisy Harland's piercing cry.

For, sitting only a few rows away, his ears had caught the sound of the words as well as the little uncontrolled, nervous cry which had accompanied them, and, hearing, he recognized the voice which was the dearest in the world to him.

Heedless of his neighbors' black looks and audible protests as he pushed past them just when the fight was getting interesting, Martin reached the aisle in less than five seconds, and there he stood, holding out his arms as if Daisy belonged to him and he had the right to her.

"Get out of the way, can't you, unless the girl's yours! She's fainted," said the man, eying Martin angrily.

"She—she's a friend of mine. Give her to me, I tell you," and, without wasting words, Martin forced open the hands which held Daisy and the next moment she was safely in his arms, her little white face against his chest, and the feel of her, the wonder of it all, sent a wild joy thrilling through his heart even while his head urged him to seek the open air with his precious burden, as quickly as possible.

But he was not to get his wish so easily.

The scene had distracted the attention of the audience, and a wave of unrest, surging through the house, caused the manager, who was present, to give the order for lights to be turned up and the picture stopped.

Martin was halfway down the aisle when the house was suddenly illuminated, and he blinked his eyes angrily at the unexpected glare.

Every eye in the building was strained in an endeavor to see what was happening.

Suddenly there was a roar of acclamation and a general stampede of the audience.

"It's Eversley himself! Good old Mart! Who'd have thought it? Look, there's the bruise and cut. It's him, all right."

Excited admirers climbed over the backs of chairs, and impatiently jostled each other in order to crowd around the idol of the moment.

Martin's picture was still on the screen, where the operator, obeying orders, had left it, until a resumption of the film should be possible.

He had left his hat beneath his seat in his hurry, and, with the bruises on his face for proof, and the likeness before them, there was no possibility of Martin's being the double of the great fighting champion.

"Let me get out, will you? Haven't you sense enough to see that this lady is not well?"

Martin barked out his words between effective shoulder movements, which soon cleared his path of the admirers whom he wished at the other end of the earth.

The manager, hurrying around from the opposite side of the house, stood in Martin's path.

"If you will follow me, Mr. Eversley, I will take you to my office. There is a couch in the room," he said, in a calm and sensible manner which immediately won Martin's heart.

He cleared a path through the crowd, and on his way gave orders to recommence the showing of the film.

Some of the audience returned to their seats, but the greater part left, to hang about outside on the chance of getting another glimpse of their idol.

"You are all right, honey girl? It was only a faint, wasn't it?"

Martin, tortured by the thought that Daisy might be seriously ill, asked her the same question over and over again in the little room where he had been bidden to carry her.

"Martin, are you real, or is it a dream? Let me feel you, dear," and Martin's eager, impetuous soul thrilled at the touch of the little white fingers on his eyes, his hair, his lips.

"It's no dream, darling, but if it is, I hope it lasts the rest of my life," said Martin, hoarsely, gathering the small, childlike form into his arms, and pressing her so tightly that Daisy might have cried out, had she not been so excited.

Then, sitting side by side on the big couch in the manager's office, they told each other things which cleared their sky of misunderstandings and doubts, and Daisy's essentially feminine heart gave a bound of joy when she heard from Martin's own lips his true feelings toward Ailsa Graham.

"And so, you see, I felt bound to do my best for her, and I am glad now that I stuck to her, for she is a totally different woman to-day. There is just

a chance that romance may come again into her life," said Daisy, concluding the story of her mother's extraordinary claim while he was in the hospital.

Martin's brows came together during the recital, and he asked, abruptly, "Did she have any proof beyond her own word that you were her daughter? It's a most extraordinary thing for her to turn up at this late date."

"Oh, she did her best to persuade me not to come to New York. She says that her reason for not claiming me was because her second husband, who was such a brute to her, refused to let her keep me. Her mother, old Granny Horrex, it was she who placed me on Miss Harland's doorstep, told her such wonderful stories about the way I was being brought up that she thought she would be a criminal to take me away from so splendid a home. It would never have come out but for poor old Granny, who told the whole story to Doctor Browne, when she was on her deathbed. She was always wonderfully fond of me, and used to insist on having one of my photographs every time one was taken. Of course, it was quite natural, as I was her grandchild," concluded Daisy, with a happy little laugh which showed that it was neither her mother nor the departed Granny Horrex who was in her thoughts just then.

"Yes, quite natural," agreed Martin, more than content to let everything and everybody except Daisy, slip into the background.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

To get away from the enthusiastic mob of the theater patrons had been a little work of art on Martin Eversley's part.

He had signed autograph albums and picture post-card photographs of himself until his arm ached. His mouth felt as if it would never again be normal through being stretched so often across his jaws in what he called an idiotic grin, in reply to newspaper camera men who urged him to smile.

Daisy had glowed with pride and pleasure throughout it all, and once or twice a doubt had crept into her mind as to whether Martin was doing right in abandoning the very proud position that he had won just at the height of his fame.

It was past five o'clock when the taxi drew up outside the house where Daisy and her mother lived.

"It isn't so nice as Rose Cottage, of course, but at any rate, it is clean and wholesome, and a hundred per cent better than our first rooms," said Daisy, as she led the way up the staircase covered with oil cloth, and smelling strongly of soap and ammonia to the first floor, where she and Lizzie Carson occupied three rooms.

"Mother, I've brought somebody to see you," cried Daisy, in a clear, ringing, happy voice which, under other circumstances, would have brought a look of pleasure to the eyes of the woman, who, many a time since she had known her, had wished passionately that Daisy had indeed been her own daughter.

But, as Daisy pushed open the door, and drew Martin into the room, a look of fear came into the eyes of the woman who had often cursed the money which had tempted her to deceive Daisy.

Martin saw the look, and it caused him immediate uneasiness. He had penetrated too deeply into the haunts of men not to know that such looks had history behind them.

Lizzie Carson was not alone in the room. She had more visitors than she wanted that afternoon.

Ben Turner, in his Sunday clothes, looking very awkward, sat on the extreme edge of a chair, with his child held firmly between his knees, as if he had some special reason for keeping her out of mischief.

"Good afternoon, Miss," said the big, burly man, rising to his feet, and holding out his hand to Daisy.

He kept it longer than he need, in order to shake it once again, at the conclusion of a sheepish little confession.

"I suppose I'll have to get out of the habit of calling you Miss, and take to Daisy, seeing that me and your ma have fixed it up to marry, and I want to tell you, Miss—Daisy, I mean, that Ben Turner's home is your home just as long as you choose." Daisy felt herself struggling with an irresistible desire to laugh and cry at the same time as she replied:

"You couple of dears, I'm so glad! I saw this coming, you know. But I won't have to inflict myself upon you for very long, Mr. Turner, because you see, I mean to follow your excellent example," and Daisy darted a laughing glance at Martin, whom she had not yet had time to introduce.

Ben Turner took his cue from the remark in characteristic fashion.

"Put it there, sir," he said, extending his rough, grimy hand, which no amount of washing could ever get clean. "You'll be welcome to do all your courtin' in my parlor," he added, genially.

The words did not jar on Daisy. She had lived long enough with Lizzie Carson to know how such words were meant.

But her own and Martin's attention was drawn toward a short, sturdily built young woman, who sat quietly near the window, not saying a word.

She was the image of Lizzie Carson, as well she might have been, since she was her own flesh and blood.

Betty generally came to see her mother in the afternoons, and took her departure well before five thirty, when Daisy came home from school.

"This is Betty, my niece," explained Lizzie Carson, looking very red and uncomfortable as she performed the introduction.

It was the only explanation she could think of. The kettle was boiling for tea on the open fireplace, and her dress almost caught in the spout as she turned round with sudden violence in order to avoid looking at Daisy.

"Look out, mother," warned Betty, jumping up and dragging the kettle off the fire as she spoke.

Martin's ears pricked up at the word.

Coupled with the terror in the woman's eyes, the fact that, though in a much coarser mold, the girl looked neither older nor younger than Daisy, caused him to look up suspiciously when the word fell from Betty's lips.

"Do you usually call your aunt, mother?" he said, addressing the embarrassed girl, but also looking keenly at the flushed face of her parent.

Betty hung her head, not knowing what to reply, but Lizzie Carson jumped up, and, standing by the table, with tears streaming down her face, she exclaimed, "I don't care if I do ten years for it, I'm going to tell the truth now. I've never had any peace since that girl, who's been a blessed little angel to me——" the beseeching eyes were turned upon Daisy. "Not since I've known her, and done that Mrs. Milburn's dirty work for her, have I had a minute's peace," she sobbed brokenly.

Martin started at the sound of Julia Milburn's name, and his mouth grew hard.

"You'd better pull yourself together, Mrs. Carson, and make a clean breast of things," said Martin, in a voice which, though not unkind, was certainly not in the least sentimental.

It did not escape his notice that Ben Turner got up from his seat and ranged himself beside Lizzie.

"Get it off your chest, Lizzie, whatever it is, it won't make no difference to me, remember that," he said, placing a heavy hand upon her shoulder.

As she sobbed out the whole miserable story, Martin Eversley's eyes grew dark with anger.

"So, for five hundred dollars, you robbed a child of her birthright, and left her to the mercy of a complete stranger, and not content with that, you conspire with another woman as bad as yourself to rob her of love, the home that a gracious and kindly woman has given her, and all that she has been used to. In return, she gives you all that she has to give, bless her, when ten years penal servitude would be nearer the mark for such a disgrace to womanhood as yourself."

"I know, I know," sobbed the thoroughly broken woman, who raised herself the least bit in Martin's estimation when she made no plea for mercy.

"I'll go to the station now with you if you like," she said, reaching for her hat and coat.

"There's no need for that at present," replied Martin, curtly. "The fellow who stole Miss Harland's inheritance from her mother is dead, you say. You are sure of that?" he asked, with a keen glance at Lizzie's red, tear-blotched face.

"Positively certain. His grave's in Wethersfield," was her reply.

"There was a letter addressed to a firm of lawyers downtown which he posted before Miss Harland's mother died. You saw him post that letter?" questioned Martin, with relentless persistence.

"Yes," was the miserable, low-spoken reply.

"Then it's our job to find out which firm of lawyers received that letter. When we've done that, we shall doubtless solve the mystery of your parentage," he finished, turning to Daisy, who was sitting silently by the window, holding Lily Turner on her lap, too utterly bewildered at the turn which events had taken to share the conversation.

They commenced the search the following morning, and found that that part of Lizzie Carson's story was perfectly true.

They were successful at the third firm which they tried, and it was the senior partner, an old man, who remembered Daisy's mother.

"You are very like her, Miss Leslie; she was just about your age when I first knew her," he said, peering closely at Daisy through his glasses.

"It would be in keeping with the rest of your romance to discover yourself the daughter of a millionaire," he said, with a gleam of humor in his eyes. "Facts, however, are that your mother was Marguerite Wooland, the only child of a very strait-laced, rather narrow-minded clergyman in Boston, who had brought her up to regard the stage and everything pertaining to it with horror. Hence, as often as she could, the young girl secretly visited the theater with some friends who were not known to her parents.

"She met and fell in love with Oscar Leslie, a young man of good family but no prospects who was trying to make his way on the stage.

"There was a secret wedding, and eventually the young husband was compelled to take an engagement in Australia, in order to earn a living.

"The entire company was drowned in a squall, and when the news reached your poor mother, she was compelled to tell her secret—for you were soon to appear on the scene.

"When her father learned the truth, he turned her out of his house, and her mother was powerless to soften him. She saw her only child turned into the streets. But she managed to give your mother every piece of jewelry she possessed, including some rare gems that were really heirlooms.

"In the letter which we received, the whole story is told, up to the time of your birth. Your mother's marriage

certificate is here, but I conclude that your own birth certificate was in the packet of gems which the man to whom she intrusted them stole.

"Mrs. Wooland has been dead five years now; she never got over her daughter's loss, and I think that she was glad to go, but it would have brought a great deal of happiness into her life if she could have brought you up, my dear. She lived on an annuity, and there was nothing much to leave when she died," the old lawyer concluded, as if he had kept the most important part of his story until the finish.

"Give me the letters, give me everything that my mother ever wrote. That is all I want," said Daisy, with tear-filled eyes.

Miss Harland, looking ten years younger than her age, and as healthy as the young couple who had come to Egypt for their honeymoon, sat waiting for them in the private sitting room of their hotel, her eyes gleaming brightly with happy tears.

Daisy and Martin had only arrived that morning, but they had insisted upon going out before lunch to explore the native bazaars.

Miss Harland did not feel like going with them. She wanted to sit and think over all that she had heard.

She remembered how she had said:

"I am glad that you decided to take no action against that poor woman, especially as the man insisted on marrying her in spite of everything. But"—and Miss Harland's face grew hard and her voice cold as she added—"it would have served Mrs. Milburn right to have been exposed; she didn't have the other poor creature's excuse."

Martin kissed Daisy before replying.

"I gave her a fright that will last her a while," said Martin, with a twist of his mouth that could hardly be termed a smile.

They wanted her, her children, as the loving, lovable spinster called them. They were going to take her back with them to New York and she was to live near, so that they could look after her and see her every day.

Miss Harland felt very excited as the door opened to admit them, eager as children.

They had brought some presents for her and made a great fuss over her.

"We've been married a month today, auntie," cried the defiant little bride, standing with her arm around her tall husband. Miss Harland looked at them and felt that just the sight of their happiness was sufficient reward for having brought Daisy up from a child.

A BACK NUMBER

BY

Mary Martin

MISS SMITH was a little woman with tired eyes and pale cheeks. Her features were small and regular, and she had once been pretty in an unassuming way.

Now she was middle-aged and took little interest in her personal appearance.

Betty stood and stared at her aunt, and every one who passed the open window stared at Betty. She was such a vividly handsome creature, so young, so rich of color, so tall and strong.

"Aunt Mary!"

The girl had not spoken until now, and the fidgety tapping of her foot in conjunction with her silence had annoyed Miss Smith.

"Yes, my dear."

"I want to speak to you."

"Yes, dear," said Aunt Mary; "but had you not better sit down to do it? Aren't you tired of standing?"

Betty, accepting the suggestion, sat down in an easy-chair.

"You don't understand, poor dear old auntie!" said Betty. "How should you? Everything has changed since you were young."

This was Betty's way of checking criticism from her aunt, and it was effectual. It induced entire self-repression on the part of the elder woman, for it hurt her terribly.

She was not considered capable of understanding young folk—she who had devoted her life to an orphan child, given up—no, she would not think of that.

But the words had shown her just where she stood with regard to this girl—she, who had a heart younger, more sympathetic, quicker and warmer than Betty's, or indeed than most of Betty's friends, must not try to share their lives, must not venture an opinion.

Yet so young at heart was she still that she believed in her simplicity that it was a story of love she was now about to hear.

Hitherto Betty had made short work of her admirers, declared that she would remain single and free all her life.

It had appeared more than probable that she would miss what her aunt believed to be the crown of a woman's life. But she was going to hold out her hands and accept it, and Miss Smith was exceedingly glad.

She did not venture to say that she had guessed her niece's secret. She would wait.

Betty told her tale with a careful repression of emotion.

"And he is as old as you are, auntie. It seems impossible, but a man is always younger for his age than a woman, isn't he? And you are old for yours, aren't you, you dear serious old thing?"

Miss Smith supposed that she was, but did not seem much interested in this side of the subject or desirous to discuss it.

What she wanted to know was whether Betty was quite sure that she loved this man, who was so much her senior, sufficiently to marry him.

Betty answered her at once.

"It is a wonderful thing to be in love," she said. "I didn't believe in it; at all events I was pretty sure that sort of thing would never come my way. But it has. It reminds me of something you said when I refused Jimmy Webb. You remember Jimmy Webb, the fellow who sang so well and was always singing silly love songs to me?"

There was a pause. Miss Smith recalled that she had on that occasion spoken from her heart on the great subject, and also that she had been severely snubbed. She was not going to be too bold now lest history should repeat itself, although the handsome eyes that met hers wore so entirely different an expression.

"Aunt Mary!" Betty's finger touched the locket that hung on the lady's chain. "I believe you were in love yourself once. Come now, tell me about your little love affair! There was one, wasn't there?"

"Yes, Betty, there was," said Aunt Mary, her eyes brightening.

"What a shame! Why wouldn't he marry you, you old dear?"

"It was I who would not marry him, or could not." Her voice was low.

"Why wouldn't you, or couldn't you?"

"Because—— I wonder whether I had better tell you, dear? Yes, I think I will."

"Of course you will! Why not?"

"I—I could not marry him because I had adopted you. When your mother lay dying and put you in my arms I promised her to do what I could to fill her place."

There was a moment's silence.

"But who was I? Where did I come in?" asked Betty.

"My lover"—Aunt Mary's cheeks were quite red as she uttered the word—"had to go abroad. He wanted me to marry him and go with him then and there. But you were a baby, and I couldn't leave you. I had said I would take your mother's place, and a mother would not leave her baby, would she? He would not let me take you with me, holding that the common-sense thing to do was to place you in the care of some trustworthy person. He tried very hard to persuade me to do that, but I wouldn't be persuaded. He was very vexed with me. And—well, there it ended!"

"That was rough on you, Aunt Mary. I'm awfully sorry to have come in the way. I spoiled everything for you."

With an impulsiveness quite unusual with her, Betty threw her arms around the little woman and held her in a brief embrace.

"No, you didn't spoil everything for me, Betty," Aunt Mary whispered.

"I believe that you've got his portrait in that old locket of yours, auntie," Betty said. "You never let any one get a squint inside it, I've noticed. But I should like to see what he was like. Won't you show it to me? He could not have been much, though, if he let you go like that, though to be sure it would have been rather a nuisance for him to be burdened with a squalling baby."

Aunt Mary covered the locket with her fingers.

"No, love," she said, "I won't show you his portrait. Fashions change, and he would look old-fashioned to your young eyes. You would laugh at him and wonder that I ever thought him good looking. Besides, it is all over and done with long ago."

"But, auntie, suppose it wasn't all over and done with—suppose he were to come home repentant and beg you to be his, what then?"

"Don't, Betty dear!" said Miss Smith, shrinking as at a rough touch.

"You mean you wouldn't have a word to say to him? Well done! You've got some spirit, Aunt Mary—more than I thought you had. Of course you don't love him a bit now, and he doesn't deserve that you should."

"I've never left off loving him. I couldn't. Perhaps I ought, but it is quite impossible. When you come to think of it, you don't love a person because that person deserves it, do you, Betty?"

The speech was not intended to convey a reproach, yet with a new sensitiveness Betty wondered whether it could in any circumstances apply to her. Then her thoughts flew swiftly to some one else.

"No, of course not, auntie! As I said before, you know a lot about the subject. The fact is you love a person because you can't help it—a kind of hypnotic business, isn't it?"

Aunt Mary nodded and deftly turned the conversation from herself to her niece's lover. What was he like?

He was bronzed and handsome, tall and thin and noble looking, according to Betty.

He was an officer who had apparently distinguished himself. Betty had met him at the Mayburys' and at other friends' houses.

The unwonted enthusiasm touched and pleased her listener.

"And his name?"

She put the question with little interest in the answer. Betty gave it with a beaming face, lingering over it delicately.

"It is John, auntie—Major John Henry Constantine." She laughed. "If I don't look out I shall be gushing about him in a minute," she added. "And I positively loathe gushers!"

There was a long pause. Miss Smith had risen, apparently to put her work in a basket that stood on the table. It took her some time to fold it. Presently she turned round.

"Did you tell him that you lived with your aunt?" she asked.

"Yes, of course I did! He is coming to see you to-day to ask for me quite in the regulation style, you know. Now, you won't make a scene about the discrepancy in our ages, will you? It is pretty big, I admit, and as a rule a man as old as he is would be a musty fellow, impossible for a girl of my age. But he's an exception; the whole thing is an exception. Besides, it is my affair. The time for their elders choosing husbands or wives for young folk is over and done with. We settle these matters for ourselves nowadays, thank goodness!"

Betty stood up and stretched. She was getting tired of her crumpled attitude and a trifle ashamed of having "let herself go" more than she intended.

Aunt Mary stared at the supple, vigorous, well-developed figure, then glanced at her own reflection in the mirror.

"Forty-five, and you only—why, you are not twenty-five yet!" she said slowly. "No wonder he fell in love with you, Betty! Youth has great charm for a man of his age. After all, it is the prime of life for a man. A woman ages much sooner. What you said about that a little while ago is perfectly correct. It is quite different for a woman because of the life she has to lead, and because—oh, because things hurt her so! Would that be John Henry—Major John Henry Constantine, I wonder?"

She had heard the door bell ring.

"I dare say it is. Good for you, auntie! You've got his name right, I see."

"It is an easy one to remember, Betty. I should like to see him alone, please."

"Good afternoon! You have come to speak to me about my niece, Elizabeth Gray. She tells me that you wish to make her your wife." Miss Smith spoke quietly and composedly.

"Yes, that's the thing for you to do. I'm going to clear out, you bet!"

Betty hurried from the room.

Miss Smith listened to a firm step on the staircase; her eyes were fixed on the door. It opened to admit a tall, well-built man of soldierly aspect.

He stood before little Miss Smith, looking down upon her and waiting for her greeting with a courteous deference that sat well upon him. The position was rather embarrassing, and he wished that she would help him out a bit.

"Good afternoon! You have come to speak to me about my niece, Elizabeth Gray. She tells me that you wish to make her your wife." She spoke quietly and composedly.

"Yes, I want to talk to you about Betty. I know how unworthy I am of her, and recognize also that I am nearly old enough to be her father. But she is good enough to ignore that, and she is a young lady who knows her own mind, is she not?"

He wished that his hostess would invite him to be seated, but she did not. As she still stood he had to do likewise, though it made him feel awkward.

What a queer little woman this aunt of Betty was! She had not yet looked at him. He supposed she was shy, but she was too old for that sort of thing.

Suddenly she raised her eyes and allowed them to meet his.

His expression changed. He drew a quick, sharp breath.

"Mary!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," she answered, "I am Mary Smith. The name of Smith is so very common that I dare say you did not dream I could be the Mary Smith you knew when you were a young man. And I am not surprised that you did not recognize me at once, for I have changed greatly during these long years. But you are looking very well."

The color rose to his bronzed face. He tried to stammer out a few words, but scarcely knew what they were.

"Yes," she said quietly, "my niece is a handsome girl and wonderfully strong, I am glad to say. Except the usual children's ailments she has never had a day's illness."

The major made no reply.

"I was very careful with her when she was a child," the little woman went on. "I tried to do everything that her mother would have done for her had she lived."

"I am sure you did." The visitor heard himself say this in a strange voice unlike his own.

"She has been greatly indulged. I hope that you will make her a good husband."

Miss Smith came to a halt. She leaned upon the table as one who feels the need of support. Her lips were white, as well as her cheeks.

"I am deeply sorry to upset you," he murmured. "I would have written first if I had had the least idea——"

"Yes, of course you would! You have no occasion to blame yourself. It is of no consequence, but——" She paused for a moment. "But it would be better for you to come and see me again another day, please," she said. "This has been rather a surprise to me, and perhaps it has upset me a little. I am not very strong."

She held out her hand. His keen eyes softened as he took it. She was very small and gentle, but there was a certain dignity about her that seemed to clothe her as with a mantle of protection.

He felt himself to be dismissed, and would not venture to remain a moment longer. Even if he might, what was there to be said? He had seldom felt so helpless and incapable.

"I never dreamed that I was to see you," he faltered.

"No! No! I understand."

"Thank you, Mary!"

"You will call again—shall we say tomorrow afternoon, Major Constantine?"

He bowed assent.

"I shall be myself then, and I will not detain you long. Betty is in the drawing-room," she added, "if you wish to see her before you leave."

He did not wish to see Betty just then, and made his way into the street as quickly as he could, not even turning his head to look back at the house.

Miss Smith waited till she heard the street door close, standing in a listening attitude. Then she roused herself to open the old-fashioned locket about which her niece had been curious and examined the miniature it held, together with a lock of dark hair.

She shivered and moved closer to the fire, hovering over it.

The miniature and that other treasure lay in the palm of her hand for a moment; the locket, empty now, had been closed again.

She looked at them lingeringly for the last time, seeing them imperfectly, for her eyes were dimmed by tears. She hesitated for a moment, catching her breath so quickly that it sounded like a sob.

Then she stooped and threw the picture and the hair into the flames.

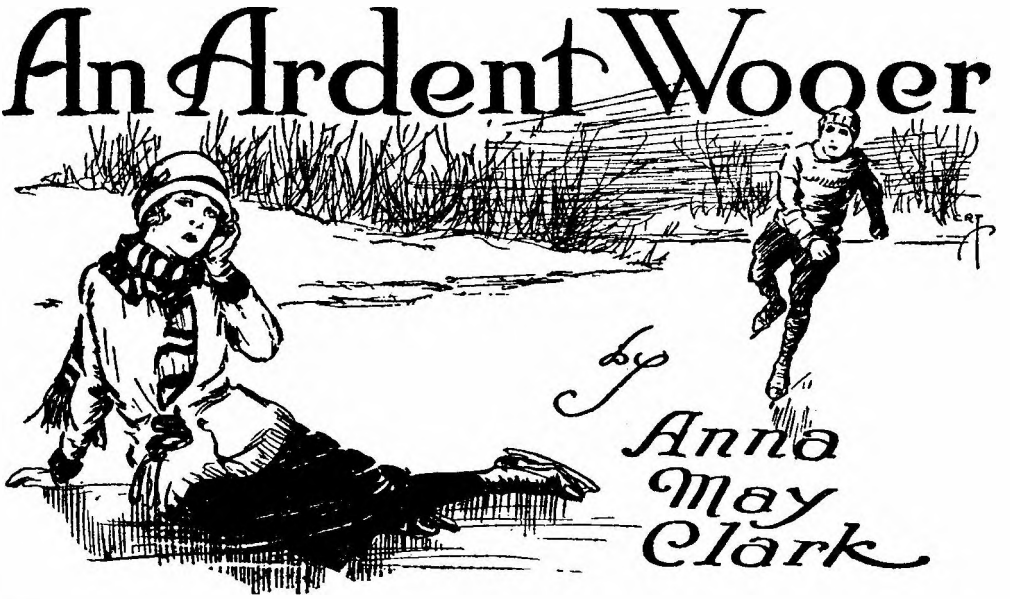
"I thought," she explained to her niece, who referred to the miniature a few days later and teased for a glimpse of it, "that it was high time for a woman of my age to put the past behind her. So I burned it. That was good, sound, common sense, eh, Betty?"

"Right you are, Aunt Mary!" replied her niece approvingly. "What's the good of being sentimental? It is Early Victorian, and, besides, it doesn't pay."

Aunt Mary seemed to pat her dog, who looked up at her with love in his eyes. He nestled close to her, and she said something to him that Betty could not hear. But he seemed to understand.

He seemed to be gazing into the future when Betty would be married and gone and all of his adored mistress' love would be lavished on him.

An Ardent Wooer



MASIE ROSCOE had little self-consciousness, or she would have known what a pretty picture she made, sitting on an old oak table in her father's great hall, the pale sunlight of a frosty winter morning playing on her golden curls, and half a score of dogs of all sizes and breeds leaping and struggling for the pieces of biscuit she slowly doled out to them.

Thoroughly engrossed in her sport, she swung her daintily shod feet, and laughed a long, low, mellow laugh, as she made the dogs leap higher and higher for their prizes.

Suddenly the sound of an angry voice coming through a half-open door on the other side of the hall attracted her attention. Louder and louder it rose, until she could not help hearing every word that was said.

Her face paled a little, and then blushed a rosy red.

Pushing the dogs from her, she jumped to the ground and tripped lightly to the middle of the hall. There she stopped and listened again, her pretty head half on one side and a roguish smile on her lips.

"Now, I wonder if I ought to listen," she queried to herself, "or whether I should cough and let them know I am here?"

The angry voice that made itself so distinctly heard on the other side of the library door grew louder.

"I don't think they could hear me even if I did cough," said Masie, and went back to her seat on the table again, prepared to enjoy the conversation of the speakers she could not see.

"It's like a graphophone entertainment," she laughed, "and, anyhow, it's about me, so it won't matter if I do listen."

"Confound you, sir"—it was her father who spoke. "Confound you, sir, I never heard such a piece of impudence in my life. You are a paid servant, sir, on the same social level as my butler or my valet! And you presume to wish to marry my daughter—the daughter of John Roscoe! Con-con-con-confound your impudence!"

Masie could picture her father to herself, but his last almost incoherent splutter of wrath had given her food for thought.

"Why didn't Ronnie Stuart ask me instead of speaking to father?" she

murmured. "Of course father's cross! Oh, dear, I wish elocution was part of the education of a private secretary. I can't hear a word that Ronnie is saying."

Suddenly the low murmur that indicated that Ronnie Stuart was defending himself against the attacks of his employer was broken again by John Roscoe's bull-like roar:

"Leave my employ! Of course you will! I should feel justified in dismissing you this very hour, but I'm a merciful man, sir. You shall go at the end of the week. And that you may judge how utterly ridiculous your presumption is, I will tell you that I have arranged an alliance between my daughter and Cyril Fosdyk, the son of my old neighbor. Yes, I think I may say that the alliance is practically arranged."

If John Roscoe could have seen his daughter's face his own might not, perhaps, have worn so self-satisfied an expression.

Masie had jumped to the floor, her small white teeth were clenched together, while she reiterated: "I won't! I won't marry any old man I don't love!" stamping her foot at each word.

While she was thus emphasizing her determination to assert her rights, Ronnie Stuart must have said something to further anger the old man.

"Understand," she heard her father shout, "you are not to speak to my daughter again. If it were not for this confounded gouty foot of mine, I'd bundle you out, you presumptuous young dog! I consider that you contaminate my daughter by speaking to——"

"Mr. Roscoe, I will not have you say that of me!" Ronnie Stuart had found his voice at last, and Masie could not complain of any lack of clearness in his clean-cut sentences. "I admire your daughter. I may say that one of the reasons why I took my present position in your house was because I had seen Miss Roscoe and desired very much to know more of her."

Masie, held almost breathless by her interest, heard her father choke and splutter, but he could not edge a word in, for Ronnie's clear young voice kept on, regardless of interruptions:

"I love your daughter, and I am going away to find a fortune that will enable me to offer her a worthy home as well as an honest love that I venture to think would not be a contamination to any woman. Before I go I would like to tell you that, despite your insinuations, I have never even thought of abusing my position as your private secretary. Not once have I given Miss Roscoe even a hint of my feelings toward her, and I shall not do so now unless I have your permission."

"And I thought he was shy!" thought Masie, her eyes alight with astonishment at what she had heard. "I thought he was shy and tried to help him to say nice things to me! But if you think you managed to hide your feelings from me, my poor, trusting Ronnie—well, you are not paying a great compliment to my intelligence. My goodness! here he comes!"

She ran lightly back to the table and sprang into her old position.

"Jump, doggies," she whispered. "Jump, or even a mere man will be able to read in my face that I know too much for my heart's peace."

It was not, however, a very observant Ronnie Stuart who came out into the big hall, to find the subject of his recent somewhat strenuous conversation engaged in an uproarious riot with her dogs.

"Hello, Ronnie!" cried the girl. "I've been waiting hours for you. Will you get your skates and mine and come out? Griggs has been out and he says Fosdyk Pond's in fine condition, the best bit of ice there's been near here for years. And he says there's not a soul on it. Come along! I'll go in

and tell father that I want you this morning."

"Fosdyk Pond? Why, Miss Roscoe——"

"Yes, Fosdyk Pond," laughed Masie. "It isn't too far for you, is it? Come along. But I thought we had arranged to drop 'Miss Roscoe' some months ago."

A somewhat wry smile lit Ronnie's troubled face as he gazed into the laughing eyes that looked up at him.

"The fact of it is, Miss Roscoe——"

"Masie."

"Miss Masie."

"Masie."

Ronnie laughed outright.

"You won't let me be serious," he said, "and really, Masie, the situation is serious enough. I'm leaving here at the end of the week."

"Leaving!" The distress in Masie's voice was real enough, but the surprise was a work of art. It might have been her first intimation of the news.

"Yes, and I have promised your father——"

"What have you promised my father?"

Ronnie thought, and then laughed again.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I don't think he gave me a chance to promise anything. He did most of the talking."

"But why are you leaving? And what has all this to do with skating on Fosdyk Pond? Come along, Ronnie, you can tell me all about it when we are out on the ice. It's too fine a morning to be miserable." She placed her small hand on his arm appealingly. "Don't make me miserable, Ronnie," she said. "You know I hate nothing so much as a long face. Anyhow, there's no need, for I'll tell father that you are to stay, and then it'll be all right."

They had reached Fosdyk Pond and had skated some miles before either returned to the subject that was uppermost in the minds of both.

As they flew over the perfect surface, arms crossed and hands locked together, their bodies glowing with the splendid exercise, and their minds soothed by the rhythmic swing of their movement, Masie glanced shyly up into her companion's face several times.

She saw that though his square jaw and firm lips were set determinedly, the trouble had gone from his eyes.

He was again the comrade she had learned to value during the year she had known him.

Ronnie broke the silence first.

"Your father told me," he said suddenly, "that you were about to be engaged to young Cyril Fosdyk. I suppose we may meet him. This is his father's property, you know."

"You're jealous, Ronnie."

"Jealous?"

"Yes. Don't tell me you're not. When I mentioned Fosdyk Pond you didn't want to come, and you've been grumpy ever since."

Ronnie made no reply, and Masie could almost have shaken him in her vexation.

She had known for a long while how much he cared for her, and being a normal, healthy girl, she did not pretend to herself that she was anything but very much interested in him.

She had given him many opportunities for declaring himself, and now she knew that it was not shyness, as she had thought, that had kept him back, but an absurd sense of the responsibilities of his position as her father's secretary.

"Surely," she thought rebelliously, "if I want him to make love to me that should be enough for him."

She smiled as she thought of the other men who would be at her feet at less than half a hint that she cared for them.

Ronnie Stuart was the first man who

had been strong enough to resist her charms, and although the situation had its piquancy, Masie was not sure that she was altogether pleased. However, it had been his idea of duty, and she had to forgive him.

Now, however, he could have no such scruples. Her father had made him promise nothing. Then she remembered that he had said he would say nothing to her. She decided that Ronnie must be taught a lesson; he must be made to understand that no stupid ideas of duty must stand in the way of the pleasure of Masie Roscoe.

"You know, Ronnie, I must marry some time," she said sweetly. "I can't go on being your tom-boy chum for ever. And father is very keen about this marriage. It would please him very much to be able to say, 'My son-in-law, Cyril Fosdyk.'"

As she spoke she felt his strong clasp tighten on her hands, his fingers drove her rings into her flesh.

She turned a frightened glance up to his face, but he had turned away. He did not look at her, but his grasp grew tighter still.

"Oh, Ronnie, let go of my hands," she cried, "you are hurting me very much. There is no need to hold me so tightly. Anyhow, I think I'd rather skate by myself than with so rough a creature."

To her astonishment Ronnie did not seem at all upset by this snub. He seemed, in fact, to be in a very good temper.

"All right," he said cheerfully. "My arms were getting cramped, anyway."

Masie's eyes filled with tears of vexation at this rudeness. She turned her back on him and sped away by herself.

"I don't believe he really loves me," she told herself. "If he does, why doesn't he say so? Surely if he cares at all he cannot stand quietly by and see me married to another man. Against my will, too! Oh, I hate him! At least, I almost hate him."

Masie did not dare turn around, but as she could not hear the whir of his skates she knew that Ronnie was making no great effort to overtake her.

"He shall propose to me before we return! He shall!" she said. "If only he would, I could tackle dad. I've enough money for two anyway, and I mean to marry whom I please."

On and on she sped, building rosy castles in the air as she went, knowing that Ronnie could catch her almost any time he liked.

"But I hope he won't leave it too long," she thought.

Suddenly she stumbled, tried to recover her balance, stumbled again, and fell in a pitiful heap on the cold ice.

Ronnie, a long distance behind, saw her fall.

Putting every ounce of strength into his long, dashing strides, he flew over the ice, and in a very few seconds he was kneeling by her side, peering anxiously into the pale face and long-lashed lids that veiled those usually bright eyes.

"Masie! Masie! Are you hurt?" he asked.

There was no answer, not a movement of the inert body.

"My poor, little willful darling," he murmured, and tenderly placed her in a more comfortable position.

Ronnie Stuart did not kiss her pale lips, nor did he pour out the passion in his heart.

He showed his love in a far more practical way by lifting her in his strong arms and skating as fast as he could to where he could get her proper attention.

He held her tightly against his heart and noticed with satisfaction that the color had returned with a rush to her cheeks.

A surge of romance filled his soul. He held the girl he loved in his arms;

the delicate fragrance of her filled his nostrils. He was carrying her away—away!

A pain shot through his left ankle, as though it had been stabbed with a red-hot bayonet. He gave a little cry of agony and then bit his lips hard, as, in the effort to save himself from falling with his precious charge, he put his weight again on the damaged foot.

He knew what had happened. Trying to make speed he had asked too much of his ankle, damaged some years ago in a football match, and it had given way under the strain.

Maneuvering cleverly, he sank down slowly, laid the girl on the ice, and then began to rub his injured joint.

"It's no use," he said. "We're in a pretty hole. I wonder if I can manage to crawl. There is a cottage only a quarter of a mile from here, I think. It will be a nasty job, but Masie can't stay out here all night. Here goes!" and with that he began to crawl to the edge of the pond.

"Ronnie!"

He had not gone more than a few feet when the voice arrested him. He turned to find Masie sitting up and gazing after him, her eyes suffused with tears.

"Ronnie, don't move," she commanded. "I'm coming to you."

"No, stay where you are." Ronnie waved her back. "It's all right. I've just hurt my ankle a little. I'll bring some one to help you in a minute or two. You'll be all right if you don't move. I don't think you've broken any bones.

He was tenderly concerned.

To his astonishment Masie rose and ran to him.

"Ronnie," she said, "I'm not hurt at all, really. I only pretended because I wanted you to carry me. Because I wanted to know how it felt to be in your arms. There, now you know what a horrid little flirt I am. It's all through me that you've hurt yourself, and if you speak to me I know I shall cry."

"What, Masie, you dear, delightful rogue!" Despite her warning, and despite his injured foot, he struggled up from the ground and slipped his arm round her. "Masie," he whispered, "do you know? Do you know?"

"What, Ronnie?" Masie's face was hidden on his shoulder, but he heard the barely articulated words.

"I should like to kiss you, dear," he answered, "but here comes somebody. He is most horribly in the way, but I suppose I should be glad to see him, for perhaps he will help me to get home without crawling."

The man came toward them at a good speed, head down and racing. He would have passed them, but Ronnie hailed him.

"Hi! Parsons!" he called. The man slowed up instantly, threw a surprised glance at Ronnie, pulled off his cap with a gesture of respect, and glided toward them.

Ronnie wasted no time in useless conversation.

"Look here, Parsons," he said as the man came up. "I've strained this wretched ankle of mine again—the left one, you know. Help me to the bank, and get a couple of men with a hurdle or something. Send some one up to the house and—mother is at home, isn't she? Yes, I thought so. Tell her, please, that Miss Roscoe will be with us to dinner, and that—er—Parsons—you might say I have returned. Thank you."

The man helped him to the bank and then touched his cap.

"I'll be as quick as I can, Mister Cyril," he said, and, slipping off his skates, he hurried off.

"Cyril!" Masie stared at her companion in amazement. "Cyril! Oh, Ronnie, you are not——"

"I am afraid I am. Ronald Stuart Cyril Fosdyk, at your service. But I'd like you to go on calling me Ronnie,

Masie dear. My mother always calls me that. I'm glad she's at home. You two will get on famously."

"But, Ronnie——"

"Oh, yes, I know, there are half a score of questions to be answered, and endless explanations. Let's forget them for a time."

"But father said——"

"'An alliance has been arranged.'"

"But it hasn't."

"Your father, Masie dear, is a hot-headed old prophet, and I'm going to send a car to bring him to dinner. I want to know what he means by trying to frighten poor, humble, private secretaries by talking of 'alliances.' And I want to know why he used my name without my permission. I shall also send him a message: A marriage has been arranged, and will shortly take place, between Masie, only daughter of John Roscoe, and——"

"Yes, that will astonish him, Ronnie, the dear old pretender. But haven't you forgotten something?"

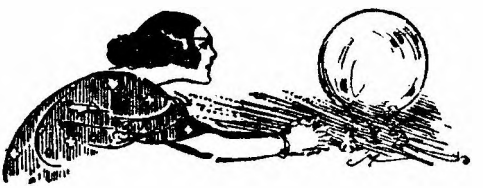
"Forgotten something?"

"Yes, Ronnie; you haven't proposed to me yet, and—and—and there isn't anybody coming along just now."

And so Ronnie, with a slow, rather whimsical smile, bent and kissed the lips so close to his own.

"You can't know how much I love you, dear," he whispered as he held her close against his heart. "My wonder girl—my little love."

"My lover," she whispered.



THE SUNBEAM

IT slid right down from the heart of a cloud
In a shaft of golden light;
And it brought a smile to tired eyes,
Which had watched through darkest night.

It played in a baby's golden curls.
Till an aureole's flame it seemed;
And the mother, clasping her darling close,
Found life held all she dreamed.

It lay at eve on the churchyard sod.
Whilst a mourner checked her sigh,
For it formed a ladder of glory bright
To the Sunbeam's Home on High.

MAY WYNNE.

A MILL GIRL'S HERITAGE

by

Louisa Carter Lee

THERE was a flutter of excitement in Terant's Mill the day Maud Gresham started.

Among the men it was inevitable. Terant's Mill was renowned for its pretty girls; and even among these Maud Gresham was conspicuous.

She started in the carding-room next to Kate Belfrage; and she could not have been more happily placed.

Some people have a genius for friendship. Kate Belfrage was one of them. Maud Gresham felt it in the first few minutes. She was timorous and shy, but, like steel to the magnet, Maud gravitated to the kindly, gray-eyed girl at her side.

When the great bell sounded the dismissal hour at six they passed out through the wide gates together.

"Where is your place?" asked Kate.

"Cove Lane."

"Just beside mine. We'll chum coming and going. But you mustn't be so terribly shy. The others will think you are 'standoffish;' and that is the unpardonable sin in Terant's."

"I am unaccustomed to mix with mill workers. But I am sure I shall like them if there are many like you."

"Lots—all of them better. But I shall be your friend till you find them. Are you quite alone?"

"Yes."

"No friends?"

"N-o."

The answer was given hesitatingly and with a blush on the soft cheeks. Kate Belfrage nodded.

"Don't you distress yourself, my dear. I didn't ask to be curious, but to know how I could be helpful. You keep your secrets."

"I hate myself for doing so in the face of so much kindness. Will you come around to my room to-night, and I shall gladly tell you my story?"

"Very well. Only don't you tell me any more than you feel you can trust me with."

"That is quite a pretty way of inviting me to tell you all," smiled Maud. "And I shall."

That night after supper Kate Belfrage went to Cove Lane, and, in the cosy little room, Maud Gresham fulfilled her promise.

"I never did mill work before, Kate."

"A most superfluous remark."

"I am the granddaughter of John Gresham, of the West. My parents are

long since dead. I was reared by my grandfather, a man of considerable wealth. He provided for me as a young lady of good social position. As a child I had nothing to complain of—everything to be grateful for. But it transpired that, ever since I was a child, my grandfather had set his heart on marrying me to wealth.

"He did not explain these things to me until six months ago. That was too late. I was capable of thinking for myself then, and—what my grandfather quite overlooked—capable of acting for myself. I refused to be the pawn in his game. We quarreled. I suffered many months of misery. Remonstrance and reproach were my daily portion. One forgives much to age and more to kin. I honestly tried to pay tribute to both; but I stood by my guns. I allowed much for my grandfather's disappointment. I was even willing to marry wealth, but I must first know who bore it. Wealth was my grandfather's sole concern. The man behind the money was mine. The result was that my home happiness was ruined.

"By disobedience I had forfeited grandfather's favor; I was eating a dependent's bread; I was reminded of it at every meal. It was intolerable, and I resolved to suffer it no longer.

"Sooner than barter my body and enslave my soul for a name whose owner I did not even respect, I fled from Riplea. I might be a young fool—which was my grandfather's firm conviction—but I was not going to be a lifelong fool by marrying a man I disliked. I am still ready to acknowledge my grandfather's authority, backed as it was by his kindness; but I will not be a loveless bride. My head may acknowledge another's wisdom; my heart acknowledges no guidance but its own. Committing myself to Heaven's care, I ran away and came to Terant's Mill. I had many accomplishments; not one of them had any economic value. I was a highly educated young lady of twenty-one, and I couldn't earn my own living. A pair of willing but inexperienced hands was all I brought to the labor market. But luck was on my side, Kate and the rest of my story you know.

"There is only one thing more I must say. If anything should happen—you know the dread things that phrase covers—if anything should happen, there is a packet in that box. Open it, and you will find instructions. I herewith nominate you my executor, though I hope you will not require to execute anything for quite a long time. Now, Kate, I have spoken my heart out. My secret is in your possession. What do you think of it all?"

"You were right to run away. You were wrong to choose this as the place to run to. Mill work is not for you."

"Perhaps not; I confess that this venture into mill-land caused me many an anxious thought, many a troubled dream. But the reality has been ever so much less dreadful than the dream. Of course, I know I must seem guilty of great ingratitude to my grandfather, and I am ready to do any kind of penance. But the sin itself I will not commit. No, Kate. The die is cast. I am here now, and am strangely happy. Every one is kind, and I have been so successful with my first friend that I should like to remain and make more."

So Maud Gresham remained and soon was the most popular girl in Terant's.

She was of special interest to the men—to some more than others.

To Fred Stirling, for instance. Just as Fred himself was of special interest to women. Would Fred Stirling ever marry, and whom? That was the wonder of many a mill lass, who cherished the secret hope that Fred would indeed marry and, perchance, marry her.

That hope was doomed the day Maud Gresham started. Fred had always been impervious to woman's charms. It was clear he was aroused at last.

All Terant's men sought Maud Gresham's friendship. It was readily given. Some men sought more. They found with surprise that, while the first step was easy, the second was impossible. As friends they were freely acknowledged. Immediately they aspired to climb higher they became conscious that, between them and the pretty stranger, there was a great gulf fixed.

Yet Fred Stirling was never conscious of that gulf. He was slow to seek even friendship; but he swiftly passed on to holier ground, and knew it not.

Even Maud, swift to check the first signs of it in others, failed to notice it in Fred Stirling.

But others did. Fred was the best catch in town. The awakening of his affection was noted by a host of envious eyes. Girls whose daydreams had been three parts composed of Fred Stirling, submitted to fate. Maud Gresham and Fred Stirling were obviously designed for each other.

That such a perfectly matched pair should miss marrying would be to miss their clearly appointed destiny.

Maud was unconscious of the new factor in her life. Love was in possession of her heart ere she was aware of it.

It was common knowledge that Maud Gresham and Fred Stirling were "courting" long before either could have given their new glad emotion a name.

But this emotion dispelled Maud's shyness and made her strangely bold, bold enough to slip out many a night to meet Fred Stirling.

Kate Belfrage was conscience's slave. And the tyrant troubled her sore on account of Maud Gresham.

Duty is at all times hard. It is harder when it is not clear. Kate's was not. Long and earnestly she sought the path. She alone shared Maud's secret, and she could not divest herself of responsibility for her.

Maud was in love with the manliest lad in town.

It was quite right that she should abandon her high estate, and labor at lowly toil for love's sake. But should she, for the same cause, be allowed to take the irreparable step of marrying a mill hand, even such a splendid type of mill hand as Fred Stirling?

Fred was worthy of any woman's love. But Maud was unfitted for a wife's hard lot. She was ignorant of the future burdens; some one should warn her.

There was only one person who could. It was a delicate and dangerous business, but the brave mill lass stood up to duty.

"You always acknowledge me your first friend, Maud?"

"And best, Kate."

"I wonder if our friendship will stand the test to which I am going to subject it? It is about Fred."

Maud's soft cheeks were swiftly dyed with the deepest crimson.

"I shall stop if you wish, Maud. I don't want to hurt."

"Go on."

"Well, I am not sure if you yet know what every one in Terant's mill could tell you. You are hopelessly in love with Fred Stirling, and he with you. Do you know that?"

"I did not—till two nights ago. Fred told me then."

"He could only tell you half."

"I supplied the other half. Till then, Kate, I honestly did not know. It came upon us both as a surprise. It was something Fred said quite unthinkingly; but our eyes met. Fred declared something in my eyes tempted him. He went on. And before he could stop, it was all out. I cannot tell you what he said or how. No woman ever tells that, not even to such a cherished friend as you, Kate. But it was worth having turned my back on rank and riches just to hear it. I have all I want from life. It

can give me no greater happiness. I am, indeed, in love with Fred, and he with me. Our mill mates have probably guessed our secret, but our mill mates will never guess our joy."

"Have you told Fred your history?"

"No. I am afraid it might make a difference; and I would sooner keep it secret all my life than lose the smallest particle of Fred's love."

"But do you realize whither you are drifting? You are lady born, lady bred, and the mill hand's wife has a hard life. Work is sometimes scarce, and poverty is always hateful. No doubt you love Fred. But have you counted the cost? Remember, marriage is not a romantic incident, but a testing reality. Aren't you afraid that one day you might be sorry?"

"You are a faithful soul, Kate. I know how much courage it needs to say these things; and I know they are true. I have not counted the cost. Love never does. But I hear the call of my own heart, and no human being ever obeyed that call and regretted it; nothing will part me from Fred. Certainly not one of the things you have pictured. Once I enjoyed all that the world counts precious. To-day I am infinitely happier as a humble mill girl. Such a wonderful magician love is!"

Kate listened and wondered.

This young heart was a citadel of love. Kate had tried to make it surrender. She found it impregnable.

Duty had required her to point out to Maud Gresham the hardness of love's way. She had done so—but in vain.

Riplea Hall is ancient, stately and begirt with trees. Up the long, sweeping avenue Kate Belfrage walked one afternoon to ask an interview of the owner.

John Gresham's name is still remembered on New York Exchange. For years he was renowned as a clever and sound financier. But, as he grew old, he grew tired of the fighting. With a full share of the spoils, he had retired to Riplea Hall.

The strong man's weakness was pedigree. He could boast none himself. Because he lacked it, his love for it was almost a passion. He was prepared to purchase it at any price. He had money, and a granddaughter. Through these he would graft himself into some ancient and honorable family.

That hope sustained him almost until the hour of his realization. Then his dream was shattered.

His granddaughter, Maud, would not conform to his plans for her matrimonial destiny. He had planned for her glory rather than for her happiness. With woman's clearer vision, Maud had discerned the danger and shunned it.

For twelve months John Gresham's life had been darkened by his granddaughter's disobedience.

For six months it had been doubly darkened by her desertion. Such was the man whom Kate Belfrage had come to confront.

"I shall first have to ask Mr. Hugh," said the maid who answered Kate's call.

Two minutes later Hugh Gresham joined the visitor in the library. He was a young man of handsome appearance and charming manner; but if rumor lied not, he had lived merrily rather than wisely.

He was not a man after the fashion of his grandfather. But when Maud resigned her place of privileges, John Gresham had angrily appointed in her stead Hugh Gresham, who was beginning to feel himself securely settled in Riplea Hall.

"You wish to see my grandfather?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am not sure that you can. He is not in the best of health, and, frankly, not in the best of tempers. Unless your business is important, I should advise you not to see him."

"I have come for no other purpose, and my business relates to Miss Maud."

"Ah! Where is Maud? Has she grown weary of exile? Have you come as her plenipotentiary suing peace?"

"I have come to answer none of these questions."

"Then you need not trouble my grandfather. He will ask you them—and less politely."

"As I am here without Maud's knowledge, much less permission, I shall divulge nothing material concerning her. She has honored me with her confidence, and I am not out to betray it. But there are probable developments that her grandfather should know."

"Very well; but let me precede you to prepare him for this surprise."

A few minutes later Kate Belfrage was conducted into the presence of John Gresham. He had been of splendid physique, and, even in age, the tall figure, the piercing eyes, the imperious features were impressive.

"Where is my granddaughter, girl, and why doesn't she come herself? Has her fit of heroics so completely subsided that she asks you to come and whine for her? Send her to me at once. I do not deal with go-betweens!"

Kate Belfrage was meek in spirit. Had she been there to plead for herself, John Gresham's wrath would have shriveled her up. Had he treated her courteously, she had meant to plead for Maud's sake.

But this!

As in a moment the woman's intuition realized the nature of the man and the method of handling him. Even while he spoke a complete reversal of tactics was taking place in Kate's mind. It was instantly decided and vigorously acted upon.

"I think you are forgetting I am not your granddaughter. I came hoping to serve both you and her. I am willing to tell my story in my own way—no more and no less. I belong to a class far beneath yours; but the men of my class do not bully women. I never was bullied in my life, and I won't take it from you."

"Just what do you mean, young woman?" John Gresham's voice thundered.

There was a little silence during which Kate looked steadily at the old man. His gaze dropped beneath hers.

"I have come to tell you something which I think you should know," Kate began in a clear voice. "The little love that you apparently have for your granddaughter does not entitle you to any consideration, but just the fact that you are her relative prompts me to tell you. Maud came to the city and strangely, got a job in the mill in which I am employed."

John Gresham started. Kate paused as if expecting some interruption but none came.

"She has been happy there," Kate went on. "And she has found there what she did not find here—the man she loves. Nothing will prevent her marrying him. But the seriousness of it all has troubled me. I have warned her about it, not because it is a wrong step, but because it seems a reckless step to take without informing her friends; I have now done so. But don't waste your tears on Maud. She needs none. She has complete happiness; indeed, she could make a host of grandfathers happy with what she has left over."

The courageous admire courage. John Gresham was angry with his visitor's speech, but he could not be with her spirit.

Slowly a new light was dawning within his mind. This girl had emerged out of the unknown to awaken the suspicion that perhaps he had been wrong.

Perhaps youth was not always foolish; perhaps age was not always wise.

"Well," he said slowly, "Maud cannot complain of her ambassador's feebleness of speech. But if half you say is true, it is time I saw her again. Return and tell her that I think she is about to eclipse

her great folly with a greater one. Tell her I wish to see her, 'without prejudice,' as the lawyers say. Ask her if she thinks she is fair to me. Was my love of so little value that she can do without it? Her happiness was my sole concern. Does she remember a day when it was not? For I loved her. God knows I loved her!"

The speaker's voice choked a moment.

"Is it just," he continued, "that an old man should be compelled to betray his weakness to a stranger because his own are not beside him to give him strength? Did I deserve no better than to be deserted in my old age?"

He finished with tears in his eyes, and the heart of the mill girl was instantly won. Her own hot words were remembered and regretted.

She had come to face a tyrant. Here were signs of a heart that she had unwittingly, certainly unwillingly, wounded by her sharp speech.

"I am sorry if I have been rude," she said, with the accents of a penitent. "My excuse must be my anxiety for my cause. But I shall gladly deliver your message. Maud will not hear it in vain. You can expect her as soon as I can reach her, and she, thereafter, can reach Riplea Hall."

John Gresham had recovered himself. There was something of the old imperiousness when he spoke again.

"You say you have come far. You must have as far to return, and the day is well advanced. Will you accept the hospitality of Riplea Hall to-night, and go to-morrow? The housekeeper will see to your comfort."

"I cannot. I must be at my loom to-morrow morning. There was a breakdown of machinery yesterday. That threw us idle to-day, and I seized the opportunity to slip away unobserved—least of all by Maud; but I shall see her to-night. I have risked her displeasure in coming here; but my message of peace will, I am sure, win her pardon."

"Then, if you will not stay, you must eat. We were about to lunch when you arrived. You will join us."

Kate Belfrage had not broken fast since leaving home. The unexpected revelation of John Gresham's kind nature tempted her to accept his invitation, so the mill girl dined at Riplea Hall, and provided the supreme surprise of the day for her hosts.

The plain, simple dress could not conceal the wearer's natural beauty.

Old men and young paid tribute to it with many an admiring glance, while Kate accepted their courtesies with that elegance and ease which are so foolishly believed to be the exclusive hall-marks of birth and breeding. Her bearing was perfect.

Young Hugh Gresham was in excellent mood and his attention to his uncle's young guest, in spite of her simple clothing, was delightful. She sat between the two men and chatted with them as if she had been a friend of long standing.

From grave to gay, with all the varying notes between, their topics swiftly changed. But never to the mill girl's disadvantage.

In the conversational thrust and parry, wherewith her hosts secretly set themselves to test her, the woman ever and easily won.

The men sat and marveled. Reluctantly, at last, they let her go, and, by tacit understanding, they made no offer to escort her farther than to the door.

From that vantage point, however, they watched her pass down the avenue up which two hours before she had with such dread advanced.

Kate Belfrage reached home speedily, but not speedily enough to intercept Maud ere she set out on her nightly walk with Fred Stirling. It would be nine o'clock before they returned.

At that hour Kate was in Cove Lane. Maud would part with her lover at the

end and come hurrying alone. Kate waited for sound or sign. There was neither.

The minutes sped, but Maud came not. Weary of her vigil, Kate sauntered up the lane. Lovers' partings were notoriously long. She was unwilling to interrupt this one; but she would just peep round the bend in the road.

Cove Lane was quiet at all times. It seemed specially so tonight as Kate moved forward.

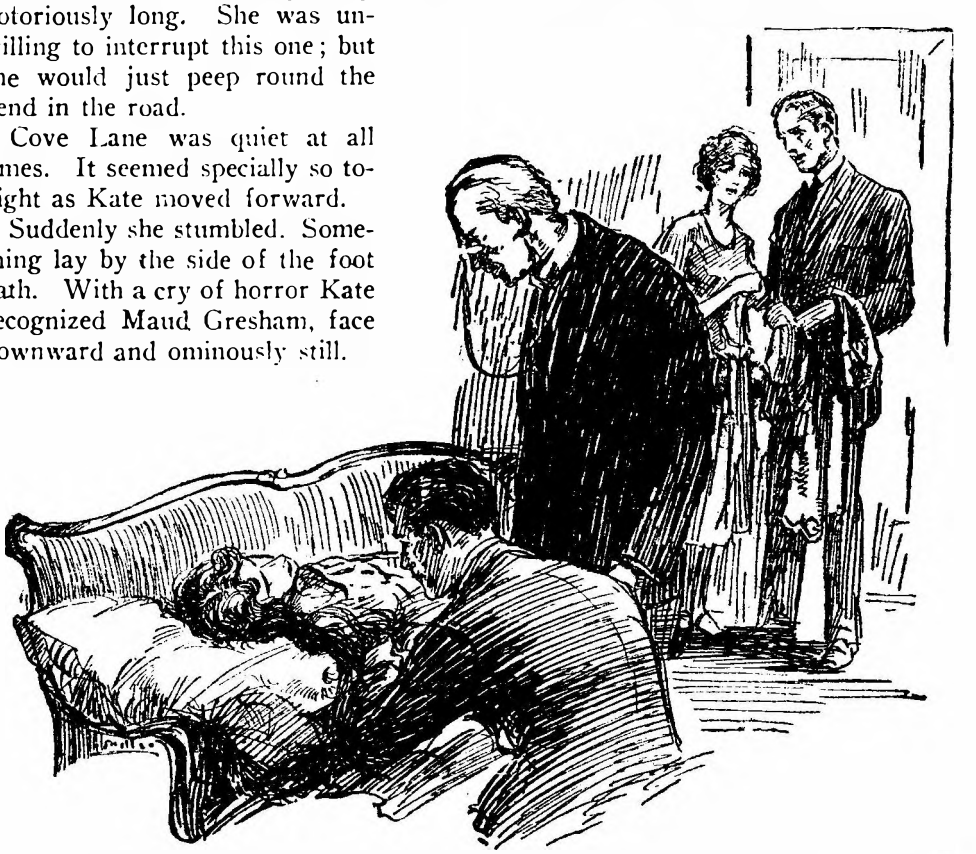
Suddenly she stumbled. Something lay by the side of the foot path. With a cry of horror Kate recognized Maud Gresham, face downward and ominously still.

She stooped and touched the familiar figure. Her hand felt damp and warm. She withdrew it hastily, to find it colored literally blood red.

Within a few seconds Cove Lane was roused. Strong hands bore Maud Gresham into Ardene Cottage. The news flashed through the town. Terant's Mill, man and woman, crowded into Cove Lane. The doctors got precedence. The crowd sacrificed sleep, and waited for the medical verdict.

The prettiest girl in Terant's Mill had been knifed in Cove Lane. It was despicable, but more mysterious than despicable.

Maud Gresham had only friends. Fred Stirling had just left her. Within a few minutes Kate had found her.



The doctors were still in consultation; but, as if by the sound of the familiar voice, Maud for the first time opened her eyes as the strangers entered.

What was the solution—where was it to be sought? The police hurriedly set themselves to find out.

One girl kept her head amid all the excitement. She wired Riplea Hall.

John Gresham read the dread news with eyes that suddenly dimmed. Hugh Gresham was out alone with the car. It was late when he returned. His grandfather was awaiting him with the message in his hand.

"You need not get out," he said. "Turn the machine around, and strain

it to the uttermost ounce. Maud is the victim of some cruel outrage."

Within a few seconds the car was dashing toward where Maud was. It was midnight when it turned into Cove Lane.

The doctors were still in consultation; but, as if by the sound of the familiar voice, Maud for the first time opened her eyes as the strangers entered.

Wonderingly she looked up into the anxious, loving face of her grandfather.

She did not understand. But she smiled in mute and eloquent response to the look of love ere she lapsed again into unconsciousness.

The doctors anxiously watching the signs nodded approvingly.

"She is safe," was the confident verdict. "It will take time, of course, but she is quite safe."

The tension was relieved in Ardene Cottage, and the long night ended at last.

In the gray dawn Kate Belfrage sought her own home. With a vague notion of seeing something that might help to make plain the mystery she returned to the spot where Maud had lain.

Others had anticipated her; a crowd was already examining the place.

So intent were they on their own wisdom, they failed to notice Kate Belfrage pause abruptly and barely stifle a cry of astonishment.

Checking a strong impulse to stoop down, she instead took one step forward and stood rigid.

Motionless she remained amid all the movement. Men came and went, heedless of the white-faced, anxious-looking girl.

Patiently she stood till the utmost laggard had gone. Satisfied that she was at last alone, she lifted her dainty foot deep-pressed into the soil. Stooping down, she hastily snatched some trifle from the ground, thrust it deep into her bosom, then hurried away.

The police never formally abandoned the search. But their indefinite delay in arresting Maud Gresham's assailant could only be because they had no idea who Maud Gresham's assailant was. By slow degrees, therefore, the town's desire for revenge died down.

In Ardene Cottage it had scarcely ever existed. Gratitude left little room for revenge. John Gresham was grateful for a granddaughter discovered; Fred Stirling for a sweetheart spared; Maud Gresham for the joys of the old life so strangely added to the joys of the new.

But if there was so much joy in Ardene Cottage, there was also a fair measure of it outside.

Convalescent and radiantly happy, Maud sat every evening by the fire in the little kitchen, the center of a friendly

Stooping down, Kate hastily snatched some trifle from the ground and thrust it deep into her bosom, then, like a guilty creature, she hurried away.

circle whose happiness was not unworthy of her own.

When the merry evening ended Hugh Gresham took Kate Belfrage home. If it was long ere he returned, there was no one to notice it but his grandfather. And he was too absorbed in Maud's recovery to notice anything.

But in these walks home the man of fashion learned more than pages ever taught. He found happiness where he least expected it. His former world seemed to crumble to ruins. Only he and a humble mill girl were left. And in the love light of her eyes he read the doom of the deliverance of his soul.

It was with a heart throbbing with such emotions that he paused one night in Cove Lane and looked steadfastly at the woman by his side.

"Maud will soon be better," he said. "Cove Lane will soon be but a memory; for me an imperishable memory. My brightest and my blackest thoughts will ever be associated with this quiet lane. Let me explain why. My parents died soon after I was born. As a child I was indulged; as a man I indulged myself. I soon wasted all my substance. I passed into the grip of the money lenders. They were about to ruin me when I was saved by what seemed an intervention of Providence; though the idea of Providence intervening on my behalf is incredible enough.

"My grandfather summoned me to Riplea Hall. Maud had gone in disgrace. I was to succeed her.

"The Greshams are a proud race. For all her gentleness, Maud has a full share of it. I felt safe as to my future; but the day you appeared my hopes died. I knew that my grandfather was eating his heart out for Maud. My sole chance was that pride would keep them apart. Immediately I knew your purpose I knew that, sooner or later, they would become reconciled. My position was desperate. The money lenders were simply staying their hand that they might seize the more when I entered into possession. If they found out that Maud was to share with me they would mercilessly crush me. Against Maud Gresham, therefore, I cherished every hateful thought the human heart can harbor. My one desire was to prevent her return. It was no use trying to bribe you to disclose Maud's hiding-place; but, after you had gone, I went down to the station. There were few passengers at Riplea any day, and it was easy to get the garrulous old station master to prattle about the young lady passenger. Within a few minutes I was driving thither. By strange luck I saw Maud parting with her sweetheart. I stood in a gap of the hedges. She passed. Next moment she was lying unconscious and bleeding. And there is the coward hand that did it!"

There was a long silence. His words had not the extraordinary effect he had anticipated. Instead the woman's voice quietly asked:

"Why do you tell me these strange things?"

"For a reason stranger still; because I love you. I know it is madness to confess love and crime in the same breath. But in Cove Lane I sinned, and in Cove Lane I make confession to the girl whose goodness has inspired me to it. I have played the hypocrite to others. I can play it no longer to you. For I love you, Kate; I passionately love you. Surely the supreme proof of my sincerity is that I tell you of my love, and yet tell you also of what must make that love forever impossible."

"How do you know?" Her voice trembled a little.

"Merciful heavens! You could not love a man who had done so foul a deed!"

"You don't know what a woman's love can do. It has already made a different man of Hugh Gresham, according to his own confession. And it was not the real Hugh Gresham who did the deed. The

real Hugh Gresham is the man I have loved since the day I dined at Riplea Hall. For I so loved you then that everything about you interested me. I even noticed the peculiar design of your sleeve-links. And next morning, at the spot where Maud had fallen, I found a part of one of these links. In an instant everything was clear to me, but I buried the trinket in my bosom along with the secret that it revealed."

"You have known all the time?"

"Yes."

"Why did you not hand me over to the police?"

"Why did you make confession to me?"

"Because I loved you."

"Let the same reason serve us both," was the answer as she entered the arms opened wide to receive her.

An hour later she was still nestling there.

"No, Hugh," she said. "You will not give yourself up to the police. You won't even tell your grandfather or Maud. Hugh, will you give up the fast and foolish life which tempted you to sin? I have no wish to enter the fashionable world. Will you not rather enter mine, and chance finding happiness there? Even as Maud has found it, so may you. Be a mill hand, and I will proudly be that mill hand's bride. Let

"By strange luck I saw Maud parting with her sweetheart. I stood in the gap of hedges. She passed. Next moment she was lying unconscious and bleeding. And there is the coward hand that did it," Hugh confessed.

this be the test of your love and the proof of your penitence. Will you, Hugh?"

"Will I!" echoed Hugh Gresham. "If that is your idea of penance and punishment, Kate, may you always be my judge."

The kiss Kate Belfrage received was from lips quivering with contrition and gratitude.

Next morning Hugh Gresham sought an interview with his grandfather and cousin.

"I wish to intimate, sir, that you can restore Maud to her former place in Riplea Hall. I wish to withdraw."

"What are going to do?"

"Remain here and marry one of the mill girls."

"Kate Belfrage?" exclaimed Maud joyfully.

"Yes."

"Congratulations on your good luck and good sense, Hugh. But you are speaking too fast and dealing too generously. You can take Kate to Riplea Hall. Give her my place, grandfather; I don't need it. I shall remain here. I would not imperil my happiness by quitting it. Heaven gave me Fred, and you can give your fortune to whom you think it could make happier. It couldn't make me."

Even John Gresham smiled.

"There seems to be some special fascination about this place," he said. "Every one is determined to remain. I think I shall do the same; and I shall tell you to-night in what capacity."

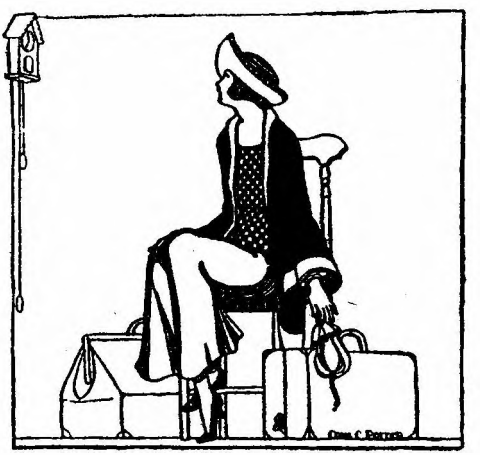
Within the next few hours there was commotion on the Stock Exchange. A strong, inexplicable movement set in on Terant's Mill stock, and ere the closing hour all Terant's shares had changed hands.

It subsequently transpired that the great John Gresham had emerged from his seclusion and bought up the whole amount.

He was absolute owner of Terant's Mill.

That same night he appointed Fred Stirling and Hugh Gresham joint managers at excessive salaries.

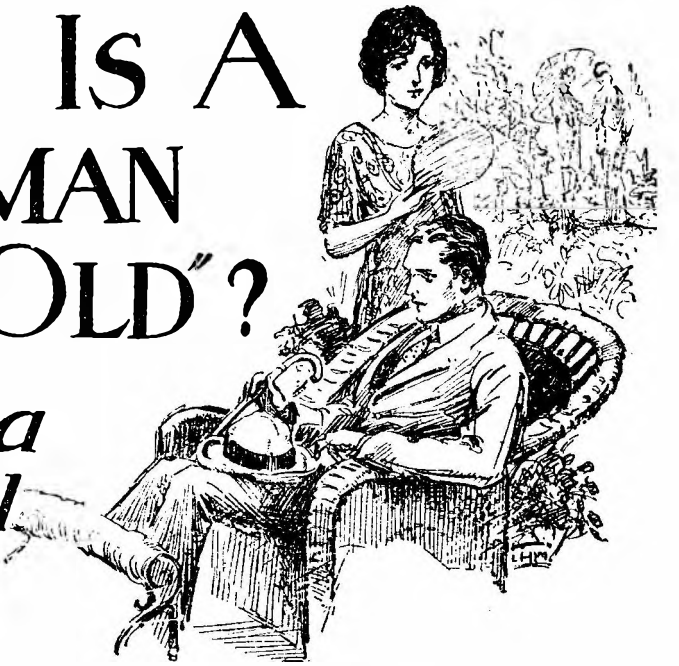
"But," he said with exaggerated severity, "in order to keep a careful eye on you and on your wives as well I intend to remain here. And I don't see that you can object. It was yourself who set the fashion."



When Is A Woman "Too Old"?

by

Amenia Rosehill



ADA Martin was the daughter of middle-class parents possessed of small means and a large family.

After Ada there came three boys, and the little girl had to help her mother to look after them.

When four girls followed the brothers in quick succession it had grown to be expected that Ada should act as nurse and help and that the little ones should look to her for amusement and attention.

As the years went by and the young folk grew up, Ada was still the mother's right hand, and her brothers and sisters expected her to be always at their call.

She was not pretty, though her eyes were good and sweet, and she had a cheerful manner. In her early girlhood Ada had an offer of marriage.

The son of the rector fell in love with the bright, helpful girl, and asked her to be his wife.

Ada returned his love and would have married him, but the parents on both sides objected.

The rector did not think the match good enough for his son—the Martins had no money and were nobodies. The Martins objected to giving Ada up except to a man who could do something to help the family. So the affair ended hopelessly.

Young Raynor vowed eternal fealty and went away to make his fortune, and Ada waited hopefully at home.

For a long time she hoped that he would return, though indeed in her busy life her love affair did not occupy much of her thought; and then, some five years after their parting, she heard of his marriage to a rich woman.

After a few tears Ada Martin burned his letters and a few flowers he had given her and then shut away her little romance forever.

Her sisters laughed and called her an old maid, but they were well content that Ada should not marry. She was too useful and too much wanted at home to be spared—even if any one had wanted her.

The younger girls had grown up pretty and somewhat exacting in consequence. They demanded more amusement than their sister had ever had and

clamored to go out here and there and to have their friends at home.

The mother and Ada were only too pleased to indulge them as far as was possible.

Mrs. Martin wanted to settle the girls well, and Ada worked like a slave to dress them—she had a talent for dressmaking—and to make their home attractive for the young people who came to it.

"Poor old Ada! She is a regular old maid, but she is very useful," the sisters would say when Ada had turned out a new dress that looked as if it had come from a smart shop, or had furbished up a new hat out of old oddments and given it a stylish air.

Gradually the girls got married and poor Miss Martin was left on the shelf.

She was a happy creature, cheerful and sunny; but when the last sister was married and the boys were out in the world she woke to the fact that youth had gone, that love was never likely to be hers, that she felt as young as ever, and that she longed for something of her own to love.

Her sisters had their husbands and children. She had nothing, and she was thirty-two!

In the new leisure that she had she found time to accept some of the invitations that came to her, and so it came about that she stood one day in a secluded nook in a neighbor's garden while a garden party was in progress.

She did not know many of the people there; and, after greeting her hostess, she drifted to a quiet spot and was looking around, watching the people about her with keen enjoyment.

Not very far away from her was a roller chair containing a young man—almost a lad he looked—with a pale face and wistful eyes. He was a distinctly handsome lad, Miss Martin noticed, looking at the dark curly hair that clustered on his well-shaped head and at the clearly cut features and square jaw. He was clean-shaven, and she could see that the beautiful mouth showed a bitter curve, while the dark eyes held a deep, silent misery.

Miss Martin felt a sudden desire to go and comfort him.

It was so much her mission in life to bind the wounds of others that she instinctively made a movement toward the chair and then stopped, thinking that the young man would misunderstand her motive.

Then a smile came to her eyes.

"I am always forgetting that I am not so young as I was," she said to herself. "The boy will think me a middle-aged woman. Of course I can speak to him!"

So, still smiling, she walked to the chair and addressed the occupant.

"You are lucky to have a seat," she said gayly. "They might have given us a few more, I think; but I suppose most of these people will be playing tennis and croquet, won't they?"

"Don't you play?" asked the young man, looking up with some interest, for the pleasant voice had struck sweetly on his ear, and he liked the smiling, sweet-faced woman at once.

"Oh, I am too old now!" said Ada. "I didn't learn when I was a girl, and I couldn't do it now."

"There is a nice seat vacant under those trees there," said the young man suddenly. "If you go now you will secure it. It is tiring to stand, and the sun is very hot here"—with a restless movement of fatigue, for the sun's rays were streaming down onto his head, as Ada had noticed when she came to him.

"But will you come with me?" asked Ada. "Do you mind? Or are you waiting for somebody?"

"Oh, no!" he replied, with some bitterness. "They have forgotten me. They won't notice if I go away. But I can't move by myself"—with another writhe in the chair.

"Oh, I will manage the chair!" said Ada; and, with a vigorous hand, she pushed him across the lawn and settled him in the shade of the trees. She seated herself on the bench there, and the young man looked at her gratefully.

"This is nice—out of the glare of the sun," said the young fellow wearily. "It seems so much worse when one is helpless."

"Ah, yes. This is much better!" responded Ada, with a smile.

The young man scarcely knew how it happened that he talked to this kindly woman as he had never talked to a stranger before; but he felt there was something very sympathetic about her. In a short time they were chatting together like old friends.

Ada learned that the young man was suffering from a disease that had been pronounced incurable by his physicians, but that he was soon to go abroad in the hope of receiving benefit from milder air.

She learned too that he was alone in the world, and that his hostess was the wife of the man who had been his guardian during his minority.

"So you see I'm doomed!" he ended at last, with a reckless and unhappy laugh as he looked about over the fair lawns and watched the gayly dressed groups that passed them.

"You mustn't talk like that," said Miss Martin decidedly and cheerfully. "That is very bad! You must make up your mind to live, and that will help you."

The young man laughed loudly and harshly.

"That sounds very nice," he said, with a faint sneer, "but put it to yourself. "If you knew—with absolute certainly that you were to die in six months or so, could you be so very tranquil about it?"

Ada's thoughtful gray eyes met his as he faced her, and she said gently:

"Yes, I think I could. My religion would teach me resignation."

"I am not religious," he said wearily, as he turned away with a sigh.

"I'd like to argue that point with you," Miss Martin said, with a cheery laugh. "I think it is so strange to hear a person speak of not being religious. But this is not the time or the place."

"But to leave the world," said the young fellow slowly—"to go out into the darkness and leave this bright, beautiful world——"

"For a world more beautiful still," she interrupted.

"But we don't know," he said.

"We didn't know this till we came," said Ada, smiling. "Don't you think, as this is so beautiful and so much to our liking, that we can take the rest on trust?"

"My dear boy, I couldn't see you!" interposed another voice.

Their hostess came up, and Ada slipped away as Mrs. Longton seated herself.

"Who is that lady to whom I was talking?" asked the invalid.

"Oh, that is only poor Miss Martin!" said the lady slightingly and not noting the young man's frown as his eyes followed the figure in the pretty gray gown till it disappeared among the trees.

"Your man is coming for you," said Mrs. Longton. "I think you should rest now."

The young man agreed in silence, and his attendant wheeled him back to the house so it was not until the next day that he was able to ask the questions that were on his lips.

"Why did you call that lady 'poor Miss Martin,' Mrs. Longton?" he asked.

He was lying on a couch in the pleasant drawing-room and Mrs. Longton sat beside him, busy with some dainty embroidery. She looked up to smile at him.

"Oh, I don't know!" she said. "We

all do it. She seems destined to be an old maid, you know."

"I'm surprised at that—she looks so much more like a mother," he said slowly.

"Well, that's no wonder!" laughed Mrs. Longton pleasantly. "She is the eldest daughter in a large family. There were a heap of children, and the parents are not well-to-do. Ada—this girl—slaved for them all, made the girls' dresses and helped them, and when they went to parties she stayed at home, and all that. The mother is a faded, fretful sort of person, and Ada looks after everything, and the brother at home is a bit of a scamp, I think, so poor Miss Martin has her hands full."

There was a pause. The young man lay still, watching the white, jeweled hands of his hostess as she plied her needle. Then he spoke again:

"She looks as if she would make a good nurse."

Mrs. Longton's thoughts had wandered in the meantime, and it was with an effort that she recalled them sufficiently to answer his question.

"Ada Martin? Of course she would! She has nursed all her family through all sorts of things. The father would have died in a serious illness some years ago but for her. The doctor told me so himself. He said she was simply splendid! She is very strong, you see, and has such a sweet temper. She is a good woman, poor thing!"

There was another long silence, while the rings on Mrs. Longton's hands flashed in the sunlight and the young man watched them as if fascinated.

When he spoke again there was a faint flush on his pale cheek and a curious light in his eyes.

"Do you think—would it be possible for her—Miss Martin—to come and nurse me?" he asked slowly. "I shall have to have some one, and I could pay her well—money is nothing to me. I have taken a fancy to her—call it a sick fancy, if you will—but she looks so strong and kind. If I have to die I should like a friendly face to smile at me."

Mrs. Longton laid down her work and looked pityingly at him.

"But, my dear boy," she said, "she is not a nurse, you know, and she could hardly go alone with you. She is ages older than you, of course—she must be well over thirty. But still, I am afraid it would not do."

Again he was silent, and then he burst out with the thought that had been in his mind all along.

"I would marry her," he said. "They are poor, you say? They would not object to her marrying me for so short a time, and I could make it worth her while. I want her to come. I've taken a fancy to her. She is so kind and so sweet and so comforting, and I can't die all alone out there in those foreign places."

He gave a little shiver and saw that there was a tear in the pretty eyes of his hostess.

"Oh, you needn't look like that!" he said with a bitter laugh. "I know I'm going to die. Don't think I'm deceived by this idea of getting me away. It will have to be, but I am a coward. I don't want to die all alone, and I think I could face it better if I had her there. Will you put it to her and ask her, if she'll take me in the circumstances?"

"Don't excite yourself, dear boy!" said Mrs. Longton, coming to his side. "I'll speak to my husband about it."

The young man caught her gown as she turned away.

"Tell him it's the last thing I shall ask," he said pleadingly. "I'll get my dying over as quickly and decently as I can, but not all alone!"

Mrs. Longton sought her husband and put the case to him.

"I should certainly tell Miss Martin. It's a fine chance for her. He can leave her well off, and as for the poor

lad himself—well, I can understand his feelings. I wish we could go with him, Peggy; but that is out of the question."

"Yes," Mrs. Longton said. "But I don't suppose Miss Martin will agree, John."

"I expect she will if her mother hears about it," said Mr. Longton cynically. "Mrs. Martin is about the most frankly worldly minded person I know."

"She did well for her other girls, certainly," admitted Mrs. Longton.

"Poor Miss Martin did well for them," said Mr. Longton. "It was her pleasant way and charming manners that made the house liked and got them off—nothing else!"

Meanwhile, the person so discussed—poor Miss Martin—had gone home to trouble.

Willie Martin, the only brother at home, had got into serious disgrace. It was the old story of betting, pilfering, and more betting in the wild hope of retrieving the loss already sustained. The boy had lost a large sum, and disgrace would follow if the money were not found in a very short time.

The situation was a serious one for the family, for they were by no means rich, and such a sum as was wanted could not be found without applying to relatives.

The father—a poor, broken-down man who had never been successful in business—was loud in his reproaches to the unhappy boy, and the mother, weak and querulous, had much to say.

The lad was sullen and desperate.

Ada, to whom all looked in times of stress and storm, suggested writing to an uncle, who could, if he would, find the money, but whose generosity had been almost strained to breaking-point in the past by this same Willie.

"We can try him," Ada said wearily as she went upstairs to write the letter in solitude; for, if Uncle Joseph would do it for any one, he would do it for Ada, as all the family knew.

While the rest of the dejected family sat silent in the small sitting room there was a ring at the bell, and Mrs. Longton entered.

Mrs. Martin rose to receive her, and tried to hide the fact that she had been crying.

Mr. Martin hastily pulled down the blind, with some muttered excuse about the sun, which had been hidden all day.

Willie found escape impossible, and after a sulky salutation to the unwelcome guest, sat down again in dull resignation.

"I've come on an odd errand, Mrs. Martin," began Mrs. Longton, plunging boldly into her subject. "I am an ambassador sent to ask your daughter's hand in marriage."

"Not—not Ada!" stammered Mrs. Martin, taken aback.

Nobody had ever expected Ada to marry. She was always to be a fixture till the family required her no more.

"Yes, Ada," said Mrs. Longton, smiling. "The suitor is poor, young Adrian Roscombe. I am sorry to say he has not long to live; but he has taken a strong fancy to Ada, and would like her to nurse him. If she will marry him and stay with him till he dies I am empowered to say that he will settle five thousand a year on her. Do you think Ada will agree? And could you spare her?"

"She must agree! This will settle all!" said Willie in agitation, whispering to his mother; and, thus prompted, Mrs. Martin spoke:

"I am sure Ada will agree," she said. "It is a great honor. Oh, I am sure she will agree!"

Then the door opened and Ada came in, the letter to Uncle Joseph in her hand, ready to be submitted to family consultation and correction.

She was very pale, but she greeted Mrs. Longton in her usual pleasant manner, and almost instantly that lady, perceiving by instinct that she had come

"To marry him?" Ada cried, her face flushing delicately.

at a propitious moment, advanced her proposal again.

"To marry him?" Ada cried, the red color creeping over her comely face.

"A mere matter of form, my dear," said Mrs. Longton quickly. "He is very ill and cannot recover. He is rich, and would settle a good income on you."

"And he wants me—the poor boy!" Ada said compassionately. "Mother" —turning to Mrs. Martin—"what am I to do?"

"Accept, Ada. You will never have another such chance," said Mrs. Martin eagerly.

"You had better accept, my girl," said Mr. Martin with a sigh.

Willie did not speak, but his miserable eyes spoke for him, and his sister turned a little pale as she met them. She had forgotten Willie and the necessity for that terribly large sum of money in her thought of that other poor boy who was dying and wanted her.

Mrs. Longton rose in her slow, graceful way.

"You will talk it over among yourselves, won't you?" she said. "But you must decide soon. He goes next week."

When she was gone Ada was assailed on all sides.

"You can't refuse!" Mrs. Martin said eagerly. "Think how useful the money would be, Ada! Here is your father getting old and your sisters wanting help now and then, not to speak of your brothers"—with an angry frown at Willie. "Five thousand a year would be a godsend! You can't hesitate!"

"You'll do it, Ada?" whispered Willie as he caught her hand in his. "You wouldn't see me sent to prison! Would you?"

"You take it, my girl. You are in luck's way!" said Martin.

Ada slipped away, and presently she walked over to the Grange. Mrs. Longton was not in, she was informed; but she asked for Adrian, and was shown into the room where he lay on a couch.

She seemed to bring comfort and healing with her as she crossed the room with a light, quick step.

"They have told you?" he exclaimed eagerly. "Will you come with me? Will you help me to die?"

She put her hand in his as he tried to raise himself and smiled down on him with tears in her eyes.

"You poor boy!" she said gently. "If you want me, yes! Of course I will come!"

So this very odd proposal of marriage was made and accepted; and in a few days poor Miss Martin was transformed into Mrs. Roscombe, to the everlasting jealousy of her sisters.

Adrian had been most generous. He had made the promised settlement on his wife and had put a sum of money into her hands which had made all right for Willie, so Ada left home with a light heart.

Her parents parted from her easily, being upheld by the thought of her new dignity and that the parting was not to be for long.

They knew enough of her to be quite sure that her riches would benefit them more than herself.

Adrian and his wife went abroad together, assured that, in all probability, the wife would come home a widow. It was a sad journey; but Ada determined that she would not spoil it by any depression of spirits, and all the way she kept up her patient's heart by her own cheerfulness and gayety.

A man traveled with them and another nurse was to be engaged if necessary; but Ada, seeing how Adrian shrank from strangers, determined to nurse him alone if she could. When they were once settled in the pretty house where all that could be done for the invalid was to be done, she was indefatigable in attending to him night and day.

Their relations were rather those of mother and son more than of husband and wife, but Adrian clung to his nurse and found his only comfort and stay in her company and conversation.

For a time there was no change in him. He was no weaker and the disease made no more progress.

Then came a day when the distinguished physician who attended the invalid hinted at an operation that had been deemed impossible before; and, after a consultation with another doctor, it was decided that the hope of success was strong enough to warrant the operation being performed at once.

"But suppose—suppose I recover after all?" Adrian suggested slowly to Ada as she sat by his side after the doctors had left them. "Will you think I deceived you?"

"Why should I?" she asked, with her pleasant smile—the smile that began in the eyes before it reached the mouth. "You did not know."

"But if I had known——" he began, and then stopped.

"You would not have done it," she put in quickly, "I know what your feelings must be."

There was a short silence, and then he said abruptly:

"You will have the money in any case. You can go back home, you know, and you will have your five thousand a year."

He spoke bitterly, and Ada felt, for the first time since their strange companionship began, that there was a barrier between them.

"But most likely it will kill me off," he said, "and then you will be free, as you expected."

She knelt beside him and laid her cool hand on his forehead.

"You are not so well, my dear boy," she said gently, "and you are exciting yourself with this talking. There now —try to sleep! I will read to you if you will lie still."

Soon her pleasant voice broke the stillness. But Adrian, though he lay so quiet, was not asleep. His hand stole out and took Ada's in his, and it rested there while she read. A tear rolled from under the dark eyelashes, and he jerked his head away that she might not see. After a time he slept, and she stole away.

On the day of the operation Ada waited in great anxiety till the doctors came down to her; but the first look at their faces told her that all had gone well.

"It has been a success, Mrs. Roscombe," said the great surgeon, smiling. "We have got at the root of the mischief, and with care and good nursing which I know"—with a bow—"he will receive, Adrian will recover."

When the doctors were gone Ada went to the room where the patient lay, attended by a professional nurse.

She sat down by the bed, and presently the eyes opened and Adrian looked at her steadily.

"Tell me—the truth!" he murmured.

"All has gone well," she said, with tears of joy in her sweet gray eyes. "You must be very good and do all that we tell you for a time, and then —no more roller chairs!"

He lay very still, smiling back at her, and then a shade passed over his face and he suppressed a sigh.

"Pain, dear boy?" Ada asked anxiously. "It will soon go, the doctor says. And you, who have borne so bravely all along, will bear a little more, remembering the end, won't you?"

"I—brave?" he said, slowly flushing. "I think I have been a coward."

"You have been a dear martyr," she said, her eyes flashing. "If only I could have borne some of it for you!"

"You helped me," he said quickly. "I could never have borne it but for you."

The nurse interposed, coming toward the bed.

"He must not be excited, Mrs. Roscombe," she said.

Then, to her surprise, the patient turned to her, his eyes flashing ominously:

"Speak like that again to Mrs. Roscombe and you go, nurse!" he said. "If I live at all it will be her doing! She saved me for this!"

"But nurse is right," Ada said, rising. "You must not talk."

"You won't go away?" he pleaded.

"No," she said smiling. "But I shall not say another word. You must sleep."

"Sit beside me," he said, and she sat down and put her hand into the one that groped so weakly for it.

Then he slept, and from that day he grew steadily better.

During his convalescence Ada was always his kind, cheerful attendant, but as he grew stronger and stronger a barrier seemed to be set up between them, and his manner changed daily toward her.

Ada felt it, but did not know how to alter things. She was conscious that she was a superfluity in the young man's life. He had married her that she might nurse him until he died, and now his life was given back to him, and he was saddled with a wife—a wife he did not want!

Still she knew that he was grateful to her and that the respect he entertained for her would be always hers; but she—poor, foolish woman—was not satisfied.

"I can never cease to be grateful to you," he said to her one day when they were talking of returning. "If it had not been for you I should have died, I know I should."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't!" she said

cheerfully. "You have a marvelous constitution, my dear boy."

"But I should," he persisted. "I should have died of the loneliness of it. I shouldn't have been able to keep up my spirits enough to get well. So you see there is a big debt to pay, and I want to do the best I can for you. I suppose you want to go back home as soon as possible, and you shall have ten thousand a year as long as you live."

"Oh, no!" she cried. "I don't want to be paid——" She stopped, struggling with the foolish tears that would come. "I should not know what to do with so much money," she added.

"As you please," said Adrian. "It will always be there if you want it. Now we will get back as soon as we can. I shall see you home, of course," he added, almost sharply.

"Very well!" Ada murmured.

She was more than ever conscious of the barrier between them, and her heart sank when she caught one of his dark glances fixed upon her.

She thought that he was deriding himself for the foolish sick fancy which had tied him in the heyday of his manhood to a woman so much his senior, a useful, old-fashioned old maid.

Perhaps too he scorned her for being willing to make such a marriage for money.

"But indeed I would have done it without that," thought Mrs. Roscombe. "He was so lonely, poor boy!"

So the days passed on, and the slight coldness grew with time. Adrian seemed to shun the society of his wife, and she, with gentle dignity, showed him plainly that she did not intend to intrude upon him.

When they reached Paris, Adrian left Ada alone in the hotel while he spent an evening with some friends he met there.

"He is ashamed of me," thought Ada as she spent the long evening alone.

The next morning Adrian made a semiapology for his neglect.

"They were very old friends," he explained, "and I thought you would not care to be introduced to them. I should have had to say you were my wife, and the less people know about it the less talk there will be. I don't want folk to be gossiping about you."

"You were quite right," Ada said cheerfully.

"Would you like to stay a day or two in Paris?" asked Adrian courteously as he rose.

"No!" said Ada wearily. "Let us get home."

She felt suddenly that she was very tired and that all the flavor had gone out of life. She sank into a chair with a little sigh as Adrian left the room.

The next instant she became aware that he had returned, and before she quite understood what was happening he was kneeling at her feet.

"Ada dearest, need we part?" he was saying in agitated tones. "Can't you find a little love in your heart for me? No"—as she would have spoken—"let me speak! I know you only married me out of pity, and I don't want pity. I want love. I have grown to love you so dearly, so very dearly, with all my heart! You are all the world to me! Can you care for me a little?"

She pushed him away, half laughing, half crying.

"I am old," she said, "and you are a boy!"

"I am twenty-five and you are thirty-two," he said coolly. "What of that? What is a trifling difference like that if we love each other?"

"But you might have married a pretty young girl."

"But I happen to prefer you to any girl in the world," he said. "To me you are the most beautiful woman in the world!"

"Oh, my dear boy, you must indeed be in love with me!" she said, with

a little sobbing laugh. "I am as plain as plain can be!"

"Ah," he said coolly, a twinkle in his eye, for he knew that the battle was won, "you haven't seen yourself as I have! I am the best judge of that, and I say that you are lovely."

"But—but," she stammered, "people will laugh at you with a wife so much older!"

"You don't look a bit older! What rubbish!" he exclaimed. "And you are going to think of what the world will say when I am hungering to hear you say that you can love me? You saved my life, Ada darling, and won't you stay always with your patient? Tell me, dearest, can you love me?"

"It's perfectly ridiculous," cried Mrs. Roscombe, with a burst of tears—"at my age; but I'm as much in love with you as if I were sixteen!"

"But don't you imagine, madam," said her husband sternly, "that you are going to plume yourself on those few extra years! I shall prove a tyrant, I can tell you, and, first of all, I mean to take you away again where I can look after you for a change and get those roses back into your cheeks that you lost in nursing me."

But it did not look as if the roses were very far away to judge by Mrs. Roscombe's cheeks when she escaped from her husband's arms.

She was blushing like a happy schoolgirl.

Adrian lifted her hand to his lips with a gesture of exaggerated gallantry.

"You are lovely, darling," he said in a voice that was weighted with emotion in spite of the light and amusing air he had assumed.

"I never dreamed that there could be so much happiness ahead of me."

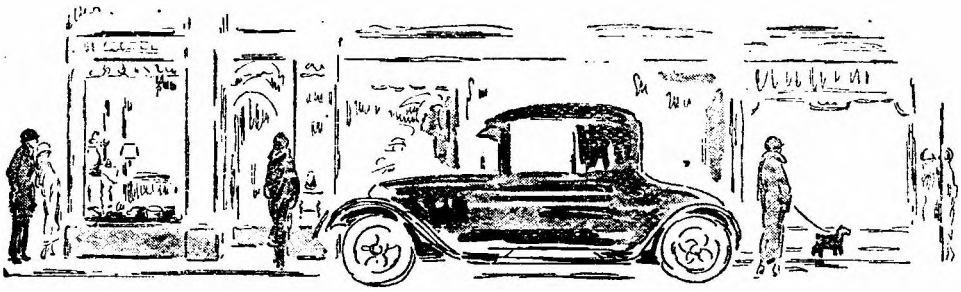
"Nor did I," whispered the girl who had believed romance was lost to her.

"I shall spend the remainder of my life trying to tell you how really much I love you," Adrian said tenderly, as once more his arms enfolded his wife.

YOUR FATHER

BLUE morning-glories, he loved them!
Always, he called me to see.
Now they are bells
Tolling sad knells
Of happier summers to me!

ROSE M. BURDICK.



The One-woman Man

By VIVIAN GREY

PART III.

THE STORY SO FAR

Francine Lavelle and her husband decide to adopt a daughter, who blossoms into a lovable young woman. On the night of a big party a man is killed in the garden. Suspicion at first rests on Alice. As the girl is being questioned a stranger calls at the house.

CHAPTER X—(*Continued.*)

"DON'T," Alice said, with a sudden, irrepressible sob. "You don't know!"

"But," he said, quietly, "I want to know!"

She turned her eyes upon his face with a look of such hopeless despair that it almost terrified him; but, before he had recovered himself sufficiently to speak, the door opened, and Valroy Harrison appeared on the threshold.

Keating started. He realized, with the appearance of Val that the entire household was being drawn into the affair.

"Your father has sent me for you, Alice," he said, gently; and the girl started to her feet as if suddenly galvanized into life. Rayburn Keating rose also; his face was almost as colorless as her own.

"What is it?" Alice asked, in a choking voice. "Do they want me?"

"I am sorry to say they do," said Harrison, who had lost his graceful languor and looked awkward and embarrassed. "But it is only to ask you a question or two. Are you coming, Keating?"

"Certainly," Keating answered; and he took Alice's hand and pressed it reassuringly.

Valroy Harrison went in front, and opened the door, standing back to allow Alice and Keating to pass him.

As they entered, Lavelle cast a keen glance at Keating, and from him to Alice. Could it be, he asked himself, that Keating had repeated his offer to her, notwithstanding the heavy cloud which hung over her? This was either a generous self-sacrifice, or a degree of infatuation for which Lavelle was scarcely prepared.

All the gentlemen present rose when Alice entered, and the girl mechanically inclined her head. Every one present was struck by her appearance—her beauty, her intense pallor, the fixed expression of her eyes; and the group, to a man, felt a sudden anger against Ingram for having been the cause of submitting her to such an ordeal.

Lavelle went forward to meet her, led

her to the chair from which he had risen, and introduced her to Stillwell.

"We are sorry to have put you to the inconvenience of coming here, Miss Lavelle," the coroner began, in his pompous manner, and suddenly deciding to make the unoffending Smith his scapegoat; "but one of the gardeners in Mr. Lavelle's employ was very strongly under the impression that on the night of the dance at the house he saw you in the grounds."

"He must have seen numbers of people in the grounds," Alice said, in her low voice, which had a strange, toneless sound, as if muffled.

"I am afraid I was not sufficiently explicit," Stillwell said, with a touch of impatience. "He said he had seen you toward dawn in the neighborhood of the shrubbery, where an hour or two later the body of the unfortunate stranger was found shot through the heart. He believes now that it is possible he was mistaken."

"But even if I had been there," the girl said, turning her great, mournful eyes on his face for a moment, "it would not necessarily prove that I knew anything about the death of that poor man."

"No, certainly not; but since you were not there," the coroner answered, smiling, "we need not discuss the point, need we? Smith recognizes his mistake. Was the poor fellow who was found dead an acquaintance or a friend of yours?"

Even in this terrible moment Alice could not help thinking what a bombshell it would be in the midst of that assembly if she replied, as she might truthfully do: "He was my father!"

Aloud she said: "No." And as the word left her lips a great pity welled in her heart for the man whose life had been forfeited.

"You knew nothing about him then?"

"I knew nothing about him then!" the girl repeated after him, wondering wildly whether she were going to escape so easily, or whether Ingram would force her to lie as she had already lied.

But Ingram seemed unaware of, or, at least, indifferent, to her presence; he appeared to have done his part in the proceedings, and to have no further interest in them.

"You have no question to ask this young lady, Mr. Ingram?" the coroner said sharply, and Alice felt her heart die within her as she thought of her muddy gown, her bloodstained shoes, all of which she believed were in Ingram's possession. She felt quite sure that the person who took them from her maid had been a detective.

The detective lifted his eyes and rested them for a moment on Alice's face, while, unconsciously to herself, into the girl's eyes there crept a look of agonized entreaty.

"I have nothing to say to this young lady, sir," the detective said quietly, "except to express my regret that my mistake has caused her some inconvenience."

A faint murmur of approval rose from the jury. They were glad that he should eat humble pie.

"Perhaps you would like to go, Alice?" Lavelle said, bending over the girl, who was too dazed to realize that her ordeal was over, and who sat motionless, as if she did not understand.

At his words she started to her feet, and stood looking about her in a dazed, bewildered manner.

"Is that all?" she said faintly, glancing at Lavelle with eyes which seemed to see nothing.

"Yes, that is all," he answered, as he took her hand.

"I—may—go?" she asked, incredulously.

"Yes," he said. "I will take you away. "You will excuse me, Mr. Stillwell?" he added, hurriedly, as Alice put her hand to her throat, with a gesture of pain, and swayed as she stood, as if

she were about to fall. "I am afraid Miss Lavelle is ill. This has been too much for her."

He took Alice's hand and drew it through his arm. The girl seemed scarcely conscious of what was passing around her; the revulsion of feeling was too great to be borne calmly; the relief was too intense for a frame weakened by the terrible anxiety and suspense through which she had passed.

"Come, Alice," Lavelle said, gently, while Philip Keating, starting to his feet, went toward the door to open it for them.

For a moment Alice could not stir; then, with a faint, strange, little laugh, she turned from the table, and made a few tottering steps toward the door. But her strength failed, and the faltering steps paused; she put up her hand again to her throat, with the same pathetic gesture, and fell back on Lavelle's supporting arm, her upturned face upon his shoulder.

Keating hurriedly went to Lavelle's assistance, and between them they carried the unconscious girl from the room, amid murmurs of consternation and sympathy.

As they placed her upon the couch in the sitting room, Keating uttered an exclamation of mingled pain and recognition, for the likeness between the beautiful, upturned face, deathlike in its pallor and immobility, and the face of the dead man whom he had found in the shrubbery, struck him with freshness and force, which increased the pain and anxiety he could not help feeling.

The coloring was different. Alice was blond and the dead man was dark, but there was a strong likeness about the eyes.

There was a mystery, and a great one. How would it be possible to fathom it?

There on his knees before the unconscious girl, his heart wrung with an anguish deeper and more bitter than he had ever known before, Philip Keating wondered at the strange resemblance. With each passing moment the conviction grew in his heart that the girl he loved, the girl he adored and would gladly have laid down his life for, was in some way connected with the murdered man.

Strange suppositions, things which otherwise, he would have dismissed as impossible, incredible, crowded in upon him. He thought of the uncanny likeness of Alice and her foster mother, Francine Lavelle, who was still ill and had not, since the morning of the gruesome find, been able to see any of her guests. She had been excused from examination because, having been ill, it seemed impossible that she should know anything about the affair.

While Keating watched, he saw the blue-veined eyelids flutter. The eyes opened and looked fearfully up at him.

"It's all over now, dear," he said smiling gently down upon Alice.

"They—they finished with me?"

"They finished with you." Once more the kindly, almost fatherly, smile played at the corners of his mouth. "And now, dear, will you let me take you out for a ride in the air?" Keating suggested.

Alice looked at him thoughtfully for a moment before she spoke.

"But where are the others?" she asked.

"Some of them are preparing to leave now. We hoped to keep the affair quiet, but of course that was next to impossible—is in a case of this kind. Val and Grace started out for somewhere right after the detective finished with us."

The words had scarcely crossed his lips before he regretted them. He attributed the deep pain which filled the girl's eyes to the news that he had just given her.

"Can't I take you out for a little air?" he asked again.

Alice shook her head slowly though a grateful little smile twisted her pitifully white lips.

"I think I'd better go up and see mother," she said. "And then perhaps I'll lie down a while. I—I'm tired."

"I don't wonder that you are, dear," Keating said tenderly, and then, as Alice started to rise from the couch he took her hands in his and pressed them against his face as he bent over her. "Alice," he breathed the name impassionedly, "won't you tell me that you didn't mean what you said this morning? Won't you tell me that you do love me and that you'll give me the right to protect you?"

The pain in Alice's eyes deepened. She looked away, unable to meet the gaze that was bent upon her.

"Oh—I can't," she murmured at last.

"Can't?" The man repeated the word. "Do you mean that you don't care for me?" And then as she failed to reply he bent lower and spoke still more gently. "Tell me, dear," he said.

"I—I——" she faltered, "I'm not fit to be your wife—not fit now!" The words were wrung from her lips in a heartbroken little cry.

"Not fit? My darling there is no woman in the world more fit! You don't think I'd let a thing like this shadow that has fallen over all of us make any difference in my estimate of you?"

Alice looked up at him, her pleading eyes misty with tears.

"Please don't talk to me about it now," she said brokenly.

And Rayburn Keating looking down upon her, compassionately, bent over her slim white hand and touched his lips to it.

"It shall be as you wish, dear," he said softly. "But please believe that whatever happens I shall always be at your service."

He left her and Alice's eyes followed him as he went. She scarcely knew, as she watched him, what her emotions were. A sharp little pain gripped her heart and held it at thought of Valroy Harrison, with his flashing black eyes, his debonair way and then, as the vision changed to one of her mother, wretched under the weight of a frightful crime she felt the need of the calm strength of the man whom she had just sent away.

She wondered vaguely at the strange twist of fate that had kept her mother entirely out of the investigation relative to the murdered man and was grateful for it. She shuddered involuntarily at thought of her beautiful young mother connected with so dark a crime.

She saw again her own bloodstained slippers—mute accusation—and wondered then why Ingram had not come frankly out with his accusation of her. She was sure that it was he who held them as well as the gown which she had sent her maid to the cleaners with.

Alice had not seen her mother that day. The big house had been in such a state of chaos that the lives of all the occupants had been interrupted. Ordinarily she would have gone several times to her mother's room to peep in and inquire about her but fear of having the secret lay between them revealed stayed her.

Suddenly she stood up, galvanized to action by a swift thought. What if Ingram had questioned her mother and forced from her the whole story? Cold terror gripped the girl's heart. Better anything, she thought, than have the truth come out and have Gaylord Lavelle shocked beyond measure, before he could gather his senses, do something which would break forever the ideal life that had been his with the wife he loved.

Forcing her trembling limbs to do her bidding she hastened to her mother's room.

Mrs. Lavelle, very white and wan, was propped up among pillows in the

chaise longue. Tears filled her eyes as her daughter's arms held her in a close embrace and then their lips met.

"I wonder at the bigness of your heart, Alice—that you can love me after all that I have had to tell you," Francine said in a shaky voice.

"It wasn't your fault, mother!" were the words that came quickly from the girl's lips.

"You were only a child when it happened. I'm sure you've been forgiven for all of it long ago. Tell me dear," she seemed suddenly to have become a woman, mistress of the situation, "has any one been in to see you?"

"Your father—Gaylord," the words came from the woman's lips with hesitation.

"No one else?" Alice questioned.

"No one else," Francine murmured.

"And what did papa say to you?"

There was a little silence before the older woman answered. She seemed to shudder, to shrink into herself and the eyes which she turned upon her daughter were filled with pain.

"He told me about—what had—happened." She spoke with difficulty. "And—and I hadn't the courage to tell him what I knew. Alice, I—I hate myself for my weakness!" Her shoulders shook. Sobs tore at her throat.

"But you mustn't hate yourself, dear," Alice, her arms around the woman, was quick to sympathize. "I don't see how you could have told! I'm glad you didn't. I'm sure it'll all blow over and there'll be no need of papa's knowing about—about things." She finished rather lamely, not daring to put into words the thing that had really happened. "Did daddy tell you much?"

"Only that they'd found a body." Alice breathed a sigh of relief. Her mother did not know of the details.

Suddenly Francine, looking at the lovely girl before her put out an impulsive hand.

"Alice," she said, "promise me one thing—that you'll never have a secret from the man who loves you and trusts you."

"Mother!" Alice recognized the torment through which her mother must be going; she could understand, even with her girlish heart, something of the suffering imposed upon her by reason of the secret she had kept.

"If I had told Gaylord all about this in the beginning," Francine was speaking again, "I should have run the risk of losing him—his love might not have been strong enough to have withstood the doubts that my story would have brought. But if it had withstood, Alice, and we had married as we did—now I should not be in this terrible position! I should have had nothing to hide—nothing to fear!"

The silence which followed the woman's words was tense.

"Will you promise your mother—your very unworthy mother, that, Alice dear?" Francine asked at length in a low, subdued tone.

"I promise, mother," Alice's clear eyes met her mother's. "I give my promise to the dearest and best mother a girl ever had."

Francine looked at her daughter long and searchingly.

"I wonder where you got your courage, dear?" The words were meditative. "Perhaps from—your father. He might have had depths of sincerity and strength which I never plumbed. I knew so little of him—so really little of the man I married and for whom I gave birth to my only child."

"I must go now, dear." Alice rose. "They will be wondering where I am." And then, as she bent to touch her lips once more to her mother's she saw a small box and on the hearth rug a withered flower. "What is this?" There was an element of concern in her voice.

Francine's face was haggard as she looked at the thing which lay like a ghost on the rug.

"It's—it's—he sent it," she managed to say.

Without another word Alice picked it up, tore it into bits and threw it into the blaze in the fireplace. She was glad, as she saw the pain in her mother's face that she had told her the hideous details of the questioning.

"I'm going now, dear. I'll slip in to see you again before nightfall," she said gently.

Alice closed the door of her mother's room and then walked thoughtfully down the hall and out across the broad lawns of Lavelle House. She avoided the path that led past the summerhouse and made a detour to the little cottage in which her dancing master lived.

As she neared the structure, she thought, with aching heart, of the happy hours she had spent dancing. She wondered vaguely if they were ended.

The door of the quaint little building was open. "Ah, my pupil—my dear little pupil!" said the man gently as he advanced to meet Alice. "You honor me so greatly."

The gentleness, the sympathy of his tone touched the girl. Something about it went to her heart and forced slow tears from her deep blue eyes.

"It is I who am honored, my teacher, that you allow me to come here," she said, but her voice trembled on the words.

"My dear," the exquisitely gentle little man was all concern, "something is troubling you. Surely it is not—not something connected with the tragedy of the summerhouse? My little pupil is not letting that disturb her?"

Alice looked up and would have spoken but she dared not trust her voice. After a little silence the dancing master spoke again.

"You are troubled, my dear. Can you not trust your old teacher?"

The sympathy, the understanding of his tone were too much for the overwrought girl. With a pitiful little cry she flung herself into the arms which seemed to have been waiting for her and, while the man, kind through his own sorrow, tried to soothe her she sobbed out the story of the terrible night, leaving nothing unrevealed.

At its conclusion she looked up at the man with something like terror in her eyes.

"And now I've told you," she said a little wildly, "and I meant to keep it all so secret for mother's sake. I meant that no one should know—so that I could help her."

"And no one shall know, my dear," were the gently spoken words which she heard in response. "No one shall know. Your teacher has lived too long in this old world to let any one suffer through his knowledge, my pupil. Let your mind be at peace. It has relieved you to tell me—perhaps there may even be something I can do to help. Trust me. Have no fear, child. Believe in your mother with all your heart. She is as good as you are beautiful."

As she walked back across the broad lawns Alice was conscious of a

lighter, happier feeling. The dark clouds which had gathered over her horizon seemed to be lifting.

She passed the detective, Ingram, and spoke to him almost casually. He turned and looked wonderingly after her—he wondered secretly at a girl who could almost smile when there were bloodstains on her slippers!

CHAPTER XI.

The next morning, pacing the lawn of Lavelle House, Rayburn Keating and Gaylord Lavelle were talking in low, earnest tones. Lavelle's face was white and his tone tense, as he labored under conflicting emotions.

After leaving the investigation to which several members of the house had voluntarily subjected themselves he found himself strangely affected by the facts which had been brought out and by Ingram's conduct relative to Alice.

He knew that the girl had been carefully brought up and that Francine had been most watchful of her friendships yet he was at a loss to understand the half implied things of the questioning.

As the hours wore on he became more and more convinced that Alice was in some way connected with the affair. Dear as the girl was to him, firm as was his intention to shield her should any harm seem imminent, Rayburn Keating, too, was dear, almost as dear as the son he had never had.

He knew that Keating was fond of Alice and he felt that under the existing conditions marriage would be impossible for them.

He looked up at the younger man, his handsome face strangely haggard.

"Do you think you will be any the happier for playing with fire?" Lavelle asked. "It seems to me that the wisest thing you could do would be to leave—put as great a distance as possible between you and Alice and try to forget all about her."

Keating smiled sadly, but he said nothing for a minute or two. He seemed to be watching the blue-gray curls of smoke from his cigar. Then he remarked, quietly:

"The wisdom of such a course of action is manifest, but I am afraid both strength and will to carry it out are lacking!"

"You can do it, if you wish, my dear fellow," rejoined Lavelle; "and, although I hate to have to say it to you, and of Alice, since it would appear that you have given your love to an unworthy object——"

"No!" Keating interposed, quickly, "I cannot hear that, even from you! Alice is good and pure. I would stake my life on that. It is through some mistaken idea of self-sacrifice that this stain has come upon her, I am sure!"

"Nevertheless the stain exists," Lavelle said, gently. "A man cannot be too particular, too careful in the choice of the woman to whom he is going to confide his name."

"I quite agree with you," Keating answered. "But I have such faith in Alice that I would trust my name and honor and happiness to her without the very smallest misgiving, if only"—with a little laugh which had not much merriment in it—"she would take them."

Lavelle glanced at him with a good deal of sympathy, but said nothing.

A servant entered bearing a silver salver on which lay a visiting card. "This gentleman begs to see you," he said, addressing Lavelle, "on business, he desired me to say."

Lavelle took the card, and glanced at it carelessly.

" 'Paul Martin, Artiste Dance,' " read he. "What can the man want with me?"

"The gentleman is," volunteered the waiting servant, "particularly anxious to see you."

"In that case I will not keep him," remarked Lavelle, smiling. "Where is Paul Martin?"

"I showed him into your sitting room," rejoined the servant.

"Tell him I will be with him immediately," said Lavelle; then, as the man went his way, he turned to Keating.

"Rather a coincidence is it not, that in a place like Allendale two men, both in the profession, should turn up within so short a time? I wonder if Paul Martin will be able to help us to fathom the mystery of the other man?"

A look of interest brightened Keating's grave face.

"Let us hope so," he said, quickly.

"Ah, that interests you!" his relative said, smiling. "Will you come with me and interview this visitor of mine, who probably has mistaken my name for that of some one else?"

They sauntered across the lawn toward the house. The gray morning was growing gloomier, and as they reached the stately Gothic portico, a few drops of rain began to fall, and a chill wind made the "sere and yellow" leaves on the old oak trees shiver as it passed through them.

Lavelle, always keenly sensitive to external influences, shivered slightly also, as, crossing the threshold, he glanced behind him at the dreary landscape.

Keating followed Lavelle up the wide staircase and down the gallery toward the sitting room. A servant in attendance opened the door and held aside the portière.

The sole occupant of the luxurious room was a small, slender man, plainly, even shabbily, dressed, but with an air of refinement about him. He stood, hat in hand, with his face turned toward the door, and, as the two men entered, a look of keen interest and curiosity flashed into his dark eyes.

He bowed with rather elaborate courtesy, but said nothing, and looked from one face to the other, as if in doubt which gentleman to address.

Lavelle, holding the card between his fingers, advanced toward the stranger.

"You are Mr. Paul Martin, I presume?" he said. "And you wished to see me, they tell me. I am Lavelle; but I cannot help thinking," he added, with a faint smile, "that you have mentioned my name in error."

"I am sorry to contradict you," was the prompt and unexpected reply. "I asked to see Mr. Lavelle, because it is he whom I wish to see, and with whom I have very important business."

"Then be seated," Lavelle said, indicating a chair, and drawing up one for himself. "I am at your service."

The man, who seemed, somehow, not quite as his ease, said: "When I said my business was important, I ought also to have added that it was private, and for your ears alone."

"Oh, this gentleman is not *de trop*," he said smiling. "That is, unless you have personal motives for wishing to see me alone. This is my relative and I"—with an emphasis on the pronoun—"have no secrets from him."

"But perhaps Mr. Martin objects to my presence for reasons of his own," Keating said, gently; "in which case I will retire."

"By no means," the other said, hastily. "The business which has brought me here does not concern me directly in the very least. It concerns Mr. Lavelle only, and since you are his friend, and because you look sympathetic and good, I shall be glad to have your presence. But I must warn you," he added, turning to Lavelle, with a strange solemnity, which, while it startled Keating, seemed rather to amuse Lavelle, "that what I have to tell you is painful to a degree."

Lavelle again raised his eyebrows, and a faint gleam of compassion shone through the puzzled amusement of his glance. Was his strange little visitor in his right senses, he wondered, apprehending nothing from the warning, while Keating, advancing, stood by his side.

"If as you seem to suggest, the business concerns me personally," Lavelle said, quietly, "then you may reassure yourself completely. I have, as I remarked before, no secrets from Mr. Keating."

"As you will," the stranger said, calmly. He bowed slightly, as if to end the discussion, then he sat down in the chair which Lavelle had assigned to him, putting his hat and gloves upon the table. He looked very grave and Keating's keen glance saw that there were lines under his eyes and about his clean-shaven lips, as if he had spent a sleepless night, or sustained some recent and painful grief.

Martin's appearance rather appealed to Keating. There was a simplicity about him which he liked, and the trouble in his face aroused the artist's sympathy. It was with the same solemnity which had somewhat impressed Keating that the man began to speak. Perhaps, his profession being that of a dancer he could not help being slightly dramatic in his manner.

"I beg you to believe," he said, "that I am grieved beyond measure to be the bearer of these most terrible tidings. The fate which has chosen me for such a duty is a cruel one; but I am the only one who could undertake it, since I, Paul Martin, am the only confidant my poor friend ever had."

Lavelle was listening with an air of polite indifference. He was very little interested in the dancer's mission, whatever it was. He felt sure that the man was mistaken; that his business concerned some one else and that he was confiding in him in error.

"Your friend," he said, with the same polished courtesy of manner which was characteristic of him; "may I ask his name?"

The little dancer uttered an exclamation of impatience to himself; then raising his voice, he continued, "I beg your pardon, I forgot that you perhaps would not immediately associate me with the poor man who was murdered here, in this park." He pointed to the grounds spreading far and wide under the windows. "A week ago that man was my friend—my dearest friend," he added, in a tone of intense emotion.

"I respect your grief, sir, and sympathize deeply in your loss," Lavelle said, gently. "In what way can I be of any service to you? I ought first to tell you," he continued, "that I know very little about the sad affair, which doubtless, is the reason of your presence here. I do not think I ever saw your friend, and I have, I need scarcely say, no solution to offer of the mystery of his death."

"The mystery of his death is no mystery to me," Martin replied sadly. "He explained it all to me in a letter which he wrote me on the night he died."

Lavelle bowed slightly, but glanced at Keating as he did so with a look which did not escape the dancer's quick perception.

"Ah, you do not understand," he said, sadly; "and, because you do not, you think that I am not in my right mind. But you are wrong. I have passed a sad night of distress and agitation, truly, but this morning I am quite calm, and when I say that my dear dead friend explained the mystery I speak advisedly. The last act of his life, before going to that accursed rendezvous, was to write me fully, to explain his presence here, his intentions, and his resolve. He said nothing about his danger, probably because he had not realized it. That it existed, the result has proved but too clearly."

Lavelle bowed again, and sat patiently waiting for the remainder of the story. He was beginning to feel a little bored, and to wish the interview could come to an end.

"Your consideration for me, for which I am grateful, makes it all the more painful to me to cause you grief,"

Martin went on sadly, "and yet I must do so."

"To cause me grief!" Lavelle repeated slowly. "I fail to understand you. I cannot possibly have any concern with the event of which you speak, save that which I have as owner of the property on which he died."

"Ah," the little man said, with a tragic intonation. "Unfortunately, you are mistaken. There is scarcely anyone more nearly concerned with the death of my poor friend than yourself."

"Am I to understand that you accuse me of murdering him?" he said, with a touch of contempt in his calm manner, which made Keating, who was listening with keen attention and breathless interest, put his hand quietly on his shoulder as he stood beside him.

"I accuse you of nothing," the man rejoined quietly. "Indeed, I do not wish to accuse anybody, but—— He paused, considered a moment, then went on. "When you have heard my story, you will know, I think, at whose door to lay the guilt of my friend's death."

CHAPTER XII.

A brief silence followed Paul Martin's gravely spoken words; a silence which, to Rayburn Keating, seemed charged with menace. He was beginning to feel strangely uneasy, for the man's manner impressed him more and more, and he could not help wondering at the indifference Lavelle evinced.

"Pray continue," the latter said, quietly. "Your time and mine is of some value, no doubt, and the morning is getting on."

"I will be brief," was the reply; "but when one has bad news to give, one delays the moment of telling," he added, sadly.

He took out his pocketbook as he spoke, and drew from it a letter, which he held in both hands as he continued.

He spoke softly.

"My dear, dear friend, as you know, I presume," he began, "belonged to the same profession as myself, and his friends and comrades have always believed that, except for a cruel misfortune which darkened his youth and his whole life, he would eventually have earned a high position in his art. He married young."

"That is generally a mistake," said Lavelle tranquilly.

"It was more than a mistake in his case," replied the other, "although at first he believed he was going to be very happy. His wife was young and beautiful. She belonged to a different class from himself. She was called"—he paused for a moment, as if to fix their attention upon the name—"Francine Kelly."

"Francine?" exclaimed Keating, with a start; then checked himself as he saw that Martin looked at him curiously.

"The name is familiar to you!"

"The name Francine is not an uncommon one," Keating rejoined, quietly.

There was a little silence.

"No; it is so common, indeed, that it means nothing perhaps. She had a mother who earned her living cleaning. A respectable woman but poor. Her husband had been wealthy but was disowned by his family after his marriage with Francine.

"My friend's wife—she was never known by the name which had become hers through her marriage with my friend; but we will use it here, if you please,," the man went on quietly—"was, as I have said, extremely beautiful. My friend adored her and the child that came to them."

There was no indifference on either of the two faces turned toward the speaker now. Had Paul Martin been less in earnest he might have been pleased with the sensation he was making.

"Unfortunately just at this time my poor friend was kidnaped by his family and held prisoner—with the baby. As I said—they never acknowledged his wife—which must also have added to her unhappiness."

He paused for a few minutes as if to give more weight to what was to follow.

"He did not see her again for sixteen years," he said, hoarsely, and was silent, his head dropping forward on his breast.

Neither of the two men who heard him spoke. Keating's hand had unconsciously pressed heavily on Lavelle's shoulder, but he was equally unconscious of the pressure; they were both very pale, and into the hearts of both had crept an intense, almost paralyzing dread.

"When he was released, heartbroken," continued Paul, brokenly, "he could obtain no tidings of his wife. She had disappeared completely, and it was supposed that she had committed suicide, an act she had often threatened in her fits of depression. He sought for her far and wide, neglecting all other interests; his child, whom he disregarded in his despair, being left to the care of a strange woman. After a long absence in Italy, whither he had gone in following up some slight clew, he returned to find that the woman had died during his absence, and his child had been adopted by a grand lady, who had been in the room when the poor woman died, and who had been interested in the fate of the little orphan!"

Again he was silent, and his pause was met by the same silence on the part of his listeners. Every shade of color had died out of Lavelle's cheeks and lips; but he sat haughtily erect, and Keating, who had no clew to the story so far as it concerned Mrs. Lavelle, could not guess the torture his cousin was enduring.

"Strangely enough, my friend could find no trace of his child," continued Martin. "Perhaps, in his despair at his wife's disappearance, he did not take as much trouble as he might have done. Perhaps—and it may well have been so—he thought she—the child—was better off than he could have made her. At any rate, he never discovered her whereabouts until——"

"Until," Keating repeated, breathlessly.

"Until he found her here!"

"He found her here!" Lavelle repeated, moistening his dry lips, and trying to speak in his natural manner. "This, then, was the reason of his presence here?"

He fixed his eyes as he spoke on the man's face with a look of such intense appeal that it went to the soft heart of the little dancer, who, however, shook his head sadly.

"No. It was not in pursuit of his daughter that my poor friend came here. It was to follow his wife."

There was a little silence.

"Ah!"

The monosyllable dropped like a stone from Lavelle's lips, and a shudder shook him, which was slight enough to escape the notice of the man, but which Keating felt with a sudden start of dismay.

Had his relative any personal interest in this terrible business he asked himself, with a thrill of dread. Could his own wife be in any way concerned in it?

The thought had come to Lavelle, and it seemed to have turned him into stone. What was this awful thing which had come upon him he was asking himself. Could it be that his wife, the woman who had told him she was free when he married her, be Francine Kelly? Impossible! What madness possessed him?

"Will you continue?" he said, after a pause, feeling that he could not bear the suspense with calmness. "Did your friend find his—find the lady of whom he was in search?"

"I regret to say that he did," the other replied, with a great sadness and sympathy in his voice.

"He spoke to her?" said Lavelle, while Keating's hand sought and clasped his, which closed over it with the strong grip of a man in intense, almost mortal, agony.

"He spoke to her," repeated Martin, sorrowfully.

"He assured himself of her identity?" continued Lavelle, with white, stiff lips, which almost refused to obey him. "He made no mistake?"

Keating watched intently.

"He made no mistake," repeated Paul Martin. "He found the woman he had married—the woman who had borne him a child—the woman who had been torn from him by his relatives!"

There was a moment's awful silence. Lavelle's hand was clasping Keating's with a force which cut the signet ring the artist wore into the flesh, but of which, in his absorbed interest in the tragedy, Keating was utterly unconscious. Little as he knew of the circumstances of his cousin's marriage, he began to read between the lines of Paul Martin's story, and he believed he knew who the woman was whom the unfortunate man had recognized as his wife.

In the bewilderment and confusion inseparable from his horror, he forgot that other fact which the story Martin told pointed at—that if Mrs. Lavelle were the central feminine figure of the story, then Alice was her daughter.

He felt stunned, incapable of comprehension. That Francine Lavelle, the beautiful, and he had supposed wholly worthy wife of Gaylord Lavelle should be guilty of so great wrong doing, seemed impossible.

"You—you cannot mean all of this?" The words came from his ashen lips in a faltering question.

The dancer bowed, slowly, sadly, as if reluctant to affirm.

"I must repeat that all I have told you is the truth—the sad truth, he said at length. "My friend, my very dear friend, died a broken-hearted man because of this."

Gaylord Lavelle, gradually getting a grip on himself, rose and took a step nearer the little man.

"And who do you say this woman, whose story you have just told us, is?" he asked in a voice that sounded strangely weary.

There was a silence in the room, a silence that was tense and alive.

"Francine Lavelle," said the dancer, at length.

CHAPTER XIII.

The silence which followed the utterance of Mrs. Lavelle's name lasted several minutes, but it seemed to Rayburn Keating that hours had elapsed when his cousin turned his face toward him, with a forced, ghastly smile parting his pale lips in mockery or derision of the assertion Martin had made. He made an effort to speak, but no words came, and suddenly, with an inarticulate, gasping cry he sank back, and would have fallen but for Keating's arm.

He had not fainted. There was none of the peace of unconsciousness in his tortured and convulsed face, but he seemed stifled with the emotion he had suppressed.

Martin rushed to the window and opened it, and Philip led the suffering

man to it, with a rapid sign to Martin not to summon assistance. The terrible emotion was not long-lived; but, brief as it was, it left Lavelle aged, haggard, worn, and he seemed to collapse into the chair which Rayburn drew forward for him rather than to seat himself in it.

With a delicacy which Philip had not expected from the little dancer, the latter held himself aloof for the next few minutes, during which Lavelle sat breathing heavily, his hand in Keating's. He clung to Keating as a drowning man might to a rope which had been thrown to rescue him from death.

Presently he raised his head and looked up, with dim, miserable eyes into Keating's face.

"You heard him," he said, hoarsely; while again his lips contracted and drew away from his teeth in that curious, horrible smile. "It cannot be true."

"It cannot be true, indeed," Keating answered quickly. "There is some terrible mistake. Mr. Martin is in error. Let us look into the matter calmly, and see where the mistake lies."

"Calmly!" echoed Lavelle, in the same strange voice. "How can one consider such a charge calmly?"

"Will you leave it in my hands?" Keating said, gently.

"I must be present," said the other, quickly. "Question him, Rayburn, here and now."

Keating hesitated. A cold hand seemed to have gripped his heart.

Once more his head drooped upon his breast, and a spasm of agony convulsed his face. He had said that it could not be true; but, in his heart, he believed that his wife was guilty. He had forgotten, for the moment, the tragedy of the summerhouse, so that the full horror of the position had not burst upon him as it had upon Keating; but of deception toward him, of the desertion of her husband, he believed her guilty.

Lavelle, greatly as he had loved Francine, had always wondered about her past. He may have thought that he was at peace about her. He may have been unconscious of any distrust; but the feeling was latent, and sprang suddenly into vivid and vigorous life.

Perhaps he was still too benumbed and stupefied to realize the full horror of this awful thing; but, as he sat there, the wreck of the man who had entered the room half an hour before, it seemed to him that the light of his life had gone out suddenly. There was nothing before him but the darkness of despair.

"You have said a very terrible thing, sir," Rayburn Keating began, as he turned to the dancer who stood, silent and distressed, near the table. "You have brought a charge against a lady who has occupied for fifteen or sixteen years a very high position, and occupied it not only blamelessly, but with honor to herself and her friends. You can scarcely expect us to believe it without proof."

The dancer bowed.

"Believe me, I grieve to be the bearer of these terrible tidings, but I have no choice," he said, gravely. "I came here hoping to find my friend; I am confronted, suddenly, by the news of his strange and mysterious death."

A low cry broke from Lavelle. The words recalled to him the portion of the tragedy which he had for a moment forgotten! He started to his feet, and turned furiously upon Paul Martin.

"You carry things too far!" he said. "Do you accuse this lady of murder as well as bigamy?"

"I make no accusation," answered Martin; then, addressing Keating, he held out an open letter.

"You," he continued, "are a man of honor, and I trust you. On the last night of my friend's life he wrote me this letter. Will you read it? The beginning contains details which would not interest you; but, in these last few lines, you will read what brought me here."

He put the letter into Keating's hand, indicating the place where he might begin to read.

The man took it in silence, with an ache in his heart. The handwriting was very small, but beautifully clear, each letter being so distinctly formed that he had no difficulty in reading the lines indicated—the lines the dead man had written and posted before going to that last meeting with the woman he had loved, which had only started on their way after the hand which had written them was cold and stiff in death.

He read:

Thus, my dear Paul, I have found here not only my wife, but my child, and the mother and daughter are under the same roof, without suspecting the relationship between them. Truth is indeed stranger than fiction! The girl is beautiful, and I am told by this kind old man, who little guesses how deeply I am interested in his narrative, that she is good as she is beautiful, and that she has a gift to charm the world. Is it too late for me to dream of happiness? Is it too late for me to teach her to love me? I will leave her free to do as she wishes; her happiness shall be my first consideration—and perhaps she will never know that a stranger who watched her from the garden at night was her father! But her mother shall not be free to choose. She shall come with me. I regret that Lavelle should suffer, he has had her beauty and charm for sixteen years, during which I, their rightful owner, have lived solitary and alone. Why, then, should he not suffer in his turn?

When I have finished this letter I go to meet her in the shrubbery of this great house, where she—my wife—is an honored mistress. To-night she is to give me my answer, and it can be but one—she has no alternative! I have been patient. I have spared her—not so much for her sake, as for this—the open shame of a public version of this story for which no one living is to blame. But I have no more patience; to-night will end it—she dare not avoid the meeting. Whether a future shared with her—a woman who perhaps loves me no longer—will give me happiness Heaven knows, and time alone can tell. What my feeling for her is I scarcely know. Ah, Paul! she is so beautiful, and love dies so hard in the hearts of some of us! But to-night—to-night ends my suspense. On my way to the rendezvous I mail this letter. There is a masked ball at the great house to-night, and she will have little difficulty in keeping her appointment with me.

I write you all this, so that you may know, if you do not hear from me again by to-morrow's mail, that something is wrong. I am a stranger here. I have no papers with me; and I leave all in your hands—yours, the one true and faithful friend I have ever had!

Philip had read calmly and steadily enough, although every word of the letter cut him like a knife, and he could guess what its perusal must mean to the suffering man by his side, who could no longer doubt this horrible story of sin and shame! As he read the closing lines, he let the sheet of paper fall to the ground, where it lay upon the carpet.

As Martin stooped to recover it, the door of the room in which they stood was pushed open, and Mrs. Lavelle, serene, and even though a little pale, smiling, and wondrously lovely, came in, trailing her rich, delicately hued draperies after her.

At sight of the three men, whose faces were turned to the door as she entered, she paused, glancing questioningly from one to the other; and Keating saw that in that moment the delicate rose tints faded from her cheek, and that into her beautiful eyes flashed a quick look of fear.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mrs. Lavelle's hesitation was but momentary. After a scarcely perceptible pause she advanced into the room.

"Am I disturbing you?" she asked, calmly. "I thought you were alone, Gaylord.

She spoke in her usual languidly graceful manner. The fear which had at first assailed her had been quite evanescent. The death of the man near the summerhouse, and her escape from all suspicion, had completely restored her confidence. She was dressed with the perfection which always characterized her, and she looked so young

that Martin, accustomed to think of his friend's wife as a woman of approaching middle life, did not at first realize that this was the one who had wrought so much misery.

She advanced slowly into the room, slightly inclining her head in recognition of Paul Martin's low bow and the glance full of amazed admiration which he gave her; then, as she reached the table, she paused, and, glancing at the open window, shivered a little.

"You gentlemen must be fond of fresh air," she said, languidly. "Good morning, Rayburn; am I interrupting some important conference? Are you not well, Gaylord? Is this gentleman your doctor?"

She was so self-assured that, for a moment, Keating's belief in her guilt was shaken. But not one of the three men present was sufficiently calm to answer her. Then Martin, suddenly realizing that this was Mrs. Lavelle, started back with an exclamation he tried vainly to repress.

The strange silence surprised her, and she turned her blue eyes from one face to the other with a questioning glance. Only her husband—or rather the man who had believed himself to be her husband—had the courage to meet that glance, and he let his own rest upon her face with a look of such intense reproach and pain that Keating, seeing it, thought he would have rather received a blow.

Perhaps it aroused her fear, for, with a swift look at the stranger, she turned away.

"I will leave you," she said, quietly. "I will return when you are disengaged, Gaylord."

"No!" Lavelle said, in a strangely level tone. "Your presence is more urgently needed here than elsewhere! I was about to send for you when you entered the room."

"Indeed! Have you anything to tell me?" she asked. "Not, I hope, that this gentlemen—he is one of your doctors, is he not?—has any fear that your health is seriously impaired?"

Lavelle had the courage to smile.

"My health!" he said, bitterly, "is but too good. It would have been better for me that I had died a thousand deaths before hearing what I have heard this morning."

The color dropped suddenly from her cheek; her hand, hanging by her side, closed convulsively over the delicate folds of her gown. But she retained her composure.

"Indeed!" she said. "I am sorry you should have been troubled. Is the story one I need hear? If there is no necessity for my doing so, I should prefer not to."

"I am afraid this one concerns you and me too nearly for avoidance," Lavelle said, in the same calm manner, his ghastly pallor and clenched hand alone showing the immense effort required to retain it. "This gentleman is not, as you surmised, one of my doctors," he continued. "He is Mr. Paul Martin, who belongs to the profession you adorned when I married you—the profession to which the poor man belonged who was found dead under the trees yonder ten days ago!"

"Indeed!" Mrs. Lavelle repeated slowly. "I am pleased to make Mr. Martin's acquaintance." She bowed again, with her usual queenly grace, but Keating saw that the color had left her lips, and that she was trembling.

"This gentleman," Lavelle continued, "has come from afar in answer to a letter he had received from——"

He paused, trembling with the violence of the emotion he forced him-

self to repress; but as Philip made a step toward him he gently motioned him away.

"A letter he had received from—from your husband," he continued, fixing his eyes on the wretched woman's face with a look which must have pierced her soul.

"From you?" she said, although his look and tone had told her even more than his words—that her secret was hers no longer. "I did not know you were acquainted with this gentleman, to whom"—her blue eyes glanced at the unhappy stranger with a flash of lightning hatred—"I am indebted for so much interest."

"Unfortunately for me," Lavelle continued, bitterly, "my acquaintance with this gentleman only dates from the last half hour! If I had known him years ago he might have saved me from the shame and misery I am forced now to face. When I said that Mr. Martin had come in answer to a letter he had received from your husband, I was not alluding to myself. I meant your first husband, your real husband!"

The words were spoken. The accusation was made, but the man who had made it was even more overcome than was the woman who was its object.

"What story is this?" she managed to say, although in the few moments which had elapsed since she had previously spoken her voice had lost all its sweetness and grown harsh and toneless. "Are you so easily set against me that one word from a stranger——"

IMAGERY

TO reach out—clasp your hand in the darkness,
To have you no longer a lifeless miniature of loveliness
But a radiant, scarlet flower, forgiving the hands
That bruised you with their ardor and warm conquest;
The conquest of your loveliness—this speaks not
Of your mind.

L. Ozelle Mathis.

When Faith Was Young

BY Ethel Donoher

THE sunlight streaming in at the window and the fire in the stove made the kitchen stifling. Faith Deemster opened the oven door, drew out a pan of delicately browned biscuits, and carried them to the table.

"Whew!" she exclaimed wearily. "Isn't it hot?"

Martha, the hired girl, glanced up from the peas she was shelling and nodded assent.

"But it's July," she pointed out. "It's always hot in July."

"It always is here," Faith agreed. "And yet city people talk about lovely, cool farmhouses! They should try to get a few meals in our kitchen."

Martha considered this.

"But it must be awful to live in the city all summer," she observed. "Why, in some of them places you don't hardly see a tree."

"Yes"—Faith brushed the moist rings of hair back from her forehead—"I suppose you're right. There are disadvantages everywhere. Who is that outside? Didn't a machine drive in?"

Martha glanced out of the window.

"Yes," she reported. "I think it's Miss Hazel."

Faith removed her apron and darted toward the door.

"Bring some raspberry cordial out on the veranda, please," she called over her shoulder.

Down the path she sped, the sunlight turning her hair to red-gold and throwing into sharp relief the tiny brown freckles it had dusted across her nose. She was a lithe little figure in her blue linen frock, the exact shade of her eyes. With her bright hair tossed in the wind she was like a fleet-footed incarnation of summer.

"Hello," she called joyously. "Whooh, Hazel!"

The girl alighting from an automobile farther down the driveway turned and waved her hand.

"I'm so glad you're here," said Faith, coming to a breathless halt before the visitor. "Guess what! Roger is coming home to-day, and he's bringing his fiancée."

Roger was Faith's older brother, a young lawyer, who practiced in New York. He had written home recently to announce his engagement to a well-known young pianist, Avery Grayson. The Deemsters, country people for gen-

erations, were a little appalled at the thought of a celebrity entering their midst; but both Mrs. Deemster and Faith were agreed upon one point: Roger could do no wrong. If he wished to marry a girl whose picture appeared in the fashionable magazines, she must he a very nice girl, because Roger was Roger.

Quite plainly Faith's news had deeply impressed Hazel Miller.

"Perhaps I'd better not stay," she began. "You'll want Roger and Miss Grayson to yourselves. Your mother says——"

"Nonsense!" Faith reached into the little car and drew out her friend's suit case. "Indeed you're going to stay. I'll be terribly glad to have you. I'm scared stiff at the thought of meeting Roger's girl. Suppose she shouldn't like us, or the farm, or—or anything here?"

"Well," dubiously, "of course she might not like the country. She's from New York, you know. And she's so famous. I suppose she'll be very grand. Oh, really, I think I'd better go home."

"I simply won't let you go. Come up to the house this minute. Mother's on the veranda. Martha's going to bring us out some raspberry cordial."

"Wait a minute!" The newcomer grasped her suit case. "Let me have that! If we're going to see your mother at once I must give you something I brought for you."

"What?" Faith wanted to know.

"The picture."

"Oh, my dear! Did you get one?"

"Yes." Hazel unfastened her case and drew out a large photograph. "Look. Isn't he too wonderful for words?"

It was the photograph of a young man with dark eyes and clear-cut features. A distinctly handsome face.

"He's gorgeous!" Faith exclaimed rapturously. "Where in the world did you get him?"

"He is one of Bob Holden's friends," Hazel told her. "They went to college together, I believe. Bob got married recently and went to Philadelphia to live, but he left the photograph home with a lot of other things. Helen Holden, Bob's sister, is a friend of mine. You must have met her when you were in Oakbridge."

"Yes," Faith remembered, "I know her. But how did you get the picture?"

"Well, I saw it over at Holden's one day last week. We were playing bridge there. The minute I caught sight of it on the piano I knew it was exactly the sort of picture you needed. Before I left I coaxed Helen to give it to me, telling her I wanted to play a joke on somebody. Helen's awfully good natured. It didn't take much coaxing."

Faith was devouring the photograph with fascinated eyes.

"He's perfect," she breathed; "simply perfect! This will absolutely settle Joe Conklin. Mother can't try to make me marry him now."

"You think your plan was a good one, then? Is it working?"

"Good! It was perfect. And, of course, it's working. Oh, I'm so glad I thought of it! No one can have the faintest idea how mother harrowed me about Joe Conklin. She was determined I should marry him just because his father is the richest man around here. What did I care about that, when I simply loathed Joe? But mother wouldn't believe I loathed him. She said that was all nonsense. You know how mother is. She likes to manage everybody—that is, everybody except Roger. She wouldn't try to manage him."

Hazel looked sympathetic.

"I know," she agreed. "It must have been awful. Mrs. Deemster was certainly determined to make you accept Joe. Do you remember that night at the Christmas entertainment when she made you ride home with him?"

Faith shuddered.

"As though I could ever forget it! And things like that were happening all the time. I had scarcely a peaceful minute. She made Joe so welcome here that he—well, he simply camped all over the place. Then mother'd walk off and leave me alone with him."

ried. And mother would say the same thing. Really, sometimes I used to wake in the middle of the night, so frightened. You know mother has always got her way in the end. She's always made me do what she wanted.

"One day, late in the spring, she said something which started me thinking.

Hazel unfastened her suit case and drew out a large photograph. "Look! Isn't he too wonderful for words?"

"I suppose you tried being rude to him."

"Rude! I was brutal. If Joe Conklin had a grain of sense he wouldn't be speaking to me. But I couldn't make him mad. He'd just sit there smiling and telling me that I'd grow to love him after we were married. She told me that if I cared for anybody else it would be different, that then she wouldn't insist upon me marrying Joe. But as things were, she explained, it would be madness to refuse him. You know we haven't any money to speak of, and, of course, I almost never meet any marriageable men. Mother said she

couldn't bear the thought of dying and leaving me depending upon Roger. He hasn't any more than he needs."

"And it was that talk with Mrs. Deemster which gave you the idea, wasn't it?" Hazel prompted.

"Yes. When she said that, I thought I'd better make her believe I did care for somebody. Then you invited me to go to Oakbridge for the month of June. You know the rest; how we planned, while I was there, that I should go home and say I was in love."

"But tell me," Hazel urged, "what did Mrs. Deemster say? How did you tell her?"

"Well, I told her I had met a perfectly wonderful man who was visiting friends of yours. Floyd van Dell, I said his name was."

Hazel looked a little stupefied.

"Floyd van Dell!" she repeated uncertainly. "Goodness!"

"What's the matter?" Faith demanded. "I think it's a perfectly beautiful name."

"Well," guardedly, "perhaps it is—but it sounds so—sort of unnatural. Go on. What else did you say?"

"I said that Floyd and I were terribly in love with each other, and that I was sure he would ask me to marry him as soon as his aunt died."

"What did his aunt have to do with it?" Hazel inquired weakly.

"She had everything to do with it, as I told the story. I said his aunt had brought Floyd up, and that she was very old and ill. She had made him promise not to marry while she lived."

"My goodness!" breathed Hazel. "How did you ever think of all that? What else? What did Mrs. Deemster say?"

"She—she seemed a little disturbed," Faith admitted, a reminiscent frown puckering her brow. "She didn't seem to feel, as I had expected she would, that Floyd should keep her from worrying about my future. In fact, she appeared to worry more than ever. Isn't that strange? Of course she asked me all sorts of questions about Floyd; where he lived, what his business was, and all that."

"What did you tell her?"

"I said he lived in Boston. Then Boston made me think of Harvard, so I said Floyd was a college professor."

"But," Hazel gasped, "suppose she tried to look him up?"

"Oh," Faith was shocked, "mother wouldn't do that! She's too old fashioned. You see, she doesn't think Floyd and I are engaged—only terribly in love. Besides, she hopes I'll forget all about him. I can tell that from the way she talks. Still, I did think she might ask Roger to look Floyd up, so I told her he had left Boston and was sailing for Europe this week."

"My goodness!" said Hazel again. "And does Mrs. Deemster think this man writes to you?"

"Oh, yes. I know just when the postman comes, and I run out to the box every morning, whether he's stopped or not. Then I disappear for a while and come back looking dreamy and mysterious."

"And your mother doesn't worry you any more about Joe Conklin?"

"No, she's too busy worrying about Floyd. Come on up to the house. I'll show her the picture and tell her you brought it from the post office. When she sees this man I think she'll stop bothering about my future, don't you? He certainly looks dependable."

A few minutes later the two girls were climbing the broad veranda steps.

"Here's Hazel, mother," Faith announced, depositing the suit case, and drawing her friend forward.

Mrs. Deemster glanced up from her knitting and smiled. She was a large, gray-haired, militant-looking woman—militant even now, seated in a low, wicker rocking-chair.

"How do you do, Hazel?" she asked. "You have heard the news, I suppose, that we're expecting Roger and his future wife to-day?"

"Yes, Mrs. Deemster, Faith told me. And I said at once that I thought I shouldn't stay."

"Fiddlesticks! Faith will be mighty glad to have you. I strongly suspect that she's half afraid of her new sister-to-be."

Faith had been standing beside the rocking-chair, giving only half her attention to the conversation. Now she smiled absently at her mother's sally, and extended the photograph.

"Look, mother," she invited. "This is a picture of Floyd."

Up came Mrs. Deemster's head with a jerk. She adjusted her spectacles, reached for the photograph, and examined it in silence.

At last the silence became oppressive.

"D-don't you like him?" Faith inquired.

"How can I possibly answer that question?" her mother demanded. "I don't know the man."

"But—don't you like his looks?"

Faith tried to smile.

"Well," dryly, "I'll say this for him: he doesn't look like a Floyd."

"Why, mother"—Faith elevated her chin—"I think the name suits him perfectly."

"Perhaps I'm old fashioned," Mrs. Deemster admitted, "but I don't like fancy names for men. When did this picture arrive?"

"I brought it from the post office," Hazel explained. "I stopped there to post a letter and asked if there was any mail for you."

Mrs. Deemster glanced back at the photograph. She was studying it silently when the pur of a motor sounded in the lane.

"Could that be Roger?" she asked, listening.

"Oh, hardly," Faith replied. "It's too early, isn't it? Anyway, the car's stopped. It isn't turning in here——"

She paused. Two figures, a man and a girl, had just come into view from around a wide-spreading elm tree.

"It is Roger!" she cried. "And that must be Avery."

Hurriedly Mrs. Deemster arose, smoothing the folds of her silk dress, and passing her hand over her neat coiffure. She crossed the veranda and waited on the top step.

Martha appeared in the doorway carrying the raspberry cordial.

"Put it on the table," her mistress instructed, without turning around.

A minute later Hannah Deemster was folding her son in her arms.

Roger's hair was fair, like Faith's; when he smiled there was a shadowy resemblance between them. When Roger's face was in repose he looked like his mother. He was less austere, perhaps, but scarcely less determined.

"This is Avery, mother." He turned to the girl beside him.

Something caught in Faith's throat. To think that Roger, Roger, the dignified, the intellectual, the family pride, could look like that! His eyes, resting upon Avery Grayson, were so very tender, so proud, so young. This was a new Roger—one Faith had never seen before. It must be a wonderful thing to be in love, she decided swiftly. It must be almost a miracle, if it could make Roger look so human."

As she reached her brother's side he leaned down and kissed her.

"This is Faith," he told Avery.

Even his kiss was different! This time he hadn't brushed Faith's cheek as though he were dusting it with his cropped mustache, he had kissed her gently. It was as though she had just found a brother who loved her.

And Avery Grayson. Faith's attention shifted from Roger to the girl who had changed him. She was the most beautiful girl Faith had ever seen. Tall,

dark, graceful, with vivid coloring. She was wearing gray; her frock was straight and severe; but even Faith knew something of lines, and recognized the gray frock as a thing of perfection.

Avery was, Faith noted, neither dust flecked nor rumpled, although Roger was explaining that they had driven out to the farm in an open car. Avery's brother, it seemed, was with them. He was still out in the machine.

It was some minutes after both Mrs. Deemster and Faith had kissed and welcomed her that Avery turned to them impulsively.

"I hope," she said, "that you are even one half as glad to see me as I am to see you. I have asked Roger so many questions, but you know what men are. I could gather only that he had the most perfect mother and the prettiest sister in the world."

Faith smothered a gasp. Roger had said that! Roger thought she was pretty! Why, he had always called her freckle face and said she was very homely!

Roger, himself, was looking a little sheepish. Perhaps he read something of what was passing in his sister's mind. At any rate, he strolled away from the group, leaving his mother to assure Avery that her coming had been awaited with great eagerness.

When Faith had drawn Hazel forward, and was introducing her to Avery, Roger stooped down and picked up the photograph Mrs. Deemster left on the arm of her chair.

"Who have we here?" he asked, turning the picture face up.

No one but Avery noted his look of surprise.

"That," his mother replied, "is a Mr. Floyd van Dell. I want to talk to you about him, Roger. He and Faith have fallen in love with each other. She met him while she was visiting Hazel in Oakbridge. He was visiting friends there, I believe."

Avery was looking at the photograph now. Neither she nor Roger spoke, but their eyes met in a questioning glance.

A motor in the lane whirred toward them, seemed about to turn in at the driveway, and stopped.

"Tim—my brother!" Avery said. "What can be keeping him? I hope you won't mind having Tim." She appealed to Mrs. Deemster. "Roger insisted that he should come with us."

"Most certainly I don't mind," the older woman assured her. "I am delighted that you brought him. Why did you leave him down in the car?"

"The engine stopped just before we turned in from the lane," Avery explained. "It's Tim's car—a new one. He drove us out. When the engine died, he wanted to find out what the trouble was. So we came on up to the house. He was to follow, but it sounds as though he was still having trouble. Come on, Roger, let's go down and tear him away. He may stay there for hours."

As Roger followed her across the lawn, Faith looked after them.

"Isn't Avery a darling?" she asked eagerly. "But, mother, why did you tell them so soon about Floyd?"

"Why shouldn't I tell them?" Mrs. Deemster wanted to know. "Certainly you wouldn't wish to hide anything of that sort from your brother, and Avery is one of the family now. Are you ashamed of this Floyd person?"

"Mother! How can you? Of course I'm not ashamed of him. But there isn't really much to talk about. We aren't engaged, you know."

Mrs. Deemster compressed her lips, opened them to remark:

"I think there's a great deal to talk about, when you admit frankly that you love this man. I think it's quite time your brother heard about him. I'm not at all sure that he'll approve. Dear, dear, if only you could have fancied Joe Conklin! He was so suitable."

"Yes," dryly from Faith, "he was suitable in every way, if you don't count in the fact that I detested him."

"Detested fiddlesticks!" her mother retorted. "Girls usually talk that way about the men they finally marry, and who make them excellent husbands. Nowadays girls are entirely too fanciful. They refuse to take any advice from their elders. Nobody can guide them. That's where they make their mistake."

Faith had taken up the photograph and was looking at it thoughtfully.

"Perhaps you're right, mother," she admitted. "But we can't be guided toward love by anything but our hearts."

"Look!"

It was Hazel who had breathed this injunction into Faith's ear. The latter raised her eyes from the photograph, glanced at the girl beside her, and then swung round to see what Hazel was staring at.

There, mounting the veranda steps, between Roger and Avery, was Floyd van Dell in the flesh! There was no shadow of doubt about it. He was the man whose photograph had just dropped from Faith's numb fingers.

There was a tiny gasp from Hazel, but not for worlds could Faith have uttered a sound. She stood motionless, scarcely breathing, while, to her further stupefaction, the newcomer strode across the veranda, straight toward her.

"Have I surprised you?" he asked jovially, meeting her gaze without the flicker of an eyelash. "I purposely didn't let you know I was coming."

Had he surprised her! Faith glared at him. Was the man mad, or was she losing her reason? And her mother was watching them. Quite plainly she, too, had recognized Floyd.

"I—yes, you certainly have surprised me," Faith assured him, scarcely conscious of what she was saying.

Suddenly she understood. This man was Avery's brother. Avery had recognized his photograph, and she had told him about it when she went down to the car. They were trying to spare her feelings, her pride! They didn't want her mother to find her out.

Faith gripped her hands at her sides. What could she do? One thing was certain; she must keep from her mother, somehow, the fact that she had pretended to be in love with a man she had never seen. What would her mother say, what would she do, if she learned the truth? At least she would insist upon her daughter marrying Joe Conklin at once to keep her out of further mischief.

Faith glanced wildly about her. If only she could get away and think what would be best! How could she go on pretending to know this man? Oh, why had Hazel brought his picture? There he stood laughing at her! And what was he thinking? Possibly he believed she really had fallen in love with his photograph. Faith stiffened. Love him! She hated him. She could tell that at a glance.

Thank Heaven, Avery was drawing him toward the others!

They paused before Mrs. Deemster.

"This is Timmis, my brother," said Avery a trifle nervously. "He—you've seen his picture, of course."

Mrs. Deemster looked bewildered.

"But I thought his name was——"

"Oh, I can explain that," Timmis Grayson assured her. "Faith wrote me that she wasn't going to tell you I was Avery's brother because, well, she thought I'd better stand on my own two feet, as a mere nobody, and not as the brother of a famous sister. So that was why she spoke of me as Mr.——" He looked at Faith. "By the way, Kitten, what did you say my name was?"

Kitten! Faith could have killed him.

"I said," she spoke distinctly, "that your name was Floyd van Dell."

Timmis swallowed hard and turned back to Mrs. Deemster.

"So you see," he continued, "that was why she spoke of me as—Floyd van Dell. But I thought it was all nonsense. I decided to come down and straighten it out. You see how it was."

Mrs. Deemster had regained her poise.

"Indeed," she responded icily, "I don't see at all. I never heard of anything so ridiculous in my life. I hate deception and I won't tolerate it!"

"But Faith didn't mean to deceive you," Avery interposed. "It was just that she wanted to do things her way. Possibly Timmis shouldn't have told you, but surely you can understand."

She smiled winningly.

"Indeed I can't," was the prompt response. "I can't understand at all." She fastened stern eyes upon her daughter. "Faith, when did you intend to introduce Mr. Grayson to me?"

"Why—why—when he came back from abroad," the culprit stammered. Then, catching sight of the twinkle in Tim's eyes, she added with malicious forethought:

"I was so afraid you might not like Mr. Grayson, mother. And I didn't want him to prejudice you against Avery."

Mrs. Deemster regarded Timmis suspiciously.

"And why," she demanded, "did you think I wouldn't like him?"

"Because," said Faith, with seeming reluctance, "I'm afraid he's a little wild."

"Wild!" Mrs. Deemster stiffened. "I thought you said he was a college professor. Are you a college professor, Mr. Grayson?"

"Well—er—well, no," Tim admitted cautiously. "No, not exactly."

"Not exactly!" Mrs. Deemster repeated. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that I'm not a professor now. I was once, yes; I was once, but I'm not now. I'm in the advertising business."

There was a muffled sound from Avery. She turned her back to the group, ostensibly to view the garden.

Tim's hostess, too, turned her back upon him. She addressed her daughter.

"Just what did you mean when you said Mr. Grayson was wild?"

"I don't exactly know," Faith admitted. "But didn't you tell me, Hazel, that when he was visiting in Oakbridge they said that about him?"

There Tim stood laughing at her! And what was he thinking?

"Yes," promptly from Hazel. "They all thought he was sort of fast. Still" —she glanced at the handsome Timmis and weakened—"I never quite believed it."

Plainly enough, Mrs. Deemster was not so charitable.

"What do you think of all this, Roger?" she asked.

"I think Faith's a young idiot," he replied briefly.

Avery swung round and faced him. She hesitated a moment.

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed. "You don't think Faith's an idiot, Roger. You know perfectly well she's just young."

Here it was that Faith saw her longed-for opportunity to get away. Why hadn't she thought of it before? She went swiftly to Avery's side and spoke softly:

"You must want to go up to your room. May I take you?"

"Please," said Avery.

In the wide, low-ceilinged bedchamber Faith stood before the visitor with cheeks flushed and eyes suspiciously bright.

"I don't wonder that Roger thinks I'm an idiot," she said unsteadily. "And I can't imagine what the rest of you are thinking."

Avery smiled at her.

"We aren't thinking anything very terrible. But it might make things more comfortable all around if you could tell me why you pretended to know Timmis."

"Of course I'll tell you," Faith agreed. "I did it because mother was trying to make me marry Joe Conklin." Haltingly, the red deepening now and then in her cheeks, she told the whole story.

"But why didn't you tell Roger about this?" Avery asked, when Faith had fin-

Faith stiffened! Love him? She hated him. She could tell that at a glance.

ished. "Surely he could have convinced Mrs. Deemster that you needn't marry a man you didn't love."

"Oh, you don't know mother," was the quick response. "Roger isn't here—and she is. Even if he had talked with her, he couldn't have changed her mind. Oh, I know I was wrong, wicked, even! I knew out on that veranda that I deserved all I was getting. I told horrible lies. It was frightful what I did! I'm so ashamed——"

The tears rolled disconsolately down Faith's cheeks. Avery slipped an arm around her.

"Honey child, don't cry about it! There's no real harm done. The truth would have hurt Mrs. Deemster more than the ridiculous story we made up, and she won't ever have to know the truth. You see, I had to bring Tim up to the house because your mother knew he was out in the car, but he'll be gone to-morrow. Until then you can just go on pretending that you know each other. Later, you can say you have quarreled. That will be easy. Now don't worry about it any more. Everything will go smoothly. See if it doesn't."

"Is Roger very angry with me?" Faith asked mournfully.

"Certainly not. Don't bother about that. I'll fix Roger."

Judging from appearances, Avery kept her word. When the family assembled for dinner that night, Roger looked quizzical and slightly disapproving, but he did not appear to be angry.

Faith sat beside Timmis, answering his genial questions with monosyllables, her eyes fastened upon her plate. Occasionally Mrs. Deemster cast a troubled glance in her daughter's direction, and Hazel kept round eyes fastened upon her friend, but the others appeared to find nothing amiss. Avery and Roger talked fluently. Altogether the dinner hour passed pleasantly enough.

Afterward, they gathered in the twilight on the old veranda. Hazel perched herself upon the arm of Faith's chair.

"Do you think Mr. Grayson will ask you to take a walk in the garden?" she whispered. "Aren't you thrilled? It's the most exciting situation I ever——"

"No"—Faith's tone was low but vehement—"I'm not thrilled. I hate Timmis Grayson. Can't you imagine what he's thinking about me? I'm just praying for to-morrow to come quickly so he can go home."

"Oh," said Hazel, "aren't you queer!"

Faith grasped her arm.

"Who's that coming up the path?"

"Why"—Hazel stood up to make sure—"it's Joe Conklin."

Joe Conklin—to-night! Faith was certain she couldn't, after all she had been through, listen to that detestable, drawling voice. She couldn't, she wouldn't be polite to Joe Conklin!

So it happened that by the time the others had caught sight of Joe's angular figure approaching the house, Faith was missing. She had slipped from her chair, skirted the veranda, and was running down the back steps into the garden.

She made straight for an old apple tree behind the house. Its branches formed a low seat. One could hide there; one could even cry there undisturbed. Faith did.

That is, she attempted to. She cried, but she was not alone.

"Faith," some one called from beneath the tree. It was quite dark now.

"Go away!" she ordered in smothered tones. "I c-came out here to be alone."

"But I want to talk with you. It's I, Timmis Grayson."

"Oh!" scornfully. "You're the very last person I want to see, now or ever!"

"But, I say," Timmis persisted, "don't you think you're a little unfair?"

"No, I don't; and if I am, I don't care. I—I hate you! Go away!"

"I won't do anything of the sort!" Tim's voice was stubborn. "If you

don't come down and talk with me, I'll come up."

Silence from the tree.

Timmis climbed. Reaching the broad seat where a small girl was huddled, he settled himself comfortably beside her.

"Now, then," he began affably, "I want to tell you that Avery explained why you said that you knew me, and all that. Also, I'd like you to know how honestly glad I am to have been of service to you. I just saw that Conklin chap up at the house. No wonder you were desperate! Jove, imagine you tied to him for life!"

"Oh, I don't know," said Faith perversely, sitting erect and smoothing her rumpled hair. "Possibly I wasn't exactly fair to Joe. Maybe if I had tried to like him——"

Firm hands closed about her wrists.

"Now listen to me, young woman," Timmis counseled. "You may as well understand one thing right now. When I first saw you this afternoon standing there glaring at me from under all that red-gold hair, I knew you were the girl for me. What's more, I'm going to marry you. You said I was wild, but you don't know half how wild I am."

He took Faith in his arms, held her quietly until she ceased to struggle, then kissed her.

The old apple tree had sheltered many generations of Deemsters. Perhaps some of them had been kissed there before, but it seemed to Faith that the first kiss in the world had been given and received.

"Will you marry me, darling?" Tom whispered. "Oh, little Faith; naughty, adorable little Faith, you might as well promise, because I'll never let you go."

Her head was buried against his shoulder.

"Mother wouldn't let me marry you," she objected weakly.

"Oh, yes, she would. Roger will talk with her. I'll see that Avery makes him."

Faith raised her head and regarded him with interest.

"Would I be able to make you do things?" she asked.

"Anything. You could make me do anything but stop loving you. I'd even answer to the name of Floyd, if you wanted me to. But I may as well warn you now, darling, that they wouldn't let me be a college professor. Otherwise I'd be perfectly willing——"

Faith pressed a slim finger against his lips.

"Listen!" she whispered.

Deep, rich chords of music were floating across the old garden.

"That must be Avery playing. Oh, isn't it glorious!"

Tim held her close.

"But do you know what she's playing?" he asked.

"Yes," said Faith shyly. "I know."

Avery was playing the wedding march.

"She selected that for us, darling," Tim explained. "I told her just before dinner that I loved you. She knows we're out here together; trust Avery for that! Oh, my dear, do you care just a little, even?"

"I care a great deal, Tim. I think I loved you the minute you walked up on that veranda. I suppose that was why I was so angry, because I hated to think you were laughing at me."

"I'll never laugh at you again, sweetheart," he promised, his lips against hers. "And even to-day I was adoring you while I was laughing. Doesn't that absolve me a little?"

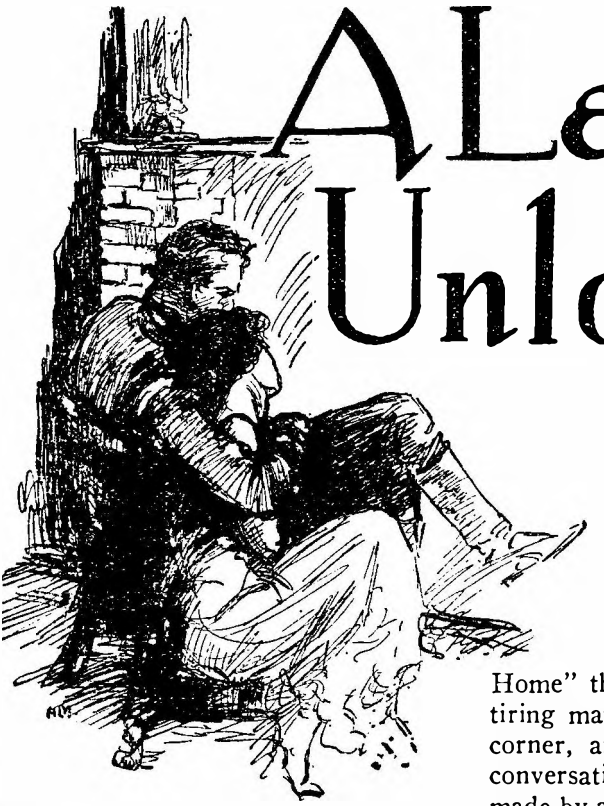
Faith thought it did.

"Listen to that music, dear," said Tim. "Won't you promise to marry me in the autumn?"

Music on the afternoon air spoke eloquently for Tim.

"Well," Faith admitted, "that music is intoxicating. Yes"—she buried her face against his shoulder—"I'll marry you—in the autumn."

A Lady Unloved



By

Georgette MacMillan

A BEAUTY doctor at your 'At Home,' mother!"

"And why not, pray? Isn't everybody democratic nowadays? And she is so smart, too. Besides, everybody knows she is really Molly Methlayne, whose husband treated her so badly, and when he died left her nothing. So, you see, my dear Miss Prunes-and-Prisms, there is nothing so terrible in having her here after all!"

Mrs. Avilaun, beautiful in maturity, looked at her daughter, plain in youth, with amused contempt. That Jennifer should presume to question her actions caused her both amusement and surprise—Jennifer, whose very existence was to her but a matter of indifference!

But that afternoon Jennifer had ventured to talk with, and actually to criticize, her mother, timorously enough to be sure, but still to criticize.

It seemed that at her mother's "At Home" the girl had, in her usually retiring manner, poked herself away in a corner, and had overheard a sprightly conversation, in which the assertion was made by a little dark woman, exquisitely gowned, that the woman who is plain by nature, but manages to make the world think she isn't, has more claim to admiration than one who is merely pretty.

Now Jennifer was plain—undeniably so; and from her earliest childhood the fact had been so persistently drummed into her ears that what might, under happier conditions and with good dressing, have passed as a mere lack of good looks had become downright ugliness.

She had always been a disappointment.

Her mother had much desired a pretty, golden-haired, blue-eyed, picture baby girl who could have been petted and spoiled and overdressed.

Jennifer, instead, appeared on life's stage sallow, lank and snub-nosed.

In the beginning Mrs. Avilaun had gazed aghast at her offspring, and had handed her over absolutely; first to the care of her nurses, and then to Blecker,

the patient, elderly, and frumpish governess who directed the nursery education of the two handsome and rather selfish little boys, Algy and Erskine, who had preceded Jennifer.

The boys had led their little sister a miserable life, her disfavor in the maternal eyes seeming to them sufficient reason for merciless bantering on her plainness. They were never checked.

"Blecky," conscious of advancing years and fearful of jeopardizing her tenure of an excellent place, and also being a little in awe of the two young tyrants, chided them only half-heartedly, and refrained from indulging in that petting which she would have liked to give to the snubbed and neglected little daughter of the house.

Later, when college called her brothers away, Jennifer led a life of more or less peaceful seclusion with the patient Blecker.

Chance meetings on the stairs summed up her acquaintance with her smart and lovely mother. She always read contemptuous disapproval in her mother's eyes, and always afterward she spent long hours brooding.

Her father was to her a nebulous person, perpetually hunting, shooting, fishing, and yachting.

Something dreadful happened—she never knew rightly what—on one of these expeditions, and she wore black for some time, hating herself more than ever when she looked in the glass. She was thirteen then, and self-consciousness, always an unfortunate trait of hers, was becoming a well-rooted characteristic.

She knew herself to be despised and neglected, and in those young years had not the spirit to show outwardly the dull rebellion that brooded in her lonely heart.

Later still, the nursery became her sitting room, and Blecker stayed on. Blecker provided her with the one solace of her life—music. Blecker also provided her with something else less conducive to content—her clothes.

But Jennifer did not mind. She had reached those black depths of joylessness when clothes did not matter.

"What's the good?" thought she, surveying her unprepossessing reflection in the glass. "Clothes wouldn't make me even passably good looking!" And she accepted the dreadful sartorial objects of drab and slate alpaca and the more dreadful "dressy" blouses that the kindly but incapable Blecker procured.

Nor did she rebel at the uncompromising scraping back and ruthless oiling of her hair, or at the ugly cushion of plaits at the back of her head that the older woman advocated.

She sometimes looked at her mother's gleaming head with its rippling waves of hair and wondered; but it never occurred to her that such adornment might with judicious treatment be hers, or that her flat-heeled boots, chosen for the admirable but inartistic reason that they were "stout," might have been a little more like those worn by the happier girls of her own age whom she met walking in the park.

So she lived her dreary life in monotonous seclusion in the midst of wealth and plenty, yet starved and poor, dwelling ever on her disabilities and magnifying them out of all proportion to fact, with no interest in the present and no hope for the future.

Then something happened.

There were three jolly girls—very merry, very shrill voiced, and just a little vulgar. Their name was Glandell, and they were "pals" with Algy and Erskine.

This trio found time to pause one day, in their feverish hunt through life for joy, to think of Algy and Erskine's frumpy sister. Why didn't the boys ever take her anywhere? Why couldn't they see her? Where was she? This was at a party—rightly termed "A Hooligan"—at Mrs. Avilaun's.

Jennifer had preferred the solitude of her room, and the irrepressible Glandells discovered this.

"Let's ask Mrs. Avilaun to let her come to our house party next week!" they cried.

But Erskine looked serious.

"My beautiful children, how dare you ask?" said he.

"It has no parlor tricks," supplemented Algy.

But the girls were not to be balked of their new whim.

They approached Mrs. Avilaun on the subject. Shrugging her shoulders, laughing, and only half attentive, she gave consent.

Jennifer was straightway bearded in her den. The frost of her manner was not long in melting under the genuine kindly warmth of the Glandell girls' interest.

It was arranged that she should go, and in the small hours of the morning the three hoydens discussed the horrors of a crimson blouse with butter-colored insertion, a fawn alpaca skirt, and a Japanese coiffure, which had been their chief impression of Jennifer.

"She looks as though she wants waking," said one.

"She looks as though she wants warming," said another.

There was a little silence.

"Sillies! She looks as though she wants loving!" said the third.

Then they all went to sleep.

The Cloisters, a showy house of red brick with plaster excrescences, unfortunate in nomenclature, was fortunate in everything else.

On the Westchester hills it had air, views, and accessibility, to say nothing of a private park, lake, and golf links of its own.

Inside, it was all cushions and rugs and warmth and good living, again to say nothing of a general air of conviviality.

Transplanted here from her bleak upper room, Jennifer was nearly in Paradise. Then he appeared.

Being of that elusive type often known as "fascinating," he was uncommonly well versed in the ways of women, and he took Jennifer up from the first.

And anybody with the most elementary knowledge of Cupid's most obvious tricks could have foretold that Jennifer would fall in love with him.

But that was a common event in "Beauty" Beaumish's life—the only unique touch, from his point of view, being the fact that the woman in this case was a plain one, and that really added a certain piquancy to a state of affairs that was apt, after continued repetition, to become stale.

The other members of the house party shelved him. The pretty women, hitherto always strenuously occupied in trying to outdo the other pretty women in Captain Beaumish's favor, felt a certain sense of relief. They thought that here at least he was safe.

They watched the golf lessons he gave her—sure test of a man's devotion—unconcerned, scarcely resenting the monopoly. She could not dance, so he sat out many a dance with her, and the others had to be content in watching him amuse the plain little frump in her ill-cut, impossible dresses. She did not ride, so he walked—with her.

Everywhere he was her cavalier. The Glandell girls slapped him on the shoulder—they did not even think him handsome and told him so—and observed that it was great of him to give the poor little thing a decent time, and hoped he'd stay a few days longer, and so on.

He did, feeling rather proud of himself. It was so unusual for Beauty Beaumish to do anything for anybody but himself, especially for an ugly woman.

He was so much more accustomed to having things done for him by a pretty one.

The Glandell girls found time to pause one day in their feverish hunt through life for joy, to think of Algy and Erskine's frumpy sister. "Why didn't the boys ever take her anywhere? Why was she kept hidden away so?"

When it came to saying good-by, Beauty Beaumish looked unutterable things into Jennifer's eyes. He was so accustomed to looking unutterable things, even when he merely passed the salt, that no doubt he scarcely knew what he was doing, but Jennifer, her heart aflame, read much into that look.

She looked up at him appealingly in her all-too-simple way; but then again he was accustomed to appealing looks, and when he took her hand in his it could scarcely be said that he was aware that he took her heart with it.

Jennifer returned home to dream of Beaumish, but Beaumish seemed to forget her. At one of her mother's parties she saw him devoting himself to another woman. She looked long on the fashionable woman and her beautiful attire, wondering who she might be.

Later on she knew only too well. Then she took the hat she had been wearing—it was of straw, trimmed with velvet forget-me-nots, threaded on their own stalks, and shiny red currants—and slowly and deliberately placed her too well-shod feet in the middle of it. Clothes do matter sometimes.

The Glandell girls came occasionally to see her in her den. They were very kind. They urged her to come down more often to her mother's "At Homes" and to go to their own house.

Half reluctantly she consented, ever with the one idea in her mind that she might possibly see "him."

Of course she did see him sometimes, and always the center of a group of flattering, foolish women.

The fact that she never actually met him led her to imagine that he wished to avoid her; and therefore once when

he made his way to where she stood she deliberately turned away.

She did not therefore see the shrugged shoulders, nor could she be aware that Beauty Beaumish was not accustomed to, and did not like, being snubbed.

"It's all because I'm so hideously ugly!" she cried to herself. "I'm not like other girls, and never shall be, and I've never been given a chance. He was just kind for a while, and now he won't notice me at all!"

Then one day she heard the fiat of Madame Rouvenski: "The woman who is plain by nature, but manages to make the world think she isn't——" Then it was possible for a plain woman to appear pretty?

Could she—was it ever possible for her, Jennifer, to make the world—and "the world" for Jennifer was Nigel Beaumish—could she be pretty? Deeply she pondered, and, in spite of the fact that her reason told her "No," she brought the directory from the library and looked up Madame Rouvenski's address.

At the Maison Rouvenski everything that was not soft and pink was hard and silver.

The chairs and carpets and curtains were rose color, and the walls were covered by silver-framed mirrors.

Little tables displayed Madame Rouvenski's toilet specialties—all pink in silver boxes. Pink velvet cases held glittering little manicure instruments.

Even the telephone was mounted in silver, and the softest, pinkest thing in the room was Madame Rouvenski's ear pressed to it.

"But certainly! At half past four—Miss Avilaun, you said? How charming! I will see you myself, of course! Good-by!"

"What rot!" she ejaculated to herself, without the least trace of a foreign accent. "I'm due to meet him at a quarter to four!"

Madame Rouvenski was charming to Jennifer. In delightful dulcet tones and slightly broken accent she told her there would be no difficulty whatever.

Jennifer was an easy case, and under Madame Rouvenski's magic fingers could be made beautiful at once—nothing easier.

At one of her mother's parties Jennifer saw woman. She looked long on the fashion who she

She had only to realize her style and live up to it. Here madame considered Jennifer. Her practiced eye took in at a glance the glaring faults of Jennifer's entire appearance, noticing the gauche deportment, the neglected skin, the lifeless, ill-dressed hair, the awful clothes.

She thought of that other most remunerative and eminently satisfactory client of hers, the beautiful mother of the girl in front of her.

She appeared very kind, and, making the younger woman feel at ease, drew out her confidence. Yes, confided Jennifer, there was a reason other than pardonable vanity. Might she, her dear mother's friend, know? Was it a really delightful reason?

Reluctantly, Jennifer admitted it was.

Captain Beaumish devoting himself to another able lady and her beautiful attire, wondering might be.

Then, blushing furiously, Jennifer, the unwise, the unsophisticated, overcome that any one should be interested in her affairs, "gushed" it all out.

It was not for nothing that Betty Methlayne—for at the moment of hearing Captain Beaumish's name she was very certainly not Madame Rouvenski—had learned to control her features; but, though her lips smiled sweetly, her heart was in a tumult of rage.

That this ugly, little hopeless frump before her should dare, positively dare, to aspire to Beauty Beaumish, who at that very moment was waiting—bah! It was too utterly stupid! The impertinent little cat should learn her lesson, and she herself would be in the instructress.

In an instant a plan was formed in her mind, and, while she yet smiled most sweetly, holding Jennifer's hand in hers, and murmuring sympathetic words, she was working out maliciously the details of a projected metamorphosis in Jennifer's appearance which should make her not lovely, but ridiculous!

So, after an interval occupied by the manipulations of Madame Rouvenski, Jennifer was launched, a transformed being, upon an amazed and highly amused world.

Peroxide and much crimping had done their worst to her hair, which was dressed in an exaggerated caricature of the previous season's fashion. Its metallic glint clashed cruelly with the rouge—a dreadful pink—that bloomed hectically on her cheeks. Additional blue-black lashes were ingeniously fixed to her own, and belladonna gave her eyes an unconvincing glitter.

Her reddened lips were too much like a Cupid's bow, and the *perle blanc* that covered her nose and chin took mauvish tints in certain lights.

A complete wardrobe, purchased under the guidance of Miss Anstruther, fully in the secret and inwardly convulsed at what she considered a huge joke, had been procured.

It was garish, vulgar, and wholly unsuitable, suggesting attire for a circus rather than that of a simple girl.

Faint misgivings that rose at times in Jennifer's mind, discerned at once by madame and her satellite, were instantly crushed by them by gushing reassurances.

She looked a different girl, madame

told her delightedly. It was quite true, she did—to her disadvantage.

So, bravely hopeful and crushing the doubt that assailed her, Jennifer entered upon fashionable life among fashionable women, fondly hoping that she was arrayed as one of them.

Mrs. Avilaun was giving a huge "crush" when Jennifer first shed her glory on an astonished world.

Mrs. Avilaun, when she beheld Jennifer, at first gazed amazed, aghast, and then burst out into a peal of laughter. Her shoulders shook with mirth, and she had to press her wee handkerchief over her mouth, for guests were arriving.

Jennifer blushed and bit her vermilion lip hard. She had also intercepted surreptitious signaling between two footmen.

Soon she was conscious of eyes peering over banisters far above. Some of the servants had crept stealthily out to see the unusual sight.

Her heart began to sink, but bravely she clung to the remembrance of madame's reiterated assurance. He was coming to-night. She had seen his acceptance. He should see that she could be just as smart and gay as other women.

She was quite ready to imitate all the airs and graces which they assumed, and which she had watched so often of late—to smile and bridle and drop her eyelids to utter witticisms—if only she could think of them at the right time—to be in turn coy, gay, audacious. She would—— Oh, here he was!

He was touching mamma's finger tips, and, as usual, looking worlds into mamma's responsive eyes.

Jennifer had observed that every one responded to Beauty Beaumish. Then he glanced at Jennifer, standing by her mother's side. He did not know her.

"Captain Beaumish!"

He stared hard for a moment before recognition showed in his eyes.

"Good heavens!" he muttered under his breath. Recovering himself, he added hastily, "Really, my dear Miss Jennifer, I scarcely knew you—you must forgive me!"

He looked at her—from the top of her golden head, over her cerise sequined gown, to her too-showy slippers—and over his face there stole an unmistakable smile of cold derision.

Still she persisted bravely. She giggled in the approved manner, and opened her fan, and tossed her gilded head.

"Oh, one—develops, shall I say? Isn't it simply too stifling here?"

She half yawned, as she had seen her mother's bored friends do.

"Very," he replied curtly, and, turning on his heel, was lost in the gathering crowd.

At that instant a cruel fate decreed that Betty Methlayne—"Madame Rouvenski" was for the night left among her powder jars—fresh looking and perfectly gowned in a well-cut dress of ivory charmeuse and without ornaments, should pass. She glanced over her shoulder at her miserable victim, so vulgarly noticeable in her dreadful finery, and laughed—a low, cruel laugh. An instant later she passed on Captain Beaumish's arm, still laughing.

Jennifer got through the evening somehow.

The misery in her heart, the passionate regret, the rebellion against the myriad eyes focused so derisively upon her, and the dreadful vista of faces that failed to hide their sneering smiles, made for her a nightmare of inconceivable horror.

War! A horrifying poignant word when figuring alone as it did upon the newspaper placards that close August day!

Open-mouthed, the populace stood in isolated groups, the embodiment of one vast question.

Momentarily everything stood still. Great eventualities loomed ominously close. The leveling hand of a universal catastrophe obliterated class distinctions. Holiday makers, gayly busy at being idle, were rudely disturbed, and flung their things together pell-mell and rushed to consult utterly useless time-tables.

Jennifer, trying to recover from the ravages of both Cupid and Madame Rouvenski, was basking with Blecker on the Pacific coast.

A hurried note from her mother—fortunately returned a day or two previously from Europe—summoned her home if she wished to see Algy and Erskine before they left with their regiments.

She hurried to town, dragged for once out of her slough of despondency by the stirring events around her. That she should be required was something unlooked for. Her troubles seemed lighter.

She found Mrs. Avilaun inordinately energetic, flying about in a much-beflagged car, personally supervising the getting together of her boys' kits.

Then there were informal farewell luncheons and a hundred and one things to do. Mrs. Avilaun rushed about in a fever of excitement, gay, beautiful, and violently patriotic. Some one remarked how zealous she was.

"Zealous!" she replied in her old, gay manner. "Dreadful word! I prefer 'enthusiasm,' please! Zeal is a disagreeable quality in some one else, but enthusiasm is a delightful one in oneself."

Every one laughed, but that night—it was the day of Algy and Erskine's departure—Jennifer wondered if all her mother's cheerfulness was not a pose, for she had discovered three wrinkles on the lovely face that had not been there before, and there was a listless drooping of the mouth.

It was quite true. Realities make for wrinkles, and for once in her life Mrs. Avilaun found it difficult to smile. She was grieving deeply for her boys. War had struck at her heart.

Jennifer could never say afterward what made her do it, but, thinking partly of her two brothers, already far away, and partly of the quiet figure before her, she stood a moment irresolute as she said "Good night," then stooped, and for the first time since she could remember kissed her mother.

Mrs. Avilaun did not move. Her handkerchief was before her face, and Jennifer went to bed wondering at her own daring. In the morning a message was brought to her. Would she breakfast in Mrs. Avilaun's room? And when the girl stood by her mother's bedside the latter, raising her arms, drew down her daughter's face and kissed it.

"I've been thinking," said the elder woman in her usual bright tones, "and I want you to have a maid, Jennifer—a really decent one—French, of course. You simply must be dressed and have your hair done properly and lots of things. You really could look quite well." She pondered, considering her daughter thoroughly. "You don't mind my saying this, do you?" she added quickly, with unaccustomed consideration for the girl. "But, you know, my—my dear"—she hesitated over the word—"that lemon-silk blouse you have on now is all wrong with that tweed skirt, and you should wear shoes like mine. I think your foot is like mine, too. You should go in for being 'tailor-made.' I think—yes, decidedly—plain things perfectly cut and trim collars would suit you! We mustn't let this dreadful war get too much into our blood, must we? Would you like a maid, Jennifer?"

"Oh, mamma!" Jennifer's heart filled with gratitude, and she had difficulty in repressing her tears. It seemed so unspeakably wonderful that her mother should care.

The matter was fixed, and it was not many weeks after that a new and charming Jennifer issued forth, always fresh in the smartest of well-cut, tailor-made suits, the neatest of footgear, with her brown hair brushed and burnished and becomingly dressed, and her face bright with a new-found interest —that of caring for the welfare of others.

Jennifer was occupied almost beyond her powers. Among the myriad excellent women who busied themselves in the organization of relief schemes, work guilds, and the hundred-and-one splendid institutions that sprang up at the beginning of the war, none was so energetic or so untiring as Mrs. Avilaun and her daughter.

Jennifer proved herself invaluable. A hitherto quite unsuspected administrative ability suddenly evinced itself.

She was tremendously in demand. Her advice was constantly sought, and she was kept overwhelmingly busy. Her hands were very full, and her large, loving heart overflowed in sympathy for those in deeper distress than she.

She tried to forget herself and her own little troubles, which now seemed so paltry and trivial. Therefore when her mother, now so closely her friend, questioned her a little tentatively regarding the powder and paint episode, and learned that Madame Rouvenski was responsible, she did not mind in the least her mother's comment:

"Horrid little woman! And all the time she was simply throwing herself at Captain Beaumish, who doesn't care two straws for her!"

This was Mrs. Avilaun's way of administering balm.

Her words made clear to Jennifer many things. Mrs. Avilaun knew more than even Jennifer suspected. Also the Glandell girls had not been silent.

Indeed it was they who wrote of Jennifer's doings to Captain Beaumish, very much in the thick of it at the front.

They had a good deal of discernment, and knew intuitively what news was welcome to their correspondents. They received veiled encouragement from the recipient.

"I really believe things will happen some day," observed Kissie, the eldest, oracularly.

"Profound!" commented her sister. "How, when, and where?"

"'To whom' you should say—to Jennifer and Captain Beaumish."

"Rats!" was the elegant reply. "He meant nothing. He's only a flirt!"

"In your own choice language, my dear—'rats!' I've seen things—not only with my eyes, and I've heard things not only with my ears, but with my inner consciousness. Anyhow, he never writes without mentioning her. I'm going to send him a long letter now and tell him, among other things, how well and splendid she is looking, what splendid things she's doing, and congratulate him on being mentioned in the last dispatches. So there!"

November has its charm. Jennifer thought so as she walked one foggy Sunday afternoon toward the great hall where an orchestral concert was given every Sunday afternoon.

The sun, like a vermilion balloon, was sinking behind the purple silhouette of a massive block of buildings to the west, and from the naked trees little bunches of leaves hung, making them look grotesque and Japanese.

Jennifer, accompanied by the faithful Blecker, usually took this way on Sundays, the weekly concert being the one relaxation in her strenuous life.

Her mother rented a box, and there she could sit in peace and dream.

On this particular day the music played was entirely that of French composers, and as she sat only half attentive her thoughts floated away to other and more terrible music in a not far distant land.

The vast fog-dimmed interior appeared like a smoke-veiled battlefield; the distant twinkling lights like furtive camp fires; and the shriek of the violins playing in unison the opening bars of the *farandole* in Bizet's "Arlésienne" strangely similar to the scream of flying shells.

Imagination ran riot; present facts melted into a reverie of past and future, and therefore she was not so extraordinarily astonished when she heard a voice at once strange and familiar in her ears:

"It is lovely, isn't it?"

He was bending over her shoulder, his face a little lined, a little roughened, a little careworn, his eyes looking straight into hers. She noticed that the khaki he wore was stained and very shabby. Somehow at that moment it seemed quite natural he should be there.

"Aren't you glad to see me?" he said, drawing up a chair. "I only got in at noon."

Then she realized that Captain Beaumish was at her side, talking to her, smiling at her. She sat up.

"Of course! And I'm scarcely surprised—one has ceased to be surprised at anything in these troublous times," she replied, giving him her hand. "Miss Blecker? Oh, she's asleep! Miss——"

"For Heaven's sake, don't wake her!" he interposed earnestly. "I want to see you only. I came on purpose. I've been to your place, and your mother—dear good lady!—said that I should find you here. I've not lost any time, have I?"

"I am very flattered. Have you long leave?"

He paused as though weighing his words well before he spoke again. Then he said:

"I think I can manage to do all I want to in the time at my disposal. Frankly, I've only three days, and I've no time for pretty speeches and fine words. If I can do all I want nothing will matter ever afterward." Here he looked at her very earnestly. "A good deal depends on you."

Jennifer turned to him, amazed.

"On me?"

"Everything in the world depends on you!"

A singing in Jennifer's ears drowned the music of the orchestra and the—to her—far more beautiful music of his voice.

The hall spun around her; the moment seemed full of unspeakable possibilities numbing her senses and sending her soul into uncharted realms of immeasurable happiness.

In desperation she buried her face in the bunch of violets on her breast, and ever after the scent recalled to her those happy moments of her life.

Then she recovered herself and realized that he was speaking again, had been speaking for some time, and that he was pleading.

"We could fix it up in a hurry, if you don't mind. It is bad form to disappoint a girl of a fine wedding, I know, but you are so different in every way from all the rest. I believe somehow you wouldn't care. And it would make such a difference to me—you can't imagine—when we're having a scrap out there to think of you here—really mine, belonging to me! Why, my dear—my very dear girl, I'd feel just splendid! Can you do it, or am I asking too much altogether? Can you, little girl?"

His tone was tender.

She made no answer, yet somehow he knew quite well what was in her heart, for he took her hands and kissed them. And that "light which never was on land or sea" at that moment dawned in the happy eyes of a loving woman deeply loved.

After the concert they went together to Jennifer's home and sat there before the glowing fireplace.

"I never dreamed that love could be so wonderful," the man said as he bent over the hand of the girl he loved and touched it with his lips. "I've wasted so much time which we might have been happy in."

"But we have the years before us, dear man of mine." Jennifer's voice was soft and tremulous with emotion.

"If I could only know that." Beaumish's voice was very low, very earnest.

"I do know it. I know that you'll come back and we'll have years ahead of us in which to make up for all we have missed."

And somehow the intensity of the girl's voice gripped and went deep into the man's heart, awaking there a sort of peace.

He held her hand the tighter.

Years after, as they sat before their own fireplace, he often recalled that hour and Jennifer's faith in their love and their future.

AN IRISH LOVE SONG

CUSHLA machree, the gloaming is falling,
The lights of the village gleam pale through the mist;
I stand by the path leading down through the heather,
But only the sobbing waves share my lone tryst.
Why are you so late? You promised to meet me
When the light of the sunset lay over the sea;
But the shadows of night are distantly stealing.
Cushla machree, asthore, cushla machree!

Cushla machree, a future without you
Would be as a desert where autumn winds moan,
Or a shrine that the spirit of love has forsaken,
And left the sad pilgrim to sorrow alone.
The birds of the air seek their mates in the springtime,
And call to them sweetly from mountain and sea,
As ever my heart to your own heart is calling.
Cushla machree, asthore, cushla machree!

Cushla machree, at last you are coming,
A vision of light 'neath the half-risen moon;
The waves that were sobbing are goldenly singing,
Like winds in the limes and the roses of June.
I smell the wild heather that bends as you pass it;
The sound of your footsteps is love's melody,
My arms that were empty are stretched to enfold you,
Cushla machree, asthore, cushla machree!

FRANKLIN PIERCE CARRIGAN.

That Good For Nothing Dan Baxter

By Mary Frances Doner

CHAPTER I.

THE usual Tuesday afternoon bridge at the country club had ended, and Rosalie Merritt stood on the veranda waiting for Cyril while the motors rolled away. Anxiously she glanced at her watch. To-night at seven the Carletons were giving the dinner dance of the season at their stunning new house on the lake and she would have to rush home and dress in one short hour.

Cyril would come, of course. He always came. One could depend on Cyril Baxter. Perhaps he had had a blow-out, or—oh, well! Anyway, Cyril would come! And with this lean comfort she threw herself in a chair and looked across the smooth expanse of green that stretched on over the hill.

The new gown, now. It was a darling! Just the daintiest possible green net and American Beauty roses arranged at the side as only a perfect modiste such as Avalon could achieve. It alone was worth that trip to New York a month ago. It would create a sensation tonight. Why, Elsa Carleton herself, would simply gasp when she saw it!

Six fifteen. What was the matter with Cyril? Of course, since he had taken over the responsibility of his father's business, he couldn't play around quite as much. Still Cyril was seldom late. He had a reputation for dependability. Now, if it had been Dan; well, that was another matter. No one depended on him. No one bothered much with him. Funny how Cyril could have had such a brother; a big, lazy, good-for-nothing brother like Dan.

And just then, with an amusing ironical touch, fate sent Dan spinning around the corner of the club in a shabby-looking roadster. He nodded to Rosalie and shot around the curve. Then the car came to an abrupt stop and he poked his

head out and called back, smiling, "Stranded?"

Rosalie shrugged. "Looks that way. I'm waiting for Cyril. He was supposed to pick me up here before six."

"Who? Cy?" And Dan frowned curiously. "Why, he's halfway to Chicago by now."

"Chicago?" echoed Rosalie weakly.

"Yep. Left at three o'clock." Then he drew in his head and backed the roadster toward the veranda. "Hop in and I'll drive you back."

"I can't believe it!"

"On the level!" he assured her. "Come on, I'll run you home."

She stepped in mechanically. Her eyes brimmed with tears of disappointment. "Gee, don't, Rosalie!" he begged. "Cy'll come back."

"I hope he never does!" she cried furiously. "It isn't that! I've planned on the Carleton affair. Elsa is opening her new house with that dinner for Charlotte and Jack. Why, my gown——" She broke off abruptly. "This was so unexpected. One can always depend on Cyril."

"Sure," Dan said easily. "That's why the poor chap gets the very deuce if he doesn't live up to his reputation. Now with me, it's different."

"Considerably!" she returned icily.

But he only laughed. "I could skip down twice a week, and no one would know the difference except my dog."

But Rosalie shrugged impatiently. He didn't matter. He never had—to any one in Redmond. Even his family ignored Dan Baxter to a certain extent. He wasn't in the least like Cyril, whose manners were beyond reproach and whose views of life were sane and normal. And there were his two sisters, Grace and Madeline, to whom he was a thorn in the side. He couldn't make good at the mills; rather, stayed a lot in his room trying to write books. Ridiculous, decided Redmond. Even his father showed his disapproval of his youngest son by leaving him a very minor portion of his estate at his death.

Rosalie glanced at him now. His soft silk sport shirt fluttered against her arm. His dark striped tie was carelessly tied, and his hair tossed about in the breeze. He wasn't in the least like Cyril who was always perfectly groomed. She wanted to shake him and scold him and make him like other people for that moment. But in the next, she was too disturbed at Cyril's amazing conduct to give Dan a thought. She did not meet his glance or she might have seen the warm gray eyes caressing her with their gentleness, smiling wistfully back of that devil-may-care manner.

"There must be other chaps going to the Carleton blow-out who could pair up with you, Rosalie," he observed casually.

"Don't be ridiculous!" she returned sharply. "That sort of thing isn't done, but I'm furious enough this minute to do anything!"

"On the strength of that broad statement, I'm wondering if I would be considered as a possible substitute for my honored brother?"

"You go to the dinner?" echoed Rosalie. Under any other circumstances, such a suggestion on Dan Baxter's part would have been resented almost. But it did seem queer, for of course the Carletons must have invited him earlier or he would not have dared make such a proposal. Elsa was quite frank in her denunciation of him as a rule. For Dan Baxter laughed at Redmond society and scorned all social functions.

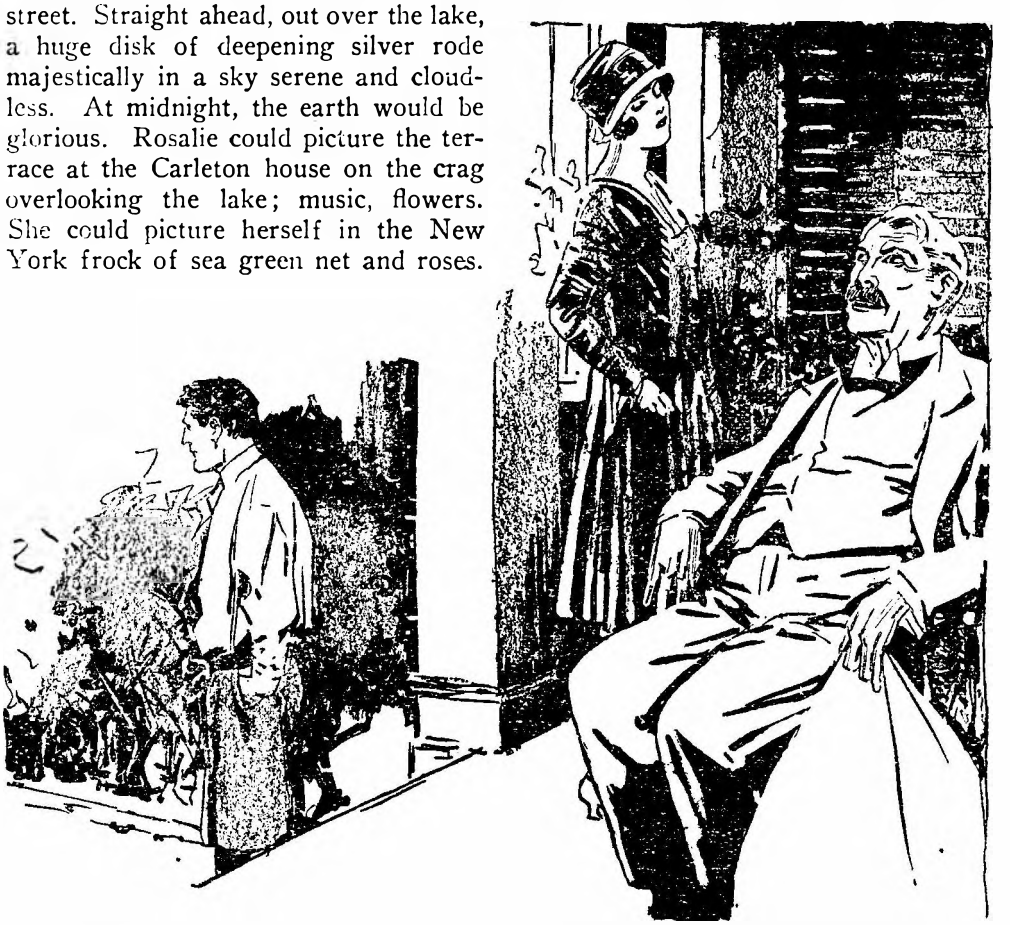
"Your tone is most flattering," he reminded her, crimsoning. "However, it isn't my idea of a wild evening, but if it will help you out——"

"Keep your charity!" she flamed. "I shall probably survive to-night's disappointment!"

"You've got me all wrong, Rosalie," he hurried to explain. "You see, I haven't got Cyril's technique. What I meant to say was, if you could put up

with me this evening, I'd try to take his place and you could enjoy the party." He stopped his car at her door.

The soft fragrance of the summer evening drifted through the quiet, pretty street. Straight ahead, out over the lake, a huge disk of deepening silver rode majestically in a sky serene and cloudless. At midnight, the earth would be glorious. Rosalie could picture the terrace at the Carleton house on the crag overlooking the lake; music, flowers. She could picture herself in the New York frock of sea green net and roses.



"What's the idea, Rosalie," her father inquired, "running around these days with that good-for-nothing Dan Baxter?"

It was too much! The Carleton dance with Dan Baxter was better than no dance at all.

"Well, I'm sure Cyril would be grateful to you for saving him the embarrassment this would have caused, Dan. The dance doesn't matter so much, but the dinner will be laid for a certain number, of course, and—well, do try to get back here for me as soon as possible, won't you?" With a little nod she ran up the walk.

She did not see the smile of joy that leaped to his eyes. She did not see his hands grow rigid on the wheel as he swung the car down the street.

"What's the idea, Rosalie?" her father inquired over his evening paper as she came up the steps. "Running around these days with that good-for-nothing Dan Baxter?"

She shrugged petulantly and tossed her head. "I'm merely using him to make Cyril mad."

"Well, I wouldn't carry it very far," he advised her. "Dan Baxter has never amounted to anything."

His voice was serious.

She was in a hurry to dress, but she

paused a moment, struck by a sudden curiosity. "Father, just what's wrong with Dan Baxter?"

The paper was lowered again. "Well——" Mr. Merritt fingered his chin thoughtfully. "Oh, I don't know exactly. He just doesn't amount to anything. That's all."

"Did he steal, or——"

"Oh, don't bother me!" The papers rattled again. "He's a good-for-nothing, and that's enough! All I've got to say is, don't start running around with him. With Cyril it's different. I think he'll make a name for himself on his own, and he certainly is doing big things down at the mills. Old Baxter was wise in leaving them all to Cyril."

"But isn't Dan in it, too?"

"I don't know!" snapped her father. "Dan's probably too lazy. Never heard of him doing anything but smoking cigarettes and living a gay life. A fellow like that is no good, I tell you. The bad part of it is that he'll share a little in the profits of Cyril's work."

"Well, at least be decent to him, father, when he comes for me this evening. You see, he's taking me to the Carleton dinner." And before her father could remonstrate, she had hurried upstairs to dress.

As she sat before her dressing table, a pang of shame went through her as she remembered Dan. She hadn't told her father the real truth, that Dan had come to the rescue and saved her from bitter disappointment to-night by offering to take Cyril's place. But after all, one had to make a definite and legitimate excuse for going out with Dan Baxter.

They were the last guests to arrive at the Carleton house that evening. Elsa Carleton greeted them as cordially and nonchalantly as if Cyril were there instead of Dan. But Rosalie did not fail to see the sudden amazement in Elsa's eyes, the taut, forced smile on her lips.

"I suppose you know," said the man on Rosalie's left at dinner, "that Cyril will raise the very deuce when he comes back and finds that you've stepped out to-night with Dan." No one but Harry Wayne would have dared presume so far, but he was vice president of the Baxter Mills, and enjoyed a close friendship with Cyril.

"No, I don't happen to know that," returned Rosalie coldly. "And since you're so well informed, you've probably heard, too, that Cyril deliberately left town to-day without even letting me know and the score happens to be mine to settle with him!"

Harry Wayne smiled. "Oh, you'll forget that soon enough. A man like Cyril, head over heels in business, has to let the social world go by sometimes. He'll probably wire you orchids in the morning, and say, Rosalie, have those two Cleveland girls fallen for Dan Baxter? It's easy to tell they don't live in Redmond and Elsa was wise enough to shift place cards the moment you showed up with Dan. Whatever he's saying, those Cleveland girls are getting a big laugh out of it."

"He has a way with him, hasn't he, Harry?" Rosalie said quietly.

"A way that I don't envy, poor devil!" laughed Harry Wayne. "I suppose he means well, but there's nothing to him. Elsa would probably faint if she could hear his line of talk right now. He isn't usually so choice with his girl friends, and those two debs from Cleveland are certainly lapping it up! I hope they won't take him as a sample of Redmond's best social talent."

"Cat!" returned Rosalie with spirit. Just then, Dan Baxter's eyes met hers and held them for a moment. He was smiling and talking to the girls on either side of him, but the smile in his eyes was for Rosalie.

Harry Wayne rambled on beside her. She heard him vaguely. She found herself noticing suddenly the resemblance between Dan and Cyril; the same deep forehead, the finely chiseled features, the

same trick of tossing back the head in laughter. Only Dan's laughter, for some reason, seemed contagious. You wanted to laugh when you saw him laughing, even though you didn't know what it was all about. Cyril's hair was dark and always smooth. And his eyes had a way of piercing through you like a swift, certain rapier. There was steel in his smile, too. Rosalie had seen it there a few times. Cyril was deeply respected, reliable, ambitious. He was making the most of every moment life had given him.

Rosalie seemed to see him sitting there beside Dan now, and the parallel she drew startled her. For Dan's hair wasn't smooth and dark. It was a kind of lustrous brown, a warm brown which rippled here and there. His eyes were gray, with just a hint of sadness in them despite the laughter. When he laughed he laughed all over; it wasn't merely a polite, studied laughter. It seemed absolutely no effort for him. Those girls on either side of him neglected Elsa's excellent dinner shamelessly to laugh with him.

CHAPTER II.

The reception was held a little later on the terrace which was beautiful in the moonlight. With the water lapping gently down beyond at the sandy edges of the beach, and the silver veil whispering over the white stone house with its sweep of steps leading down to the lake, it seemed like a breath of Italy. Inside, the orchestra played a *canzonetta* with all the fitfulness and delicate capriciousness of Italian musicians.

Rosalie slipped away from the others and stood for a moment in the shadows of a giant boxwood, breathless with the beauty of the night. With her gown of sea green net fluttering in the summer breeze, her head thrown back in an attitude of complete ecstasy, she stood like a captive sprite against the black foliage in the moonlight. She had, for the moment, forgotten Cyril and Dan Baxter and Elsa's party. It was as if she had entered a magic valley.

"To-night," said a voice beside her presently, a kind of hushed, reverent voice, "your face is like a white flower in the moonlight!"

She turned swiftly. Dan Baxter was standing there saying this, and cruelly, though unconsciously, she laughed. "I thought you were drinking too much champagne at dinner! Don't ever try to be flowery, Dan. You're too funny!"

He laughed with her, threw his head back gayly, as though he, too, considered it a big joke. "Well, I told you my technique was clumsy, but I promised to take Cyril's place. Remember!" And he took out his cigarettes. His hand trembled as he lighted one, but Rosalie didn't notice.

"I shall punish him for to-night!" she said sharply, remembering.

"Then I must be making a mess of it," mourned Dan with a chuckle.

"On the contrary, you created a near-riot at dinner with those girls from Cleveland," she told him. "But you could never play a serious rôle like Cyril. You're not that type."

"What type am I, Rosalie?" He drew carelessly on his cigarette as he waited for her answer.

"I hardly know," she returned with a laugh. "Funny, Dan, even though we've lived in this town most of our lives, I know you as a name and not a person. Why, until to-day, I don't know when I've seen you before."

"No?" with apparent carelessness.

"Honestly. Must be—well, at least two years. I think that the last time I saw you to really talk to was at some party, I don't know when. But it rained and our car broke down. I think I went with Harry Wayne, and you came along and picked me up. You wrapped your coat around me when we got home, and carried me up the steps. Wasn't it funny?"

"Yes." He blew rings of smoke at the moon, then cleared his throat. "That was the fifth of July last summer." And then with a suddenness that startled her: "They're dancing now. Shall we go in?"

"But, Dan!" she cried, with an incredulously amused laugh as he piloted her along the terrace. "You remember the very day? Why, you're the funniest thing!"

"That's what every one says, Rosalie!"

It was queer, but Rosalie almost forgot to be sorry about Cyril. Dan could dance splendidly. Why, the evening wasn't such a wreck, after all. And besides, she probably wouldn't see Dan again for hours after the stag line began its offensive.

She didn't. Rosalie was popular. After a while she forgot about Dan completely. Harry Wayne was showing her marked attention. Once, Dan tried to break on them as they danced, but Harry refused to let him. And together they laughed at Dan's discomfiture.

"Let him laugh that off as he does everything else!" Harry told her. "He's got such a healthy sense of humor."

Dan did not try again.

Once during the evening, Elsa Carleton managed a word with Rosalie. "What is the idea, my dear, for Heaven's sake? I almost fainted when you walked in with Dan Baxter, though I do hope my poker face came to the rescue! Cyril hadn't sent regrets, although Harry Wayne mentioned the Chicago trip this evening when he came and I was frantic. Yet I felt you would save the situation somehow, but how on earth did you ever think of Dan? He's scarcely your type, and——"

"But didn't you send him cards, Elsa?" she demanded, amazed.

"I have sent him cards repeatedly. But he continued to ignore them, though of course you know it was for his family's sake. I stopped a year ago. But really, I'm glad he came to-night."

Rosalie did not hear the rest. Then Dan Baxter had braved the possibility of Elsa Carleton's scorn in coming here to-night so that she, Rosalie, might not be disappointed!

Shortly after midnight, Harry Wayne swept Rosalie from an admirer's arms as they danced. "Six of us are driving down to the Orange Blossom Tavern; come on, Rosalie, what do you say? A couple of dances there to Ted Granger's orchestra. Are you game?"

"Decidedly!" returned Rosalie without another thought. And as she piled into the car with the others, daringly reckless to-night, she hoped Cyril would hear of it, and disapprove. She hoped he'd just dare disapprove! But it never occurred to her that she was treating Dan shabbily. All this was just part of the game. Life was meant to enjoy. Go ahead and trample on other people's feelings if necessary. That didn't matter!

The couple of dances at the Orange Blossom Inn proved to be a couple of dozen, for Ted Granger's orchestra was just too good! And the highballs were not limited to a few. It was with difficulty that Rosalie finally persuaded them to take her back, for her father might hear of it. But when they reached the Carleton house they found it in darkness, the party over.

Not until she was safe in her own bed at home, with the faint pink of dawn stealing through the windows, did Rosalie have time to think of Dan Baxter. A pang of shame went through her. It had been the shabbiest kind of a trick. He hadn't deserved that. He had been perfectly splendid, and if it hadn't been for him, she would have missed the Carleton party entirely. But why worry about that good-for-nothing Dan Baxter? She fell asleep at last.

The telephone ringing about ten woke her. Chicago was calling. Cyril's voice came to her over the wire.

"I'm sorry, Rosalie. When I thought of the Carleton dinner, it was too late."

"It doesn't matter," she said coldly. "I managed nicely."

"You mean you went?" incredulously.

"Of course! Your tone and your question betray your conceit, Cyril!"

"Rosalie, who took you?" he demanded.

"Dan." Funny, but why did she feel guilty on admitting that?

"Dan!" The wire trembled with his amazed shout.

"Why not?" innocently.

There was a little silence during which Rosalie smiled slightly.

"Rosalie!" in Cyril's most studied and deeply wounded voice. "I thought you and I—well, it's been understood between us—that is, your father has practically given his consent to our marriage."

She laughed now. "Well, there's more than father to be considered in this little drama. However, must we discuss this important question by telephone? I'll probably see you in a month or two."

"To-morrow at the latest!" His voice was stern.

"It doesn't matter to me when you come. I'm terribly sleepy now and you'll have to excuse me. After the Carleton party, we went to the Orange Blossom and had a perfectly hectic time and—well, see you some time. Good-by!" And she hung up the receiver and tumbled back into bed.

Somehow up to now, Cyril Baxter had figured mightily in her future. She had been flattered by his attentions. She had enjoyed the envy of other girls who coveted the matrimonial catch in Redmond, and since the elder Baxter had died and left everything in Cyril's hands, what promised to be a huge fortune some day would be ruled over by Cyril Baxter's wife. But since yesterday, it was as if Rosalie, like another Pandora, had lifted the lid of the future and peered into the box where lay things one would not exactly call treasures. It was evident that Cyril's slow, steady determination would have its way. What to Rosalie had seemed an unpardonable sin, merely meant to him something that could not be avoided. The great god business! And she should understand. Cyril was a matrimonial catch, to be sure. But until last night she had not realized the price she would have to pay. And, thinking of last night with her head burrowed cozily into the cool, smooth pillow, she remembered Dan Baxter, and was again ashamed.

"He'll have a family row on his hands, besides my miserable trick. I've got to do something to square it. He was sweet." And on impulse, as she did everything else, she snatched up the telephone and gave the Baxter number. There was a delay before she finally heard Dan's voice. "Dan Baxter," she began unceremoniously, "aren't you ashamed, sleeping until this hour?"

"I'm ashamed of nothing but the outrageous female I took to a dance last night!" he told her. She couldn't quite make out what it was she heard in that voice.

"You're perfectly right and I don't blame you," she assured him with a trill of laughter. "Do you absolutely hate her, Dan Baxter?" It didn't matter much and it was sort of fun kidding him along.

"Absolutely!" answered the voice that couldn't hate anything.

"You liked her once, remember? I believe it was the fifth of July and rainy, and you wrapped her up in your coat and carried her up the steps."

"Oh, I don't know. Couldn't very well let her swim," defensively.

"You told her last night, Dan Baxter, that her face was like a white flower in the moonlight. Did you hate her then?"

A pause. "She deserved to be hated." A voice that fought with itself for steadiness. You could hear that if you listened closely. But not if you were a

lovely, radiant Rosalie, too busy with life's glamour to feel life's overtones; not if pain were alien to you, or longing or suffering or want. No, you wouldn't hear it then!

She laughed now, gayly. "Do you suppose it would be possible to call a truce to-day and lunch with that dreadful person? She'd be very humble and good, really!"

"Where?" It startled her with its swiftness, that word.

"Oh, well, let's say at that very proper little tea room on the Webbfield road."

"I'll call for you about twelve thirty, if it's agreeable."

"It is. Am I forgiven, Dan Baxter?" Melody crept into Rosalie's voice, echoing the careless music of her youthfulness and charm.

"At twelve thirty," repeated Dan Baxter in a voice just a bit husky.

She hung up the receiver. Well, why not? If Cyril came back on the noon train, he might look her up immediately. She'd tell the maid where she was going. Then, if Cyril came and found her at the tea room with Dan!

"I hope they'll make me a mushroom omelette to-day," began Rosalie blithely, as Dan's car speeded along the Webbfield road. "I'm starved. I haven't had an ounce of breakfast."

"I understand you had a very early breakfast at the Orange Blossom Tavern this morning," he informed her casually, looking straight ahead.

There seemed to be a little undercurrent of tenderness in his tone.

Impulsively, she turned and touched his arm. "It was perfectly beastly of me to go off that way last night and I'm sorry."

"Oh, that's all right!" The gay, indifferent smile; the pathetic huskiness of that voice. He began to whistle softly.

There was something about him just now that made her terribly ashamed of herself. Silly! If it had been any one else but just that good-for-nothing Dan Baxter!

CHAPTER III.

At the tea room they found a table on the broad side veranda that overlooked a quaint little garden. A brook splashed merrily over stones worn white and smooth, and the water was so clear that you could see the pebbly bed, and fish darting through. A big, lazy yellow cat stalked through the garden, stopped to sniff at a bed of marigolds and eyed itself critically in the mirrored surface of the brook.

"That cat reminds me of Mrs. Lefcourt," Dan remarked. "Nothing to do but amble around and criticize and sniff at things."

Rosalie laughed. It did, when you came to think of it. It was for all the world like Mrs. Lefcourt—but she would never have thought of that but for Dan. It was fun to sit here like this, being silly! And unexpectedly, Rosalie heard herself say: "But that's even more than you have to do, Dan Baxter! I don't believe you even take the trouble to sniff at things."

"The conversation grows involved," he returned, with a forced laugh. "Shall we discuss the marigolds now?"

"No, let's discuss you," she decided with sudden spirit. "Dan, why do you stay out of things? Why aren't you like other men with something to do and think about and achieve?"

His lips tightened, but he smiled. "Consider the lilies that neither toil nor spin, Rosalie. And yet, are they arrayed more gayly than I? This sports shirt came from——"

"There you go again! Dan, why can't you be serious, ever? Why can't you?" What made her say that? she wondered.

"Why should I?" he demanded, but there was a look in his eyes that she could not analyze. It made her want to retreat within herself, made her want to search and search until she had found

the thing in her heart that Dan Baxter's deep gray eyes seemed to see there. But always on his lips was the cynical, twisted smile, as if laughter with him were a weapon or a shield.

"Most people are, at least once in a while," she told him. "If you just keep on going the way you are, what will people say about you when you die? Won't you want to leave a little something worth while?"

His lips were still smiling, but she saw the sudden shadows in his eyes. "I'll leave an epitaph to be carved on my tombstone! I found it in a book of poems the other day. You'll be reading it off cold granite, too, perhaps.

"My days were a thing for me to live,
For others to deplore.
I took of life all it could give:
Rind, inner fruit, and core.

"But wasn't the rind bitter?" she asked.

"Yes, but worth the price of the fruit inside!"

She had to turn away from his eyes just then. There was a kind of misery leaping out from behind that casual smile, leaping out from behind the grayness of them.

"You're wasting the best years of your life, do you know that?" she demanded, wondering at her own temerity. And besides, what was the difference? It was nothing to her!

He laughed. "Don't spoil your omelette worrying about me, Rosalie. But what would you suggest, bricklaying or plastering as a profession?"

"Anything that had a weekly pay envelope!" she told him heatedly. "You could do things just as well as Cyril if you'd only try!"

"Which only goes to show how greatly you underestimate my brother's ability!" He was laughing at her, and she knew it.

"I hate a man who can't be serious for five minutes!" she stormed.

"I'd rather be the object of your hatred than your indifference!"

She tried to stem her impatience. Cyril never stirred any positive emotions in her heart. To be with Cyril was to walk along beside an even flowing stream in the open. No shadows, no bright bursts of sunshine. Just sameness. Just yielding to the even hum of his demanding personality. Cyril had that way with him. He could make you yield to preserve that evenness, and you did it, not understanding. Not because you wanted to, nor because you really cared for him violently. No. But there was strength in Cyril's dominance that whipped you on to fulfill his wishes. And now, with Dan——

The whir of a motor at the gate attracted her attention. Cyril was getting out of his roadster. He came up to their table directly.

"I told you I'd be in about noon," he said to Rosalie. "Why didn't you wait for me?"

"You're being funny, aren't you?" Rosalie shrugged indifferently.

Cyril swung on Dan angrily. "I'd like an explanation of this. What do you mean by carrying on with Rosalie the minute I leave town?"

"Don't be absurd," she put in coldly. "One would think me an infant! You haven't a word to say about me, Cyril. Remember that. I do as I please and if there is any one I must account to, it's my father and not you!"

He seemed not to hear her. His eyes were on Dan. "What's your game now?"

"No one could ever accuse me of deserting a lady in distress," Dan informed him, smiling.

"Your choice isn't usually so select," came Cyril's sarcastic retort. "I doubt if Rosalie would have accepted your offer had she known some of your girl friends!"

Dan smiled on. That was the queer part of it, thought Rosalie. "How did

"No one could ever accuse me of deserting a lady in distress," Dan informed him, smiling.

you find Westcott in Chicago?" he asked blandly.

Cyril's shoulders stiffened. His face went white. But he smiled. The question was ignored. He turned to Rosalie. "When you have finished your lunch, I'll take you home."

"Oh, no!" Rosalie shook her head firmly. "Dan and I are out for the day!"

"Did you say Westcott was well?" Dan asked him again quietly.

Once more, Rosalie caught the look of hunted terror in Cyril's eyes. She saw his fingers stiffen on the table's edge. "Yes, yes," he mumbled and got to his feet. "Well, Rosalie, I'll drop in to-night to see you. Good-by!"

But that evening when Cyril came, somehow the old net was spread about Rosalie again—her father's complete approval of Cyril. That was something They sat together and smoked and talked over the oil question, the new machinery for Cyril's mill, while Rosalie sat quietly in the shadows watching them, listening vaguely. Successful business men, both of them, filling each other with the stanchness and comfort of their reliability.

And then, a little later, Rosalie's father rose and left discreetly, with a word about his usual evening stroll down to the lake. In the hush of the evening, it was pleasant to see Cyril sitting here again, Cyril, whom half the girls in town adored; young and handsome and successful. His behavior of yesterday had been unpardonable, of course. But her father had a way of

making her see just how a thing like that could happen. Perhaps she had been hasty and unreasonable; she, Rosalie, whose life was comprised of things trifling in comparison to Cyril's.

And Cyril was saying: "That property now, along the Marlborough cliff, Rosalie. Couldn't be a better location. It will double in value in five years and we can sell to advantage. I'll have Hubbell draw up some plans and you can look them over. Choose your own style of house. I'll leave that to you; only, as a suggestion, the conservative type is more easily disposed of, you know. If we get married this fall, we can run out to California, and I'll just make the big convention there. I'll have to go anyway, and then I can kill two birds with one stone. If you decide to make it this winter instead, why we'll take our trip to New Orleans. I've got to spend a few weeks there some time this year. Have to look over the place for our new factory."

Cyril's voice hummed on.

But Rosalie was thinking what some men might have said: "Let's have one of those Spanish houses along the lake like—oh, like Elsa Carleton's, for instance. Eh, Rosalie? Big rooms and bright colors and a terrace that's white in the moonlight! And a garden with a brook in it, where cats stop to preen themselves in its mirror—funny, yellow cats that remind one of Mrs. Lefcourt. And a honeymoon, Rosalie? Doesn't matter where! Trains and travel and distance, maybe, but anyway, just you and I, caring! Rosalie, your face is like a white flower in the moonlight!" Gray eyes searching yours; sad, gray eyes behind their laughter. Dan——

"You haven't heard a word I've said!" Cyril's voice came at her accusingly. "What's come over you, Rosalie?"

"I—oh——"

He came over to where she sat and took a chair beside her. "I'm going to ask you to promise me something. Please don't encourage any attentions from Dan. He's my brother, I know, and I'm sorry to have to say this. But he's never been a fellow one could be proud of. He doesn't respect himself and he brings criticism on those with whom he associates. He's a pagan kind of fellow. I can't make him out. That's why I was furious with him about last night. He's never been like the rest of us. He just doesn't belong!"

"Why?" she heard herself ask. She trembled suddenly for Dan. She wanted to protect him from Cyril, from himself.

"He's thoroughly different," Cyril told her. "Things that we hold sacred are objects of his ridicule. He has no sense of propriety, no ambition, outside of spending hours at his desk writing stuff that isn't worth the paper it's on. Sits up most of the night doing that or running around with cheap girls. He's got a way of laughing at everything serious. Do you know what he thinks of women? No, of course you don't! He says most of them are like nice purring cats and every cat he sees reminds him of some woman. Feline, brainless! Some day he'll probably point to some especially nice one and say, 'There's your Miss Rosalie Merritt!' You thought you had him bowled over, I suppose. He's laughing at you now, Rosalie, as he laughs at everything else in the world. And I could kill him for that!"

She had never seen Cyril so moved, but for the moment she could not decide whether his anger was stirred by honest chivalry or prejudiced scorn. His words had left her cold. Was it possible that Dan, that good-for-nothing Dan Baxter, had considered her nothing more than another bright doll in the world of women? It was incredible! Why, she had actually been sorry for him, interested in him, and though she would not admit it to herself, his words had made a deep impression upon her. And he had been kind when Cyril left

so mysteriously for Chicago; he had saved her from a bitter disappointment. Chicago; it started a train of thought in her mind that had been interrupted at luncheon when Dan had put that abrupt question to Cyril. "How is Westcott?" She could see the taut whiteness of Cyril's face again. She could see his fingers stiffen on the edge of that table. And scarcely without knowing what she was saying:

"Cyril, who is that Westcott person in Chicago?"

In the deepening shadows of evening she could not see his face. "Why do you ask me that?" he demanded in a voice that was strained and unnatural.

"Oh, I don't know." She was afraid, suddenly afraid of Cyril.

There was something terrifying in the curve of his body as he stood there, like an animal almost, defending itself against attack. In a moment he was himself again. He laughed easily. "Oh, a business friend, Rosalie, he's just a business friend." He came over to where she sat and drew her to her feet. "Is it settled then, once and for all, Rosalie? Are you going to have me?"

There was a certain majesty in Cyril's bearing now. Rosalie had never ceased feeling flattered at his singling her out from the other girls, this adored bachelor of Redmond. For Rosalie was modest and humble in her thoughts. As he towered there beside her, it was as if she stood beside a great rock that would shield her from the dangers of life. His arms went about her mechanically. It was as if he shut out the world and its besetting terrors. What did she know of men? Some might come with their sweet songs of love, their romance and flattery. And after the honeymoon, what then? Hadn't he just told her of Dan and his opinion of women? "Rosalie, your face is like a white flower in the moonlight!" And all the time, it was as if he were mentally stroking a kitten's fur. He could laugh at her, too. He, whose eyes sometimes said things that left her breathless. He was laughing at her now, perhaps.

"Yes, Cyril," Rosalie said quickly, "in the spring, probably."

He kissed her then with the mechanical precision of an automaton. She brushed at her lips unconsciously as he went down the steps to his car. She sat there a long time, thinking. It seemed, somehow, as though an invisible jailer had fastened a chain to her and the weight of it pulled her head down—and down—and down——

The moonlight made a pearl of a forgotten tear on her cheek when her father woke her on his return.

The Redmond *Daily Record* carried the announcement of Rosalie's engagement the following afternoon. Rosalie's father had answered the long-put question for busy and curious reporters.

But when the girls came to call and wish Rosalie joy, the maid told them she was not at home. For some reason, she had wanted to get away from the fact, despite her father's delighted approval and every one's envy.

CHAPTER IV.

There was a trail along the lake that Rosalie's roadster followed when she wanted to think things out. She went there now. It ran close to the edge of a cliff at one place. It was here she loved to sit and watch the water ripple toward the horizon and dream. But no more dreaming now. That was over. Household linens now. Plans to look over for the house. Furnishings to select. Stationery to have engraved with the new monogram. Cards to be engraved with the new name, Mrs. Cyril Payne Baxter. A very proper name, very correct, like Cyril. Like granite.

A car nosed its way along the trail. She glanced back indifferently, then looked out again toward the lake. Some one else used this trail occasionally, too. Its unpaved roughness made people shun

it, as a rule, for the splendid big highway only a mile longer, with fewer hills and hollows. The car rambled on. She did not hear it stop. She was not aware of Dan Baxter's presence until he spoke to her softly.

"Happened to see you sitting here as I went by, so I came back to wish you joy, Rosalie."

Startled, she glanced up. His hair was tousled, as usual. No coat. His silk shirt rippled in the summer breeze, and a long, careless tie swung out like rhythmic arms. The gray knickers were stained with oil from the car; the brown brogues all scuffed and dusty, with a knot in one lace. His face was tanned, with a streak of dust along one cheek. But Rosalie forgot the carelessness of him, the pagan indifference to convention. She forgot the cruel things Cyril had told her about him. She forgot that only last night she had hated him enough to promise herself definitely to Cyril. She was glad, glad inside.

"Oh, it's you!" was all she said, was all she could say, somehow.

"No, I'm not a bit tired," he began with characteristic patter. "But since you insist, I will sit down beside you."

There it was, just such a ridiculous thing as that he was saying could make her bubble inside with wanting to laugh. But she remembered, suddenly, the things Cyril had told her about Dan. His words came back: "He'll see some nice cat and laugh and say, 'There's your Miss Rosalie Merritt!' He's laughing at you now, Rosalie, as he laughs at everything else in the world."

And bitterness clipped off the gay rejoinder that came to her lips as Dan sat down beside her.

"You take a lot for granted," she told him spiritedly.

She saw the smile fade from his eyes. His laughing air of defiance fled. And while Rosalie could not have met those eyes and said the unkind things that came to her lips, she glanced out over the lake, determining not to let the charm of his personality deter her from her purpose. "I came out here to be alone," she told him coldly. "And you needn't trouble to wish me joy. I think I realize values now."

He got to his feet with a lithe grace that drew her reluctant admiration.

"I'm sorry," and he laughed bravely, "you see, I thought we were friends, Rosalie."

She would not look up at him. The lake with its cool blue surface was just out beyond. It was easier to be unkind to him if she didn't shift her gaze. "Why"—she shrugged and laughed carelessly—"I wouldn't go so far as to say that. Rather, acquaintances of long standing."

"Just as you wish," he agreed.

She didn't have to look at him then. At the hurt tone in his voice she longed to, but stubbornly she kept her gaze averted.

"I do wish it that way," she went on cruelly. "Friendship between you and me is impossible. You just don't belong, Dan. I want friends whom I can depend on, and that's one reason I'm marrying Cyril. I've found one man who is everything he pretends to be. He has a deep regard for women. He's ambitious and progressive and he's willing to sacrifice the pleasures of life to greater achievements. It"—she had to pause in spite of herself to square her shoulders and make the next statement sound convincing—"it isn't hard to love a man like that. You'll never amount to anything, Dan. You're neither flesh nor fowl nor good red herring!"

The quietness of him as he stood there made her think for a moment that she must have been dreaming he was here. Then: "I guess you're right, Rosalie," he said slowly. "I don't amount to much."

She was silent and she was ashamed. What right had she to judge Dan Baxter? What were her achievements, her

sacrifices? What did she stand for in a progressive community?

"You—you love Cyril, Rosalie?" he asked after a moment, timidly, like a small, anxious boy.

"Of course!" She whirled on him, as though trying to make herself believe it, too. "Otherwise, why should I be marrying him? He's everything I admire! He——" Yes, he—what? her heart asked her. She could not finish the sentence, for she had looked into Dan's eyes. There was something there that frightened her.

"I didn't know that you cared for him so much," he said humbly. "I didn't know." And he turned and went toward his car.

She threw herself once more on the ground, heard the grinding of his gears, heard the car roar down the road. Somehow, satisfaction at having punished him was an empty thing. It was lonely here on the cliff. A kind of desolation had settled on the place. The echoing roar of the receding car seemed to wheel out over the lake to the farthest billows against the horizon. She ran to her own motor and shot down the road, trying desperately to get away from that intangible, haunting something. But to get away from that, she would have had to reach into her soul and tear out the thing that had come to life there the night Dan Baxter had whispered to her, "Your face is like a white flower in the moonlight!"

At breakfast the following morning, Rosalie found her father inclined to an irritable silence.

"Whatever is the matter to-day?" she demanded. "Stocks drop? I wouldn't let the loss of a little money affect me like that."

He glanced up sharply. "I don't like it," he began irrelevantly. "I don't like it at all."

"Don't like what, darling?" she went on blithely, breaking her toast.

"Dan Baxter's performances!"

A chill played along Rosalie's spine. The mention of that name lately had a most startling effect on her. "What has happened?"

"Disgraceful!" her father went on. "He took that Lizzie Beggs out driving last night in his car."

"Not Lizzie Beggs, the one that every one talks about and——"

"Exactly!" stormed her father. "And early this morning he shot his car through a paint-shop window on Grove Street. The whole place is smashed up."

"But Dan?" she heard herself say in terror. "Was he hurt?"

"No one knows the details, except that a policeman saw Lizzie Beggs extricating herself from the débris crying out, 'Baxter, help me!' but the clever Dan had already disappeared. Though he must have been hurt for his car is wrecked. I overheard all this from the servants. They were cackling back there like a bunch of magpies! I don't like it, Rosalie. Something must be done about this Dan Baxter. He's no good, and I won't have you marrying into a family that produces such fellows. Cyril is all right, but you'll bear the Baxter name, too."

Rosalie heard him vaguely. Then Cyril was right. Dan had no finer instincts, no ambitions, no ideals. He could associate with Lizzie Beggs, who sold cigars and cigarettes in the Hotel Wellington; who laughed so loudly and vulgarly. No one who was worth while would dare be seen with her!

"People will begin to point at you and say, 'She's marrying into the Baxter family!'" her father went on angrily.

"You urged it; you wanted it," she reminded him. "Cyril is such a splendid fellow, you've always told me!"

He shrugged and gestured that the subject was closed. As he left the table, he turned to her. "Did you give Cyril those papers I left for him last night?"

"No. He didn't come last night.

Phoned me about nine that business would detain him for the evening." In Rosalie's voice there still lingered the memory of her pique.

Her father regarded her a moment thoughtfully, shrugged and went out. And Rosalie forgot the incident, forgot Cyril and the broken tryst. So Dan was a complete rotter! Lizzie Beggs, and Dan. No, one just couldn't picture that. Not Dan's fine gray eyes smiling into Lizzie Beggs'; no, not that! There was something too honest in Dan's smile.

CHAPTER V.

The morning seemed endless. There were a number of little things Rosalie could think of doing; there wasn't one she could concentrate on, for all the time the vision of Dan Baxter and Lizzie Beggs rose before her. Well, why not? her other self argued. What did it matter? That was Dan Baxter's privilege. Surely it was nothing to her!

She threw herself on the bench before the piano and rattled off a few measures of jazz. But she kept seeing Dan Baxter cut and bruised. She kept seeing his eyes with pain in them and that something that had reached her heart yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that. She went to the telephone at last. She had to. And she called the Baxter number.

"Mr. Baxter, please," she told the maid who answered.

"He—well, he may not come to the phone," she informed Rosalie. "He's lying down."

There was a little silence.

Of course, he would be! flamed Rosalie. "Tell him Miss Merritt is calling!" Her voice was crisp.

"Very well." The maid left on her errand. If Rosalie could then have retracted her impulsive command, she would. But now, after giving her name! What would she say to Dan Baxter when he answered? What business was it of hers if he saw fit to disgrace himself, if he were hurt?

"Rosalie, it's you?" Cyril's voice came to her!

The shock of it startled her into speechlessness. Cyril! What was he doing home, and in bed, in the middle of the morning?

So! Now he would think she cared as much as this! What could she say to him and retain her pride? It had never occurred to her that Cyril would be at home this morning. And if she confessed her real motive in calling, she wouldn't dare do that. Suddenly she remembered her father's parting words that morning.

"I merely wanted to tell you," she said smoothly, "that father left some papers for you last night. I thought they might be important."

"Thanks, Rosalie. I'll run over and get them soon. Please don't be angry with me about last night. Business, you know——" his voice trailed off.

"The maid told me you were ill. I'm sorry," with frigid courtesy.

A pause. "Well, one of those mean, sick headaches. I may be kept in with it a few days."

"Too bad." Then, in spite of herself, in spite of pride and reserve, she said: "I heard that Dan was injured last night. Is it true?"

Cyril's faint, cruel laughter came over the wires at the mention of Dan's name. "Not much, I guess. He left town on an early train this morning."

"Oh!" A smothered little syllable that tried to sound natural. "Oh, I see. Well, good-by, Cyril!"

Then it was true. The shame of it had driven even the shameless Dan Baxter away from the taunts and sneers and justified indignation of the people of Redmond. It hurt Rosalie, the thought of it. Dan Baxter and Lizzie Beggs. He hadn't seemed that sort. His defiance of convention, his lack of ambition, his scathing denunciation of society

had been pagan. But no one would have accused him of that, she thought. But now, he had gone. Well, it was a good thing. No more scandal to the Baxter name in Redmond. There would be peace and quiet, deadening peace.

Rosalie tried to shrug it away; swung her roadster out madly through the country roads. She was a lucky girl if she only knew it. Not many girls in Redmond would have a future so secure and worth while as hers would be with Cyril. A trip to California this winter as the wife of Redmond's greatest catch. A trip to New Orleans, perhaps. The Mardi gras. Europe, next summer possibly. The dream faded slowly. You can reserve a palatial suite on a liner and spend your money freely on foreign shores. But you can't buy romance in the moonlight, and you can't buy the warmth of the smile in one man's gray eyes, the smile that goes down deep in your heart and makes you glad. Silver may jingle in your pockets—but sometimes you'd rather hear the silver of a man's laugh, husky and gloriously real.

Dan Baxter, gone. Hunger crept through Rosalie's heart. The future with Cyril loomed before her, secure and firm. But sometimes security is a rock against which our dreams are crushed as a tiny craft is flung against Gibraltar.

It was at the Devereaux luncheon the next day, given in honor of Rosalie, that perhaps the first news of Dan Baxter's behavior was spread.

Freddy Devereaux rushed in on the scene of his sister's party, and with all the innocent tactlessness of the little brother, proceeded to shout: "Gee, listen! It's all over town! Dan Baxter skipped town yesterday morning with a bunch of the mill's money. The auditor was there to-day, and they said Harry Wayne made the discovery. Cyril is home sick and say, some one said Dan took fifty thousand!"

A frozen silence at the luncheon table greeted this. All eyes turned to Rosalie. Her face drained of its color. Dan—Dan had done this! No——

"Freddy," his sister remonstrated, "please don't come in here shouting all the town gossip. We aren't concerned!"

Rosalie stared stonily at the roses in the silver bowl before her. Dan, a thief! Sobs tore at her throat. But she smiled.

"You were telling us about that new book, Rosalie," spoke up Jane briskly. "And what happened then?"

Desperately Rosalie tried to swing once more into the conversation. No one knew the effort it cost her to live through that afternoon of bridge until she could take her car toward evening and flee out through the country. Dan. oh, Dan! she thought.

She called Cyril that evening on the telephone. "You must come over. I've got to see you."

"But, my dear," he begged, "I'm feeling like the very deuce. To-morrow night perhaps."

"If you don't come to-night, Cyril, you need never come again!" And she hung up the receiver. She had to know about Dan, somehow.

He came. It was dim on the porch where she sat. Her father had gone to La Salle in the morning and would not return until the late night train.

As Cyril got out of his car at the curb, the chauffeur drove away, and he came up the steps with a limp. A pang of regret assailed Rosalie then. Selfishly she had demanded this of a sick man. But she would not allow, even to herself, her reason for wanting him.

He took a chair in the deep shadows of the porch.

"We'd better go inside," she said. "It's a bit chilly, and if you're not well——"

"No, no," he put in quickly. "I prefer to sit here. The light hurts my eyes and I like the air." Then, curiously, "What did you want to see me about, Rosalie?"

She laughed tremulously. "I pine for

a sight of my beloved; I entreat him to come here to me, and he asks me why in a tone and manner that he would ask a fishwife the price of mackerel!"

"You're being funny now, aren't you?" he returned moodily. "If this sudden passion for me were sincere, you would have realized what an effort it was for me to come out to-night. I don't flatter myself that you care for me, Rosalie, not that much."

"Then why do you want to marry me?" she demanded. And he could not have seen the tense whiteness of her face just then.

"Because I want you for my wife!" His voice was low.

"As you want an excellent motor and thoroughbred dogs!" She laughed bitterly.

"What's come over you, Rosalie?" he demanded impatiently.

She subsided at his words, settled back in her chair and swallowed hard as if to catch the demon hysteria before it claimed her. "What's this talk about Dan?" she heard herself ask. Her fingers clenched rigidly on the arms of the chair. "What's it all about, Cyril? Is it true?"

He shifted in his chair. "Rosalie, if you don't mind, let's talk about something else. I'm a wreck to-night."

She was sorry for him, but she had to know about Dan.

"But Cyril, just this much; he didn't steal it, did he? And they aren't going to arrest him?" She went over to his chair and stood trembling before him. "We've got to help him out of this. Maybe, oh, you can't tell why he did it, if he did! He wouldn't steal just for the fun of it, not just for the money, Cyril! Can't we do something for him, you and I maybe? Perhaps father would help. If you would ask him——"

He got to his feet beside her, caught her hand in his. "What do you care how he did it, or why?" he snarled. "It's nothing to you. He's a hound, that's all. Help him?" He laughed hoarsely. "You keep out of this, Rosalie. It isn't a woman's business." And before she could speak through the waves of horror that seemed to separate her from this man, he turned to go. "I'm weak and sick, to-night. Better run on now. I see Roger turning the corner with my car."

"Wait!" she called. "Just a minute." Then fled in to get the papers her father had left for Cyril. As she came out, unconsciously she switched on the porch lights. He turned suddenly and faced her in the sudden glare. Rosalie stood looking at him breathless, one rigid hand against her lips. For there was a long, ugly bruise on Cyril's face and one eye was swollen. His hand, when he reached it out toward the light in surprise, had some long, ugly cuts on it.

He took the papers without a word, and she could not say good-by to him then. Even when the motor had sped down the street, Rosalie stood looking after it in a dazed fashion. Why, Cyril looked as though he had been in a common brawl; like men used to look, sometimes, when they staggered out of saloons. Cyril looking like that—Cyril Baxter! Perhaps a workman at the mill had attacked him. Sometimes there were riots. He hadn't wanted her to know of course, for no man wants the woman he loves to regard him less than a hero.

Strange, but as the days went on, Rosalie had recurrent visions of those bruises and cuts of Cyril's; recurrent visions, too, of the sudden fear in his eyes when she had switched on the lights.

"There's something queer about it," she told her father a few days later, explaining the incident.

He shrugged and smiled. "Do you suppose he'd tell you the troubles he has at the mills?"

"That would be nothing to be ashamed of," she reminded him. "And Cyril looked guilty!"

"Nonsense!" laughed her father.

And Rosalie did not press the question, but she did not forget it. She was playing golf with her father a week later, and after the last hole they had strolled up to the veranda and were enjoying an iced drink and discussing their scores when a voice behind them cut through their words and Rosalie sat breathless.

"Want to hear the latest, Jack?" one man called to another. "They've caught Dan Baxter. Detectives brought him back here this afternoon. My wife just phoned. I hope the good-for-nothing sport gets what's coming to him! Disgracing his family and——"

There was a discreet warning cough from the man addressed as Jack who, apparently, had seen Rosalie and her father sitting there. And the loud-voiced individual subsided.

"You see," said Rosalie's father, "there's your good-for-nothing Dan Baxter for you!"

But Rosalie didn't hear. All the doubts of the past few weeks were doubts no longer. She knew now that she cared. Thief, criminal, whatever Dan Baxter was, that didn't matter. She got to her feet uncertainly.

"Let's go home, father," she said.

It was hard to go about in the dreadful days that followed, as if nothing had happened, when all the time the knowledge of Dan's trouble was like a sword in her heart. Cyril wore an air of aggrieved resignation to the family disgrace that infuriated Rosalie. While Dan was there in jail awaiting trial.

CHAPTER VI.

The prosecution, it seemed, had a good case. There was little chance of an acquittal for Dan Baxter. He had gone to the mills that morning, while his brother was at home ill; had rifled the safe and taken the next train out of town. Queer part of it, too, the papers said, he didn't act like a man afraid. He made no effort to defend himself against the accusation and shrugged indifferently at the threat of a heavy sentence. His lawyer was obviously working against heavy odds. The main point of his defense was the fact that Dan Baxter had not skipped town with the money that had been stolen. For it had been proven that he had taken a bag of manuscripts to New York—his work of the past eight years, and a novel of his had been accepted by a prominent New York publishing house. A publicity campaign to bring this promising new author before the public had already begun.

Rosalie read these accounts and remembered Cyril's sharp, heartless criticism of his brother's literary efforts. Poor Dan! And now that the door of success had opened to him—this shame and disgrace! She did not see much of Cyril these days. He had gone to Washington on business regarding his mills and had written her only once.

The day of the trial drew near, and Rosalie tried to fight off the feeling of terror that assailed her. There was no use. She went at last to see Dan Baxter in his cell.

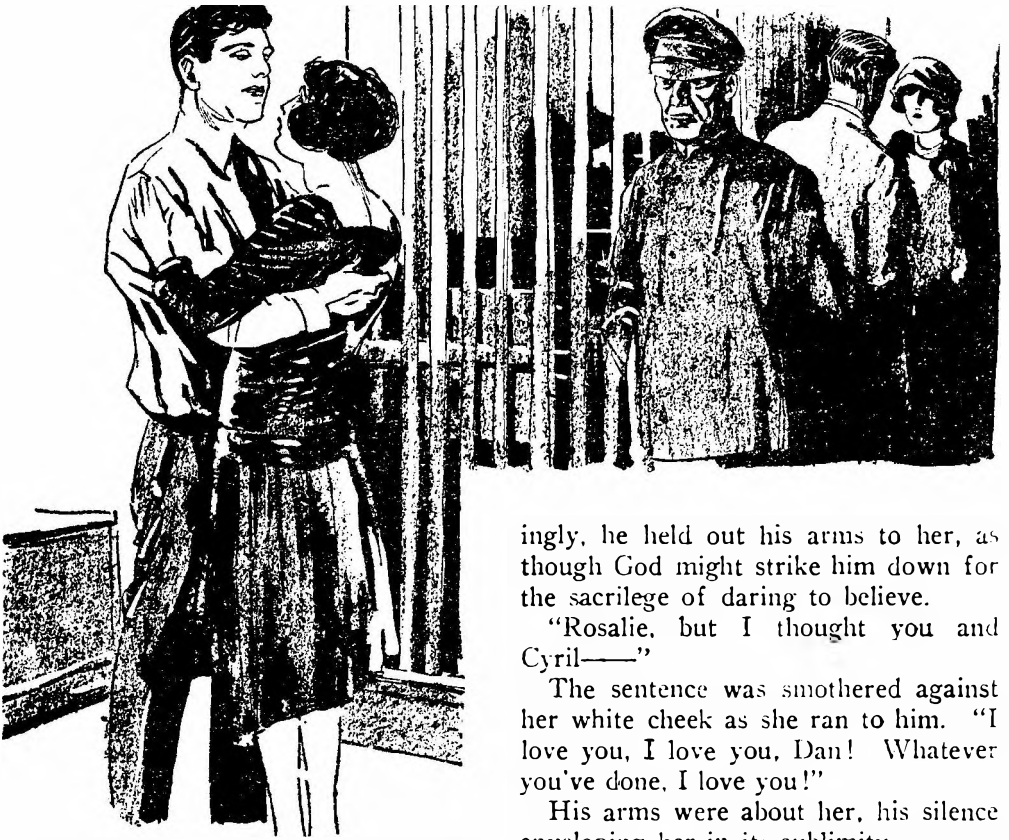
"Well, Rosalie," he greeted her, "I hadn't notified my friends of my change of address as yet, but I'm glad you managed to find me."

"Dan, what have you done?" she cried, trying to steady her voice; trying to fight back the terror that flooded through her at seeing him here.

"Everything on the calendar, I guess!" You had to look straight down into those deep-gray eyes to see the agony there, to understand the torture and pain quivering on the lips that parted in a game smile, to know the shame and humiliation he felt in having Rosalie see him here.

She caught his arm. "Dan Baxter, you didn't take that money. You couldn't—you're not that kind!"

"What a rotter you must think me!" and his voice trembled. "Bringing this



The sentence was smothered against her white cheek. "I love you, Dan. Whatever you've done, I love you."

shame on you when you're engaged to Cyril, and when you care so much for him! Never mind, when it's over you can marry him and go away, and the world will soon forget. You can find happiness then, Rosalie, with the man you love."

"Are you blind?" she cried. "Dan, don't you understand? It's you I love!"

The pitying smile died in his eyes. Across the thin, fine face, with its new pallor from these days of confinement and shame, crept a slow, incredulous smile of ecstasy, as a blind man might smile on seeing the sunshine for the first time.

"Dan!" The torn cry, the tears flooding her eyes must have told him then the glorious truth of her words. Haltingly, he held out his arms to her, as though God might strike him down for the sacrilege of daring to believe.

"Rosalie, but I thought you and Cyril——"

The sentence was smothered against her white cheek as she ran to him. "I love you, I love you, Dan! Whatever you've done, I love you!"

His arms were about her, his silence enveloping her in its sublimity.

"Dan, haven't you guessed?" she whispered.

He shook his head slowly. "I thought you loved Cyril. Why would a fellow like me dream that a girl like you could care? Good-for-nothing Dan Baxter and Rosalie Merritt! Sounds like a fairy tale. The only person that ever loved me before, Rosalie, is dead—my mother. I was like her, a dreamer. Because I wasn't born with a head for figures and a passion for the mills, I was a stranger in my own home. And I grew a kind of shell and crept into it and stayed there. But ever since the first day I saw Rosalie Merritt walking down the street with her brown hair tumbling over her shoulders, and her sweet young eyes smiling, always smiling, I've loved her. I've laughed at myself nights as I've laid on the beach and looked up at the stars. For there was

Rosalie walking among them—and Dan Baxter, grub, was worshiping her across a million miles!"

"Oh, Dan!" And a trembling hand crept to his white cheek. "I never dreamed you cared, not like that! But I do love you so! Why haven't you defended yourself against this dreadful thing? Why haven't you said something to refute these accusations they heap on you? You didn't take any money, Dan, I know, I know! I've believed in you from the first. I never doubted you!"

"Rosalie," his voice was gentle, adoring. "I would have laid my life at your feet if it meant your happiness. And giving up my honor, I thought, meant your happiness with Cyril. That's all that has ever been valuable in my eyes —your happiness, Rosalie!"

"Time's up!" came the jailer's gruff voice.

"Dan, oh, Dan!" she cried. But the door clanged after her, and the shadow of bars fell between her and the radiant, smiling face of the man she loved.

Harry Wayne was leaving her father at the door when she returned home later in the evening.

"Rosalie, my poor little girl!" her father greeted her, as the door closed on Wayne, and took her in his arms. "There's a time in every one's life when he must face a crisis and be brave. It's going to be hard on you, I know, but——"

"What do you mean, father?" she demanded.

"We might as well face the issue sensibly," he decided. "Rosalie, Harry Wayne was just here, as you know. He came to me with the most astounding piece of news I've ever heard. He told me to-night, so I would be spared reading the details in the morning paper first hand. Cyril Baxter is a full-fledged scoundrel. We thought he was in Washington, you know. He's in Australia. He stole that money and, more than that, he framed his brother, Dan. He was sick that morning, if you remember, and he sent Dan to his office at the mills and told him to place some papers in the safe. That his secretary would open it, as she knew the combination. He also told him to get some notes there and deliver them to his attorney in New York, since Dan was going there to try and market some of his scripts. Well, as it happened, the honorable Cyril had extricated fifty thousand from the safe the evening before, to pay his share to a filthy bootlegger in Chicago named Westcott."

"Westcott!" echoed Rosalie.

"Yes! The fellow squealed on Cyril to-day. Seems as though they were in partnership on this rum running. Lizzie Beggs was in on it, too, and that's another thing! The reason Cyril was so ill, he was the little gentleman that was smashed up with Lizzie Beggs in front of Berryman's paint shop. He used to appropriate Dan's car when he went on these questionable tours. Lizzie had some friends who were interested in getting liquor, and they were willing to pay a big price for it. She had an understanding with Cyril and Westcott —and on this particular evening, Cyril had failed to keep up to his bargain. She threatened him, and I guess he took a chance on trying to keep her quiet for a while. Well, she went about getting her part of the money silently, at first. But when she found they were double crossing her, she squealed!

"Cyril was wise enough, however. He told the very plausible story that he was going to Washington—but he was headed for Australia all the time. He hadn't made good at the mills, and he was trying to blind the people in the town to his true machinations. Westcott didn't get out soon enough, and there's a big clean-up in Chicago now. He was caught red-handed! I see now that Cyril's attentions to you meant merely a social gesture, and besides, he

knew you wouldn't go to him empty handed. So the good-for-nothing Dan isn't the only bad egg in the family!"

"You call him good-for-nothing?" cried Rosalie. "Father, he was taking the blame for Cyril's cowardice and treachery all the time. And he would have gone on and taken Cyril's punishment——"

Anthony Merritt shook his head and smiled. "You innocent child! Don't you know Dan was wise enough to realize that he didn't have a chance with his useless life against him? What would be the sense of protesting? Why?"

"Don't, don't!" she cried. "You don't understand. He would have gone through with it and taken the blame, because he thought I loved Cyril!"

"Oh!" Her father nodded. "And how do you know all this?"

"Because I've just come from the jail where he is!"

"You, at the jail!" he sputtered angrily.

"Yes, and I'd crawl to him if he needed me, wherever he was, because I love him! He's worth a dozen of those smug, conceited business men who live by rule, and sin under cover of their position. He's been honest with himself always, and that's why they don't understand! He isn't a millionaire and he never will be, but he has a soul and a sense of humor and an imagination worth a dozen fortunes. I'd rather live in a cabin with him than share a palace with any one else in the world! Oh, father! Some one to laugh with and love, that's marriage! It isn't a real lace veil and a flower-banked church and a trip to Europe for a honeymoon. It's the thing that reaches into your heart and touches your soul, as if the hand of God had entered there and lighted the light that burns on till you die!"

Her father groped for a chair, sank weakly into it. "Come here, my child, and tell me about it. How long has this been going on?" The same old question and the same old answer. A dim-eyed father patting a girl's brown hair and remembering——

Not so long afterward, through the dimness of evening on the Merritt porch stirred a blur of white. That was Rosalie. The very roses, still and fragrant in their bowl on the wicker table, breathed an air of expectancy. You could hear a step coming down the street, and some one whistling; a funny little trill without motif or melody, more like the swift, ecstatic phrasing of a lark.

The steps turned in at the Merritt walk and mounted the porch with firm precision.

"I smell roses," said the intruder. The moonlight threw a faint shaft of silver across them. "I see something white in that chair," said the voice, advancing slowly. "An angel, probably. I had a date here with a very beautiful one! Pardon me, Saint Peter," he bowed, apostrophizing the sprawling shadow of a chair in the moonlight, "while I investigate. For this is heaven, of couse, isn't it?"

Oh, the joy of it! The ridiculous trills of happiness that coursed through Rosalie as she sat paralyzed with the joy of this moment, of Dan's coming to her for the first time after all the trouble and pain. Only Dan could have said such dear, foolish things, trying to stem the torrent of his happiness with gay, silly words; trying to keep this moment a bit sane that way.

Then he was on his knees beside that chair, his face buried in the perfumed lace of her gown, silent. Groping for her hand, crushing it, almost, in his emotion.

"Dan!" And her lips bent in whispered benediction above the careless brown hair of that good-for-nothing Dan Baxter.

LITTLE WRONGS TO TRUE LOVE

By Helen Roberts

SCRATCHES are perhaps not as dangerous as wounds, but they are distinctly irritating.

They do not receive the sympathy which is their due. At times they are harder to bear than really serious injuries. We feel we can stand a short and sharp blow so much more easily than a prolonged course of small inflictions.

Alas! How light a cause may move
Dissension between hearts that love!
Hearts that the world in vain had tried,
And sorrow but more closely tied.
That stood the storm when waves were rough,
Yet in a sunny hour fall off!

The little things of the world are so infinitely more to us, as a rule, than the great things, partly because they are always happening.

We cannot escape from them, whereas we think that by good chance the greater evils quite possibly may not come our way at all.

So, too, in our affections and friendships, we find it so much more difficult to forgive or to bear with the small trials of our love than with the great tests.

If we are of a fastidious nature, too sensitive and too highly strung for the everyday life in which we find ourselves, then trifles that are of small importance will play a big part in our minds.

We shall be tempted to make more of good manners than of a good heart, though both are usually combined, and if we are not careful we may miss our happiness thereby.

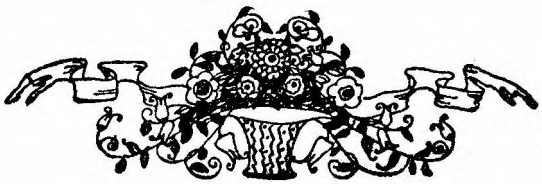
The little failings in temper or tact that we notice in our friends will outweigh their good points, and we shall look at things in a wrong proportion.

A great offense against true love we may be induced to pardon, but the smaller wrongs that others do to us we shall be unmerciful about, and refuse to overlook.

Yet we are mistaken; such little wrongs are done us not from deliberate unkindness, but from human weakness and ignorance, and it is for us who understand better to forgive them, and, if need be, endure them in patience and hope.

There is a wise saying which runs: "To understand all is to forgive all." Let us act upon its advice, and we shall not regret it.

If we do so, they will prove to be those "little wings" which will bear us to the heaven of love and happiness.



MISS LIBERTY

This poem is dedicated to Miss Catherine C. Williams. In 1876 she was the model for the Goddess of Liberty on the silver dollar which George Morgan designed. Miss Williams died this year in Philadelphia, after a lifetime spent in teaching.

WHEN Katie was a fair young girl,
With golden hair that wished to curl,
They said to her: "Miss Catherine,
You have the best face we have seen
To represent Miss Liberty,
This hundredth anniversary."

And so she sat to Georgie Morgan,
Brother to Johnny, who played the organ?
No, Johnny's brother played the viol,
While this young man drew, and painted well,
They urged her then to try the stage;
She said: "I'll teach, from youth to age."

By bankers, lawyers, doctors, nurses,
Her photo's carried in their purses;
Rarely, an editor, or farmer
Secures a picture of this charmer.
Her features, on the silver dollar,
Are known, and loved, by clod and scholar.

ROSE M. BURDICK.

Editor's Note: This department is conducted for the benefit of the readers of "Love Story Magazine" as well as for their entertainment, but neither the publishers nor the author can assume responsibility for the reliability of any statement made herein, for incorrect data is often furnished, even when the sender has every reason to believe it correct. Wynn does not make any claim whatever to superhuman knowledge or power, making all deductions by means of the positions of the planets alone, and the results must be taken for what they are worth in the light of your experience.

In order that the greatest number of readers may use the department, each is limited to asking one question. Your questions should be about yourself or your problems. No questions about lost articles, the stock market or gambling will be answered.

Give as much as you can of the following data: date, month, year and place of birth, the hour of the day or night if possible, and the sex.

MAKE THE MOST OF NEXT WEEK

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time.

Sunday, July 18th

This Sunday can be made into either a pleasurable or a highly idealistic, religious day. At any rate, it will be one filled with emotion, and the people born between October 23d and November 5th will not be as serious as usual. Those born on or about June 15th will be nervous and excitable and affairs of the heart will predominate in their lives.

Monday, July 19th

This is not a very good day, the morning until noon being about the only period of any consequence. The general tendencies will be toward depression and delay, and anything begun on this day will be a long time in the making. The folks born between November 5th and 17th will find it a very difficult and blue Monday, unless they take steps to make it otherwise. As these individuals are already under the influence of Saturn, and as Saturn is strong in the heavens to-day, it would be wise for them to take extra precautions against loss and watch the diet and health as much as possible. The men and women born on June 16th, while under the warm and pleasant rays of Venus, will nevertheless be inclined to talk too much in the evening and should guard their writings and sayings.

Tuesday, July 20th

Here is a peach of a day! The entire time from early in the morning until midnight is splendid for most anything, and especially good for those who celebrate their birthdays between November 17th and October 1st. Make new plans, start fresh business, and take advantage of new and sudden opportunities to-day. The evening is most auspicious for social life, but also colored by a tendency to overdo and to an oversupply of animation. Those born on June 17th will find it a happy time, but should guard against unconventionality.

Wednesday, July 21st

A rather nondescript day, the only ones affected particularly being the group born between October 1st and 15th. These folks will find it an active time, with a slight stimulation entering into their affairs. Emotional interests will be uppermost in the lives of those born on or near June 18th.

Thursday, July 22d

Another splendid business day, good for artists, mechanics, bankers, lawyers, and professional people; a profitable one for most everybody except those under unfavorable aspects at the present time. The individuals who celebrate their natal anniversaries between December 15th and 28th will find it a most fortunate day for them, and as many of these people are engaged in writing and advertising work, it would be wise for them to take advantage of to-day. After 5 p. m., however, the evening is not a fortunate one, and sudden happenings of an unpleasant nature may be expected. The love affairs of those born on June 19th will prosper along about this time.

Friday, July 23d

The only good period in the morning is from twelve to twelve thirty at noon. This is a favorable time for pushing financial matters, but you should also guard against extravagance. Transact no financial matters after twelve forty. The rest of the day is pleasant with stress centering around emotional and artistic matters. The evening should be very pleasant socially for those born between December 28th and January 11th and likewise for those born on June 20th or 21st.

Saturday, July 24th

Saturn is prominent again to-day, bringing delay and disappointments. The stationary position of Mercury will stir things up a trifle, however, bringing unusual happenings in the vicinity of the noon hour. From noon until one thirty-six is a good period for financial matters. From one thirty-six to two forty-eight, however, is not very good, and it would be well to guard against overdoing, and watch out for fires and accidents. After three o'clock in the afternoon the rest of the day is favorable and the evening is splendid for social affairs and out-of-the-ordinary pursuits. The aspects of the day apply especially to those who were born between January 11th and 26th. Those who entered the world on or about June 22d will be happy and contented in their affairs connected with domestic, social, and emotional interests.

THE WHOLE WEEK

Each year when the Sun transits its own place upon arriving at your anniversary of birth, affairs in general improve, and you may enter upon any new undertakings with assurance.

Watch out for deceptive friends and schemes and a tendency to misjudge business matters if you were born on or around August 17th, for Neptune is still throwing its worrisome, imaginative ray in the direction of your Sun.

Try to direct the influence of Uranus, which is now upsetting you, if you were born on March 20th of any year. This disintegrating force is making you restless, stirring up a strong desire for travel and a general discontent in the conditions now surrounding you. If you employ the Uranus ray in a traveling position of some sort it will help that restless feeling a great deal.

Cheer up, you November 12th people. Old Man Saturn is harassing you, I know, but it can't last forever, and although I know this seems like a poor joke to you, feeling as you do now, nevertheless remember that when things cannot get any worse they must get better. Here is an encouraging thought for you. Better be glad Saturn is hitting you now in the warm weather with his cold, congestive force rather than in the wintertime, because you would certainly feel the influence in connection with your health much stronger. You see we always have something to be thankful for.

And, gracious me! The February folks are just about now getting the full benefit of Jupiter's influence in their lives. Push all your affairs at this time, and have a bushel basket waiting for the good things. The more effort people who were born around February 13th and 14th exert, the greater will be the reward.

Answers to Questions

Will I marry the man I love? Born October 29, 1907. M. M.

You will hardly be able to marry any one until the year 1927. Get a firm grip on yourself and try to rise above this despondent attitude you've gotten into. Forget about men during 1926 because you won't get on well with them. Get some other interest that will bring you out of yourself. I assure you if you keep out in the sunlight as much as possible, take up some study that is very interesting to you—you are interested in scientific

work, aren't you?—and make yourself keep cheerful, you will turn this present Saturn influence in the right direction.

Should I follow a business career or marry? Born July 1, 1901. MRS. D. K.

As far as your ability is concerned you know as well as I do that you have the qualities that are essential for success—either in business or in the making of a home. In fact, both qualities are so strong that you could carry on both at one time. I feel you will never be contented to leave the practical, systematic order of things out of your life any more than you could leave the sympathetic, home-loving, sweet element out of it. So—I guess it is just a case of preference on your own part. You might keep your eyes open for some sort of position that would fill both these bills, which would make you happy, I am sure. If you can do this—I would advise you to refrain from marrying until the year 1931, as before this time rolls around, you will have gone through a tremendous change of ideas and thought. The man you might marry now would not be acceptable to you after that time, I am afraid.

Will I make a success of detective work here or should I return East? Born February 27, 1896, 4 p. m. EFFIE.

Frankly, I can see that you are nervous and lay a great deal of stress on your health, but I cannot see where your underlying constitution is poor. In fact, you have a configuration in your chart that will enable you to recover from almost any illness. Is it possible for you to take a rest for the remainder of this year? There are planetary influences at work in your chart right now that will make you suffer financially and in health all during the rest of 1926. You are going through a period of change that every one goes through at thirty years of age, and the years 1927 and 1928 will see you definitely on your feet—bigger and better than ever. If it is at all possible, please give up detective work for the next six or eight months. You will be injuring yourself by continuing it at the present time. You are liable to suffer a loss right now, too. See that you are protected by insurance in all departments of your life. Watch your diet and keep your vitality up.

Would I make a success as a milliner? Born March 14, 1902, Philadelphia. M. O.

Yes, indeed! I think, however, that you are going to get married this year. In fact, you are going to marry several times. This first marriage will end in 1928, and will transpire some time during the coming fall to a man whom you do not know now. The whole affair will come about very suddenly. Remember this, however, that you can turn the same aspects that mean marriage into business channels. If you resist the impulse to marry you will benefit through business connections.

For what am I suited? Born February 18, 1912. MISS E. W.

You should be connected in some way with the theatrical or motion-picture business. You are an excellent saleslady and you are unconsciously selling all the time. If you could become connected with some large enterprise where you could sell it would be splendid, more so if connected with theatrical business of some sort. You have plenty of time to decide yet, of course, but you could also paint stage scenery.

For what occupation am I best suited? Born February 9, 1898, 7.15 a. m. M. L. F.

It seems that welfare work, picking out the right people to fill positions; something in which you could use your ability to study human nature and its problems, would be the ideal occupation for you. A position in the personnel department of a large organization where you could have free rein would suit your abilities admirably. I think, however, that you will get married this year, or become connected perhaps with banking and investment. Watch out for a period of poor health in December, 1927. Your mother's health will improve remarkably this year. The year 1926 is a good period for both of you and affairs will progress.

Should I sell this year? Born October 20, 1867—a. m. MRS. E. F.

Thank you very much for your kind remarks. I am indeed glad that you like our department so well and have been such a constant reader. Do not sell your house, or anything else for that matter, until the latter part of December or the first part of January, 1927. You will not get your price before that time. Watch your health this summer.

Have I much to which I may look forward? Born March 3, 1903. E. S.

Yes, indeed. The next two or three years are going to be quite eventful for you, and I urge that you take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way. Especially be ready to branch out for yourself this summer. You will get a new business offer of

some kind, I am sure, and I urge you to take it. Good luck to you, and keep optimistic whatever you do. Your nature is one that has a hard time putting itself across because of an inferiority complex. Forget this. People recognize your true worth, if you do not, and think you are a great deal better than you yourself think.

Do you see a change of surroundings this year? Born May 28, 1900, 10.30 p. m.
MISS M. B.

I see something, Miss B., which I am happy to be able to tell you about. It is a satisfaction to know that I may save you some difficulty. In August—the 17th and 18th—and again in November—the 11th, 12th, and 13th—stay away from fire, do not ride in a car, and, in general, be careful of a light accident on the days mentioned. I wonder what kind of work you do? You could write newspaper and magazine articles, and if you are not doing this, try reporting for a while, as you will make a success of this I am sure. You can likewise sell, but the newspaper profession will eventually be your line. Watch out for financial depression in January, April, and October, 1927. Figure closely at these times.

When will things brighten up for me? Born November 6, 1892. USELESS.

"Useless," indeed. My dear Miss S., no human being on the globe is useless, and I want you to snap out of this attitude at once. Scorpio people take reversals so hard, and that is just why they have had this transit of Saturn, in order that they might develop some patience and forbearance. You are just coming out of the woods, and 1927 will put you definitely on your feet. There are a number of good periods just ahead of you, and two years from now you will have forgotten all about the unpleasant period you have just gone through. Buckle down to the problems of life now. The worst is over. Saturn will not bother your Sun again for another thirty years. This likewise applies to all the people born between the 21st of October and the 20th of November.

What does the future hold for me? Born January 10, 1907, 8 p. m. D. V.

This will not be printed in time to answer your question about school, but because I know that your aspects for health are not so good this year, I am interested to know how you came out on your graduation. I should say that there was much delay and disappointment attending the occasion. You have a tremendous future ahead of you, however, after 1926, and I urge you to get in connection with big business as soon as possible. There is no doubt in my mind but that you are going to be the executive—the head of a concern or organization. Keep your goal in sight and you will rise to unlimited heights. The disappointments of this year are merely a test of your endurance, and I know you'll win.

Would I be wise in marrying the young man with whom I am now going? Born November 15, 1906. I. F.

I am afraid not, my dear. You are now under Saturn's influence and will continue to be throughout 1926. As you have probably read elsewhere in this department, Saturn restricts, delays, and disappoints. I doubt very much if you could manage marriage this year, anyway, but in case you can do so, take my advice and delay it for a while. The latter part of 1927 or in 1928 you will have a wonderful aspect for marriage, at which time there will be a love affair of tremendous importance for you. If you marry before that time, you will find that love will turn cold for you, so to speak.

Are there brighter times for us? Man, born January 23, 1877; woman, born August 23, 1885. MRS. W. A. C.

It is too bad, Mrs. C., that you did not tell me what it is you are planning to do. It is impossible for me to give you a definite answer about an event if I do not know the event. You and your husband both have a very happy and fortunate year ahead of you, but Mr. C. should push all his affairs during 1926 in preparation for the dull time in 1927. During the rest of this year, however, both of you may push everything to a successful conclusion and should take advantage of all opportunities.

Have we any chance for happiness? Man, born February 23, 1886; woman, born March 16, 1899. MISS B. A.

I see no reason why you have not have every chance for happiness. You will have a tendency, after marriage, to dwell too much upon little imagined hurts and slights. You are too sensitive. Try to overcome this. Keep the man thinking you are too big to notice these little things.

The Friend in Need

Department conducted by Laura Alston Brown

WHAT could be nicer, at this time of vacations, than a good letter from a really happy and contented wife? I have one. Come, all of you, and read it with me.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am just twenty years of age, although I have been married a year. My husband is twenty-one years old, and I think he is the best and most wonderful husband on earth.

I have a wonderful father and mother. My father and mother are the same pals and sweethearts as of the past. My mother has always been a pal to me, and I thank her all the more now, than I did at the time I was at home.

I would like to give Worried a little piece of advice. I went with a boy for about three years, and I thought I was in love with him very much. I know different now.

He was of a different religion than I am. We were engaged to be married, although my mother and father both opposed the marriage. We had an argument over our religion, and he left and went North and said when I would change my mind and join his church that he would come back.

I was such a fool then that I did not realize that he didn't love me and I didn't love him, or religion would have made no difference to us. Well, anyhow, I finally wrote and told him that I had changed my mind, and for him to come back, and all of it was against my mother's wishes. He came back and kept putting it off from time to time to join his church.

Well, I was no longer the fool then, for it opened my eyes, and I just told him to go and never come back again. I have seen him once since then, and that was by accident. I later found out that he said that he did not love me, but I was the only decent girl that he could get to go with him, and that when he married, he wanted to marry a nice girl. I was so blind to what I thought was love I would not listen to what my mother and father told me.

After I broke with him I started going with the most wonderful boy on earth, and I am married to him now, and my mother and father both love this boy as they would if he was their own flesh and blood.

So, Worried, just take your mother's advice and let this man go his way, for there will come another one far better than he was, and if you do not listen to your mother's advice no good will come to you in the end.

I just want to add that this boy I went with is married now to one of the worst kind of girls, and they have not hardly anything to eat and wear, for he gambles all of his money away.

A HAPPY WIFE.

Thanks for your very splendid letter. I do like to hear from happy wives.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been reading your columns for some time, and find the point of view of the contributors, as well as yours, very interesting. Now here is where I come in. I wish to give my opinion on petting parties.

Every one loves to be loved, and if love is not shown at home a child is susceptible to any one who comes along.

I am twenty years old, and you may or may not believe it, but since I was fourteen my father has never kissed me unless decency demanded it. To a child used to being petted and loved this spelled tragedy. It does not leave a pleasant feeling to visit homes where the children are held and loved, and to know that although the love is at home it is no longer shown in actions. Because I love to be loved is the main reason I started to allowing boys to kiss me, and when I was told all those delightful lies about being the one and only one, and that I was the only one they like to kiss.

Oh, well, you know the line that is handed to girls!

The fellows actually think the girls believe. The girls are as dumb as some of us look. I enjoyed it all just as much as if I didn't know every girl is told the selfsame thing. I have always stayed straight.

I went out with the only boy I have ever cared anything about not long ago and we had quite a little talk. We were talking about girls going wrong, and he seemed to think a man was privileged to ruin any number of girls.

I told him I thought a man should come to the altar as clean as any girl. I asked him if he wanted to marry a girl who was cheap, and, no, of course not. He is a hypocrite! He is privileged to marry a sweet, little, innocent girl.

I have never felt more disgusted in my life. I do not believe a girl should tell about her past when she marries because, no matter how broad-minded and good a man may be, he will never have the faith in her he had before he knew and she is better than he, no matter how bad she is.

A woman always loves deeper than a man.

MISS SAN DIEGO.

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have just finished reading your little corner. I have been searching it to see if there wasn't some case that would apply to me, but as there isn't I want your wonderful advice, and need it, too.

I am a young girl of eighteen and have been disappointed in my one and only love affair.

When I came up North here from Louisville, Kentucky, I was sixteen and considered pretty, not that that is important. I became very popular with the opposite sex and had my choice. I did not fancy any one in particular, and went out with my friends and had a good time without these so-called necking parties.

Last summer I met a fellow from Louisville, Kentucky, and fell for him because he came from my home town.

I love him with all my heart, and I know I always will. He's my ideal Kentucky boy.

However, we both loved each other very dearly during the summer months, and we planned to be married in about two years or three. So far so good.

We had a quarrel about a trivial matter, something I had said that insulted him. Well, we broke up. I returned all his gifts and that was the finish.

Then in the fall I met him back at school. I said I was sorry. We began again, only not as we used to be. We have been going on every since. Just friends. He is wonderful to me, only never takes me out, only to take me home when I meet him. Recently we took a walk and he told me that all we could ever be would be just good friends.

He said he didn't love any girl, and that he thought a good deal of me. He also said that there was no other girl for whom he cared more than for me.

He has changed. He goes out with different girls and gets crushes on them for a while, but always comes back for a while with me. Once he told me that he didn't want me to reckon that he liked me. Dear Mrs. Brown, you've handled all kinds of love affairs. Isn't there some way to gain his love back again? There are times that some little things he does and says show he must love me. He must love me. I can't believe he doesn't. My best girl friend said I show that I loved him too much. When I heard this I began to show indifference which got me no further. He knows I pal around with different fellows; in fact, his friends, but it makes no difference to him. How can he be so cold to one he loved and often said he would die for? Lately I haven't seen much of him. I honestly believe that he loves me best, and always will. This is my only consolation. Tell me, Mrs. Brown, is there any chance to make him love instead of like me? He is not very fickle. Don't tell me to give him up. I can't, as you must understand.

K. Y.

Just keep on being friends.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Having been a reader of your department for a year or more I am coming to you for badly needed advice.

Married life has been hard for me, especially in regards to the money question. I have never been permitted to have charge of the money. The sum of forty-three dollars is given to me out of a salary of one hundred and fifty dollars. With that I have to provide for six children from the ages of eight to eighteen, pay the laundry bill—which I cannot do myself owing to three very serious operations—and the insurance.

Now the thing is, dear lady, he will not give me one cent above that amount—not even for clothes for the children—yet he buys anything he wishes; has an expensive make of car in which he takes his friends out far oftener than he takes his family.

With friends he is the one that jumps ahead to pay. He will loan money to any of his friends if they ask him, is very pleasant and sociable. Every one whom he meets thinks he is a wonderful person, yet in the home he is disagreeable and grouchy, sometimes not talking to me for weeks.

The home is clean. Neighbors speak of how nice and clean I keep the kiddies, and I hardly think I am cross or naggy, for he often tells people and me that he often takes advantage of my good nature. So I just can't understand, for I am all for my home

and kiddies, willing to have a good time, and am a pal to my babies. All I ask is a little fairness from him and sunshine and peace with a chance for God to be in our home and lives. Can you point out a way to help, dear lady? CONSTANT READER.

How I wish I could point out a way to you! I think there is no problem more difficult than that of discovering some way in which to show a man that he is not being fair. So many men have no sense of fair play when it comes to dealing with their feminine relatives. They are the soul of honor and are as fair as can be when dealing with outsiders, but seem to have no compunction about dealing unfairly with their feminine folk. Won't some of you women tell us what you would do in such a case?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am just seventeen, have light hair and blue eyes, and lots of people tell me I am pretty.

Although I am young, I have been around quite a bit, and at least think I know a lot about men.

My trouble is this: I went with a certain fellow about a year and a half, until I went to work in a large firm and met one of the boys in the office. He asked me a number of times to go out with him, but I always refused, for I thought it best not to be going around with any of the boys in my office.

I have left this firm since, and have gone out with this boy a number of times. Now he doesn't even pay me any attention at all, even though I work in the same building with him.

I think some one must have told him something about me, for he always came up to me first and wanted always to hold a long conversation.

Mrs. Brown, I do pet, but I don't smoke and drink, like some of the other flappers I know do. Even when I am in company with other fellows and girls and with the first boy I spoke about my mind is constantly on him.

I am considered very popular, and at dances I am rushed very much, sometimes even bored, but still I treat every one of the boys nice, but can't keep my mind off of him. What shall I do?

Do you think a girl of seventeen, a flapper like most people call me, could really be in love?

I still go out a lot with number one, like him a whole lot, but not as much as number two. Do you think I should tell him so? I know he is very much in love with me, for he tells every one so, and even expressed his feelings to my mother. Mrs. Brown, if I thought I was leading him on, as some people say I am, I would let him alone, for I don't want him to take a dose of the medicine I am taking. AN UNHAPPY FLAPPER.

Good gracious, no, little flapper! Don't tell him! Don't lead him on, but don't parade your affection for the other fellow.

That would be fatal. I think you're taking the affair just a little too seriously.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Why will the majority of boys always say: "Girls, don't pet, but stay at home, and some day the right man will come along?"

Why can't a girl pet as well as a boy? Shouldn't a boy stay unkissed, too?

If a girl doesn't kiss a boy good night, then he will never come again, and if she kisses him he usually calls again, so how can a girl tell if he likes one or the other?

Won't some of you sheiks answer my questions, please? SHEIKESS.

It seems to me we've given the boys a lot of opportunities to answer these questions, but we'll give them another one for your especial benefit, Sheikess.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have come to you for advice, and first I wish to say I'm not a young flapper. I am a woman twenty-five years old, and have been married twice, the first time in 1918, which only lasted four short months.

My husband and I separated on good terms, for I realized that I didn't love him, and told him so, and while he seemed to care for me, he told me he would give me up if I didn't love him, for he cared too much to wreck my life. He did. I came to Atlanta and got a divorce, and since the day my first husband and I separated I have never seen or heard of him and don't know what became of him.

I stayed in Atlanta and worked, getting along nicely, and fell in love with a man there. We'll call him George. In 1920 I married him and spent three very happy years with him. I thought he was in the advertising business, but after three years I learned he gambled for a living, and it most killed me. I begged him to stop and go to work,

and he always promised he would, but something would happen each time, and finally he got in trouble. I sold all my furniture and borrowed money from my people to get him out of his trouble, thinking surely it had learned him a lesson, but it didn't; we were never happy after that. He began drinking, and one year and four months ago I left him, thinking I'd wake him up to what he was doing. I love him so, Mrs. Brown, and it was killing me when I thought of him throwing his life away. I most lost my mind after I left him, for soon after I left I learned he was living with a woman and was going to the dogs, and how I suffered no one only God will ever know. Last fall I went back to him, and we went to my home town and stayed all winter. He promised never to have no more to do with this woman and to stop drinking, but he didn't do either—he drank worse every day, and one day I found wires where he had been wiring this woman that he had lived with.

It hurt me. I said some awful hard things to him, and I left again and came here to Knoxville last February and went to work, and on April 8th who came here but George. I saw him, and the end was we made up again. We were very happy for ten days, then we had a little fuss one day because he was drinking and I went uptown, and when I came home he was gone with all his clothes, and I haven't seen him since. To-day I heard he was in Kentucky and had this woman he lived with with him. Mrs. Brown, I love my husband very much. Life is not worth while without him. Do you think he will ever wake up and do right and leave this woman alone? I can stand the whisky, but I can't live with him and know he fools with her. Would you try him again or not? Please give me some advice. JEAN.

I'm afraid there isn't much hope for a case like yours. Your husband seems to have no stability at all and I doubt if you could ever depend upon him.

DEAR MRS. LAURA ALSTON BROWN: Will you help me? A question has come to me a million times: What ails me? What's wrong? Isn't there a girl somewhere in this big world of ours who is in earnest and would love to have a real breadwinner and a homemaker, I wonder?

First, I will tell you about myself. I am thirty years of age, height five feet five and three quarter inches, weight one hundred and forty-six pounds, which cuts no matter one way or another.

I am slightly baldheaded. Now, I do not worry about any of the girls. I am not girl crazy or girl shy, but I realize unless I get busy and find one I'll soon be too old.

I do not condemn the flapper in any sense of the word, but being a little old-fashioned and a hard worker I find I can't compete with the modern sheik—not I. I really envy him, but I am a home builder and far from a sheik, I think.

I know one thing you might say. I have waited fifteen years, thinking: Be patient, she will come along some time. Not yet!

J. V. P.

Hold on a minute, girls! Don't crowd.

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN: Your department has been read by me for over five years, and I can truthfully say your advice to young and old alike is wonderful.

You, Mrs. Brown, are like a mother. You know just what to say and how to say it—when to sympathize and when to reprimand. I am sure every one appreciates the great work you have done and are still doing. And now, Mrs. Brown, may I say a word to some of the flappers who have written you?

I am, like them, very young, just eighteen, and am by no means old-fashioned. You girls say you can smoke, drink, and pet, and still be as nice as the girls who do not do those things. Well, I do not see how you can do it, for one little drink means another and still another.

I have talked with girls who have been on those parties. As a matter of fact, I was at the parties myself—and asked them the next morning something about the party, and your answer was: "Did that happen? Was she there?" or "I don't remember."

Now, then, how can they account for what they do under these circumstances? They go out and pet with a boy when he himself is stewed, and then you say they are as nice as the girls who don't do those things?

Well, I don't think your powers of reasoning are logical—for my own part I don't condemn these girls, but rather feel sorry for them. They think by doing those things they are pleasing the boys and men. Yes, you are pleasing him for the hour, but after that what does he do? Goes inside and tells another fellow: "She is a pretty nice little kid. Take her out, good time." And then they laugh and say insulting things about you, and then you think they respect you.

Why not think over the things Just a Boy Friend wrote? If you don't want to take his word for it—I think he said some pretty

fine and truthful things—ask some of your boy friends you go around with, and if they are really truthful some of you may change your minds.

Mrs. Brown, do you think I am quite right in all I say? I feel sure you do, and I have a mother like the mother you try to be to those who write to you—if they only would all take your kind advice—to thank for the girl I am. And, Mrs. Brown, I sincerely wish your success may continue in the future as it has in the past. JEAN.

Thank you, Jean!

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been reading your department for some time. I most always find some amusement therein, but the letter from Boy Friend, I think, needs challenge. In the first place, why is it necessary for the men to have what they call their "fling?" Just what do they get out of it? It seems the men can do most anything and society overlooks or else looks on and laughs. If a woman has a so-called fling, she is forever an outcast.

Boy Friend says: "You'll very rarely see a fellow get fresh with a good girl." Also he says: "No, because they are the kind we aspire to make our wives, after we have had our fling playing around with girls who want the good times."

If a girl is good enough to play around with, she is good enough for a wife! Why do the men think the good girls want to stay at home waiting for some fellow to sow his wild oats? Don't the good girls want good times, too? What girl with any respect for herself wants a fellow that has been playing around with every Carrie, May, or Marie? Also I think that a fellow that goes with a girl and afterward casts slurs on her character is a fool and a coward.

GIRL FRIEND.

Good! Your arguments are clean cut and to the point! I am wondering what our Boy Friend will have to say now!

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have read the letters in your department for some time. Tonight as I read them, I happened on the letter that Heartbroken Blue Eyes wrote. May I say what I think about it?

I am a girl of seventeen years of age; have dark-brown hair, unbobbed, and dark-brown eyes. My height is five feet one and a half inches tall, and I weigh one hundred and twenty-three pounds.

I have never been out with a boy in all my life. My parents are also old-fashioned, and very strict. They will not let me go anywhere at all—not even to a movie. Mother says that a boy is never true to a girl, and if the girl goes with boys she is only making herself cheap. Of course I can't believe they are all like that. Every night when the clock hands point to nine it finds me getting ready for bed, and I never complain. I always say, "there are better days coming."

Sometimes I wish I could have some enjoyment, but what can I do?

To Heartbroken Blue Eyes I'll say to cheer up and look at things in a better way. What do you think, Mrs. Brown?

JUST CARMY.

Wake up a bit, Carmy, and be more active and alert so you will be able to enjoy more. Even under your mother's wing and protection, which is all very wholesome and good, you are missing a great deal, I feel. Life is so big and wonderful that we should prepare ourselves to receive more!

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Am going to tell you some of my troubles and see if you can help me out. I have been to road houses and have indulged in petting parties, stayed out late at nights, et cetera. I want to give others advice, so they won't make the mistake I did.

I am only twenty-one years old and I have seen lots of life and I am tired of that kind of life. If my home had been different I would not have done as I did. Every time I would go out with fellows my sister would think they were not nice, and would say things. I finally got so tired of it that I thought I would give her a chance to say things.

So went to places that were terribly rough and saw things that I shall never forget. I don't go any more because I have learned my lesson. I met a fellow I liked awfully well, but found out later he was no good.

I went out with another fellow that loved me, and went with him for six months without my people knowing it. He asked me to marry him, but I would not. I have been out with other fellows, but cannot take to them—only that one. I found out he was no good; he got arrested for stealing and will be in jail for some time.

I have been out with all kinds of fellows, and am going out with one now that likes me, but I don't care for him. Maybe if I

go out with him for a while I might learn to like him. Dear Mrs. Brown, I am terribly fickle. I get tired of a man so easily.

Would like to get your advice. I know that you have helped others, so thought you could help me. I love children and would like to have a home and raise a family, but some of my friends say that I would not be contented. I know I would.

UNHAPPY DOT.

Then that is the thing to do—get married and settle down, Unhappy Dot. It is rather foolish to let fickleness rule you so and deprive you of what you really desire—a home. Of course you would be satisfied if you make up your mind that you want to make this your accomplishment. Be sure to find a congenial helpmate.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: May I talk a few minutes? Yes, I am afraid Boy Friend will be abused, but he probably isn't expecting it from the type of girl he was defending. He sure will get a small portion from me, and he didn't step on my toes either. I don't drink, smoke, nor pet. Perhaps a few nice girls do, but I think it shows a weakness, and I would not think of doing any of these things.

I think he hit the nice girl about as hard as he did the others. He wrote: "If the good girls will only stick to their resolutions and keep themselves good, I'm sure they will be benefited by it."

I am sure I wouldn't feel that I had been benefited if I kept myself good and then some man like this one came and offered himself to me as a worthy husband.

No, Boy Friend, I wouldn't have any more use for you than you have for those girls you have been petting and drinking with. Haven't you been doing the same thing the girl has? Then I think you are on equal terms! If there is any difference, the girl is better, because I'm sure she didn't work up the affair.

I am only seventeen, and have gone out with very few boys—most of them were decent. I also have several real good boy friends at school.

I don't blame these petting boys for not wanting the petting girls, and if I were the petting girls I wouldn't want the boys either—so I guess they will have to be bachelors and old maids. Maybe some girls would gratefully accept fellows like Boy Friend, but I wouldn't if I knew anything about him.

The girls want their husbands to be just as pure as he wants his wife to be. I believe there are boys just as nice as we girls that do not do these things.

Don't flatter yourself, Boy Friend—make these girl friends of yours advertise you as much as you do them! One of my pals put me wise to a fellow, but she wasn't a petting pal.

What do the rest of you girls think about marrying the boys who pet and drink?

Mrs. Brown, I think your wonderful work is helping many people. May I come again if I need advice? SKYROCKET.

Boy Friend got his foot into it, I fear, but it is pulling forth some good arguments which I think are justly deserved. I am more than pleased you wrote in as you did, Skyrocket, and certainly—come again!

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN: Here are a set of answers to That Curious Female. We are a club of four boys and have traveled from Maine to Alaska, lived in small towns and the largest of cities. Here's our best!

Note: answers correspond to questions in April 17, 1926—to That Curious Female.

Answer No. 1: No, kiss him good night and send him home; then go to bed—you need the sleep and so does he! Experienced.

No. 2: Because he is a selfish child.

No. 3: This question is ruled out, as unnecessary.

No. 4: This is the opinion of a few narrow-minded children! Let them grow up!

No. 5: Men seek companions of their own level as a rule—exceptions of course—so if you are above these habits, you are above him. Give him the air, or tell him to reach up and grab the curbstones.

No. 6: This question was a sticker! Human nature does not change—expressions of it do. We no longer, as a rule, say a man is wealthy—"he's got jack or coin." How often do you hear automobile? It's car, buss, or boat. We speak in the shortest way possible—we poor Americans! You are wrong in accusing only men of this trait; women are not immune. Hope these help you out! Come again! THE CLUB.

Thanks, boys, for taking up this matter in your club. Hope That Curious Female sees these answers. Perhaps will have some more questions from curious ones—would you mind?

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN: So many seem to find comfort in your column. Perhaps I shall be one of the lucky ones!

Recently, only about four or five months ago, I met a fellow three years my senior. He is just the modern so-called sheik whom I adore. I might just as well say I am a modern flapper, but I do not pet, drink, or smoke. We are of the same type in almost everything.

Now, the trouble is I am not sure that he loves me. During dances or parties, if we should happen to meet, he would always be with me. Of course he dances with other girls as well as I dance with other fellows. He has never asked me to go out with him. His friends tell me they do not go out with girls, as they have a better time by themselves.

If he should not see me for three weeks he would not try to call me up or see me. His club gave a party recently, and he took it for granted I would be at a dance, so he could invite me then. As I was not there, he took any girl whom he could get for that evening.

Many times, when he is in a hurry, he just runs past me and says "Hello," otherwise he is quite attentive toward me. Don't tell me to forget him, because I never enjoy going anywhere with other boys half as much as I do with him.

How can I test his love for me? How can I win him? Do you think if he invites me to the next party his club is giving soon that he cares for me? LEO.

Test his love? My dear, how do you know whether he has any love for you at all or not? I am afraid you mean liking—infatuation. If he invites you to his club party it will mean that he prefers your company for that evening more than any one else. It looks like you were trying to exaggerate things! To win him? All I can say is be as natural as possible; get your mind on other things and be more impersonal. He will enjoy your company more if you are not self-conscious.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a young girl in my teens, and, as most other girls have a few worries over my love affairs. I am in love with a boy three years my senior. He is very difficult to understand. Sometimes when he is around me he seems to think lots of me; then again he doesn't seem to care for me. I am in love with this boy, so, Mrs. Brown, please tell me how I can make him care more for me. I have tried in every way, but don't see any changes. I know there is not another girl, because he doesn't go with any other.

Mrs. Brown, will you please publish this as soon as possible? Love to you and your corner. POPPY.

Darling child—to be anxious and fearful lest you are not pleasing helps to spell defeat. Perhaps you are trying too hard—you know there is something in that, after all. A lovable nature, radiating kindliness, is an enviable asset.

Try and cultivate this. It will help you.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: As you have helped so many young girls, I felt sure that you could help me. I am eighteen and will soon be nineteen.

I am in love with a boy twenty. He loves me, too, but my parents object to me going with him. I don't understand, for he sure is a nice, clean-hearted boy. I used to go with a college boy some and my parents were crazy about him. Now that I'm in love with this boy they don't want me to go with him. I go with him some regardless, Mrs. Brown, because I think that I am old enough to go out with boys. He surely is well behaved.

Should I give him up or go on with him against my parents' will? I have tried every way I can to make them like him. They won't allow me to stay out of the house after ten o'clock. Mrs. Brown, don't you think that is too early for a girl of my age? I work and earn my own living. WORRIED MILLY.

Try to find out your parents' objections to this young man. You say he is well behaved and he has other commendable points. Surely you are wise enough to judge his character and whether he is worthy of a girl like you, but choose your friends wisely, Milly. I would respect my parents' wishes and be obedient if I were you.

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN: So many people come to you with their troubles and are helped by your kind advice. I am an orphan girl; my mother died when I was small and I have worked. By the help of my aunt I have educated myself—that is, I am a graduate of high school and a one-year normal course.

I have been working for myself for eleven years. The place I am working at now they

have about one hundred and fifty girls employed. You know the very best step an orphan girl can make, people are bound to talk, as there is always an upstir about some girl in regard to her conduct—whether she goes out with boys on wild parties or not. The modern flapper, as we call them these days, talks more about the innocent girl than the one who tries to do right.

But the point is I am in love with one of my home-town boys who is away in another State for his health. We have been engaged for three years, but on account of him having tuberculosis, I have put him off. He is a World War veteran and contracted it during the war. His people are wealthy and he has plenty of money of his own to last him a lifetime. Besides, he is drawing a pension from the government. He is now in a government hospital, but will be able to come home by fall and has asked me to marry him and go West. My aunt passed away three weeks ago, and now I am left in the world alone again.

I am dearly in love with this man, and feel like I can never love any one else, as we have been going together for seven years.

Now, Mrs. Brown, please advise me what to do—whether to marry this man or continue to push forward in this world of gossip and trouble. HEARTBROKEN.

You know the condition of this man's health, and you, alone, will have to decide what to do. Sacrifice strongly enters in, and if you love him sufficiently to make it, no doubt you will make one individual a happier man the rest of his life. I hope there is a possibility of his being cured.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Could an old girl join your circle? I am nearly twenty-nine years old. Seeing how you have helped others, perhaps you could advise me. I never was a girl who was boy crazy, but always dreamed of a Prince Charming who would one day come to claim me. I guess all girls have their dreams of an ideal. I met him when I was nearing my twenty-fourth birthday. Up until that time I had had one proposal of marriage, but had never been engaged, as I did not care for him, but when I met Jack I seemed to know somehow he was my ideal. It seemed mutual. He took me to a couple of dances and about a month after he asked me to go with him steady I promised.

For two years we kept steady company. We had an understanding when he finished his trade—he was learning printing—we would be married. Mrs. Brown, I was true to him in all things, but I heard he was not so true. He had been seen with another girl, and when I asked him he said: "Now, Verna, here is where trouble starts. There is always some one ready to knock but never boost. Here is where we have to have an understanding. Never believe anything any one tells you." He said the girl he was seen with lives on the same street and they happened to meet. Because a fellow is engaged is it a crime for him to be seen even walking a block with another girl, he asked. Really, Mrs. Brown, I felt ashamed of myself for doubting him. But how easily we are deceived! Another year passed, and I shut my ears to all the stories I heard. But little doubts kept creeping in my mind, but I would chase them away and remember he had said he loved me only, and to prove it all he bought me a wonderful diamond.

My happiness was complete. The next June we were to be married, which would bring me near my twenty-eight birthday. There was a whole year to prepare, but, Mrs. Brown, the suffering of a lifetime was crowded in that year. Three months after he gave me the ring I went to a party with a girl friend. Jack was going to lodge. Imagine my surprise when I saw him there and with another girl.

Then all I heard must have been true. I asked him for an explanation.

He just laughed and said, "Oh, I just wanted an evening off." I told him he could have them all. I gave him back his ring.

A week later he came to my home and begged me to take him back. I did, and three times in one year the same thing happened.

May of 1925, just one month before we were to be married, he was on a wild party—it was too awful to describe, and I could not believe it. When he called I asked him. He said: "Is that all you heard? Well, you don't know the half of it."

Well, Mrs. Brown, it just seemed as if my heart died. If that was the way he acted before marriage what would it be after? And so, Mrs. Brown, a year ago now, I was looking forward to a home and an ideal, to-day I have nothing to look forward to. In all the four years I went with him he had kept the vilest company, drank, gambled, and hadn't one penny saved toward getting married, while I had everything any average working girl had.

I have my hope chest yet. Perhaps when I am old I can look at them and think. Mrs. Brown, there are true men in the world, but why is it the opposite always attracts? After

a year he has written twice and wants me to take him back. My heart says "Yes," but, Mrs. Brown, which is easier, to give him up now or marry him and perhaps have to leave him then? DISILLUSIONED GIRL.

Leave that man right where he is, my dear. Don't waste your time.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been a reader of your corner for many years, but have never had occasion to write until just now. I have been worrying about this affair for many nights, so I decided I would write and ask your opinion about it.

I have known a young fellow for quite some time, but have never gone out with him. Last week he asked me if I would like to go to a basket-ball game with him, and there was to be dancing after the game.

I said "Yes," as I have been attracted to this fellow, as he is very tall, blond, and very good looking. We were to meet at a certain place at seven thirty. The game started at eight, and it was a twenty-minute's ride from where we were to meet to get there.

He is a basket-ball player, and naturally he had to be down there at eight o'clock. Well, I got there at twenty-five minutes to eight, and he was nowhere in sight. I waited until eight o'clock, thinking that probably something had delayed him.

At eight o'clock I went down to the game alone, as I knew every one down there, and would be able to talk to any one there. I saw him in the gym playing, but did not have a chance to speak to him until after the game. As soon as it was over he came to me and told me that he had been there at seven thirty, and had waited about two minutes, and had taken the bus back again. When he had ridden about two blocks he saw me coming, but had never bothered to get off the bus.

Of course I was really mad, and told him so. He began to get very friendly and affectionate toward me. After a while a crowd of fellows came over and began to joke and say funny things. Before I knew it Jack had disappeared, and later I saw him sitting down in the gym.

When the music began for the dancing he still sat there. I refused several invitations to dance, thinking he would come out and ask me to dance. At five minutes to twelve I went up in the girl's room and put on my hat and coat. Looking down into the gym I saw him looking out into the hall, as if looking for me, and then he got up and began to dance with some girl.

I heard afterward that right after that dance he had gone out and put on his hat and coat and had gone outside. Of course he did not know that I was upstairs. After it was all over I went downstairs and looked all over for him, as he was to take me home, but could see no trace of him.

I then went outside, and didn't see him there, either. Seeing an old boy friend of mine I went over and asked him if he had seen Jack come out. He said that he hadn't seen him come out, but that he had seen him with his hat and coat on before the last dance was over.

This fellow had his car with him, and he asked me if I wanted him to drive me home. As he is a very good friend of mine I let him take me home. He also belongs to the same lodge as Jack does, and they are going to have a meeting a week from Monday. He asked me if I wanted him to explain to Jack that I had waited for him, and, not finding him there, had gone home with this fellow.

I said yes, as I didn't want any hard feelings to come from this affair. I am what you call "wild" about this fellow, and have been worrying for days whether this will be the end of our friendship. Do you think I am to blame or whether he is? I will be patiently waiting for your reply. WAITING.

Why make an appointment for seven thirty if you were not going to keep it at seven thirty? That caused all the trouble.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am just eighteen, with long, brown wavy hair, blue eyes, a fair complexion, and I am five feet five inches tall. People say I am very beautiful.

One day the manager for whom I work told me I look like a princess, and from that time on everybody calls me "Princess."

About a month ago I met a handsome young man, two years my senior. We go out frequently during the week and I enjoy his company. He says he simply adores me, and has asked to marry me. Although I love him I feel that I could not marry for a while. Please tell me, Mrs. Brown, if I am doing right.

PRINCESS.

What could be wrong about it, Princess?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: May another spanked flapper have her little say in your columns?

It would not be strange to hear some of the pampered darlings favor spankings—for other girls, but how one who suffers this form of punishment herself can approve of it is more than I understand.

Another thing that I don't understand is why so many writers in newspapers and magazines seem to think unmarried girls ought to be spanked to make them behave, but that a married flapper may do as she pleases, sometimes leading younger girls into mischief, and shouldn't have to account to anybody.

Of course, no one would favor wife beating as a general practice, and it may sound mean and hateful of me to say it, but I felt a thrill of satisfaction when I read the letter some weeks ago signed Perplexed, in which she admits her husband spanks her for flirting.

I know several young married women who deserve spanking more than I do, and the worst one is my own sister—and she don't get it.

My stepmother has always been very strict with me, and though I am nearly eighteen, and as tall as she is, she still spanks me for the most childish offenses, and my father would beat me half to death if I resisted her.

I catch it for being careless and untidy, for sassing her, getting low marks in school, staying out too late, and all such things.

What makes me the maddest is that my married sister, who causes me to get punished lots of times by tellings things on me and encouraging my stepmother to spank me, seems to love to stay in the room and look on.

I have to gather up my skirts and drape myself over my stepmother's knees when she says so. I don't dare to kick or struggle, but it stings and smarts, so that I can't help squirming, and my sister laughs at me for that, and says I look so funny in that position on account of being so tall. I guess I do, but she oughtn't to make fun of me, and I think she ought to try to get me out of scrapes instead of getting me into them.

She behaves lots worse than I do. She don't care a thing about what her husband wants or says, she goes with a fast crowd he don't approve of, and she flirts with every man she meets, from the minister on down to the ice man.

I have told her husband he ought to spank her, and spank her hard. She'll stand for it all right. She wouldn't give up the easy time she's got just on account of getting what she deserves occasionally.

When I marry I am going to quit flirting and try to respect my husband and set a good example for younger girls. If a wife won't do that there ought to be some way to make her do it. PROTESTING FLAPPER.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Auburn-haired Bobbie makes me just boil—don't smoke, don't drink, but lets the boys kiss her just once! Bah! I have listened to that kind so much they make me laugh.

My home was in Hollywood before I married. I had plenty of admirers, but I made pals of them instead.

I could take a drink, smoke a cigarette, listen to their troubles and business matters, listen to a raw story, and laugh at it whether I enjoyed it or not, but when it came to kissing and petting I always asked: "Do you get a kick out of petting every girl you meet? I do not enjoy it a bit, but if you must kiss me, why go ahead!"

And I have had many a boy say, "I wish there were more girls like you."

Make them see how foolish it really is, but show them you can be a good fellow. And I believe that is what the flapper does. I believe and trust to the full extent, in the present day and coming generation. My husband enjoys entertaining his friends at home because I can forget myself and be one of them, but they never overstep themselves. And they all love to come to our house. I am a good cook and a clean housekeeper, but not so much that it makes him uncomfortable. Girls do try to flirt with him, but as he told one of the boys, "She might be prettier than my wife, but there is no one who can be a wife, a pal, a sweetheart, and a trouble confider like my wife after six years of married life."

Yes, I have two daughters, and I want them to be real up-to-date American girls. Then I know I will not have the worries I would otherwise, for they will be open and aboveboard with all they do.

Also find the right man and keep him. Don't ever change once you marry, because the other fellows may be worse.

Oh, yes, I dance, golf, shoot, tennis, any sport he wishes. JUST ME.

Every one to his own faith.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: This letter is being written by inspiration. It is a testimonial. Having read eight issues of your department, I find no reader or writer has a problem equal to mine. I write not for help, but to give some ideas gained from the old reliable teacher—experience. I am a girl, eighteen years old, have black eyes, and brown, bobbed hair. I am five feet seven and a half inches tall, and weigh one hundred and forty pounds.

I cannot use the word beautiful, in describing myself, for the word "stunning" or "gorgeous" might fit me better. Conceited? Not a particle!

But I can read my mirror. My age being eighteen, you will perhaps think I could not possibly give you much information, but I have gone alone and uncompanioned with

boys ever since I was twelve years old. Quite a lot I have learned in those six years.

I have known the touch of a lover's kiss in farewell. I have held a lover dying in my arms. I have danced from 8 p. m. until 4 a. m. with boys. I have known the true grip of a friend's hand in farewell.

And, yes! I have even loved myself once. I loved too deeply. I paid the price, and I, smiling, pass over it.

I live by myself, and have since my graduation from high school last spring

I work for a new firm of lawyers at present, and there isn't a one of them I would care for at all, and still they admire me. I have been called a "magnet." Some call me the "Spanish Señorita," with my coal-black eyes. But that is of no consequence.

What I want to say is this: Girls, never kiss a boy, unless engaged.

Car rides, parties, dances, et cetera are absolutely the road to destruction.

Never let your emotions overcome you. Keep cool, level-headed, and unmoved.

The boy who loves you wants you perfect. He will come some day. So stay and wait.

Home life, mother and dad are the best instructors and supervisors.

Last, but not least, when love does come, you will know it, and don't be afraid. The ceremony will follow soon. I should like to say a word to the boys. For every one boy who keeps himself straight and clean there are ten girls.

From one who has traveled down that age-old path, that has no return, yet has an entrance at the side which reads, "Only those who have sinned against God, and are forgiven entereth here." I have entered that door, and have erased the memory of how it looked at the bottom of the path. For I have risen higher than I ever fell. Love to all.

EXPERIENCED.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: May I say a few words to Worried?

I am a young married woman of twenty-three. My baby is in my arms.

To Worried: How can you change your religion and believe it, if you were not brought up that way? Can you stop and say, "Two and two are five," when you were taught that it was four? No! I don't know what religion you are, but we are all trying for the same place, "Heaven."

I believe in the Bible, in the separation of church and state, and the strict enforcement of the law.

Worried, to be happy be true to yourself and to your mother who bore you, and stick to your own belief. READER.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am just another girl nineteen years old craving advice. I have black-brown hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, am five feet four inches and weigh one hundred and twenty pounds.

I am very pretty, and my looks are very dangerous to my happiness. That is the main thing.

All I would have to do is to go outdoors and wink my eye at a fellow, and he would eat out of my hand.

I am in love with two fellows. The first one I fell madly in love with two years ago. He was from a big city, very handsome and sheiky. I think he cared for me in his way.

My mother liked him very much and approved of his keeping my company. People talked and said he was false and so on, but he denied all these accusations. I could not believe them myself.

Early last winter this fellow returned to his home and I have since learned to care considerably for another. Now this time my mother dislikes the young man, and claims he is not fit for my company. He likes me very much and I like him.

Now, Mrs. Brown, all I ask is advice. You may scold me, reprimand me in any form, but help me to decide which way to turn. What shall I do? Give up B. and go back to H.? I am all upset. My mother keeps me in, will not even let me go out walking in the day, and I get black looks on B.'s account. My mother will not take me in her confidence. The only confidante I have is my fifteen-year-old cousin. But she is only good to listen. Please advise me and I will follow it.

DANGEROUS DAGGER EYES.

My first suggestion is to forget your beauty and then you'll be all right.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a girl fifteen years of age, blond hair, blue eyes, and considered good looking.

My mother died when I was three years old. My father is living and does not believe in letting me go out.

I have a sister and any place I go I have to go with her. I can't go anywhere with my girl friends unless she goes, too. Now, all the other girls go out with their friends, and when they ask me to go I must say no. I am sick and tired of going with my sister, and often instead of going I stay home.

I like dancing, and can dance good, and I like a good show. But many times I stay home because my sister goes with me.

I have to do all the housework besides my schoolwork. I don't think it fair. Do you?

Mrs. Brown, please give me some advice. I never have any pleasure, and many times feel like leaving home. DISCOURAGED.

Don't leave home. Cheer up! Things could be much worse.

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am seventeen years old, but look older. I am five feet nine inches tall, and have dark-brown eyes and hair. I am fairly good looking, and dress up to date. I pet, drink, and smoke to a certain extent, but I don't believe in letting a fellow make a fool out of me.

I play the piano and dance and know just about the cutest fellows here.

I am neither fast nor slow, a loud mouth, nor an old maid.

When a fellow brings me home he doesn't seem to know when it is time to go home, and I always have to tell him.

I leave them stay pretty late, and my mother never tells me in front of fellows when it is time to go to bed, like some mothers do.

Why is it that they insist on staying longer and never ask you for a date when they leave?

Do you think that fellows do not like tall girls—that is, do not like to take them out? It seems that when I have a date it is with a fellow shorter than I am.

Should you act like you like a fellow the first time you go out with him, so that he might call again?

I am glad I can say that I don't push myself on any one, and never ask fellows to take me anywhere or dance with me.

Every one tells me to "be myself," but I think I am, but I am not satisfied with that advice, and I want some from you, if you will be kind enough to advise me. JEAN.

What say, girls?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been an eager reader in your department for nearly three years, and I think you are a wonderful adviser. As I believe you are frank, I hope you will be so with me, as I feel that the advice you give me will make a world of difference in my life.

Mrs. Brown, I am a young married lady, thirty years of age. Every one tells me that I really don't look more than a girl. I am respected and looked upon as an ideal wife and mother—and truly that has always been my highest aim. My hubby and sons and our home are my happiest thoughts. I live for their happiness, for I love them with an everlasting love, and I feel that my love is returned. At times I am so happy; then again I feel that my hubby can't love me as he ought to and do the things he does. He knows I am true to him in every respect. We have been married fourteen years and I have loved him as a wife and mother. He was very wild when we were married, but I clung to him, for better or worse, and now at times I feel when he is so good to me God has blessed me for what I have suffered.

Mrs. Brown, I don't mind the suffering if I hold first place in my hubby's heart. He comes first of all in my heart! I have always petted and humored him in every way and I know he would never have found any one to love him as I do. He is just crazy about our two darling boys. One is twelve and the other ten years old. They are fine, bright boys. People are always telling him what a fine family he has. He also tells others what a dear wife he has and how smart I am and what a nice house I keep.

I do try to make our home bright and happy, but he never tells me that he loves me or what a good wife I am to him. Why is it that he tells others and doesn't tell me? He is so good to give us what we want, yet I would rather not have so much and get lots of love.

Mrs. Brown, my hubby is in the bus business, and, of course, he is thrown with all classes of people. He is very lively and likes to have a lot of fun, and has a friendly disposition. He never meets a stranger but what he is very jolly. He likes to talk with girls and have fun with them. I am not that way, for there are so many girls would wreck a good home and then laugh at you.

Mrs. Brown, don't think that I don't want my hubby to speak to a girl. I like for him to talk and laugh with everybody in a decent way. I more than meet him halfway. I have never smoked, drank, or went on any petting parties in my life. He was the first and only man I ever kissed—and not then until we were engaged to be married. I hope you will understand. I am not condemning any one; I believe in every one having a jolly time to his or her notion. Each one of us is accountable for our actions.

I have black bobbed hair, naturally curly. I am fair complexioned; have dark-gray eyes and am well built. I don't wear extremely short dresses, use powder or rouge lightly, and am considered one of the best-looking ladies in our town. I am not bragging, but stating true facts, so you will understand.

I feel that my love and prayers have helped to change hubby wonderfully. But the question is, do you really think that my husband could love me truly, and yet never tell me so? He has never left the house in the fourteen years that we have been married without kiss-

ing the boys and me good-by unless he was pouting with me. I always have to do the making up, whether I am right or wrong. He has a dreadful temper.

Now, Mrs. Brown, he has caused a very bad story to get out on him just by talking with the wrong kind of people. He told me that he would have given his right arm rather than cause me to suffer as I did, as it nearly broke my heart. I am always telling him to please live a straight life, so as to set an example for our dear boys. I know he wants to, but it is such a temptation not to, sometimes, I guess.

When things happen like that, I feel like going one way and let him go the other. But there are our boys to consider—our home and my husband need me so.

I am so anxious to get your advice in LOVE STORY MAGAZINE. I feel that your answer will help me to feel stronger and fight for this love that I feel will be the greatest thing in my life. A DEVOTED WIFE AND MOTHER.

Do be strong and love the more! It is foolish to suffer because love and appreciation of your efforts have not been expressed. You cannot be responsible for another's lack. They are the real sufferers themselves! Let bright, happy thoughts, filled with unselfish love, help you to polish the rough places smooth.

Mrs. Brown will be glad to solve in these pages problems on which you desire her advice. Your letters will be regarded confidentially and signatures will be withheld.

Address Mrs. Laura Alston Brown, Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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DANDRUFF?

Bottle Bacilli, the cause of Dandruff. Illustration Reproduced from Hazen's "Diseases of the Skin." C. V. Mosby, Publisher.

Dandruff is a disease difficult to cure, but easy to check. Read below about the best way to combat it.

It's a danger signal!

DANDRUFF is a danger signal. If you have it you should do something about it.

Perhaps you never knew it before, but dandruff is a germ disease. It spreads by infection from personal contact, as with the common use of combs and brushes. Children, for instance, are never troubled with dandruff until actually infected by some contact.

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Try Listerine this way. Used systematically, the results are almost miraculous! — *Lambert Pharmacal Co., St. Louis, U. S. A.*

LISTERINE

— and dandruff simply do not get along together