TELL SOMEBODY ELSE HOW GOOD IT IS

LOVE STORY MAGAZINE

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EVERY WEEK

JUNE 12, 1926

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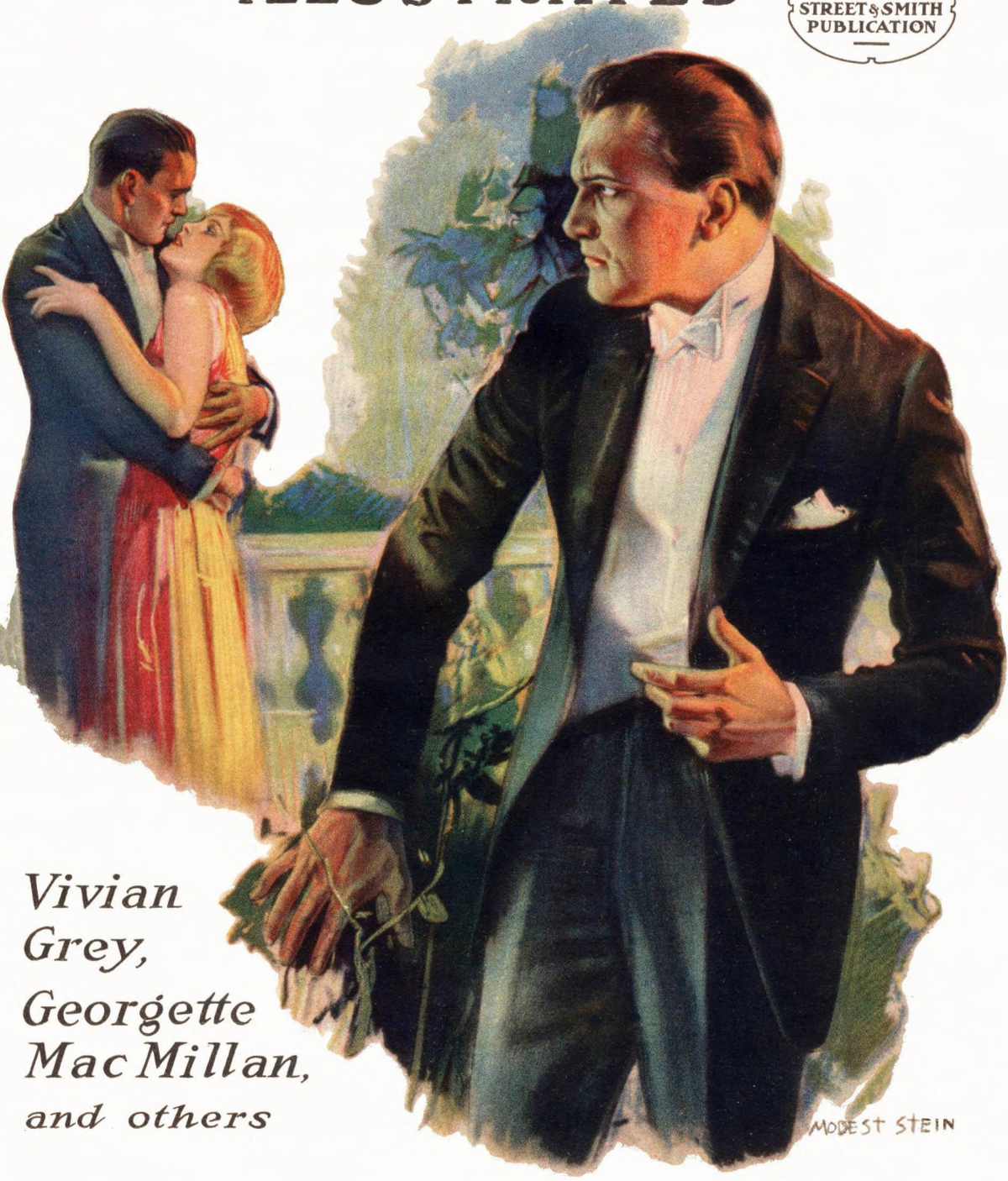

Vivian Grey, Georgette MacMillan, and others

Love Story Magazine

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY

Vol. XXXVIII **Contents for June 12, 1926** **No. 3**

CONTINUED STORIES

NOVELETTE AND SHORT STORIES

POETRY

Watch Love Story Magazine for "SHIFTING SANDS," a thrilling new serial, by Margaret Gibbons MacGill

Publication issued weekly by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, Vice President and Treasurer; George C. Smith, Jr., Vice President; Ormond V. Gould, Secretary. Entered as Second-class Matter, April 21, 1921, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, $7.50. Foreign, $8.50.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, $6.00 **SINGLE COPIES, 15 CENTS**

IS LOVE A BEAUTIFIER?

DOES woman grow more beautiful when love comes into her life? Florence Wilson Dunn has written a stirring story dealing with this subject. Don't fail to read it in next week's LOVE STORY MAGAZINE. It will give you some new ideas on love as well as beauty. And is there a woman in the world who does not want to be beautiful?

* * *

YOU'VE known that sort. They're always on hand for the gay butterfly hours, but not there when real responsibilities come.

But there are many ways of showing depth of love, and perhaps those who show it least, show it most to those who have eyes to see. Isn't it true that very often a homely exterior covers a warm heart? James Hogg didn't amount to much in Mrs. Buckley's opinion. He had taken her home away—he owned everything! He had been flooding the Buckley mail box with bills which they could not pay. And then Betty took a hand. "Not a Marrying Man," by Vivian Grey, is as realistic as a story you might hear about your next-door neighbor. It is in two parts, and will begin in our next issue.

* * *

HER MAD ADVENTURE," by Georgette MacMillan, is continued in next week's LOVE STORY MAGAZINE. This story is written in Miss MacMillan's usual delightful manner, and is a stirring tale. Don't fail to read the coming installment.

* * *

AREN'T we always wanting to know false hearts from true? With the false went gold, and with the true—love, in the case of Gerald Langham. He couldn't decide which to choose. People often flounder about piteously deciding a question like this. Louisa Carter Lee has written an intensely interesting story on this theme. It has a hint of mystery and—"plenty of love!" Seek out "False Hearts and True," as one of the stories you want to read first in next week's issue of this publication.

* * *

YOU will enjoy "The Wish Venders" next week! What wish would you make if you knew that wish would come true? This was what the wish venders did! Read about the chances they gave to people to make wishes and how they made them come true, especially in the case of a big-hearted "Butter and Egg" man from the West. Excitement and action run riot throughout this striking story by that very capabale writer, Victor Thorne.

* * *

IS your husband your jailer? Helen Tempest thought hers was going to be. She married for money. Of course marriage is decidedly a bargain, but can there be a chance of its running smoothly if you do not share in all things equally? "Love's Strange Way," by Rhea Jewett, takes up the marriage question next week.

* * *

DOESN'T it mean a great deal to be loyal to your own honor and your own soul? Reward is bound to come! Guy Howard has a mighty struggle to do this. Of course a lovable girl is involved, which makes the situation all the more difficult. Kate Morris has a story ready for you in next week's LOVE STORY, telling you all about Guy's love affair. Watch for "A Gallant Heart!"

* * *

THERE will be, also, a treat in the way of poetry. L. Ozelle Mathis, whose work you have already learned to love, has written one of her most beautiful bits of verse for next week's issue of LOVE STORY MAGAZINE. Turn to page eighty and read "Response" when you get your magazine. Victor A. Berry and Celia Cheeseman will also be on the next contents page. Don't miss their poems.

Mrs. Brown will have more to say about "spanking" Watch for her department.

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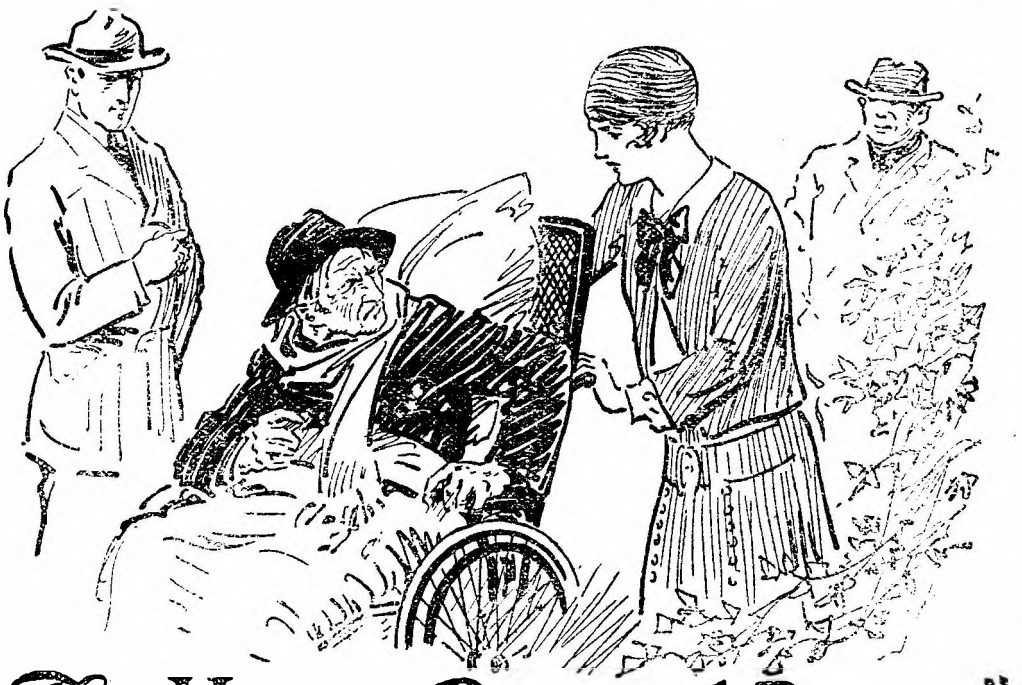


The Heart Bowed Down

by Mrs. Harry Pugh Smith

THE first time Stephen Lake saw them, the slender young girl pushing the palsied old man in a wheel chair, he thought, of course, that they were father and daughter; and, cripples being the rule, not the exception, at the famous spa where Lake himself had gone to get rid of a slight rheumatic pain in the left shoulder, acquired during his last African expedition, he would not have given the pair a second glance had it not been for the girl's extraordinary beauty.

She was of an unusual type, tall, slender, and wonderfully graceful, with something of the liquid ease of movement in her carriage which he had observed in the maidens of savage tribes whose bodies had known none of the inhibitions of our so-called civilization.

Her profile was as finely chiseled as a cameo, and she had clear, colorless skin of the most exquisite texture and deep-violet eyes as open and candid as crystal. Her small, beautifully shaped head was closely swathed about with pale-gold hair which she wore long and perfectly straight. Her mouth was sensitive of line and scarlet, the only vivid coloring about her.

With her long, graceful limbs, and the chaste, almost austere, chiseling of her features she resembled far more the classic Grecian tradition of ideal feminine beauty than that which one commonly sees embodied to-day, and it was undoubtedly this elusive but unmistakable likeness to the huntress Diana which attracted Lake's attention, himself a hunter of world-wide repute, whose eyes had been too long trained to appreciate the beauties of nature to see anything lovely in the artificial, even in the artificial charms of woman.

On his more and more infrequent visits to the haunts of civilization he had been amazed and a little bit amused, but not in the least intrigued, by the modern flapper which he had found rampant in one form or another everywhere he went. Although many of them had courted him assiduously, none had made the big-game hunter's pulse quicken a beat. But he admitted, as he stared almost rudely at the exquisite face of this strange girl, that in her classic beauty even his critical artist eye could detect no flaw. She was chastely, gloriously beautiful. It was such as she, he would have sworn, who had "launched ten thousand ships" and set all Troy in flames.

As the wheel chair came abreast of the celebrated explorer, a small pebble in the path caused it to lurch unsteadily. The old man, who was swaddled in rugs and pillows until he looked more like a mummy than a human being, burst into a stream of abuse.

"Can't you look where you're going?" he snarled, his shriveled, colorless lips writhing hideously. "Is there any reason why you should jolt the daylights out of a man?"

"I'm sorry," murmured the girl in a low voice.

A big, burly individual with a pair of cauliflower ears and a battered, pug-nosed face, who had been following the wheel chair at a short distance, moved nearer a step, but the girl shook her head at him.

"I can manage all right," she said so quietly the irascible old man in the chair did not hear.

A moment later the wheel chair and its companions vanished inside the hotel where Stephen Lake himself was staying. That they were new arrivals he knew, of course, and he waited with more impatience than he would have cared to confess for the dinner hour and a chance to see them again. Even so, although he had dallied as long as he could, he had almost finished dining before the pair which had absorbed his thoughts all afternoon made their appearance. As it happened, Orto, the proprietor of the hotel, a genial, likable fellow, was standing beside Lake's table when the old man in the wheel chair appeared on the threshold. The battered-looking fellow whom Lake had seen that afternoon was operating the invalid's chair, the girl standing beside it. Orto, on recognizing the trio, bustled forward.

"Always give Mr. Daniels and his party an inside table," he told the head waiter. "He does not like to sit near a window for fear of a draft." The sick man acknowledged his courtesy with an ungracious snarl.

Lake, however, hardly heard. His eyes were fastened with amazed chagrin on the girl. She was hideously got up in a flamboyant creation, gaudy with lace and sequins, which entirely destroyed the clean-cut appearance she had made that afternoon. Diamonds blazed on her throat and arms in a profusion far too effulgent for good taste in a public dining room, and her hair was so elaborately curled and puffed as to spoil completely the classic contours of her head.

Her cheeks and lips were becarmined with rouge, and her eyes so penciled about as to efface the lovely candor of their glance. Beautiful she still was,

even her gaudy dress and make-up could not wholly dim her radiant loveliness, but the rare and exquisite charm of the chaste Diana was gone, coarsened and cheapened into the modern version which one sees everywhere to-day and of which, for one, Stephen Lake was heartily sick. Still he retained enough interest to ask her name of Orto when the latter returned to his table. The proprietor glanced in the direction he indicated.

"The young lady with the old scarecrow in the wheel chair?" he repeated. "You mean Jerome Daniels. Why, that's his wife, Mr. Lake. That's Mrs. Daniels herself. Beautiful woman, isn't she, if only old Jerome didn't persist in dressing her up like one of his own race horses?"

Stephen Lake was conscious of an almost overwhelming revulsion of feeling. Married—that lovely young girl married to the hideous old bag of skin and bones in the wheel chair! Lake's knuckles whitened as his lean, sunburned hands clenched involuntarily on the edge of the table before him.

"Old Daniels has been coming here once a season for twenty years," Orto went on. "He's a racehorse man from Kentucky. He owns one of the finest strings in this country and makes every big racing event all over the world. He had a stroke of apoplexy about three years ago, right after he married, in fact. He's had a second since then. Too bad he can't go on and have the third. He makes life a hell on earth for *her*, I imagine."

Stephen Lake imagined so, too. Unconsciously he ground his strong white teeth at the picture the words evoked. He knew suddenly what it was in the girl's eyes which had baffled him that afternoon. It was the dumb, bruised look animals wear when they have been tortured beyond the breaking point. Yes, that was what she reminded him of, some lovely, cowed wild thing whose spirit had been broken by intolerable brutality.

But why had she ever married such an old beast? Was it for the gaudy finery which was so terribly unbecoming to her? Women, most of them, have a passion for gauds and baubles. Had she sold her youth and beauty for vulgar trapperies? Somehow the thought was repugnant to him. It did not harmonize with the candid gaze of those crystal-clear eyes. Yet why—why had she done it?

In spite of himself his glance strayed to the table where, his ill temper more pronounced than ever, Jerome Daniels sat snarling over his dinner, his little, red-rimmed eyes keeping close watch over his lovely young wife, who scarcely raised her head. The man who had rolled the invalid's chair into the dining room stood a little apart, but not out of sight, waiting for his irascible employer to finish. Lake learned later that he was an ex-pugilist named "Battling Bill" Sloat, whom Daniels, since the stroke of apoplexy had left him helpless, used as a sort of body servant.

When the Daniels were about half through dinner a handsome, rather slightly built young chap joined them, being received with a frown by old Jerome and an adoring glance from the girl. As it happened this very youth had scraped an acquaintance with Stephen Lake that morning on the golf links. His name, it appeared, was Howard Hale, and, some one having told him that Lake was the famous big-game hunter, he had very ingenuously presented himself on the plea that he had read all of Lake's articles concerning his various expeditions, in which the boy seemed to be tremendously interested. There was something likable about young Hale. Stephen Lake had found him very good company. From Orto he now learned that the boy was Mrs. Jerome Daniels' brother.

Between courses Howard Hale and

his sister danced. They were a strikingly handsome couple. The music stopped just as they were in front of Stephen Lake's table. Young Hale saw him and spoke. Lake stood up and was presented to Mrs. Daniels, his pulses pounding in spite of himself, thrilled curiously as he took the slender white hand she extended him, albeit he winced at the gaudy, tasteless jewels which weighted it down.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Lake," she said, her eyes meeting his in the simple, direct way which he was to learn was characteristic of her. "We've read everything you ever wrote, Howard and I, and—and envied you, I must confess. Yours is the sort of life we should have liked to lead." There was the sign of a shadow on her face.

Her brother laughed awkwardly.

"Natalie is an ardent sportswoman, Mr. Lake," he said. "Really, she can shoot and ride and hunt and fish and swim like a man. She wouldn't be excess baggage even on one of your expeditions."

Stephen Lake was conscious of a queer throbbing in his temples.

"I can imagine not," he said unsteadily.

The music was beginning again.

"May I?" He held out his arms.

Natalie Daniels gave a strange, almost defiant glance over at her husband, who sat hunched over his dessert. Then, with a sudden recklessness in her violet eyes, she slipped into Stephen Lake's arms. She danced wonderfully well, just as he had known she would. Neither of them spoke. He could not have said a word had his life depended on it. The feel of Natalie Daniels' lovely liquid body in his arms had set up a wild trembling in his every nerve. He wondered if she experienced anything of the delirious emotion which for the first time in his life was threatening to sweep him off his feet. He could not tell from her averted face, but when the music ceased and with a strange, almost irresistible reluctance he released her he saw that under the vivid splotches of rouge on her cheeks she was very white.

Jerome Daniels glanced up with a snarl when they approached his table.

"Back at last, eh?" he growled. "It's a pity I didn't leave you and Howard in the gutter, where I found you. Then you could have danced to your heart's content."

It was an ugly, an insulting speech. Stephen glanced at Howard Hale, expecting him to resent it both for his own and his sister's sake. But beyond flushing the boy did nothing. In a voice which shook a little Natalie introduced Stephen to her husband, a courtesy which the paralytic acknowledged only with a surly nod and an unintelligible growl.

"Say, *you*," he muttered loudly, paying Stephen no further heed and scowling at Battling Bill Sloat, who moved leisurely forward, "what do you mean standing around there all night? Can't you see I'm ready to go? Here I keep you and Natalie up year after year, and all you've got to do is wait on me, and that's the last thing you two ever think of. Neither of you have a thought of me unless you want to bleed me for something."

Still snarling viciously at his wife and his attendant, old Jerome Daniels was wheeled out of the dining room. With an effort Stephen Lake turned to Natalie's brother. The boy looked white and miserable.

"Won't you join me, Hale, for a game of billiards?" the hunter asked out of a sudden sympathy for the youth's downcast appearance.

Howard played a good game. Lake, who was an expert, had all he could do to worst him. During the lively play the boy's depression lifted slightly. He was avidly interested in the adventurous life which Stephen Lake led.

"It must be wonderful!" he cried, his handsome young face kindling with enthusiasm. "It's the sort of thing I'd like best in the world."

"Why don't you come with me next week?" asked Lake, yielding to a sudden impulse. "I'm taking an expedition into South America to be gone at least three years. What say?"

Howard Hale caught his breath.

"God," he cried eagerly, "if I only could!" Then his face fell and he shrugged his shoulders. "I'd love it better than anything in the world, Lake," he said, "and it is bully of you to ask me, but I—I can't go. Unfortunately"—his young face was very bitter—"it's impossible for me to lead my life as I please."

According to the habit of years, Stephen Lake rose early the following morning. Even when resting from his long, hard treks into the out-of-the-way corners of the world he never let himself go soft. Physical fitness was the first essential in his code, and his lean, muscular body, superbly knit together, was a living testimonial to the fact. At the spa he had made arrangements for a saddle horse, and every morning he rose when the rest of the hotel was fast asleep and went for a brisk canter. On this particular day the dawn was slightly overcast by threatening clouds, but the air was fresh and snapping. Both man and animal felt it. When well out on a country road which led up circuitously to a rougher hill country studded with scrub pines and boulders, Lake perceived that he was not, as usual, the only early riser in the neighborhood. Just ahead of him he made out a girl's erect, slender figure, mounted on a spirited black horse. Even before he came abreast of her some sixth sense which he seemed to have for this woman and no other warned him it was Natalie.

She wore a severe black riding habit with a white-linen shirtwaist and stock and a small, black bowler hat on her fair hair, which was knotted simply on the nape of her white neck. No rouge marred her clear skin and vivid lips. Stephen's heart gave a wild bound. She was again the chaste and exquisitely lovely Diana. Her beauty went to the man's head like a draft of wine. He had long prided himself on his indifference to women, his complete imperviousness to all their varied charms, but his lip curled; he would never be so proud again.

She rode superbly, just as her brother had said. The animal on which she was mounted was a fine, blooded creature with a sensitive mouth and as high strung as a nervous woman, but she rode him as if she had been born in his saddle. They were a poem in motion. Stephen Lake's clear, rather ruthless gray eyes kindled at the sight, and he caught his breath at the wave of almost blinding color which washed into the girl's face when, turning, she recognized him. The burning blush receded, leaving her deathly white, but not before Stephen had seen the telltale tide and had had time to realize, with a wild flutter of his lawless pulses, what it meant.

"I had not dared hope for such luck as to find you out so early, Mrs. Daniels," he said, reining in his horse and extending his hand while he lifted his hat. "This is a real pleasure."

The glance which Natalie Daniels gave him was not quite steady.

"It is a pleasure to me, too, Mr. Lake," she said simply. He was to learn that she never coquetted. She was as direct in her manner and as free from feminine wiles and evasions as a man. "I always have an early morning ride. Jerome sleeps very late. He is troubled with insomnia and often lies awake until nearly day, so that we never disturb him, and sometimes he does not stir until nine o'clock. It is the only time of the day when I am

free. "I mean," she broke off, coloring, "when I can follow my own will without considering any one else's comfort."

Stephen Lake's hand clenched on the pommel of his saddle. In spite of the way she had tried to cover her slip, he knew she had told the truth when she said the early morning hours, when her irascible old husband was asleep, were the only hours of the day when she was free of the hideous incubus which rode her slender young shoulders like a veritable old man of the sea. As Orto had said, there was no doubt but that Jerome Daniels made this girl's life a hell on earth. It was to scare away for a time at least the shadow in her beautiful eyes that Stephen yielded to her naïve questions and told her about his life in the farthermost regions of the earth. She was as breathlessly interested in the recital as her brother had been.

"What a glorious life!" she cried after a while, her eyes shining like those of a lovely, eager child. "How Howard and I would love it! Really, Mr. Lake, I—I believe I could pass muster, honestly I do! I can ride, you know, and I can shoot, too!"

From her bosom she suddenly whipped a small, black automatic—the kind that will almost fit into the palm of your hand and is no less deadly because it looks like a toy. Aiming at an autumn leaf which the wind had sent scurrying across the road some forty feet ahead, she punctured it as neatly as Stephen Lake himself could have done.

"Splendid!" cried the man. "You do know how to shoot!" Inside him there was a strange turmoil. What a woman she was, what a splendid, lovely woman! He took the small, black automatic and stared at it curiously a moment before he returned it to her. "A pretty toy this but rather unusual for a woman."

She thrust the weapon hurriedly into her bosom. All the sparkle and animation had fled from her face. It was suddenly a cold, hard mask.

"Howard gave it to me—in case of an—of an emergency," she said in a queer, half-stifled voice.

A flame lapped at the base of Stephen Lake's brain. In case her husband's brutality became insupportable, was what she meant as he very well knew. Wild, savage phrases of which he had never suspected himself capable trembled on his lips. He could no more have kept them back than he could have voluntarily ceased breathing, had not there come an unexpected interruption. The clouds which had threatened for an hour suddenly made good their promise. With a sharp spit of lightning and a hoarse growl of thunder great raindrops began to fall.

"Great Scott!" cried Stephen, spurring his horse forward. "We are in for a thunderstorm."

There was no sign of shelter in sight except an abandoned log cabin some distance ahead. They raced for it and were safely inside, with the rickety door closed and the horses hobbled outside, before the real storm broke. It did not last very long, but it was furious while it did last, fierce, white-hot lightning with a continuous crescendo of almost-deafening thunder. Stephen Lake and the girl watched it from the cabin's one window. So far from being nervous or timid, Jerome Daniels' wife seemed to find a strange exhilaration in this savage display of nature's wrath.

"You are not afraid?" asked the man as an especially vivid flash of lightning flared in their very faces.

The eyes which she turned on him wore an enigmatical expression.

"Death has no terror for me," she said in a low voice. "One meets far worse things in life."

"It is always darkest before the dawn," quoted the man softly. "And

There was no sign of shelter in sight except an abandoned log cabin some distance ahead. They raced for it and were safely inside before the real storm broke.

the blackest cloud must give way to God's sun."

He pointed as he spoke to where the sunshine was indeed breaking through its enemy clouds. She caught her breath. "I wish I could think so," she said, more to herself than to him.

Due to the delay which the storm had occasioned them, it was nearly ten o'clock when Stephen and Natalie rode up to their hotel. That she was worried over the tardiness of their return he knew by the frequency with which she had referred to her wrist watch. Howard was waiting on the veranda when they approached. He hurried to meet them, his face very white.

"Jerome is awake, Natalie," he said

in a low voice, "and raving because you are late."

The girl made no reply, but as she slid from her horse, which she turned over to the waiting groom, Stephen saw she was ghastly white.

Mrs. Daniels and I were delayed by the storm," Lake explained courteously. "We had to take refuge somewhere to keep from getting drenched. I will go and explain to Mr. Daniels."

Neither Natalie nor her brother made any reply. Following the former's stricken glance, Stephen saw she was looking up at a window on the third floor. There, his distorted face pressed against the windowpane, his lips writhing with rage, sat old Jerome Daniels in his wheel chair. Howard made a distinct effort to speak.

"You'll help Natalie more by doing nothing, Mr. Lake," he said, flushing as he spoke, and, catching his sister's arm, he hurried her up the steps and into the hotel.

Lake did not see any of them again until dinner, although he lounged around the lobby all afternoon. Neither Jerome Daniels nor his wife or her brother came down to luncheon.

Lake had despaired of seeing them when the wheel chair and its irascible occupant appeared at the dining-room door, Battling Bill Sloat and Natalie in attendance. Natalie's dress was in worse taste than on the night before, but Stephen no longer found the gaudy make-up so offensive. That the war paint was her husband's taste, not her own, he was by now convinced. He would have sworn that her vulgar dress and jewels were but a part of the hideous cross beneath which the girl drooped day by day. Not for gauds and baubles had she married the horrible old scarecrow who was wrecking her life; he was sure of that, though why she had made such an unhallowed match he was as far as ever from fathoming.

Jerome Daniels, to his fury, had to take a seat near a window. This was sufficient to set him off into a tantrum, and all during dinner he kept up a growling conversation with Battling Bill Sloat, who stood back of his chair.

In spite of the fact that Natalie had not once glanced in his direction since entering the dining room, Stephen went over to her table between courses and asked for a dance. She flushed and cast a miserable glance in her husband's direction. Old Jerome Daniels' bloodless lips drew back in a hideous snarl.

"Go on," he snapped like a rabid dog. "Why do you sit there staring at me? Didn't you hear the gentleman ask you to dance?"

Natalie rose obediently. She was very white, and purple shadows hovered under her eyes. Her lovely body drooped in Stephen's arms. Gone was the vitality he had felt so strongly the night before; there remained only a terrible dejection. After a while she lifted her haggard face and looked at him with haunted eyes.

"Mr. Lake," she said, speaking with difficulty, as though the words were wrenched from her by some outside force, "I must beg you not to ask me to dance with you again. I—I—you don't know what it has meant to me to know you at all." Her lips trembled. "But, please, from now on forget you ever saw me. Do not—do not"—she gasped—"even speak to me when we meet."

Stephen Lake deliberately tightened his arms about her.

"And suppose I refuse?" he said in a cold, hard voice. "Suppose I object to letting you slip out of my life, now that I have found you?"

"Then"—she shivered slightly—"I will suffer—greatly."

A spasm of rage wrenched the man.

"He wouldn't dare!" he began, then paused abruptly. For the first time he noticed the broad purple bruise on the

tender flesh of the girl's upper arm. He went ghastly white, and his gray eyes turned suddenly to steel points. "He does dare, then!" he cried through his teeth. "That devil struck you, Natalie!" She nodded mutely. He was trembling from head to foot. "And you expect me to step tamely out of your life and leave you to the mercy of that—of that beast!"

He released her abruptly.

"What are you going to do?" she cried in a choked voice.

He stared at her through a red daze.

"Wring his neck and carry you off with me," he ground out.

She clung to his arm.

"Please, Stephen," she cried, "you'll only make matters a thousand times worse for Howard and me. You don't understand. I—I—there's a lot you don't understand. I will tell you—everything—if you will do nothing now."

"When will you tell me?" pressed Stephen, who had made up his mind with all the ruthlessness which was second nature to him to snatch the woman he loved from the clutches of her brutal husband. For that he loved Natalie Daniels with all the fire and passion of which he was capable he now acknowledged to himself and was ready to proclaim to the world. He had waited all his life for "the one woman," and now that he had found her he had no intention of giving her up without a struggle.

Natalie twisted her slim white fingers together.

"To-night—at eleven—I will meet you in the summerhouse near the golf links," she whispered.

Old Jerome glanced up with a snarl as his beautiful wife slipped into her chair beside him.

"Well," he growled, "I must say you took your own time about——" He broke off abruptly. Natalie had started to her feet. "What's the matter? What're you staring at?"

She said nothing for a moment, and there was sheer panic in her voice when she spoke.

"There was a man, a hideous-looking man, peeping in the window there," she cried huskily.

"A man—peeping in the window?" For a moment it looked as though the old man in the wheel chair was going to faint. "Sloat, curse you, where are you, Sloat?" he whimpered, covering his twitching face with his shaking hands.

Battling Bill Sloat bustled forward.

"Don't be alarmed, boss," he cried soothingly. "I'll go see. I don't think it was anybody."

He hurried out of the room, while Jerome Daniels slunk down in his chair.

"It's all your fault," he shrieked at the head waiter, "for putting me over here by a window! You know I hate to sit near a window!"

In a few minutes Battling Bill Sloat returned. He assured his shaking employer that he had searched the grounds thoroughly and there was no one there. Somewhat reassured, Jerome Daniels permitted Sloat to roll him from the room, Natalie walking close to his side. Stephen hoped for a glance, but she did not look in his direction.

Never had minutes limped by on such leaden feet for Lake as they did between the hours of eight and eleven that night. Long before the appointed time he had located the summerhouse near the golf links and was waiting within when, with a wild throbbing of his every pulse, he heard Natalie's light step on the graveled path that led back to the hotel. He called her name in a voice that was stifled with emotion, and she came straight to him in the summerhouse. She had put on a dark-colored cape of some filmy material over her evening dress, and in the silver moonlight she was Diana, the slender, chaste Diana. A madness seized the man.

"Natalie, my Natalie!" he cried hoarsely, and would have swept her into his arms had she not eluded him.

"Stephen," she said, her voice trembling as she put away his ardent embrace, "you must not!"

"But I love you, Natalie!" groaned the man. "I adore you! All my life I've dreamed of my mate, my other self; from one end of the earth to the other I've sought her, and the moment I saw you I knew my search was ended. I had found her, my beloved."

Again he would have swept her into his arms, had she permitted.

"But you forget, Stephen dear," she whispered, her hand pressed hard against her heart, "I am married. You have no right to say such things to me."

"No right!" cried the man passionately. "I have every right. Do you think for one minute that I will give you up to that scoundrel to whom, for some damnable reason, you have let yourself be married? Has he who tortures and degrades you every hour of your life, a better claim on you than I who adore you, I who have a clean and wholesome life to lay at your feet? No, Natalie, you do not know me if you think I will submit so easily. I am leaving in three days for an excursion into Patagonia, and when I go you go with me."

The girl uttered a low cry.

"It would be glorious," she cried brokenly. "But I cannot go. You must not think of such a thing."

The man laughed harshly.

"You can and you will," he cried through his teeth. "It is useless for you to deny you love me. I've seen it in your eyes, in your sweet, trembling lips. You are mine, *mine*, Natalie!"

She shook her head.

"I do love you, Stephen," she acknowledged sadly. "I think I have from the very first, but you and I can never be anything to each other. I must keep faith with my husband."

"With that beast whom you loathe and despise?" cried the man violently.

She nodded.

"I must," she said simply.

"You mean for me to go away, to leave you to the mercy of a man who abuses and torments you, who, in spite of his condition, may live twenty years to make your life a hell on earth? You can't mean that, Natalie? Have I found you, after all these years, only to lose you forever?"

"I am sorry," she said, her lips trembling, "but I cannot play Jerome false. He—he"—she was trembling violently—"it really isn't my secret to tell, Stephen, but you would never understand otherwise. My father—Howard and I adored him, it was he who taught us to ride and shoot and swim. He was an officer in the bank of which Jerome is one of the heaviest stockholders, and—and—he—he got to playing the races. He—we all love horses and—and he—one day he forged a check—he signed Jerome's name to it. He—he had a sure tip—he never meant to let the check go through—but the horse he had bet on fell and broke his leg—he lost. He—he was desperate. He blew out his brains. No one knew why—his records at the bank were in good shape. No one knew about the check. It had been cashed. Then Jerome came to us. He gave Howard and me a chance to redeem the check and save our father's name from disgrace. But we didn't have the money. We—we didn't know what to do. Then—then Jerome said if—if—I would marry him he would tear the check up and give me the pieces, and—and I did. And so you see I cannot play Jerome false. He has kept faith with me, and I must do the same with him even if—if"—the tears were stealing down her cheeks—"it breaks my heart."

"But, Natalie," began Stephen Lake, then he paused abruptly; in the girl's set, white face he saw the futility of

"Natalie, my Natalie!" cried Stephen, hoarsely, and he would have swept her into his arms had she not eluded him.

all argument. Natalie was strong, as strong as he; she would never break faith with her principles. He had found the only woman in the world he could ever love, only to lose her. His arms dropped heavily to his side. "This is good-by, then?" he asked hoarsely.

She nodded sorrowfully.

"Yes, Stephen," she said, her voice breaking.

He drew his shaking hand across his eyes and took a step away from her. Then, turning suddenly, he caught her blindly to him.

"Just once—this once, Natalie," he said in a pleading voice, "give me your lips."

With a sob she lifted her quivering mouth to his. For one moment they stood locked in each other's embrace, the blood pounding in their ears, the world whirling about them.

"My dear, my *dear*," murmured the man over and over, "how can I let you go?"

And suddenly, as he was praying for the strength to release her, to put her out of his life forever, a harsh, diabolic laugh grated on their ears. Turning, Stephen Lake uttered a stifled cry. In the doorway of the summerhouse,

outlined sharply against the moonlight outside, was Jerome Daniels' wheel chair. Battling Bill Sloat stood behind it, and from his swathing of rugs and blankets the old paralytic was regarding the pair before him with a horrible sneer.

"So?" he snarled, his face writhing hideously. "My hunch was right, eh? You didn't have the headache and you didn't go to bed, my beautiful wife? You had other fish to fry, just as I suspected, you and your fine gentleman friend." He scowled at Stephen Lake, who, having released Natalie, stood regarding her malevolent old husband with a strange expression on his set, white face. "Well, you'll have to get up mighty early, my girl, to get ahead of Jerome Daniels. I may be sick and old and helpless, but I'm a match for you, and don't you forget it."

Stephen Lake came a step nearer.

"I love your wife, Mr. Daniels," he said in a cold, hard voice. "I'll take her away from you this minute if she'll let me, and I warn you I will not permit you to vilify her in my presence. Keep a decent tongue in your head or it'll be the worse for you."

Jerome Daniels' withered face twisted with rage.

"*Is* that so?" he cried sneeringly. "Well, we'll see about that. So you'd carry my wife off with you if she'd let you. But she won't let you. I can guarantee that." He laughed. "I have a club over Miss Natalie's head she's not likely to disregard. She can go with you if she likes, but when she does I'll brand her dead father as a thief and a scoundrel before the whole world." He laughed again, a hideous cackle of laughter that made Stephen Lake's hands clench. "And I can do it, my dear Natalie; don't make any mistake about that. I've still got the goods on that dad of yours."

"What do you mean?" cried Natalie, starting violently.

Again Jerome Daniels cackled hideously.

"I mean, I've still got the check your father forged in my name," he taunted her. "I'm not such a fool as I look. The one I tore up and handed you on our wedding night was not the original. I'm too smart for that. It was a copy of the real thing. "Here"—he drew a folded piece of paper from his pocket and waved it derisively before her eyes —"here's the paper which I have only to show the world to convince every one that, so far from being the fine gentleman they thought him, your father was a thief and a rascal." He paused suddenly.

Natalie, her slender body gone suddenly tense, had taken a step in his direction.

"You deceived me then?" she cried in a strange, high voice. "You have cheated me all along! You told me if I married you, you would tear up the evidence of my father's guilt. But you did not! You still have it! You've kept it all this time to use against me when you pleased? You—you've deceived me from the first! You—you—all my sacrifice has been in vain—all that Howard and I have suffered at your hands has been for nothing? We are as much in your power as ever? You—you—have deceived me from the first?"

Something in the girl's blazing eyes and white, almost distraught face must have warned the man. He shrank involuntarily, cowering among his cushions.

"What—what are you going to do?" he whimpered.

Natalie Daniels' face twisted awry.

"I'm going to kill you for the beast that you are," she cried in a voice all the more deadly for its lack of emotion.

From her bosom she whipped the small, black automatic Lake had seen her use that morning. Jerome Daniels uttered a high, piercing scream.

Stephen Lake sprang forward, but he was too late. There was the sharp reports of a pistol and the whining sound of flying bullets. Jerome Daniels' supine body lurched forward in his chair, then relaxed and slid downward in the seat. Stephen ran forward and lifted the old man's drooping head.

"He's dead," he said grimly.

And he was. He had died almost instantly, without uttering a sound.

Battling Bill Sloat stared dumbly from the limp huddle in the chair to the tense, white-faced figure with the small, black automatic in her right hand.

"My God, miss," he cried hoarsely, "you've killed him!"

Natalie said nothing. Her eyes were fastened on the other door of the summerhouse, the one opposite that in which lay the body of the dead man. But if she contemplated flight she made no move. The sound of the shots had already aroused the hotel. They heard hurried footsteps on the graveled path. Stephen Lake made a violent effort to arouse himself. Going toward Natalie, he held out his hand.

"Give me the pistol," he said quickly. "We will put it in his hand and swear it was suicide."

But the girl stared at him as if she had not heard, and at that moment a big, burly man appeared at the entrance to the summerhouse. Stephen knew him for one of the house detectives, named George Ware.

"See here, what's going on in here?" he began, glancing belligerently around, his sharp eyes for the moment missing the significance of Jerome Daniels' huddled posture in the wheel chair. "Didn't I hear a shot down here just now?"

"You did," said Natalie Daniels in a strange, colorless voice. "I have just shot and killed my husband."

"Natalie!" groaned Stephen Lake.

But the girl, without a glance in his direction, held out the small, black revolver. The detective, with a hasty look at the huddled figure in the wheel chair, took the weapon and broke it.

"One shot's been fired," he said, exposing the magazine and the one exploded shell.

Stephen Lake glanced up quickly.

"Only one?" he asked curiously.

The detective gave him a defiant glance.

"You heard me, brother," he said harshly. "You ain't deaf."

Stephen, however, paid no heed. He walked slowly over to the opposite side of the summerhouse. It was a diamond-shaped building with a door at each point. At the south door, Sloat stood beside the body of Daniels. Directly opposite, at the north door, Natalie was standing. Stephen stood a little to one side.

He went over to the north door and looked out. Behind him he heard a stifled gasp. It was Natalie. She was regarding him with distended eyes.

"It—it isn't necessary to make any further investigation, is it?" she asked in a queer, choked voice which seemed to Stephen to hold a note of appeal.

He made no reply. He was gazing at a half-burned cigarette on the ground at his feet. Stooping, he picked it up. It was monogrammed. Somehow he was not greatly surprised to make out the initials, "H. H.," entwined. So Howard Hale had been at the north door of the summerhouse during the stormy interview between his sister and her husband. Stephen walked slowly back to where Natalie stood beside the belligerent house detective.

"Mr. Ware," said the big-game hunter slowly, "will you examine that gun of Mrs. Daniels' a little more closely? She says she shot her husband, but I don't believe her. I think you'll find, if you look closely, that that automatic of hers has not been fired since she shot it in my presence this morning."

The detective lifted the automatic to his nostrils and sniffed it delicately.

"It is stone cold," he admitted dubiously, "and there isn't any smell of fresh powder."

"I tell you I shot my husband," cried Natalie stubbornly. "What's the use of all these questions?"

"And I know you didn't," replied Stephen softly. "Mr. Detective, if you'll hold Mrs. Daniels here a moment, I believe I can deliver the real murderer to you in a very few minutes."

"No, no, Stephen, you mustn't, you mustn't!" cried Natalie wildly. "I will never forgive you, never!"

But Stephen had already left the summerhouse. That Howard, driven to blind fury by old Jerome Daniels' taunting words, had killed his malicious old brother-in-law, Stephen was convinced, and he was equally sure that Natalie, knowing she had not fired her own gun, had turned and seen Howard at the north door and had confessed to the crime in a frantic effort to save her brother from the consequences of his act. Stephen's one thought was to find the boy and tell him what Natalie had done. He was sure Howard would never permit his sister to suffer for his guilt.

Making his way as rapidly as possible to the boy's room, Stephen rapped on the door. There was a pause. In the silence Stephen heard a dull sound, more like the muffled report of a revolver than anything else. His heart gave a wild throb. Could the boy, in his moment of despair, have taken his own life? But at that very instant Howard himself opened the door.

"You have come to arrest me," he said, his face very white. "I admit everything; I killed Jerome Daniels," and he extended a slender, blue-black revolver.

Stephen took it and broke it mechanically. One shot had been fired, and yet the weapon felt hot to his touch and the room was full of the acrid and unmistakable odor of gunpowder. Back in the summerhouse, Stephen turned the boy over to the house detective, and in the same colorless voice Howard repeated his confession. Natalie cried out wildly, but the boy did not once glance in her direction, and suddenly, with a little moan, the girl pitched senseless to the ground.

After they had taken her away and the house detective had departed with Howard Hale in handcuffs, Stephen turned suddenly to Battling Bill Sloat.

"How long have you been in Mr. Daniels' employ, Sloat?" he asked.

The ex-pugilist scratched his head.

"Six years coming February," he replied laconically.

Stephen started.

"He had you, then, before his stroke of apoplexy?" he queried.

Battling Bill nodded.

"What were your duties then?" asked Stephen.

"Sort of bodyguard, I guess," replied Sloat. "He ain't stirred nowhere in six years without me alongside."

Stephen caught his breath.

"Of what was Daniels afraid, Bill?" he asked sharply.

Sloat shrugged his shoulders.

"He had a man named Zuber; Zeke Zuber, sent up once for doctoring a horse. Zuber was his jockey. Zuber always claimed Daniels framed him. He swore when he got out he'd kill the man who double crossed him. Daniels never said, but I always thought he believed sooner or later Zuber'd get him."

"Was that why he never sat near a window?"

Sloat nodded.

Stephen was conscious of a wild hope. Was it possible both Natalie and Howard were innocent? She had evidently confessed to the crime to save her brother. Could he have done the same? Was it possible Howard be-

lieved Natalie guilty, and was he trying to assume the crime to save her? There was the fact that only one shot had been fired from his pistol, and yet Stephen could have sworn that that shot had been fired after he rapped on the door. Had Howard gone to his room to get his revolver so as to make it appear that he was the guilty one, and had the only shot he had fired been the one Stephen had heard? It was a quixotic action, and yet one of which Stephen could well believe the boy capable. But Natalie had not killed her husband, and if Howard was innocent, too, who had fired the fatal shot? Had Jerome Daniels met the fate he had feared for six years? Had the convict Zuber anything to do with the murder?

Stephen was compelled to wait until morning to telegraph the penitentiary where Battling Bill Sloat said Zuber was confined, but the reply was forthcoming immediately:

"Zuber escaped three days ago."

A description of the escaped convict and a picture were secured from police headquarters, and the latter Natalie identified as the face of the man she had seen peeping in at her husband the night before. Convinced that his sister was in no danger of being indicted for her husband's murder, Howard admitted that he was as innocent as she. Having been in hiding at the north door of the summerhouse, he had heard Natalie threaten Daniels, and he thought it was she who fired the fatal shot. In an effort to save her he had gone to his room, secured his own revolver, fired it off once, and announced that he was the murderer.

Three days later Zeke Zuber was recaptured near his old home. He admitted he had shot and killed Jerome Daniels.

"I'd been on his trail two days," he said in his confession. "I was listening at the east door of the summerhouse when his wife threatened to kill him. I didn't want to lose my prey, so I shot him first."

That night Stephen Lake saw Natalie alone for the first time since the tragedy.

"I am leaving for Patagonia to-morrow, Natalie," he said softly, "and you and Howard are coming with me."

"Are we?" whispered Natalie, her lovely face flushing divinely.

"You are!" cried the man who loved her passionately.

And he bent and kissed her, but this time Natalie did not evade his lips nor the arms which folded her close.

The Half Hour Husband

CHAPTER XXVI.

MAJOR DUFRESNE went back to his hotel that evening in a frame of mind which was a curious mixture of irritability and suspense. Margaret had puzzled him. The fluctuations of her mind had been too rapid and too many for him to follow. She had left him in a maze. Did she care a button for him, or did she not?

He was inclined to think that she did not, because she fenced and played with him, refusing to be serious. As to the opinion of him which she had expressed, he knew enough of her sex to be aware that it is not for his virtues that a woman loves a man. That she had found fault with his lack of seriousness might mean no more than disbelief in the sincerity of his devotion, which was—was it justified?

His meditations reached such a big query that he could think of nothing else until he had answered it. Was she justified? Did he deserve her accusation of frivolity and selfishness, or did he not?

She was charming, she was even lovelier than he had supposed. The sorrow her face revealed added to its sensitiveness and mobility, and to the depth of her eyes. Her freakishness had excited his palate, too, with the sauce of the unexpected. He had always admired her, but the thirst to conquer her and make her acknowledge his power had never been so strong.

To his credit be it said he no longer wished to gain her love without serious intentions.

He admitted that there were only two courses open to him—to fly once more, or to ask her to become his wife. Was she worth the great sacrifice? Had she really obtained so great a hold upon him?

The small hours had come when he went to bed. The feat was achieved. He had arrived at that desirable starting-point of a man's career which he had mentioned to Margaret. He knew what he wanted at last.

"Yes, she is worth it," he told himself. "But does she think I am worth it? Margaret, my dear, I believe you are going to avenge your sex. Have mercy upon me, if you can!"

Nine o'clock the next morning found Dufresne agitatedly consuming his coffee and roll. He was conscious that

a crisis in his life was at hand, and the sensation was distressing.

It seemed to him, grown suddenly sensitive, that everybody must know what a fool he was about to make of himself; he even suspected a grin on the countenance of the head-waiter, who wished him good morning. But his mind was made up, and it was as he had said; he would not change it again in a hurry.

He pushed his cup away, too impatient to sit still, and went out to buy flowers for Margaret.

When he had sent them to her hotel with his card he took a stroll, and came back to look for Hildyard, who bullied him.

"You're a nice fellow! Where have you been? I thought we were going to Grindelwald to-day?"

"Hang Grindelwald!" said Dufresne.

Hildyard grinned.

"Oh, of course," he said, "if you want to stay at home and flutter round that girl."

"Miss Vaughan has a name," said Dufresne, ferociously.

"I beg your pardon!"

"And I am not a bird. I don't 'flutter!'"

"I thought you were a moth, old man. There, don't hit me. She's awfully pretty."

Hildyard went for his excursion alone, and Dufresne spent the morning wandering up and down the promenade in the hope of seeing Margaret.

At eleven o'clock his perseverance was rewarded. She emerged from the hotel, looking sweet in a white gown. Isobel was with her, but he no longer perceived Isobel. She might have been an elderly duenna.

The day had gone by when Dufresne could flirt with the maids in waiting till the queen came. For the first time in his none too reputable life, the man was hopelessly, passionately, unselfishly in love.

His first glance was at Margaret's dress. He hoped to see her wearing some of his flowers, but was disappointed.

"Good morning," he said, in a low tone. "Good morning, Miss Innes."

"Thank you for your flowers, Major Dufresne," said Margaret.

"They were intended for a peace-offering," he said, "as a sign of my forgiveness. You were awfully cruel to me last night."

"Listen to this, Isobel," said Margaret. "Men are so unreasonable! Major Dufresne insisted and insisted until I flirted with him, and then he was offended."

"No, hurt," he corrected, "because you think so badly of me."

"Why don't you appeal to Miss Innes?" said Margaret, wickedly. "Perhaps she will be kinder to you; she doesn't know you so well."

Isobel flushed. Dufresne gave a rueful laugh.

"That is still crueller than before. You hear how she treats me, Miss Innes? Take my part, in charity."

"It is a fact," said Isobel, "that Miss Vaughan knows you better than I do, Major Dufresne."

"Which is to say that you conclude I deserve my chastisement?"

"Oh, I give no opinion on the subject," said Isobel, hastily. "Where is Mr. Hildyard this morning?"

"I believe he is taking a twenty-mile walk."

"Why didn't you keep him company?" asked Margaret. "It seems to me that you are a most unsatisfactory friend!"

"Not to every one. It depends on the amount of friendship I profess."

"Oh, you don't put yourself out for any one, do you, Major Dufresne?" said Margaret. "I am sure nothing would make you take a long walk in the sun."

"You are mistaken," he replied, quietly. "I can exert myself when it is worth while. But I am not one to waste myself on trifles. If you were at the end of the twenty-mile walk, for instance, I should consider it very well worth doing!"

"You are complimentary this morning!"

"Why do you say 'this morning?'" he asked. "I have never attempted to conceal my boundless admiration for you."

His voice had dropped; they had forgotten Isobel, who lingered in the rear. Margaret changed color.

"Major Dufresne, you mustn't talk; do remember! I mean no harm. I respect you with all my heart, and I am alone. I thought you would be kind, and have some consideration. I trusted you to remember."

"And Heaven knows," he said, with a note of passion in his voice, "that I do remember. I mean no harm. I respect you with all my heart, and I am not such a blackguard as you seem to think, Margaret."

"Hush!" she said, looking around.

"Will you marry me?" he whispered.

It was not a great surprise, although she had felt uncertain of him so many times. He was a gentleman, after all—a man of honor according to his lights.

The married woman, who was fair game, had disappeared, and he could not have treated the girl better if he had been the most straight-laced of a decorous set. She was sensible, too, of the fact that the unpleasant peculiarity of her position made his conduct almost admirable.

He had taken her word about her relationship to George; he was willing to give his name to a woman whose own name had become tarnished through no fault of her own. He must be fond of her, indeed, and she forgave him his past impertinence, and felt that he had atoned by this one act of genuine love for many acts which ought to cause him shame.

"I am sorry," she said, and looked at him with kind eyes.

"Why are you sorry?"

"Because I cannot accept you, and I ought not to have let you propose. If I had been sure that you meant to ask me, I would have stopped you; but I wasn't sure."

"You don't think I want your money, do you?" he asked, with a catch of his breath.

"I had not such an idea, believe me!"

"Because, if you do, you wrong me, on my soul!" he said. "I love you—I did not know how much until I tried to do without you. Don't send me away, Margaret!"

"I must." She spoke gently.

"I know," he said, "you won't forgive me; women are so hard in some ways. I started on the wrong side of the road, and you won't let me cross over. You don't think it's possible. You are wrong!"

"If I loved you," she said, "I suppose I should be able to forgive anything, everything."

"But you don't love me," he supplemented, bitterly.

"I can't help it. You came too late."

"Yes, I suppose you were very fond of Barrington," he said, huskily. That's all right. But you can't marry him, and you are alone, and you would be happier with somebody to look after you. You don't dislike me, do you?"

"No; I have rather liked you," she said, with whimsical candor, "since last night."

"Well, try me, Margaret!"

"What an expression! One cannot try on a husband, unfortunately, as one would a new coat. If you—you don't fit, you couldn't be changed, you see."

"I'd cut and shape and alter myself till I did fit!"

"Really?" she said, raising her eyes

to his face. "I believe you are very good after all! But I can't marry you, all the same. I have no longer a heart to give to any man; it is gone—gone—gone."

"You mean you are still in love with Barrington? But you are only twenty-one; you will forget him. The wound will heal, and heal the faster for company. You cannot waste your best years, your life, because this one affair has gone astray. You ought to marry."

"I couldn't," she said, with sudden vehemence. "I couldn't! It would kill me! I love him! Oh, you don't know how I love him."

"As bad as that?" whispered the man, white-cheeked.

"And worse," she moaned.

He regarded her with the deepest concern.

"My case is hopeless, then?"

"Quite hopeless."

Her tone was low.

"It is no use waiting—trying again?"

"Believe me, no, dear friend."

"I'm glad you call me that, at any rate," he said, huskily. "It shows that you have quite forgiven me. I know I've been a beast, but—you've won, Margaret."

"Would that I could dispense with my victory for your sake!" she said.

"I shall try again some day, all the same," he said. "I—I shall always be thinking about you."

"Don't please."

"You've hit me hard," he said. "I—I feel dazed a bit. I think I'll go in, if you'll excuse me. I should like to see you again to say good-by. May I come?"

"If you like. But wouldn't it be wiser not to do so?"

"You don't even want to see me again," he said. "And I love you."

What could she answer? It was the truth. He had never touched her except for a moment, with a pity which contained no germ of love.

He looked at her with the reproach of a man whose vanity and passion have alike been wounded.

"I shall come, all the same, if you will allow me," he added. "For the present, good-by."

That he was hard hit was visible in his face. His features were rigid, his teeth set. He raised his hat and left her, and Margaret looked around for Isobel. The girl rejoined her.

"Your cavalier has gone."

"Yes," said Margaret, thoughtfully. "Poor fellow!"

Isobel drew a quick breath.

"He did mean it, then?"

"Yes."

"And you have refused him!"

"I would have prevented his humiliation if I could."

"I told you," said Isobel, "that you were too hard on him."

"After all," said Margaret, with a shrug of her shoulders, "is it not rather that we are too kind to him now? He has pleased himself throughout, that's all."

"What else does any man do who asks a woman to marry him? It isn't philanthropy, I suppose!"

"He isn't good enough, Isobel. Even if I could have cared for him, I should have been afraid. Could one trust a man like that? Would you dare to trust him? I should be afraid that he would need too much distraction to make a good husband. He would get tired, and when he was bored his wife's heart might break while he amused himself with other women."

"There may be something in what you say," said Isobel, gazing at the shadows which the waving walnut boughs overhead cast across the sunlit path. "Yet, for my part——"

"What, Isobel?"

The other girl colored.

"I should have felt inclined to risk it in your place."

"Isobel!"

Margaret's hand sought hers. Isobel laughed suddenly and a little harshly.

"I dare say you were quite right, after all. You couldn't sacrifice yourself for him, and you don't like him, do you? I am going to buy a bunch of that edelweiss to press. It's silly little rubbish, like bits of white flannel, but I dare say the novelty of it will make it interesting to the folk at home."

Dufresne was not discussed again between them; but later in the day it struck Margaret that Isobel had been crying.

"He's not good enough for her—I'm sure he's not good enough," thought Margaret; "but I'm sorry she cares for him, all the same. What a stupid world it is! Full of cross-purposes."

The next morning a note came for her. It was Dufresne's farewell; he had not had the pluck to see her again after all. There was nothing in it which any one might not have seen, and Margaret handed it to Isobel.

"Evidently you have frightened him away," said the latter, with attempted playfulness. "Cruel Margaret!"

Dufresne had done with emotions; in future he meant to stick to sentiments, which are quite another thing. His only comfort was that nobody would know what a fool he had made of himself.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Meanwhile Barrington had taken the trouble to write to his wife's relatives in Chicago in order to find out if she had really been with them during the silent years.

The answer confirmed her story, and gave a few additional particulars with a circumstantiality he could not disbelieve. She had gone straight to them and they had taken care of her money for her, and allowed her a small amount to spend.

It was only when her means were exhausted that she had allowed herself to be persuaded to return. Throughout she had been advised to communicate with her husband, and had refused.

Barrington, the lawyer, smiled faintly at that. He had gathered that the aunt in Chicago was not well off, and could imagine that Rosamond's subscription toward the weekly expenses had been too useful to lose. The desire for her society had just lasted as long as her money. Curious coincidence!

"If she had had an income, should I have heard of her again?" he wondered, and fell brooding over his query. If he had never known that his wife was alive, it would have been almost the same to him and Margaret as her death.

It was some satisfaction to know, however, that she had been leading a tolerably decent life, as he was obliged to support her—obliged to admit her existence, and permit her to call herself by his name.

The second visit he paid to her landed him in fresh trouble. He had already had letters of complaint from her. She received him with a burst of tears.

"What now?" he asked, with the sort of long-suffering patience that one gives to a tiresome child.

"I am unhappy," wailed Rosamond. "How can you expect me to pass my life with people who care nothing about me?"

"It seems to me that Mrs. Harwood and her daughter are ladies with whom it should be easy for you to make yourself comfortable. You have nice rooms, society when you wish for it; a garden, the use of a car. In the name of reason, Rosamond, what cause of complaint can you find?"

"These women are very amiable to you, but when you are not here it is another thing. I am treated like a child."

"You mean that you are—controlled?"

"They are only thinking, all the time, of what they can make out of me."

He sighed.

"My dear Rosamond, must I remind you that nobody is likely to wish for the pleasure of your society gratis?"

"You are very cruel to me," she sobbed. "You don't care—nobody cares. And it is so dull here."

"I am afraid you must put up with it."

"I am only a burden to you. I wish I were dead!"

"What a confusion of statements! Are you trying to make me smile? You complain that you are not seeing enough life, and you wish you were dead!"

"If you have only come here to mock my misery," she said, "you might as well have stayed away. You have no heart, George! You never had any heart."

"I am trying to be kind to you, Rosamond, and I am sorry that I do not succeed. What would you like me to do for you? Would you like a new gown?"

"I am not a child, to be made happy with a gift!" she retorted, passionately.

"Say straight out, then, what do you want of me?"

"You know very well," she said, ceasing to cry. "Only it suits you to pretend that you don't. I want my proper place—my rightful place as your wife."

"You have no rightful, proper place. You deserted me."

"But I have come back."

"Unfortunately you have come back too late, as I have already told you many times. I have formed another tie, which will be forever a sufficient barrier between us, apart from your habits."

"You can't divorce a woman because she drinks," she retorted, with a triumphant gleam in her eyes.

"No; if I had the making of the laws there would be one more. But a man can be a law unto himself occasionally. I will not live with you, Rosamond. You can put that down."

"Don't you wish you weren't afraid to murder me?" she asked. "Oh, I know! You'd give anything to get rid of me. Where is that woman?"

"If you mean Miss Vaughan, she has gone abroad."

"I don't believe it! She is in New York. You see her a good deal oftener, I'll swear, than you see me."

His face became white with anger, and he gave her a look suddenly which silenced her.

"Hold your tongue, Rosamond!"

"I'm not afraid of you," she said, defiantly; but she was. She regarded him askance, with a little of her old prettiness, her old, attractive way. "Don't be cross, George."

"Oh, my dear," he sighed, "you would try the patience of a saint."

"Will you come down again in two or three days?"

"Impossible; I have my work to do."

"You wouldn't say that if it were she who asked you," she said, petulantly.

"We won't go into that."

"Is she very pretty? I wish I had seen her."

"She is a good girl."

"Is she?" She laughed shrilly. He got up, and her laughter ceased.

"You are not going already, George?"

"I am trying not to hate you," he said. "Why will you go out of your way to irritate me? It is the truth that the unhappy girl who loves me has gone abroad. I may not see her again for years, if ever. You have no cause to be jealous, my wife, except of the past."

"But you love her still," she said. "You love her as you never loved me!"

They looked into each other's eyes. How did she know so much—this woman whose brain had never been of the keenest, who had never seen farther than a yard beyond her face? She had not had the opportunity of observing him and Margaret together; he had spoken so little of his love, and yet she knew! Instinct was a curious thing.

"I cannot help that. What is done is done!" he said.

"I hate her," she cried, passionately. "If it weren't for her you would take me back."

"You are wrong. Did we get on so well before you went away?"

"You don't want me to be cured," she said. "You are glad of an excuse, which you can flaunt before the world, for keeping me at arms' length!"

"Tell me," he said, tensely, "if this is always going to be the tone of your conversation; because, if it is, I need not come again."

"I don't care whether you do or not."

She would not shake hands with him, or lift her face as he went out of the room. She had thrown herself on the couch, and was shedding stormy tears with the abandon, utterly unreasonable, of a woman of hysterical temperament who has long lost all control over her impulses and desires.

Like a child, she yielded to the promptings of the moment; with a child's irresponsibility she clamored for what she wanted, snatched it if she could, lied and wheedled to secure it.

Barrington went to talk to the people of the house, an elderly widow and her daughters, women who were obliged to supplement a slender income by such means as were within their reach. That they pitied him he was sure. How much more they would have pitied him if they had known the whole truth!

"How does she go on?" he asked.

"Not so badly," said the widow. "We are very careful."

"So I gather," he said, with a painful smile. "I am obliged to you."

"We do our best, indeed," she said. "We are so anxious that—that she should recover. She is so pretty, and has so many sweet ways when she is—well. We never allow her to go out alone, and my servants have the strictest instructions to perform no errands for her that I do not know of."

"And you think your kind guardianship is meeting with success?"

"On Monday I believe—we suspected something, my daughters and I," she admitted. "We were in great distress. I fear she must have spoken to the baker's boy in the garden, and bribed him to bring in something."

"Ah!" Again that bitter smile crossed his lips. "I know what it is—the cunning which goes with the vice."

"We must scold the boy, and keep an eye on him in future," said the widow.

"I am sure you are doing your best, Mrs. Harwood, and I am grateful to you."

In the hall Rosamond intercepted him. She had recovered from her childish temper sufficiently to desire to wish him good-by.

"You might have stayed a little longer," she said.

"Not to-day."

"When will you come again?"

"In a week, as before."

She put an arm round his neck and kissed him. He did not respond; he never kissed her.

"After all, you are a good fellow," she said.

"I wish you could prove that you thought so," he replied.

"I do my best; indeed, I am being very good.

"Ah, Rosamond! Rosamond," he sighed. "There, good-by; continue to be good."

"And what shall I gain by it?" she asked.

"The priceless reward of your own self-respect."

She pouted. He tried to smile at her. After he had left the house and turned the corner of the road, he wiped his cheek, which her lips had touched. She revolted him; it was with the greatest effort that he could be kind.

She was Margaret's enemy, the usurper of the place which his heart had given to the girl. Why had she

come back? He could not become reconciled to her existence; his own had become one long, futile revolt.

He could neither forget Margaret nor find pleasure in thinking of her. The memory of her tortured him; the consciousness of the barrier between them gave him half-hours when he could scarcely bear his life. She was not so far away, and wholly his, he knew that. She was a good girl, but his will was paramount with her; and if he chose to bid her follow him at any time, she would obey. His own self-restraint was the rack on which his mind was stretched; he had to extract his consolation from honesty of purpose; but it seemed to him that virtue failed as a reward in this world. How could it comfort him to know that he was doing his best when Margaret was alive and separated from him, when he might not see her, speak to her, hold her in his arms again?

In work, hard and almost unceasing, his mind found its sole relief. He forced himself to it. He rose early and went to bed late—tired enough usually to fall asleep at once. He did not want time for thinking; he never took a rest. The little week-end trips to the seaside, which had pleased Margaret so much, were put aside. He would not go alone; he dare not, even for his health's sake. Her vision would have awaited him on the shore; her voice would have sounded in the sea. He began to look haggard, pale, and thin. He was killing himself; the man's hidden passion was devouring him alive.

He heard one day that Dufresne had gone to Switzerland, and he wondered if Margaret had anything to do with it. The beauties of nature did not attract Dufresne as a rule, he knew. The idea that she might be the recipient of attentions from another man, and that he had no right to object or interfere, gripped him with a hand of ice. He had realized from the beginning that she was free; he had even advised her to marry if she met a man she liked; but then there had been no one in the way, and the contingency had seemed a long way off.

It was different now Dufresne had followed her to Switzerland. He had no fear that she would look at any man, but he was so jealous in his love for her that it pained him to think that she might even be asked for the hand which had once belonged to him.

"If we had only been engaged, it would be different! I should not feel so bad," he told himself, to excuse his jealousy. "But she was my wife in name; I regarded her as my wife. It is so difficult to realize that I have no longer any more right to her than another man!"

He could not realize it. He still felt that there was a bond between them that only death could break—even though they never met again, although his wife lived, and although Margaret married some day. She could never forget him, whatever happened, and she would always be Margaret to him.

He had her portrait all over the house still. His wife should never enter it. Her presence would pollute the atmosphere where he had dwelt with the girl who had played, with such demure dignity, at being his wife. If Rosamond once came inside the door the visions which haunted it would fly; the woman who had spoiled his life would oust the girl he loved.

One day when he was walking along Broadway a hand on his shoulder stopped him.

"Hello, Barrington!"

"Dufresne!" exclaimed the lawyer. "I thought you were in Switzerland!"

"I was."

"Did you happen to come across—to come across—Miss Vaughan?"

"Yes," said the other man, soberly. "I saw her at Lucerne, and again at Interlaken."

"You know, then?"

"That she is not your wife? Yes; she told me all about it. Bad business, old man!"

A queer expression crossed Barrington's face.

"Do you think so?" he said.

"I am sure," said Dufresne, swinging his stick, and looking away, "that she is very fond of you."

A pause followed. Both the men seemed to find it difficult to talk.

"I went away with a fellow, you know," added Dufresne, lamely. "I don't know that I care much about Switzerland; two or three weeks were enough. You are not very bright, are you?"

"So-so. Well, good-by, old man. I can't stop."

"You are always so confoundedly busy," drawled Dufresne.

They did not make an appointment to meet again, and they were both relieved to part from each other. Dufresne knew why he felt peculiar toward Barrington, and Barrington had a similar sort of feeling for Dufresne.

"He went after her, and she has snubbed him," interpreted the lawyer, and his eyes gleamed.

Barrington would have liked to ask her if his surmise were correct, but waited to hear from her. If he broke the rule they had agreed upon, she would break it too, and he felt responsible for this girl who loved him.

Margaret's letter contained the reference he had expected.

"I promised to tell you everything, and I know you are trustworthy. Major Dufresne has been here—he must have followed me—and now he is sorry for it. I believe he is really fond of me, or imagines so for the present. Of course, I had to say 'No;' I don't think it was my fault that he asked. Don't let him guess that you know, will you? It is such a mean boast for a woman to make."

Barrington put the letter into his pocketbook with the others, and read it at intervals all day, and the sketch—the Jungfrau, from Interlaken—went to be framed to match the other from Lucerne.

A few days later he received another letter—a communication from Mrs. Harwood. The woman wrote in some distress. She was loth to trouble him, but she was afraid that she must ask him to remove Mrs. Barrington, who had become unmanageable. She was violent and hysterical when "crossed"—the expression brought a sickly smile to Barrington's lips—and refused to eat or get up, or allow her room to be touched unless she was allowed her own way. As her "way" was the way of strong drink, it was impossible to give in to her; nevertheless she had managed to procure a bottle of brandy, which she had consumed within a few hours.

The man sat with his chin on his hand, staring blankly before him. What was he to do with this incubus, which the law called his wife? She must move on; he must find a home for her. He wired that he would come down the next day. It was evident that an ordinary decent home was of no use to her. She could not control herself.

In the evening he called on his doctor, who was also a particular friend.

"Advise me, Austin," he said. "I am going mad."

"What's that!"

"My wife," he groaned. "What am I to do with my wife?"

"It is true, then?" said the doctor, gravely. "I heard something about it."

Barrington explained.

"You know what she used to be," he added. "It is just the same now. You were my only anchor in those days. Tell me what to do with her."

"Where is she—not with you?"

"No; I couldn't stand that. She is with a widow and her daughters. They won't keep her; she is impossible."

"Does she want to reform?"

"She says so. But, then, she always used to say so, if you remember, except when she denied having cause for reform."

"It's no use leaving her with women," said Austin, thoughtfully. "She must have a man over her. I know one or two good medical men who run places in the country."

"She won't go to a Home of any kind."

"Nonsense; she must!"

"So you used to tell me; but can I drag her there? She is as unreasonable as a child."

"She must go," reiterated the doctor. "Exert your authority at any cost. You are supporting her, I presume? Make her obey you. The power is with the purse, and her only chance, I can see, from what you tell me, is some drastic measure."

"There will be a scene."

"You can withstand that, I suppose? Reason with her. She cannot refute your arguments."

"She wants to come to me," said Barrington, gloomily. "She persists in stating that I am her only chance."

"Ah! That's awkward."

"I won't have her inside my doors, Austin."

"Would you like me to go and talk to her?" asked the doctor, sympathetically.

"Oh, my dear fellow, if you would!"

"I'll run down this evening, if you like."

"I must go down myself, but I won't accompany you. You will have more effect alone. I'll come around in the morning, and hear how your errand has succeeded."

He had no hopes that Austin would extract an affirmative out of the fretful Rosamond, so was agreeably surprised to learn, the next day, that she had consented to go into a Home for a time.

"How on earth did you weave the spell?" he asked.

"Through her affection for you, and her vanity," replied the doctor, smiling.

"Her affection!"

"She is fond of you, in a way. I told her that you were consumed with anxiety on her account, and that she was ruining your career. Then I put the other woman down her throat; she is furiously jealous. I persuaded her that if she chose to exert herself she could win you back."

"God forgive you, man!"

"One must make use of the tools in one's hand. At the moment she is resolved to get you away from a rival, and is nerved up to the point of a sacrifice. What matter the motive-power, if we can set her going along the right path?"

"The tension will run down."

"We must try to prevent it."

"I am awfully obliged to you, Austin, anyway."

"I shall be glad to help you whenever I can," responded the doctor, kindly. "I wish I could do more."

In the afternoon Barrington wasted several hours taking his wife to her new abode. She was in the best of spirits and expressed a liking for Austin, who had evidently influenced her. She looked bright, pretty, almost attractive. Her conversation was without complaint or reproach and she seemed determined to make the most of her new abode and sustain her virtuous resolves.

It was only when he had left her, however, that he could breathe freely again. The hideous depression which overcame him when he was with her was like a nightmare. She degraded him; her propinquity, their relationship was a humiliation as well as a grief.

If she had been his sister it would have been bad enough; but he had chosen this woman; once he had begged her to marry him as though his life depended upon her answer. He had the bitterness of knowing that his own act had ruined his life.

He made giant strides in his profession. It was as though Dame Fortune, who was treating him so scurvily in some respects, was determined to recompense him as much as possible by dowering him with worldly prosperity.

In several criminal cases of importance which were confided to him, he scored brilliant victories. Passion gave him eloquence; the concentration of all his energies upon his work rewarded him with gratified ambition.

He was fast becoming famous as one of the most brilliant leaders at the Bar; his fees doubled, trebled; his friends spoke of the career before him with a capital letter, and it was prophesied that he would mount as high as any man of the day.

He realized the future that lay before him fully. In a few years he might be attorney general; he would probably attain a judgeship by the time he reached a certain age; he might go further still.

Unhappiness had hastened his progress, no doubt; but the success was too dearly bought. He would have sold all his high prospects for his freedom and five thousand a year. Meanwhile he began to think of politics. The next time he wrote to Margaret he inclosed a cutting from a paper with the news of his election. She had already seen it, however, following his footsteps with breathless interest, and a telegram crossed his letter: "Heartfelt congratulations. I am so proud of you."

His eyes grew dim over the message. If she could have been beside him, what a different man he would have felt!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Margaret had imagined at the beginning that she would never wish to return; nevertheless she began to feel homesick after a while.

Her elasticity and adaptability were gone. She could not accommodate herself to her new surroundings with any contentment. Even the art treasures of Italy, whither she had turned her steps in autumn, could not strike many sparks of pleasure from the girl's desolate heart.

She felt, at last, as though she must go home, even though home meant no more than a strange hotel or a furnished room.

She said that she longed to hear her own language spoken again; in truth she longed to be near the man she loved, although she might not see him.

She had an idea, unwholesome, unconfessed, that she might hear him speak sometimes from the galleries of the courts, where, lost among a crowd of strangers, she could watch him unperceived. It was madness, but she could no longer endure her wandering existence. She had sought distraction in fresh scenes and amusements; she had striven honestly to drug her grief, and the opiate had failed. Instead of growing reconciled, or, at any rate, tranquil, it seemed to her that she felt more wretched every day of her life.

"I believe I should be happier if I had a home," she said, piteously, to Isobel. "It might give me a new interest. I am tired of hotels."

"Well, shall we go back?"

"I think so."

"Can you trust yourself? That is the question."

"Yes," said Margaret; and really believed that she could, she was so anxious to obey her desire.

The trunks were packed, and a few days later found them performing a leisurely journey home.

Margaret grew almost feverish in the boat; her heart was beating, and her cheeks were red. Every turn of the screw brought her nearer to him. She wondered if any instinct told him that she was coming home.

The same morbid fancy which had dictated her return took her to the old hotel. Once more she was enveloped

in the atmosphere of the past—the atmosphere she had gone abroad to escape; once more restlessness and brooding gave place to the active and sharper anguish. What little good her travels had done her was annulled. She was the same girl who had cried herself almost blind on the day his wife came back.

"I am sure," thought Isobel, "that it is a mistake, but what can I do?"

She had her own lesser pain to conquer; her own personal reason for regretting, yet desiring, this return.

Her fancy for Dufresne was by no means forgotten, although the wound her unasked, unspoken love had dealt her had not gone as deep as Margaret's. Perhaps she was incapable of such a passion, although she had a fund of quiet affection to give to the right man.

It was a great temptation to Margaret to let George know that she had returned, but she resisted it, and remained steadfast, so far, to her intention of hovering around him unseen.

She called on Mr. Samson, however, and told him that she wanted to buy a little estate with a nice, old-fashioned house and grounds.

He promised to look for a suitable property of the kind for her, and Margaret, who had sent Isobel to see her people, went to the courts and saw her idol from the back of the gallery, and heard him discourse at length upon a particularly dry matter of finance, which she could not understand, and did not wish to understand.

It was enough for her to feast her eyes upon his face, and her ears upon his voice. He was a long way off in the body of the court.

"If he were to glance up and see me, would his voice falter?" she asked herself.

He did not glance up, however, and, had he done so, he could scarcely have picked her out among the blur of strange faces. She was safe enough from recognition; perhaps safer than she wished to be. This glimpse of him from afar tantalized her more than she had anticipated; she had been foolish enough to expect to derive some consolation from it; but she went home more miserable than she had set out.

The next day Samson let her know of a property he wished her to see. She went in a bad mood, disapproved of everything like the irritable bundle of nerves she had become, and wrote Samson a sharp letter about it. What was the use of sending her upon such absurd expeditions? Evidently he did not gather what she wanted at all!

The lawyer, who was not imaginative, stared at the bitter missive, and snubbed his junior partner, who retaliated upon an inoffensive estate agent, who had really done his best. More "orders to view" descended upon Margaret, but nothing pleased her.

Nothing would please her just then. Isobel doubted whether she really wished for a house at all, and suspected that she had persuaded herself that she did, as an excuse to come home.

Nevertheless, before the week ended her mood changed, and she took a fancy to a charming old house on the Hudson and bought it outright.

"Now, furniture, Isobel," she said, with feverish gayety. "Oh, we must be very busy!"

She worked herself almost to death over this new hobby, or antidote. All day long there were interviews with carpenters, decorators, upholsterers. Isobel accompanied her to one furnishing house after another, for Beechwood was to be the most perfect place in the country. What was the use of having money if one did not spend it?

Of course, several weeks must elapse before the new home would be ready for habitation, and, meanwhile, the first of the month drew near. Did she hope, as she wrote to Barrington, that her

letter would bring him instantly to see her? It was certain that her heart beat quicker every time there came an unexpected knock at her sitting-room door during the day after she had written,

Barrington did not glance up, however, and, had he done so, he could scarcely have picked her out among the blur of strange faces.

and she stayed in from four till seven, neglecting an urgent appointment with a decorator.

He came. When his name was announced, and she heard his quick, firm tread behind the servant's, she turned red, and as quickly white.

"Ah, I knew you would come!"

She went forward to meet him, but he just took her hands and pressed them. They looked at each other long, mutely for her part, very tenderly for his; then he dropped her hands.

"So you are tired of wandering, Margaret?"

"Yes; I returned to buy a house," she said. "I want a home."

"In New York?"

"In the country. I have already found one."

"I am so glad to see you," he said.

"And I—and I to see you. You seem to be making a great name for yourself, George?"

"Yes; I am rising," he said, soberly.

"How are the servants getting on? Have there been any changes?"

"No; you drilled them so well for me. Annie would talk of you if she dared; but, of course, I never encourage that."

"Of course not," she murmured.

It was not as it used to be between them. Unconsciously the separation, the sense of their different relationship, had done its work. If any one had told her before this that she could ever feel strange with George, she would have smiled; yet, now that they met again, it was so.

She loved him no less than before. She felt that he loved her no less; all the same, he was no longer her lover, her husband in name, her own particular piece of property, but a man between whom and herself there existed no tie of any kind.

He had shown how deeply he recognized the fact by the restraint of his greeting, which he might have bestowed upon a dear friend; and she had not been tempted to spring over the barrier, to throw herself into his arms.

"So you are going to housekeeping for yourself," he said. "I am glad of it. I have felt uneasy about you sometimes. The life of hotels is not good for a young girl alone."

"Then you thought of me?"

"Oh, very often; be sure of it."

"When the newspapers came I always turned to the law reports first," she said. "I have read through every case that was mentioned with your name in it."

"What a lot of dry stuff for you!"

"I didn't find it dry," she said, simply.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Margaret? About your new house—any business, I mean?"

"I don't think so. I wouldn't bother you. I am sure you must have more than enough to do, and Mr. Samson is very attentive and kind. I should like you to see my house," she added, almost timidly.

"And I should like to see it," he said. I will come some day when you are bored—if you ask me."

"Need I ask you?" she cried. "Oh, you know how welcome you will always be!"

For a moment the restraint was gone, and her heart spoke to his again. He colored deeply, but he had tutored himself very severely for this interview, or he would not have dared to come at all.

"I suppose you will keep Miss Innes," he added.

"Yes, I am very fond of her."

"You are both young to set up housekeeping alone."

"I suppose it isn't conventional," she said, deprecatingly, "but I can't part with her now. She is fond of me—companionable. I cannot give up everything." Her voice quivered.

"I met Dufresne one day," he said, abruptly.

"Yes?"

"I think you have hit him hard, Margaret."

"Oh, he will recover," she said, with a fluttering smile. "He is not the man to break his heart over any woman. His self-love was hurt, no doubt. You did not let him see that you knew anything?"

"No; of course not."

"How is your wife getting on?"

"The complaints are beginning again. She will never be satisfied for more than a month in one place. I do not envy the trouble she must have cost the Chicago relatives for her money. I hope it paid them."

"You are not working too hard, are you?"

"No," he said.

"Is that a fact?"

"I have nothing else to do," he said.

His voice was gloomy. She had been taking notes all the time; there were a few gray hairs on his dark head; his

features were tight drawn; his eyes weary in repose. He had taken the wrench no more lightly than herself—that was evident.

"But you must rest and take a holiday sometimes," she said. "Will you come and spend a day or two on the river with me? It would do you good."

"No, my dear."

The refusal was tempered by the affection of the endearment—the first he had permitted himself to use. Again the barrier tottered.

"Oh, George," she said, with a little hopeless gasp.

"My poor child!"

Her lips quivered.

"Don't cry," he said, watching her, and simulating cheerfulness, "or I shall have to fly, and I don't want to go until you have given me a cup of tea."

"You shall have it now," she said, bravely, rising to ring the bell. "But you need not go the sooner on that account, and I won't frighten you away. You didn't know that I listened to your speech on the Thursby case, did you?"

"No!" His eyes gleamed. "Were you really in court?"

"Yes; I couldn't resist the temptation of going to see you when I came back."

"And nothing whispered to me that you were there!" He smiled. "I was rather proud of that speech! Did you watch the jury? Haven't I improved?"

"It was masterly," she said. "Oh, you are wonderful. I should feel so proud of myself were I in your place!"

"Unfortunately, my wisdom came too late. I cannot forgive myself the mistake of my youth."

"But if one's private life is not happy, it is better to have a successful than an unsuccessful public career. There must be a great deal of consolation in it. I am very glad for you."

"I have no home," he said. "Success loses its sweetness without sympathy. You had a great gift of sympathy."

"I think we always understood each other very well," she said, mistily. "There, now we are verging on forbidden ground again, and you will go away! I am so anxious for you to think me sensible. Why shouldn't we be friends, after all?" Her voice was a little shaky.

He looked at her with tender, wistful humor, shaking his head.

"Don't you believe in friendship between men and women?" she asked.

"No," he said, "unless both the man and the woman are in love with somebody else. In our case it is impossible. It is the highest compliment I can pay you, Margaret, to say that I could never trust myself. Do you imagine that I find it easy to take your hand alone—to sit here quietly without touching you? I am not wood, or a child, to forget in a few months."

"You are quite right," she said, quickly. "It is always you who are right, and I who am bad enough to tempt you."

"Ah, child, you are not bad," he said; "I think you have scarcely a fault worth naming." His voice was husky.

"You always saw me better than I was," she said. "I fear you looked at me through rose-tinted glasses."

He shook his head again. The tea came in, and both were glad of the diversion. They were talking naturally when Isobel joined them. She would have taken her tea apart, but Margaret had sent for her. She was glad; it showed that Barrington came not as a lover, but as a friend.

He took his leave as conventionally as he had greeted her. He loved her too well to treat her otherwise; her lips were not for him. She guessed that this visit of his was a test of his own strength and hers, and rejoiced that neither of them had broken down.

There was his visit to her new home to look forward to. No doubt she would see him still again, although he

had refused to spend whole days with her in the intimacy of river life. They would not be constant comrades, but every two or three months or so they might talk to each other for an hour.

The prospect gave her something to live for. She brightened perceptibly, discovering more comfort than she had believed possible in their restrained interview. She would be able to behave even more naturally next time; he should have no reason to fear their meetings for her.

She set about the affair of her new home with real zest now. He would see it, and he had such good taste; she had his approval to work for. Everything she bought involved a new question. Would George like it? His favorite colors were employed whenever possible. She even bought an armchair especially for him.

One day she met Major Dufresne. He changed color, but she was not at a loss with the man she did not love. She told him that she had taken a house, and that she would always be pleased to see him. He responded lightly, and they parted with no intention, on his part, of seeking her in her new abode.

A couple of weeks later she went to Beechwood, and there was enough to do to keep her and Isobel busy.

She bought a couple of horses, a car, a brougham, and an absurd Newfoundland puppy which had been offered to her by a hawker. The poultry-yard was stocked with chickens and ducks, and a cow munched in the paddock with the pony and the mare. It was all comfortable and pleasant enough, and worthy, she felt, surveying the effect of the finishing touches, of a visit from George.

She wrote to tell him so at the beginning of the month on stationery with her new address and a monogram.

"The windows are diamond paned," she wrote, "and the view all round the house is peaceful—exquisite in its own way. From the writing table in my morning room I can see a vista of sunlit, undulating grass and trees, which the agent described as 'parklike grounds,' and at the bottom the Hudson, with hills beyond, blue now at eventide. I know there are swans on the water, and a rustic boathouse, and many nooks to moor a canoe in under the trees. The boughs in the orchard are still laden with apples and golden and purple plums, and my puppy, Jupiter, is frolicking after the gardener, who is cutting the lawn. A pretty pastoral, is it not? Do come soon."

After finishing her letter she mused a while, with her eyes on the distant river. It was so easy to write to him still—so much easier, she was conscious, than to talk to him.

On paper they need have no fear of themselves or of each other; she might open her heart with no fear that passion would carry her away.

CHAPTER XXIX.

On the same day that Margaret wrote this letter, a disheveled and wild-eyed woman presented herself at Barrington's house. It was nine o'clock and a dark evening, and the servant who opened the door looked rather startled.

"I want to see Mr. Barrington."

"He's not at home, ma'am."

"I don't believe it," said the visitor, without ceremony. "He always used to come home at six."

"Mr. Barrington has gone out to dinner."

"Then I'll wait for him," said the woman, and made a step forward as though to enter, but the maid barred the way.

"What name please?" she said.

"Mrs. Barrington."

"Mrs. Barrington?" repeated the servant, hesitating in confusion.

"Let me pass, woman," said Rosamond, haughtily. "I am his wife."

The maid had heard rumors of her reappearance, of course, and there was still enough of the lady in Rosamond's speech and manner to convince her that the caller was not a thief.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," murmured the servant, and showed her into the study and turned up the lights.

After she had gone Rosamond threw off her coat and gazed about her.

"So this is his home," she said.

Her face became convulsed to think that she had never seen it before, and she laughed bitterly, recklessly. She was in a desperate mood.

She had made her escape from the Home, and come straight to his with the intention of staying there. If he attempted to turn her out and send her back, there would be a tragedy. She would not go; as to that she was resolved. Her black eyes flashed and her teeth clenched.

"This is my proper place, and here I mean to stay," she told herself. "Let him try to turn me out, that's all! Let him dare to try!"

Almost the first thing that attracted her attention, of course, was Margaret's portrait. She guessed the identity of the fair, slim girl at once, and crimsoned.

"It is good," she muttered, stormily, "that her portrait should be hanging in his room, which he would prevent me from entering!"

She laughed harshly.

It was with the greatest difficulty that she had effected her escape, and she had been too anxious to reach her journey's end to think of drinking on the way. Now she told herself that she felt thirsty, and went on a voyage of discovery into the drawing-room. There was a Tantalus spirit-frame unlocked on the side-board, and tumblers inside it. She helped herself liberally, and without ceremony—was she not at home in her husband's house? She returned to the library, bearing her fresh-filled glass with her, a heightened color in her cheeks, a heightened rage in her heart against Margaret, whom she accused of stealing her husband's love.

"We quarreled, but he would have been glad enough to see me back if it weren't for her," she persuaded herself. "He wouldn't be so hard as he is to me if it weren't for this woman. Good, he calls her, does he? The vixen! The viper! I'd like to see my nails in her face, and spoil her beauty for her!"

When she was sober, she was still a lady; when she was excited by drink, she became as vulgar as an intoxicated termagant, and as frenzied and irresponsible as a tigress.

The sight of Margaret's photograph, and the realization of the beauty of her young rival, brought home to her, as no words had done, the forces against which she had to contend in order to regain her husband's love.

The enemy she had never seen was no longer unknown. Her hatred and jealousy were able to expend themselves upon a definite shape, which, once seen, would never be forgotten.

Hitherto she had reproached her husband for his "cruelty;" now her venom was concentrated upon the girl who had taken him away from her, and interposed an insuperable obstacle to their reunion.

She trembled with rage. She wanted to see Margaret, to tell her what she thought of her, to fly at her, and shake the life out of the girl's body; and, as the brandy mounted to her head and inflamed her brain, her vicious desires took shape.

As though in response, the servant entered with a couple of letters, which had come by the last mail, and deposited them on her master's writing table, where he would be sure to look for them.

An instinct, or perhaps only a vague curiosity, induced Rosamond to examine them. One envelope was addressed

in an unmistakably feminine handwriting, and it was this that she clung to. She turned it over, and found a monogram—"M. V." Her heart jumped. It was impossible to doubt that it stood for Margaret Vaughan; what other woman with those initials was so likely to write to him?

Her lips parted over her teeth like those of a snarling dog. She held the letter to the light, but could see nothing; she fingered it as though she could not bring herself to put it down.

At last she went back to the dining room, and helped herself to more brandy. When she returned to the study there was a gleam of madness in her eyes; her hand trembled as with palsy.

She tore open the envelope. If Margaret had known who was going to read her sweet and innocent letter, and what unspeakable passions it was to arouse! Every phrase, so intimate, yet so full of refinement, was as petroleum upon the flame of Rosamond's hatred.

She saw, not unnaturally, perhaps, a vile and designing woman in the writer; an enemy whose interest it was to feed her husband's bitterness against her, and keep them forever apart. She was a woman with no faith in the goodness of woman and the honor of man, and the feeling that she was a dupe, a laughing-stock, the victim of her husband's illicit love, turned her into a devil capable of any crime.

Margaret's address was on the notepaper. Rosamond no longer thought of waiting for her husband. With the light of murder in her eyes, she flung on her coat again, and left the house to seek her rival, and rend her limb from limb.

It was a homicidal maniac who drove to the station and took her ticket for the next train.

Ten o'clock had already struck, and she did not know where she would sleep that night, but she did not think of that; she thought nothing about the afterward. Her one thirst, her one desire, was to kill the woman he loved.

She derived an insane pleasure en route from the thought of how she was outwitting him.

"He thinks himself very clever, no doubt," she mused, "to tell me that she is abroad, and shut me up like a sheep in the country. But I am not such a fool. It wasn't so easy to hoodwink me, as he'll find out by-and-by." She laughed hideously. "Oh, he'll find it out!"

When the train stopped at the country station hers was the only figure to descend.

She found herself on the platform with a number of milk cans and fruit baskets, and an old porter who blinked at her curiously.

"Is there a taxi here?" she asked.

"No, ma'am."

"Which is the way to Beechwood?"

"Beechwood? Miss Vaughan's place, you be meaning, I s'pose? Well, go straight through the village, and ye take the second turnin' to the right, and the first to the left, till ye see the river. Then ye keep straight along till the road turns uphill, where ye'll find——"

"How do you think I'm going to remember all that?" snapped Rosamond. "Isn't there a garage near where I could get a car?"

"Maybe. But Beechwood ain't as far as it sounds. When you get up the hill, it's the first pair o' gates ye see."

"How long will it take to walk there?"

"It depends how fast ye walk," said Giles, who was of local birth. "Maybe it'll take ye twenty minutes, and maybe half an hour."

Rosamond forgot to thank him. She left the station with the directions jumbled up in her head, followed by a sniff from Giles.

Her hat was at the back of her head, and she held her gloves in her hand—

one of them, that is to say—the other was lost.

The village street was already half asleep. Only an inn and a baker's shop were still alight, and there were not many people to notice her as she hurried along, her dark brows bent, her lips muttering a rehearsal of the accusations and insults she meant to hurl at Margaret's head.

What more she meant to do was not quite clear to her as yet; she would be guided by circumstances. Perhaps she would strike the girl about the head with something heavy, which would spoil her beauty as well as kill her; perhaps she would set the house on fire.

At the end of the street she lost herself, retraced her steps, found the right road with the help of a man, who was returning from a long delivery round.

She redoubled her haste, stumbling in the darkness, for the lamps had ceased and the moon had not yet risen above the trees. If Margaret had gone to bed it would be difficult to gain admittance to the house; she would have to set it on fire then, or wait till the morning. A fire might be useless. People escape from fires, especially from fires in low-built country houses, with a couple of staircases, perhaps. She did not want to create an alarm for nothing, because she would be prevented from getting at Margaret again. She would lose the satisfaction, too, of telling her a few things about herself.

Beechwood was in darkness and silence when she found it. She opened the gate, nevertheless, and walked up to the house. She thought she would go around it before she rang, and her enterprise was rewarded.

At a window open to the ground she found a girl's figure silhouetted against the light within—Margaret come to gaze at the river gleaming in the moonlight and the quiet fields, and the peaceful, starlit sky before she shut the window and followed Isobel to bed.

Rosamond waited a moment in the shadow; then crept forward like a tigress stealing out of her lair.

Margaret started at the sudden apparition of the wild-eyed woman, who thus confronted her in the night. Rosamond did not look like a burglar; she bore a stronger resemblance to a lunatic, and Margaret's surmise was not far from the truth.

Her first impulse was to close the glass doors sharply, but she was a brave woman, and stood her ground instead.

"Who are you?" she said. "What do you want?"

"I want to see you, if you are Margaret Vaughan."

"I am Miss Vaughan," said Margaret, with a dignified emphasis on the "Miss." But it is not usual for visitors to call at this hour and to enter in this way. Why didn't you ring at the front door?"

"Because I chose to come this way instead," responded Rosamond, hoarsely. "There are no lights at the front. I didn't want to arouse your servants. I wanted to see you alone. Let me in!"

Margaret still blocked the entrance. She was frowning and a little pale.

"I do not know that I shall admit you," she said. "You speak to me very strangely."

"Let me in!" repeated Rosamond.

"Not until you tell me who you are, and what business you have with me."

"I am George Barrington's wife!" hissed Rosamond. "You viper! Keep me out, if you dare!"

Then Margaret stood aside. She was white to the lips, and her heart was beating fast; yet the girl retained a certain dignity and self-possession which enraged Rosamond still more.

"I am not frightened of you," she said. "Kindly behave yourself. This is my house, and you shall not insult me in it."

"Oh, indeed!" said Rosamond, with bitter sarcasm. "Will you tell me how

I can insult you? You're a fine lady to give yourself airs, aren't you? I wonder you've the impudence to stand there before me, after living with my husband for three months as his wife!"

"You know, for he has told you, how little the name meant in our case," replied Margaret. "It was your own fault—not mine or his—that we thought you dead."

"And it is my fault, I suppose," shrieked Rosamond, "that you write love letters to him, and ask him to come and see you, and that he sticks your portrait about his house, while I am treated like the scum of the earth!"

"He treats you a great deal better than you deserve," said Margaret, spiritedly. "You have ruined his life. If I were in your place I should feel ashamed to meet his eyes. My one aim and effort would be to try to make myself a little more worthy of his name, instead of causing him further pain and shame every day, as you do."

"Oh, there isn't much you don't know, is there?" said Rosamond, infuriated. "He hasn't any secrets from his dear love, I can see. You are a pretty pair! And you dare—you dare"—her voice became a hoarse shriek once more—"to advise me upon my duty. Duty! Hear the word from such lips as these. One doesn't expect much of a man—men are all bad lots. It is you I blame for all this—you! Oh, when he sees you next time, there won't be much worth looking at, I can tell you!"

She had approached to within a foot of Margaret, who quailed as the woman's tainted breath mingled with hers. She saw that Rosamond was scarcely in her right mind; the light revealed a white-faced, fierce-eyed creature whose looks spelled murder.

"Leave my house," said Margaret, in a low, firm tone. "You are in no condition to be out. You don't know half of what you are saying or doing. I can't think how you came here. I don't want to ring for my servants, but I shall be obliged to do so unless you go of your own accord."

"You think a great deal of your beauty, don't you?" said Rosamond. "You consider yourself precious clever to have taken him away from me; but he won't know you, I tell you, when I'm done with you! Oh, it's no use your trying to ring the bell!"

She sprang at Margaret, who stepped back just in time. The woman was upon her like a panther, nevertheless, before she could escape.

The girl screamed. She was stronger than she looked; her young arms were wiry, and she fought for herself. If the other woman was animated by the fury of hate, she was just as anxious not to be injured or disfigured.

Fortunately the manservant had not gone to bed. He heard his mistress shriek, and burst into the room just in time. Rosamond had her by the throat, and was driving her knuckles into the soft, white flesh.

The man got the fury off, and Margaret reeled, her features convulsed, blood on her lips.

Benson was obliged to attend to her, and Rosamond, seizing her advantage, fled through the window and disappeared like a beast of prey in the night.

Benson put Margaret on the couch.

"Are you hurt?" he asked anxiously. "Oh, my poor young lady!"

The racket had been heard upstairs, and Isobel, with a dressing gown over her nightdress, appeared, followed by a couple of agitated maids.

Isobel ran to her friend in indescribable agitation.

"Margaret! Oh, Margaret! Benson, what has happened? What is the matter with her? Who screamed?"

"She has been attacked by a female person, miss—a lunatic—I reckon."

"Go after her! She mustn't be allowed to escape. No, wait! Perhaps you will have to get the doctor."

She sprang at Margaret, who stepped back just in time. The woman was upon her like a panther, nevertheless, before she could escape.

Margaret had regained her breath, and was making use of it to sob hysterically.

Isobel wiped her lips, and was relieved to find that the blood only came from them. The girl had evidently bitten herself in her struggles.

Isobel put her arm round her with the greatest tenderness.

"My poor darling! What an adventure! Benson, get some hot milk and a little water. Don't, dear. It's all right now. The creature has gone."

Margaret's convulsive sobs began to subside. She wiped her eyes and mouth, shuddered, and raised her head from Isobel's shoulder.

When the milk came she turned away from it with a shudder.

The butler had gone out to look for the fugitive, but she was nowhere to be seen, and in the darkness it did not seem of much use to continue the search.

Isobel took Margaret upstairs, leaving Benson to bolt the window and keep watch for a while.

"Have you guessed who it was?" asked Margaret, when the girls were alone in her bedroom.

"Not—not that woman?" murmured Isobel.

"Yes; his wife."

Isobel looked horror-stricken.

"She had been drinking, of course," pursued Margaret. "I really don't believe she was in her right mind. Oh, Isobel, she called me all sorts of terrible names—names to make one's cheeks burn. She reproached me so much more, I am sure, than I deserve; and then she flew at me like a tigress. She meant to kill me; she said so. She would have killed me if Benson hadn't come in time."

Again a strong shudder shook her frame.

"And—and that monster is his wife? Oh, Isobel, my heart bleeds, breaks for him. What is wrong with this world that such things should be permitted? I would do anything for him; I could make him happy; but we are obliged to keep apart because of that—that thing."

"It is hard," said Isobel, gently.

She took the girl's hot hand, and stroked it softly, while a torrent of lamentations, half-incoherent, passionate, piteous, rushed from Margaret's lips. Nothing had stirred her like Rosamond's brutal descent upon her, the abuse she had stood, the degrading brutality of the scene that had ensued. What right, she demanded, had the law to tie a man to such a creature, and ordain that her existence should forever weigh him down?

"And she dared to call me names—to treat me as though I were a bad woman," gasped Margaret. "I, who have only loved him, and would lay down my life for his sake."

Isobel only went on stroking her hand, without any attempt to argue or check her passion; and by and by Margaret wept again.

"What will become of her to-night, Isobel, without a roof to shelter her?"

"You don't care, do you?" asked Isobel, curiously.

"She wasn't in a condition to take care of herself. Don't you think we might have made a greater effort to find her?"

"I don't suppose she will come to any harm."

"But where will she go?" pursued Margaret, restlessly, "in the country at this hour. I must telegraph to Mr. Barrington."

CHAPTER XXX.

It was unnecessary, as it happened, for Margaret to communicate with Barrington. There was the sound of a motor in the drive, and somebody pulled at the bell.

"Can it be that mad woman come back again?" said Margaret, shrinking.

The butler mounted the stairs, however, to tell her that Mr. Barrington had arrived. She went down instantly.

"Thank goodness, you are safe!" he exclaimed, with a gasp of relief, as she appeared.

"Then you know what has happened?" she said, shakily.

"Yes. When I reached home I heard that Rosamond had been and gone. The torn envelope on my table told me the rest. I guessed at once that she had opened your letter, and found your address, and I dreaded that she might come here to do you some mischief. She is not in her right mind sometimes. I motored all the way from town, but I am too late? She was before me?"

"Yes. Oh, George, she tried to kill me!"

"Great heavens!"

He extended his open palms to her, and she put her hands in them.

"But there is no harm done, and you could not help it."

"I was the cause. If she had hurt you I should have gone out of my mind.

I cannot think how she contrived to escape. I shall have a row with Doctor Stephens to-morrow. What a catastrophe! My poor child, how she must have frightened you!"

"I *was* frightened," she admitted.

He drew her close to him, and looked into her face.

"What did she do? Tell me all about it."

"I was at the window in the library; it is a door, you know, which opens to the ground. Isobel had gone upstairs, and I had lingered to take a last look at the beautiful night, and perhaps to think of you."

He pressed her hand; the inflection of her voice was so sweet.

"My Margaret!"

"Suddenly a woman's figure stood before me. She spoke in a rude and threatening way, and demanded that I should let her in. I think I knew before she told me who she was. She looked very wild; her hair was loose, and her eyes gleamed. I was frightened, and tried to persuade her to go away, but she insisted upon coming in. And then she called me vile, insulting names, and flew at me like a tigress. Oh, I can feel her hands upon my throat still!"

The man's eyes glistened.

"I feared—I feared. Something told me why she had rushed away instead of waiting for me. My journey down was an atonement, surely, for all the sins of my life."

"I struggled and screamed," she continued, "and my butler was still up, fortunately, and rushed to my rescue. While he attended to me she escaped."

He kissed her hands, gently.

"My poor child. Thank God! Thank God, you are safe!"

"Benson went to look for her afterward, but she had disappeared. I did not know what to do. I was thinking of sending you a telegram. She must be found—mustn't she? Where will she spend the night?"

"I am not in a mood to care much what becomes of her," he said, between his teeth.

She drew one hand from his clasp to lay it on his forehead.

"Poor George!" she murmured.

"If you knew what I felt like on the way down!"

"I am a poor hostess," she said, with a gentle smile, and she summoned the butler.

"Mr. Barrington would like some supper, Benson. Do you think you could find something for him?"

"Nothing to eat, Margaret," said Barrington.

"Coffee, then, and some biscuits, Benson."

She made him sit down, and seated herself beside him.

"I ought to be out looking for her," he said. "You were quite right, Margaret; she cannot be left to roam about the country alone. She might return when I was gone—seek another opportunity of ill-using you. Besides"—he groaned—"I must treat her with as much consideration as though she were—human. She has no money—can have none; and I cannot allow her to roam the countryside all night. I shall have to institute a hunt for her. A pleasant scandal for your neighbors, eh?"

"Oh, never mind the neighbors. I don't care."

"You are brave."

"I expect my neighbors have already said as much as it is possible to say about me."

"I have been a curse to you," he said, gloomily.

She looked at him with her beautiful, yearning eyes, her head erect.

"I love my curse better than other people's blessings! The pleasure of seeing you to-night repays me even for what has happened. I would go through it again!"

"Ah, you love me, so you try to con-

sole me," he cried; "but I can see in your face what you have endured. Lift your chin!" There was something boyish about him.

"No."

"Lift it!"

She obeyed.

"There are bruises turning black on your throat. I can count the finger-marks."

"Don't think of it any more. It doesn't hurt."

"I might have found you dead, and Rosamond a murderess! What a tragedy for a man to carry to his grave with him!"

"But I am well, and she will be sorry to-morrow, let us hope."

"I think she is a good-hearted woman when she is herself," he said, sighing. "But I fear this jealousy of you is a new craze that will crop up whenever—whenever she is not sober. It is Doctor Stephens that I blame more than anybody. I gave her into his care; I pay him well." His eyes flamed. "If anything had happened I should have held him responsible for it—although revenge would not have comforted me much."

She took his hand again.

"Don't give another thought to me," she said. "It is over, and it does not matter. In future I shall take care of myself."

"Oh, rest assured that she shall not escape again, Margaret. I will send her abroad if there is no other way. Before Heaven I will not have you go about in danger of your life from my wife! I will not have your nerves upset in this way."

"Dear, I know that you will do your utmost to protect me. Will you sleep here to-night? You must. You cannot return. The spare room will be ready for you in a moment. I believe I must have guessed that you would come to occupy it some time, because it is furnished just in the way you like!"

"It tempts me, but I don't think that I had better stay. I will get a bed at the hotel."

"It will be shut up at this hour."

"I will clamor till they let me in! Besides—no bed for me yet, I fear," he added, ruefully. "I must set about looking for this lunatic at large."

"Take care, George!"

"She will not hurt me. Let me send you off to bed now. I will come around to breakfast, if I may."

"Please do."

He hesitated for a moment, then put his arm round her shoulders, simply, and kissed her.

"I can't help it to-night. I see the wings of the angel of death hovering over your head still. Good night, dear."

She returned his embrace passionately, and accompanied him to the hall.

"Will you take Benson? Can't he help you?"

"No, he shall stay at home to guard you. I am much obliged to Benson. I shall have a little conversation with him in the morning."

"Shall we wake up the gardener?"

"It seems a shame to disturb your establishment any more."

"He must go," she said, decidedly, and told the butler to call the other man, who slept in a cottage behind the house, and had heard nothing of all the disturbance.

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was a fine hunt that Barrington had after his missing wife that night. The gardener went in one direction, and the husband in another.

Barrington visited the railway station, which was shut, and the police station, where a solitary light glimmered, and the sleepy constable on duty had seen nothing of Rosamond. He telephoned, however, in various directions, and Barrington spent half the night there waiting for unsatisfactory replies.

Nothing had been seen of Rosamond in any of the neighboring villages and towns, and she could not have penetrated far in the time. To crown matters, the sky, which had grown overcast since midnight, clouded still more, and a steady, soaking rain began to descend.

The gardener returned from a similarly hopeless quest, and rejoined Barrington at the police station, as they had arranged.

"I think you'd better turn in, sir," he said, taking off his damp cap to scratch his head. "It's like looking for a pin in a hayrick till the morning comes. Maybe she's found a roof, and it's waste of time to go on looking."

"The advice is good; but where do you propose that I shall turn in?" asked the lawyer, with melancholy humor. "I haven't the courage to go to the hotel at this hour, and—I don't wish to trespass on Miss Vaughan's hospitality."

The policeman came forward then. His "missus" had a spare room which she let to boating gentlemen. It happened to be vacant, and she would be happy to let Mr. Barrington have it.

"Capital," he said.

The gardener knew where the cottage was, and conducted him there, before he made his own way home. Barrington was worn out, and fell asleep as soon as he had tumbled into bed; but his dreams were haunted by his wife, and he woke in the morning with a groan.

There was comfort in the immediate prospect of breakfast with Margaret. He dressed in haste. No message had come to him from the police station, and he left word that he had gone to Beechwood, whither any news of his wife was to follow him.

It was a bright, fresh morning after the rain, and the man could not restrain a thrill of exhilaration as he walked leisurely along the country road. He had a great deal on his mind, more than ever, but he was going to breakfast with Margaret, and the country air filled his lungs, and the birds sang, and the river sparkled in the sun.

Margaret was watching for him. Directly he entered the gate he caught sight of her coming toward him.

"Well, George?"

"There is no news. I don't know what has become of her."

They did not exchange any conventional greeting; she just slipped her hand through his arm.

"I was awake half the night," she said.

"How was that?"

"I was so excited."

"Not nervous still?"

"No, I didn't mean that—excited because you were coming to breakfast. Now you are angry with me! Oh! How foolish I am!" Her voice lilted.

He pressed her arm tenderly between his arm and his side.

"I am so relieved and delighted at seeing you so well, that anger would be impossible for a greater cause. How is the throat?"

"Just a little painful. Do you like my house, George?"

"It is as charming as its mistress, which is saying a great deal. I should like to see all over it before I go."

"You are very nice this morning. You shall have a button-hole for your coat. What time must you go?"

"At half past nine. I shall be late even then."

"And—Rosamond?"

"I cannot remain to look for her. I owe a duty to others as well. I have a most important case on this morning. Fortunately it is Saturday, and I shall be able to return in the afternoon."

"In time for lunch?"

"Scarcely, dear. I will lunch in town."

"But you will dine with me?"

"Ought I?" He hesitated.

"Ah! Do! Do! You must!"

"Well, I will indulge myself for once. Rosamond owes me something for this

escapade of hers. Truly"—he grew serious again—"I am very anxious about her."

"Come in to breakfast, dear."

Isobel was already down, and shook hands with Barrington. The room, low-beamed, with latticed windows, and a wide fireplace, was scented with flowers, and the table, spread with the whitest of damask and fine, old silver and china, looked a picture of exquisite refinement and taste.

What a home she could make for a man! He noted the pictures on the walls, the few graceful ornaments, the morning dress of the girl herself. She was a flower of womanhood—a flower which he had held for a moment in his hand.

She made him sit, not beside her in the guest's place, but vis-à-vis, at the other side of the oval table.

"It is like old times, isn't it?" she said, smiling, with a break in her voice, and he knew then why she had put him there.

"I wish I could always see you opposite me at breakfast, Margaret."

"Ah! How nice it would be!" She laughed, very creditably; it is always the woman who dons the mask first. "We are getting sentimental, aren't we, Isobel? You will laugh at us! Do give the man something to eat. I hope you are hungry, George?"

"I believe I am. Yes, fish, please, Miss Innes. Real fresh trout is not to be lightly passed over. Can I give you some of this omelette, Margaret?"

She had sent the butler away purposely; they could talk more freely, alone. Isobel was "one of the family," and did not count. It was pleasant for once to wait upon themselves.

After breakfast Margaret took her guest on a tour of inspection through her house and grounds. It had to be a hasty one, although he was so loath to tear himself away, but he had to catch his train.

She had ordered the car for him, so he was able to wait till the last moment.

"This afternoon you will come back; that reconciles me," she said, as he took his leave.

At the turn of the drive he turned, and she waved her handkerchief to him. She stood on the step till the car was out of sight.

She had had an hour's happiness that morning. The restraint of their last meeting had broken down under the emotion which the circumstances of the previous night had brought forth. Once more he had embraced her as of old, and their eyes had met with a love too deep for words. Even the remembrance of Rosamond, the painful bruises on her throat, had been unable to conquer the pleasure which his presence gave her.

And he was coming back; she would see him again that day.

Her heart felt unaccountably light as she reëntered the house. His visit had enlivened her. But for him she would have yielded to a fit of nervousness after the mad woman's attack, and started at every unexpected sound.

As it was, she would be glad to hear that Rosamond had left the neighborhood. She did not suppose that the woman was capable of murdering her in cold blood; but it was not agreeable to think that intoxication could turn her into a wild beast again at any moment.

A slight shudder shook Margaret at the thought, and she called to Isobel as though she wished for company.

"Will you come on the river?"

"I was going into the kitchen to make those caramels," said Isobel, smiling. "Shall I leave them till later?"

"Oh, there is no hurry, dear," said Margaret. "I want some fresh flowers for the morning room. I'll gather them while I wait for you."

She took her basket and scissors, and went out of doors.

The garden was a picture of what a

garden should be. The lawn was like green velvet: great clumps of walnut and horse-chestnut trees made shady corners; there was a rose walk and a terrace of close-cropped turf descending in two broad steps to the lawn.

Margaret picked a bunch of roses, and went on to the greenhouse for some ferns. On her way back she cut a blossom here, and a green spray there. George used to say that she arranged flowers well. She was thinking of him all the while, and studying his tastes.

She was in the act of returning to the house when she saw Isobel hastening toward her.

"Margaret! Margaret!"

"Yes. What is it?" Her face changed swiftly as Isobel joined her.

"There is some one—some one," faltered the girl, "asking for you."

"Who? What do you mean?"

"That wretched woman has returned."

Margaret turned white.

"You have let her in?"

"Yes. She came to the door and rang. She could scarcely stand, and her clothes are muddy and disarranged, as though she had been in a ditch all night. She is almost too exhausted to speak, but she asked for you, and I think she was relieved when she heard that she had not injured you."

"What have you done with her?"

"She is in the hall. Benson is watching her as though he was afraid she had a bomb in her pocket with which to blow up the house; but I don't believe she means any harm. She seems to be in a state of collapse."

Margaret said nothing, but hastened to the house. Her heart was beating painfully at the idea of seeing this woman again, but she was relieved, for George's sake, that she was found.

The sight of Rosamond shocked her for another reason. It was evident, as Isobel supposed, that she had spent the night wandering the countryside in the rain. Her clothes were plastered with mud; her hat was a wreck. Her whole appearance, indeed, was so pitiable that a swift change of feeling softened Margaret's kind heart.

"Why, where have you been?" she asked, compassionately.

The crouching woman looked up and struggled to her feet at the sound of Margaret's voice; then she burst into miserable tears.

"I've got no money," she said. "I've been wandering about all night without shelter or food. I'm cold and hungry, and ill! I don't know where to go."

She tottered, and Margaret hesitated no more than a moment. There was a beautiful expression on her face, as she put her arm round the unhappy Rosamond, who was shivering as with ague.

"I see that you are not well," she said. "Never mind! I will take care of you. Benson, tell the housemaid to get the spare room ready at once. Isobel, take her other arm, and help her upstairs. She must have a hot bath and go to bed at once. I am afraid she has a chill."

Rosamond was too ill to heed. She obeyed Margaret's instructions mechanically, as well as her cramped limbs and exhaustion would allow.

When she was warm and comfortable in bed Margaret gave her some hot soup, and sent for a doctor. Meanwhile she remained beside Rosamond, who had sunk into a feverish sleep, whence she awoke moaning to complain of pains in her back and limbs. She was probably too ill to recognize where she was, or perhaps she had forgotten the previous night, for she took the gentle attentions of her young hostess without wonder, concern, or apparent gratitude, almost as though it were a matter of course. She gave Margaret her hand to feel.

"I'm so hot," she moaned, and although it was burning, as she said, she shivered at the same moment.

"I am afraid you must expect to pay for the exposure," replied Margaret. "I hoped the hot soup and the bath would make you feel better."

Rosamond stirred.

"I'm so thirsty," she complained.

Margaret gave her some soda and milk.

She did not leave Rosamond. She sat beside her bed waiting for the doctor, with an absent expression in her eyes, which turned now and again on the restless woman in the bed. Was she wondering at the strange fate which had made her enemy of last night her guest, which had brought his wife to her door for succor?

It was a relief when she heard the doctor drive up. He was a stranger to her; she had been too short a time in the neighborhood to have required his services yet. He knew, however, who she was. The beautiful young mistress of Beechwood had already become familiar to him by sight as to the other residents.

"Miss Vaughan?"

She shook hands with him.

"Good morning, Doctor Lennox. Mrs. Barrington is your patient. I am afraid she has a chill."

"Why, what has she been doing?" he asked, cheerfully.

He turned to the bed and looked grave at once. He spoke to Rosamond, who seemed incapable of a coherent reply.

"I ought to tell you that she has been out all night," said Margaret, in a whisper. "She came down here to—to see me in a very excited state last evening, and left the house after the last train had gone. She returned just now, and told me that she had slept in a ditch. She has had a hot bath and soup."

"She spent the night out—in an excited state," murmured the doctor, in obvious amazement. He was a gentleman with a country practice, and had never heard of such disreputable proceedings in his life. "She is a friend of yours?" he added.

"I—I know of her," replied Margaret, with a vivid blush. "I know her husband. She is not exactly a friend."

"I see," he said, without seeing at all, and turned his attention once more to Rosamond.

He beckoned Margaret to accompany him to the door afterward.

"She is in for an attack of rheumatic fever," he said. "It will be a long business."

Margaret uttered a dismayed exclamation.

"I feared it."

"Will it be convenient for her to remain here?"

"She cannot be moved?"

"It would be dangerous in the extreme."

"Then, of course, she must remain," said Margaret, decidedly.

"You had better get a nurse," he said. "Do you know where to send for one?"

"No; I should be obliged if you could recommend one, doctor."

He gave her the address of a registry.

"If you telegraph," he said, "they will send one down at once. Meanwhile——"

"Please come in here," said Margaret, leading him into the library.

He wrote a couple of prescriptions, and gave his instructions concerning the nourishment Rosamond would require.

"I suppose you will communicate with Mr. Barrington?" he asked, as he rose to go.

"Certainly—at once."

He shook hands with her in the hall.

"You have my sympathy, Miss Vaughan. I know how unpleasant it is to have a stranger ill in the house."

"I am not thinking of myself," replied Margaret, truthfully, "only of her, poor thing. Of course, she shall have every attention, and I shall try to make her forget that she is not at home."

She sent one of the maids up to Rosa-

mond, and wrote two telegrams with Isobel's aid—one for the nurse, the other to Barrington, in case he were delayed in town. She addressed it to his office

"She is here and ill.—MARGARET."

CHAPTER XXXII.

Barrington received the message just as he was preparing to go. He was thunderstricken. Rosamond in Margaret's house!

She met him at the station with the car, guessing that he would come by the first train.

"You had my wire?"

"Yes; what does it mean?"

"She came to me in a state of collapse this morning, and said she had been out all night. I put her to bed, and sent for a doctor. She has rheumatic fever, unfortunately."

"Margaret, you are an angel!"

"What nonsense! I am glad to be able to do something for her. Can't you understand that? After all, she believed herself to be injured."

"Yes, I think I understand," he said, regarding her with adoration in his eyes.

"You always understand," she said; "that's partly why you're so nice, George."

"It was pretty cool of her to ask you for shelter."

"What else could the poor thing do?"

"I should have felt more like drowning myself in her place," he said, bitterly.

"Don't be hard, George; she is ill."

He turned his face away, and she sighed.

"Yes, we are three unhappy people. God help us!"

"And you don't deserve to be unhappy, Margaret."

"How do you know? You always think better of me than I deserve."

He shook his head with tender humor.

"That is the one subject on which we shall never agree! I don't know how to express my regret, Margaret, for all the trouble I am causing you."

"Don't treat me like a stranger," she said. "Of course, I don't mind doing anything—helping you in any way."

He pressed her hand in silence.

"Is she delirious?"

"She was wandering a little, I think, before the doctor came. Indeed, from the first, she scarcely seemed to realize. I have sent for a nurse."

"That was right."

When they reached the house Rosamond was quite delirious, and did not recognize her husband. An answer had come to say that a nurse would arrive at five o'clock.

Barrington came down to the drawing-room, looking grave.

"I am afraid she will be quartered with you a long time, Margaret."

"Never mind about me. Poor thing! I am afraid she is in great pain. Have your tea, George."

She handed him a cup, and he sank down in a low chair beside her.

"You and your home and your tea are equally refreshing to a tired man."

She smiled at him with almost maternal tenderness.

"The bread and butter is beside you, dear."

"Thanks."

"I hope the nurse is nice," she said. "I shall keep an eye on her at first. You'll stay down till Monday, won't you?"

"Yes, if I shan't be in the way."

"The house is big enough for all of us," she said, with a flush of pleasure.

It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good! He could stay now that his wife was here. The excuse was even good enough for Mrs. Grundy.

Isobel went to see Rosamond after tea, and Margaret took Barrington for a stroll in the garden, but she would not stay long with him. She left him alone to smoke, with the library at his disposal. A conscientious scruple

moved the girl; she would not seem to take advantage of his wife's misfortune, to rejoice at the illness which gave her the society of the man she loved. She could not help being glad that he was under her roof, but she stinted herself of the supreme pleasure of his society to atone a little for the joy of having him there.

The nurse arrived as she went in, and she conducted her to her room.

"I hope you will be comfortable," she said. "You must ask for anything you want."

"Thank you, Miss Vaughan."

"There is a little sitting room—my workroom—on this floor. Would you like your meals there?"

"If it would be convenient."

"Quite," said Margaret, pleased with the quiet, ladylike woman. "That is your patient's room."

Rosamond's voice was audible when the door opened. She was talking to herself in an incoherent murmur. Margaret could catch her own name and George's in a jumble of invective and appeal. Her face flushed at a phrase which came clearly out of the many meaningless words.

"I suppose people who are delirious always talk a great deal of nonsense?" she said, half-apologetically.

"Oh, yes, Miss Vaughan," said the nurse, with a quiet smile. "We take no notice of that."

"Doctor Lennox is coming again this evening," added Margaret. "Do you think she is very ill?"

"I can't tell yet. I will go and unpack a few things, and put on my uniform."

Margaret remained until the nurse returned, looking very professional in her cotton dress, white cap, and apron. She set to work at once arranging the room methodically, gave Rosamond her medicine, and smoothed the bedclothes.

Margaret went downstairs again, and found George talking to Isobel. It looked so familiar, and yet so strange, to enter her own living room and find him there. It was so pleasant to see him quietly seated, in no hurry to be gone; it was so agreeable to look forward to the whole long day he was to spend with them.

Isobel took up a book to leave them to themselves, and Margaret showed him all her pet acquisitions, which she had had no time to display in the morning, and asked his opinion of all sorts of things.

"I was going to give you that water-color and the old cabinet you were so fond of," he said. "Will you have them?"

"I should love to have them."

"I'll send them down to you. The cabinet would suit this room well."

"Yes, that corner is just the place for it, George."

"Do you remember how excited you were over the living room at home?"

"Ah, don't I! It was the first time I had ever had one of my own. And it wasn't mine, after all," she added, wearily.

"I never go into it now," he said, looking down.

"Are you lonely still?" she whispered.

"Always."

She stood silent beside the Greek head in Carrara marble, which she had been pointing out to him.

"Will you come down again on Monday evening?"

"If you will have me."

She flushed.

"Every evening till she is better?"

"Margaret! Margaret, you tempt me! It is not wise, I fear; but I can't resist."

"I am so glad. Of course, you ought to come and look after your wife."

"Oh, what hypocrites we are!"

A tear rose in the girl's eyes.

"Do you despise me for it?"

"God forbid that I should ever despise you."

"I try to be sincere," she said. "It is true, on my honor, that I wish her to get better soon. I would rather that she were well to-morrow than that you should visit me."

"My dear!" he murmured.

"You believe me, don't you?"

"Certainly. We both wish her well."

After dinner the doctor came again, and had an interview with Barrington. Rosamond was very ill, he declared. It was impossible to say yet what the result would be; the fever must run its course.

"What I fear most is the heart," he said. "If it should attack her heart, which is unsound—you knew that?"

"I did not know it," replied Barrington.

"I hope, however, to pull her through."

"You don't mean," said Barrington, slowly, "that there is any chance of a—a fatal termination?"

"I trust not."

"You are not sure?"

"Her constitution is not very good," replied the doctor. "She does not seem to have much stamina for a young woman. Has she had bad health lately? It is not an agreeable question to put to you, Mr. Barrington, but has she been leading an unsteady life in any way?"

"She drinks," said Barrington, crudely and bitterly.

"I thought so."

"I don't know what else she has been doing. We have been separated for some years. She has been living with relatives."

"You will excuse my plain speaking?"

"Certainly. It is best—and necessary that you should know, I am sure. I suppose her irregularities militate against her recovery?"

"Yes."

"I am glad," said Barrington, "that you have been so frank with me. If you think a consultation desirable at any time, let me know. I am very anxious to do everything possible."

"In a day or two I will let you know, Mr. Barrington."

After the doctor had gone, the younger man stood rigidly in the center of the room. That it was possible for Rosamond's illness to terminate fatally had not occurred to him hitherto.

He had supposed that some weeks of suffering, and a tedious convalescence, would be the price she would have to pay for her murderous folly and imprudence. He had expected to be tormented by appeals from a sick bed, to be moved, despite himself, to concessions which he would regret in after days. But she might die!

This was a new idea, which burst upon him with a train of new sensations. She might die! If his heart had leaped for a moment as at a trumpet note of freedom he had it well under control now. He would wish no one dead. She was his wife, and he had loved her once; she was a human soul which craved for life as other human souls.

Rosamond's life, however was destined to be a matter of conjecture for only a short while, however. Her body was too frail for the neglect she had subjected it to. Late one afternoon her tired soul gave up its struggle.

"It is so strange," Margaret said, "to think that, after all, I belong to you again. Do you know that you did not propose, George?"

"Didn't I?" Barrington asked. "It seems to me that I did long ago!"

"I took it for granted that you wanted me still, such is the vanity of women! Yes, vanity is one of our numberless faults. You won't have to buy me a wedding ring, anyhow," she said. "Do you realize that I did not give you back any of your presents?"

"Well, we have saved something in postage. What a child you are!"

"I am so glad," she said, "to be able

to feel young again. I am not silly, am I? You like me as I am?"

"You are not a child; you are very much a woman. You want a compliment every five minutes to make you happy."

"Yes, I want to be spoiled," she said, softly, with dim eyes. "You may spoil me as much as you like, George. Oh! How foolish I am, and what bliss it is to be with you, like this, again! I can't tell you how I have longed for you; how lonely I have been. I think you know what no words of mine can express. I was so happy with you. That dream-marriage of ours was like a beautiful fairy tale to me, and when it vanished I felt unhappy enough to die. Oh! Kiss me! Kiss me! Say again that you love me!"

"My dear," he murmured, deeply moved, "my dear!" He put his arm round her and drew her cheek to his. Her bosom heaved with emotion, her white throat quivered as he kissed her on brow and eyes and mouth. "You know that I love you with all my heart. I will not say that I have suffered more than you, but I will say that no man ever missed a woman or grieved more over the loss of her than I did when you went away. The light had gone out of my life, which had become a burden to me. I cared for nothing within my reach; my soul only cried like a child for the moon."

"And now we are both consoled unexpectedly."

"Yes; I never encouraged myself to look for such a solution to the problem of our lives," he said gravely. "Would some men be hypocrites enough to feign a mourning they could not feel? I wear black for her to-day, but my spirit is clothed in white, like your fair body, my love."

"I am glad you are not a hypocrite," she said. "My respect for you was the foundation of my love. Do you remember—oh! Do you remember the day you brought me home? I was so frightened of you then, and yet the fear was mingled with so deep a sense of relief and security. You were kind to me. Oh! You were kind!"

He stroked her hair, her hat lay beside her. The afternoon sunlight glinted through the boughs upon her upturned face and the scarlet cushion behind her head. A dead leaf dropped upon her breast; he brushed it off, and laid a wild flower there, which he had idly plucked from the reeds beside the bank.

"That is fresh and beautiful, and full of life, like you."

"But one day I shall be like the dead leaf," she said, "as colorless. You will not love me then. Men only love pretty things which please them. Never mind, I am young to-day, and you are here beside me, with love in your eyes."

"I shall scold you. Why will you be so morbid?"

"You loved her once, and now she is dead, and you are making love to me on the river."

"I am wiser now. A man who is not an absolute fool does not make two such mistakes in his life."

"It has been known. Perhaps I am cunning—cunning enough to hide the worst that is in me even from you!"

He regarded her with lazy complacence on his back among the velvet cushions of the punt.

"You know," she went on, "that every girl is a hypocrite when she is trying to attract a man. She is acting the apotheosis of herself all the time they are together."

"She is quite right. If she didn't, she would be a fool. Only we are not the usual pair of lovers. We know each other; there is nothing for either of us to discover. We have argued, disagreed, quarreled, and made it up; we have sulked with each other, and once I stormed at you, and you cried. What other phases can matrimony evolve for

"And yet," Margaret said broodingly, "it may be that you are wrong that I am not altogether what you think me."

us? None, surely. With a blissful sense of security, I can lie here and look at you, and adore that delicious mouth and chin, those blue eyes, the glossy wave of your hair. You are sweet, Margaret, as sweet as a wild rose, as a violet—no, you are not a violet! To bloom unseen does not strike me as being part of your natural rôle in life. You like to talk, to dress well, to be admired; you are a coquette, in fact, and an Eve among your sex."

"And yet," she said, broodingly, "it may be that you are wrong; that I am not altogether what you think me."

He was surprised to realize that she was in earnest. She sat up, her hands clasped round her knees, not looking at him, but gazing away across the river at something he could not see.

"Are you so deep?" he asked, trying to jest with her.

"Perhaps I am," she said. "I do not know. It may be that I am only playing my natural part—the woman's part, as I say, of hypocrisy."

"Margaret, what do you mean?"

"I don't know."

"You must know. Is it possible that you have something to tell me at this time of day?"

She roused herself then and unclasped her hands to finger the flower he had placed in jest upon her breast.

"Do you think it possible?"

"No," he replied; "unless you tell me outright that it is so. I have no questions to ask."

"Ah! You trust me—you love me!" she said. "How silly I am to try to make you doubt! I am like a child with a treasured plant; I must be forever digging it up, to see how it grows." She laid her hand playfully first on his eyes, then on his lips. "Don't look at me like that! Kiss me."

"Why mustn't I look at you?"

"Kiss me," she said, as though she were going to cry.

He obeyed at once. She sighed an exaggerated relief.

"Now I breathe again!"

Her earnestness, or what he had taken for earnestness, was gone. She would have him make much of her again, and think her perfect; she tyrannized over him like a spoiled child.

Time had slipped by quicker than they knew. A sudden chilly breath warned Margaret of dinner time.

"I believe we ought to turn, George."

"Half past six!" he said, and seized the paddle.

"I don't care if we are late," she said. "It is my house. I am independent of everybody in the world!"

"Even of me," he said, a little jealously.

"Yes. How nice to know it! I shall never have to ask you for a new hat."

"You are teasing me dreadfully this evening, Margaret. Your mood is disagreeable in the extreme."

"Oh, let us laugh while we can," she said. "I shall feel serious enough when we get indoors. You are not frightened of dead people, are you, George?"

"No," he said.

"I am."

"You shall go away," he said, quickly. "Why didn't you say so before? You bundle of nerves!"

"I know it's silly. I don't mind by daylight."

"Were you always like that?"

"Not before the murder. I don't suppose I shall ever quite get over what I suffered at that time."

He was inexpressibly touched. If any irritation had been left by her late unaccountable hint of mystery it vanished from his mind now. The lawyer had pitied her. The lover was melted to infinite tenderness by remembrance of the mental torture she must have endured. Her timid, deprecating glance at him seemed to beg for pity, and she had never to ask for his sympathy in vain.

His arm encircled her with a gesture of protection.

"You and Miss Innes shall go up to New York to your old hotel at once. I will wire for rooms. You shall never return to this house unless you like."

"You are the only man in the world who wouldn't laugh at me, George. But I won't go. It's too ridiculous. I must get over it."

"You need not begin now," he said, gently. "I should go if I were you, dear. You need not feel ashamed of yourself. Your nerves have had shocks enough during the last nine months to send most women into a lunatic asylum."

"I have had a bad time, haven't I?" Her lips quivered in self-pity, and she drew closer to him. "But if I go, what will you do?"

"I must say here till the funeral is over, then I will join you. Will you have the house let furnished or unfurnished, or will you sell the whole thing?"

"I don't care—just as you think best. You will be here all alone, George, for three days."

"Never mind." He smiled faintly. "I am not nervous."

"But you will be dull and sad. You will think, after I am gone, that I am a selfish pig."

"A pig! What language!"

"Well, I am only twenty-one, after all."

"You are adorably young, my sweet, and yet sometimes as old—as old as Eve! Go and tell Miss Innes that you are going to New York, and pack. I dare say she will be as glad as you at the bottom of her heart. I know what girls are."

"I am not going, George. I have utterly changed my mind."

"But I have not 'utterly changed' my mind. You are going," he said, decidedly.

"I want to stay with you."

"At the moment I would rather not have you."

"Yes, you would. You pretend, because you think I wish to go."

"Margaret, it is dinner time, and your maid has to pack."

"George," she implored.

"Obey me," he said, "if it is for the last time in your life. I wish you to go."

"Of course, if you order me——"

"I do."

She held up her mouth with an air of submission, and he gave her the kiss of reward.

He thought he understood why she was in such a curious mood on the river this afternoon, with her harping upon death, and her own unworthiness, and other unhappy subjects. She was run down, of course. The familiar bustle of New York and the preparations for her marriage would soon put her straight.

He went to the station with the girls a couple of hours later. It would be dreary in the house of death after they had gone, but he was a man; he could support the gloom of the lowered blinds and silence, with such a future before his mind's eye. Italy and Margaret! Already he could imagine her fair hair kissed to a golden aureole by the southern sun, the glisten of her blue eyes, the happy flush he loved to bring into her cheeks. What a bride she would make! What a wife! His heart beat thick and fast as he drove back to Beechwood along the dark, country road.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"That ever I should be glad to get away from him," sighed Margaret in the train. "What a queer world it is! I shouldn't have slept—I couldn't—under that roof again. And only a few weeks ago I was so eager to get into the house!"

"Never mind, you are going to be happy now," said Isobel. "You are a lucky girl, Margaret."

"Lucky? After all I have gone through!"

"Yes, even after all you have gone through. Isn't it worth it? Haven't you a magnificent reward?"

"Ah!" sighed Margaret, and her lids drooped for a moment, and her lips parted with a deep, rapturous breath.

Barrington came to his office as usual the next day, and saw her before returning to Beechwood. He had found time to attend to the matter of the license, and wondered if he were the first man who had gone on such an errand in the interval between his wife's death and funeral.

There seemed a brutality about such haste; but Rosamond had been his wife in name only for so long, and it would have been a mockery of sentiment to pretend that he was the least upset by her death. It had been a blessing to him, and he could not pretend otherwise. His conscience was clear, he had done his best for her while she lived.

The next day she was buried, and he paid and dismissed Margaret's servants, with the exception of the gardener and his wife, who were to take charge of the house till it was disposed of.

A few cases of things which Margaret had resolved to keep had already been packed under his instructions, and

forwarded to New York, and half a dozen agents had orders to let or sell the place unfurnished or as it stood.

Even if Margaret had not conceived a distaste for it, they could not have made it their home. It was necessary for the lawyer to be close to his work. When he did return to New York at last and came to tell her that all the unpleasantness was over, she received him with a quiet glow of joy.

They kissed each other, and already it seemed that she had fallen into the wife's place again. It came so natural to her to make him comfortable, and to help him to forget the gloomy past, to hover round him, and bring him things, above all to be ready with love and sympathy.

"Poor boy! You have had such a wretched day!"

Barrington came to his office as usual the next day, but saw Margaret before returning to Beechwood.

Her hand was in his hair, and he caught it and drew it down to his lips.

"And you—what have you been doing?"

"Preparing for our departure. I am afraid you are making a great sacrifice, George, in order to take me abroad in the middle of the term?"

"I am going to secure one perfect

month at any cost," he said, with quiet decision. "If I were ill I should be obliged to take a rest. I will have a honeymoon! We are going to Venice, Margaret."

"You dear, extravagant fellow!"

"We can afford it," he said, complacently. "I have been doing very well since—since our last marriage! It will not be necessary for you to spend any of your income on housekeeping, even on the aggrandized scale we contemplate."

"Then what shall I do with my money?" she asked, in dismay. "I can't spend the interest of eighty thousand on clothes!"

"We shall find some way of getting rid of it by and by, no doubt."

"I do hope we are going to be lucky," she said. "I think we've had more than our share of knocks already, don't you?"

"You have, poor child!"

"I am so happy," she said, mistily. "You are mine, really mine, at last."

He spent the morning with her. She was beginning to recover from the nervous shocks of the last few days, and her natural girlish spirits showed through the veil of restraint which it had seemed to her decorous to wear on the day of Rosamond's funeral.

He was in black, and his somber suit and tie reminded her continually of the death which had given them renewed zest of life. To-day was Rosamond's, to-morrow would be hers, and he would no longer come to her in even a pretense of mourning.

He went to the office next morning with a new buoyancy in his step. The man, who had aged prematurely in the last few months, was young again.

The strain of life had never flowed so vigorously through his veins. The day after to-morrow his heart's desire would be gratified at last, and he felt that even the pain of waiting had been worth while. If nothing had come between them that Eastertide, would he have cared so much, enjoyed so much? She had been withheld so long. The thing which is difficult to attain is all the more precious.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

To his surprise, on reaching his office, he found Mrs. Wetherby installed in his own chair. It was some time since he had seen his dear Aunt Adelaide. She had not come near him, in fact, since her temporary successful mischief-making between himself and Margaret in the matter of the missing letter.

She showed all her teeth in a hyena-like smile, which she fully believed to be a sign of genuine affection. The woman was so artificial that she did not even know when she was in earnest and when she was not.

It was her firm conviction, indeed, that she was "very fond of dearest George," and that she had been his best friend many times in his life.

Barrington was in too good a temper to resent her intrusion, or snub her. What did it matter that she had been spiteful behind his back? Nothing she did or said was worth a quarrel. He smiled also, amused at the coolness of her visit.

"How do you do, Aunt Adelaide? Where do you spring from? Your appearances and disappearances are as sudden and unaccountable as that of the fairy in the pantomime!"

"The good fairy, I hope?" she simpered.

"Oh, that goes without saying."

"I was at Atlantic City when I heard that your wife was dead," she said, "and I really couldn't help coming up to—to sympathize with you."

"Oh, to sympathize!" he repeated, with an air of attention.

"I scarcely like to say to congratulate you," she continued. "It sounds so unfeeling when the poor, misguided crea-

ture is scarcely cold in her grave. But, of course, you regard her death as a blessing?"

Barrington did not think it necessary to respond.

"A blessing," repeated Aunt Adelaide, "which is natural enough, I suppose, men being what they are, although in the end it may turn out quite different. The ways of Providence are so strange!"

"They are," acquiesced the lawyer, wondering how long Mrs. Wetherby meant to extend her visit of congratulation or condolence.

"I remember her when she was a pretty girl—most attractive, too."

Barrington, whose thoughts had wandered, returned to the contemplation of the lady before him.

"Did you admire her? I did not know at the time that she had impressed you so favorably. I was under the delusion that you considered her far inferior in looks and style to her mother."

"I said so? You are making a great mistake," said Mrs. Wetherby, in a tone of most solemn conviction. "I always admired poor Rosamond. She had such beautiful, dark eyes, and such a fine figure. She was a lady, too, which is a great thing; one knew exactly who she was and where she came from."

"Yes," he said. "That is a great safeguard, isn't it?"

Mrs. Wetherby smiled uncertainly, and changed the conversation; sometimes she had just a dim appreciation of satire.

"Now, I suppose, you are thinking of marrying again?"

"I am."

"Still infatuated!"

"Still." He smiled, refusing to be put out of temper by Aunt Adelaide. "Wonderful, isn't it?"

"I hope," said Mrs. Wetherby, lugubriously, "that you may not make another mistake. It is astonishing how often clever men make a muddle of their private lives. After your first unfortunate experience, too, I should be heartbroken if anything went wrong with you again."

"I am gratified by your concern for me, my dear Aunt Adelaide; but I assure you it is unnecessary."

"Is it?" she said. "If I had been quite sure of it I might have been content to write to you, but taking so deep an interest in your welfare as I do, George, I felt it to be my duty—my positive duty—to come and see you at once."

Barrington remained coldly and politely silent. He understood his Aunt Adelaide.

At first he had supposed it to be only curiosity which had brought her to see him, but he knew better now. She had come to tell him something unpleasant; it was written in her eager eyes, it oozed from the unctuous honey of her words.

He would not give her the gratification of showing the least curiosity. He was not curious, in fact, only worried and irritated at having his precious time wasted. If he had confessed his private opinion, it would have been that he did not care an atom for any information Mrs. Wetherby might choose to repeat or concoct.

"Perhaps, you know," she said, "that Margaret was engaged to be married to the murderer, Robert Ames?"

A curious sense of unreality came over Barrington. His eyes saw as clearly as ever, but everything seemed a long way off—the familiar book-lined walls, the view of the old buildings through the window, the figure of Mrs. Wetherby in a juvenile hat, watching him eagerly; even his own voice sounded unreal. Nevertheless, he spoke in his usual quiet way.

"Who told you?"

"Then you do know?" she said, uncertainly. "Of course, if she has told

you all about it, and you don't object, it is all right. But I couldn't help thinking it strange that she should have kept it so close—at the trial, too! Why, nobody knew that she had even seen the man!"

"And yet," said the lawyer, with his keen eyes on her face, "you seem to have heard all about it!"

"Yes; as I was going to tell you, the story came round to me only the other day in the strangest way. The man—a most respectable man—who keeps the house where I am lodging, has a brother who was there at the time of the murder. The properties adjoin, as I suppose you know, although the families were not on speaking terms through some quarrel about a right of way. Well, at ten o'clock one night, he happened to be out courting one of the maids when he heard voices."

Barrington stirred; he smiled.

"This grows dramatic. I congratulate you on the vividness of your description, my dear aunt. Your landlord's brother heard voices in the night. Well?"

"He stole forward to see who was there, and found one of his master's guests, young Mr. Ames, with the companion from The Holt."

"How did he know who she was?"

"I suppose he had seen her about. It was very natural that he should recognize her, I am sure, George!"

"Quite, my dear aunt. I throw no discredit upon your respectable landlord's brother's story."

"If you make fun of me, George," said Mrs. Wetherby, a little peevishly, "I am sure I cannot tell the story properly. Anyhow, what is the use of continuing," she added, with a sly glance at him, "if you know all about it?"

"Whether I know or not, it may interest me to hear what is being repeated about my future wife," said Barrington. "A story always becomes more entertaining by repetition."

"Do you mean to insinuate," demanded Mrs. Wetherby, turning red, "that I am lying?"

"Oh, nothing of the kind, my dear aunt! Neither, I repeat, do I doubt the veracity of the landlord's brother. It is merely a question of the point of view from which one regards a given object—just a matter of perspective!"

Mrs. Wetherby was not sure still that he was not mocking her; "dear George" had grown so cynical, so difficult to understand; but she wanted to go on. Had she not come on purpose to tell her story? And it did not suit her to quarrel about it. She dropped into her former impressive tone with scarcely an effort, as she resumed her narrative:

"His arm was round her," she said, "and her head was on his shoulder. She was crying. The man heard her say that she was very miserable, and wished she'd never had anything to do with him, as their secret would only be his ruin and hers. Ames kissed her, but she pushed him away suddenly, declaring that he was a bad man."

"This is thrilling, indeed!"

"You may choose to scoff," said Mrs. Wetherby, shrewdly, "but you don't like it. You can't like it; you are not such a fool."

"Why didn't this man talk about his discovery at the time? Servants always gossip about what doesn't concern them. I should have thought that any one who knew anything at all of her affairs would have been proud to say so while the trial was going on."

"I asked him that," replied Mrs. Wetherby, eagerly. "He was still in service at Kellway, you see, and ought not to have been out courting the maid, so his mouth was shut. Now he has left. You mark my words, George; think twice before you marry her, or you'll find you've made a mistake for a second time."

Barrington stretched with an air of lazy good humor, and yawned.

"Oh, I've left off thinking out of working hours," he said. "It's too much trouble. I am in love. Whatever Margaret does is correct, I am sure. Why shouldn't she meet her fiancé by moonlight? Probably the poor things didn't have a chance of seeing each other in the daytime!"

"Of course, if you are satisfied," said Mrs. Wetherby, as she had said before, "it doesn't matter to anybody else. But I must say that if I were a man I shouldn't care to think that the girl I was going to marry had had clandestine meetings at night with another man."

"She didn't know me then, my dear aunt," said Barrington, easily. "We must be charitable and reasonable." He was actually smiling at her in the irritating, sarcastic way he put on sometimes. "If I had been the young fellow, for instance, I should have expected her to meet me! Why refuse to others the latitude you expect yourself?"

"Do you ever make a midnight rendezvous with your fiancée?" asked Mrs. Wetherby, with a spiteful laugh.

"Fortunately, she is her own mistress now; it was otherwise with her then, and I am my own master, unaccountable to any one for my actions. If they met at night it is doubtless because they could not arrange otherwise."

"But the strange words she used toward this wretched Ames, and the hypocrisy, George, the hypocrisy of the whole proceeding! Why such secrecy unless she had something to be ashamed of?"

"Is it hypocrisy and secrecy to refrain from telling your affairs to all the strangers about you? Margaret was not with her own family, and her matrimonial projects had nothing to do with anybody."

"Of course, people will say that Robert Ames sacrificed himself to save her," said Mrs. Wetherby, "but I suppose you are prepared for that, and don't mind? The coincidence is certainly very startling."

It was one of those flashes of shrewdness with which minds of the order of Aunt Adelaide's will sometimes startle a clever man. She was not intelligent, but she was cunning. It is questionable whether Barrington would have evolved such an idea—an idea so difficult to associate with Margaret—alone. As it was, she was rewarded for her shot by a faint start and a contraction of the lawyer's brows.

He was quick to recover himself, to conceal his agitation, if he were agitated, beneath impatience and annoyance. He stirred irritably.

"As you say, I am satisfied with her past, it concerns nobody else; and I do not think that any one—any man—will have the audacity to suggest in my presence that she is a murderess. I really cannot permit the woman I am going to marry to be critized, even by you."

Mrs. Wetherby rose, biting her lips, which trembled with a mixture of anger and nervousness.

"You are very ungrateful," she said, "and I am deeply hurt. However, my conscience is clear. Whatever happens to you now will not be my fault."

"I am sorry," he said, gravely.

He had risen, too, and opened the door for her. She glared at him, and left without shaking hands.

"I wonder if he did know, after all?" she mused on her way downstairs.

Barrington returned to his chair. His clerk came in. He was overdue at court, and business had to begin.

All the morning he had scarcely breathing space, but he found time to think of Margaret, and this story concerning her, which had been told to him.

He knew that Aunt Adelaide was capable of a deliberate, gratuitous, malicious invention; nevertheless, he was inclined to believe that she was speaking the truth in this instance. It seemed to him that the narrative bore

an impress of realism which she was not clever enough to counterfeit, although he would rather, a thousand times, believe that it was a lie.

Was it possible that Margaret could have kept such a secret from him?

He fell into a reverie in the midst of the crowded court. His mind's eye saw again a scene upon the river, and Margaret gazing at him with a dim trouble in her face that was no longer mysterious to him. Her broken words, which had hinted at something he could not understand, were full enough of meaning now. He pondered again, too, his aunt's remark:

"People will say that Robert Ames sacrificed himself to save her."

He saw nothing for a moment but blood. Everything was fused in it. He could not hear the opposing counsel's voice, or see the judge's face. Then his head grew clear again, and he rose to cross-examine, the keen, attentive, and brilliant lawyer whom every one knew.

CHAPTER XXXV.

As soon as Margaret was married Isobel was going to Park Avenue to take care of the house and servants until she found a new place. It was hard on her to be obliged to start afresh. She had been so happy with Margaret, and it was improbable that she would ever be so fortunate again.

"I shall come across some old tabby, who will worry my life out," she said, mournfully; "and I shall answer back, and be looking for another situation in a month. You have spoiled me, Margaret."

"I have other views for you. You are too good to spend your life attending to other people—you must have a life, a home and interests of your own. You must marry, Isobel!"

"Alas! Nobody wants me," said the girl, with a grimace. "If you could only find somebody nice for me!"

"I am going to turn matchmaker when I come back from my honeymoon."

"Oh, the idea!" cried Isobel. "Of course, I was only in fun. Pauper as I am, I wouldn't marry just for a home, Margaret; I couldn't."

"You are a nice girl, Isobel. I am sure anybody might fancy you."

"Women always like me, but women's women are not men's."

"They are sometimes."

"Well, I won't be perverse. I'll do my best. You find the happy man, and I won't say 'No' to him unless—unless I can't help disliking the creature. Honestly, I believe I should make a good wife. I should be so grateful to anybody who made me happy."

"I know several men who might do," said Margaret, quite seriously, "and George must know many more. Don't be in a hurry to find a new position, and, above all, don't take one out of New York, or where they would not allow you to come and see me very often."

"Margaret! Margaret!" Isobel threw down the needlework upon which she was engaged and put her arms round Margaret's neck. "Oh, you dear goose, don't bother yourself! Those things come when they come; they can't be forced."

"You see," said Margaret, with a dreamy expression, "I always remember how badly I myself stood in need of a friend once, and how cruelly the world treated me till one man came along. I can't be as much to you as he has been to me; but what I can do I will, rest assured."

"Thank you, dear."

"You little silly, you are crying!" said Margaret, who was shedding a tear or two herself.

"I'm not," said Isobel, with an indignant sob.

"I shan't rest until I see you comfortably settled in a home of your own."

"Oh, you mustn't think about me; just enjoy yourself. It's the selfish people who have a good time in the world. I've seen it over and over again."

A dressmaker came to see Margaret and created a cheerful diversion. They were both as fond of clothes as the majority of their sex, and Isobel forgot her forlornness in suggesting an alteration here, an improvement there, and Margaret became as frankly egotistical as is natural in a beautiful woman who is criticizing a garment to be worn on her honeymoon.

She sighed with delight when the gown was finally disposed of.

"I do look nice in it, don't I, Isobel?"

"Delicious," said Isobel, who had a genuine and passionate admiration for her friend; "but then, you look nice in almost anything."

"But there are degrees of niceness. This, I think, is the superlative."

"Blue is always your color. I do hope you'll have a blue room in your new home."

Barrington was coming to dinner. Margaret had another blue dress, not new, but very becoming, and she put it on that night. It was such an agreeable sensation to meet his eyes fixed upon her with a lover's admiration, and to know how much she was desired. She would never be a dowd, she resolved, even when her youth was gone.

At six o'clock she began to look for him. Much as they had been together formerly, his coming never failed to set her heart beating, and to bring a flush to her cheeks. His step outside the door to-night was as great an event as though he were newly her lover. The novelty, the excitement never wore off. She rose to meet him with trembling lips and brightening eyes.

"Well, dear?"

He put his hand on her shoulder and kissed her.

"You look tired to-day," she said, quickly.

"Do I?"

"Poor boy!" she said, softly. "He is working too hard. A rest will do him good. I was just reading the end of the Stormont affair in the evening paper. You got your verdict, I see."

"Yes, by the skin of my teeth." His face, which looked rather white and drawn, brightened to a smile. It was gone in an instant, however, and he sank heavily into the chair to which she had led him.

"Have you been busy to-day?"

"Awfully," she said. "But the last gown has come home now." She folded her hands in her lap, complacently. "I must say everybody has been very good."

"And you are ready to start off—at once?"

"Yes."

"It will be too late to turn back soon, you know, Margaret."

"I don't want to turn back."

"How about your dolefulness on the river the other day? Forgotten?"

Her bright face clouded just a little, and she looked at him with a recurrence of that dim trouble in her eyes.

"Yes, forgotten. I am never going to talk such nonsense again."

He sat gazing at her in silence, as though he would read her soul.

"Why do you look at me like that, George?"

"I will tell you presently."

"Why not now?"

"It is dinner time, isn't it? After dinner I want a talk with you."

He saw her wince with the quick nervousness of a highly-bred horse at the prick of the spur.

"Not an unpleasant talk?" she asked.

He smiled, and laid his hand on her lips.

"Afterward, I said!"

The smile reassured her, and the color, which had faded a little, came back to her cheeks. She kissed the hand on her lips.

It was a token of love and submission so tender that he was inexpressibly touched. He caught her to his side with a swift, protective gesture, but said nothing, and released her as Isobel came into the room.

At dinner Margaret seemed preoccupied. Occasionally Barrington caught her glancing at him with inquiry in her eyes, which she averted as they met his.

She could not, however, help being very happy. He had conquered a tendency to moodiness, and was making her laugh with anecdotes of the trial—an amusing action for libel between a smart dramatist and an actor-manager—in which he had been engaged during the day. It was evident that he was in no hurry for that talk he had mentioned to her, for he prolonged the dinner as much as possible, lingering over his nuts and keeping the girls amused the while.

When it was over at last he stood up, straightening himself as though he were tired.

Margaret slipped her hand through his arm as they went up to her sitting room together. They were alone as he shut the door behind them; Isobel, making herself scarce as usual when Barrington was there, had gone to her own room.

"Now," said Margaret, sinking on to the couch. "I know there is something on your mind. Come and sit down here beside me."

He crossed the room, but stood before her instead.

"You are right," he said. "There is some thing on my mind. Candidly, I have had a most unpleasant day, Margaret."

"I'm sorry," she said, anxiously. "It isn't my fault in any way, is it?"

His eyes pierced hers suddenly; for the moment—habit is strong—it was the lawyer, not the lover, who looked at her.

"What were you doing that night in Kellway's park with Robert Ames?"

Margaret gave a deep gasp and sprang to her feet.

"Good heavens!" she whispered, "how did you know?"

He saw the blood rush to her face in flood and ebb. He knew that she trembled, sickened, writhed under his scrutiny, cast hunted glances round her for some loophole of escape. Her fear of the man she loved so deeply was a pitiable thing.

"Then it is true that you were in the habit of meeting him clandestinely—that you were engaged?"

She hesitated painfully.

"Answer!" he said, sharply.

"It is true."

Perhaps his harshness and abruptness was a little cruel, but they served his purpose, and no doubt the wound this discovery had dealt him was deep enough to excuse much, for his face was as white as hers, even to the lips, and his eyes looked strained and bloodshot.

Neverthless, having succeeded in startling a confession from her, his tone was quieter, though deeply reproachful.

"Why did you conceal it from me? You pretended to have no secrets. In all our confidential talks together you held this in reserve, while you played at openness with me. I told you everything; I trusted you with all my heart." His voice, held under with an effort, grew heated again. "I cannot understand such hypocrisy!"

"I did not mean to be a hypocrite," she whispered. "I did not think it necessary to tell you at the beginning, when we were little more than strangers to each other, and afterward—afterward I did not like to. Indeed, I had no other motive for my silence than that. If I had known what we were to become to each other, I should have behaved differently."

"You should have told your lawyer, if not your lover—your husband, as you believed me to be. It might have put

quite a different complexion upon your defense. You had no right to conceal it. Why did you do so, in any case? What was the object of the deception? There was no harm that I can see in your engagement to this man. The only harm done was in the concealment of it."

"He wished it to be private for a time. He had family reasons for desiring secrecy."

"Did you care for him?"

"I did not love him. I liked him very well. He kept after me, and—and I wanted a home."

"As you did—afterward," supplemented Barrington, bitterly.

She winced, and covered her face; tears stole between her fingers, and her bosom rose and fell in great waves of emotion.

"It is natural that you should be angry with me," she said. "I did wrong. I ought to have told you when your goodness to me gave you the right to know everything. But I was afraid that you would think me deceitful—think less of me. Now you have found out from another source, and I have brought down on myself double the punishment I feared."

"It pains me, naturally," he said, "to discover that you had a reserve from me when I had none from you. It pains me, too, to think that, after all, I was not the first. Ah!"—he raised his hand, enjoining silence, as she was about to break in upon his speech—"that is little, after all! I am not so unreasonable—a boy—to go into hysterics because, before we met, another man had kissed you. Even to your silence I am trying to grant patience and understanding. But you must help me, Margaret."

The floor was heaving under her feet.

He laid his hands on her shoulders, to steady her, and hold her before him.

"Why are you so frightened? Have I become terrible all of a sudden?"

"I am ashamed. You are angry with me just as everything seemed straight at last. You will never forgive me!"

"Nonsense; I love you. But I want the truth; all of it, Margaret."

"I will tell you everything—if—if," she panted, "you will look kindly at me again."

He put his arm round her, touched in spite of his just anger, and drew her to the couch. She sank to his feet, and laid her tear-stained face on his knee.

"Yes, I will tell you everything," she murmured. "We met out of doors, that is why nobody knew of our acquaintance. He performed some trifling service for me, opened a gate and restored something I had dropped. We fell into conversation and I knew that he admired me. We met several times afterward—not deliberately on my part, although I did not try to avoid him. Afterward we made an appointment, which I kept. It was foolish, no doubt, but I was lonely, miserable, depressed. I did not like the people at The Holt. You know how much cause I had to hate one man there, at least! I told Robert Ames about my troubles, and he sympathized, hating where I hated, because he loved me; and for another reason, it seemed to me afterward, for he had once known Wilfrid Denver well."

She paused in the feverish haste of her story to moisten her dry lips.

"I was troubled that he did not ask me to marry him, and one day I told him that I had been very unwise to meet him, and must do so no more. It was then that he proposed, telling me that he was in no position to marry yet. He was in Wilfrid Denver's power over some transaction, which would ruin him if it came to his father's ears. He dared not marry me in his enemy's face; furthermore, his father had an heiress in view for him. By-and-by he hoped to get hold of some money, and come to a settlement with Denver.

The consciousness of a mutual persecutor drew us still closer together. I promised to wait for him."

She wiped her brow with the handkerchief she had crumpled into a ball.

"Am I tedious? You want to know everything, don't you?"

"Yes," he said, quietly. "Go on."

She was telling him the story, as far as it concerned the murdered man, which she had told him before the trial, less many details which had made his death at her hands seem just possible to the counsel for the defense. The element of Robert Ames was alone new to him. That she had contrived to keep it dark all through her confabulations with her lawyer, and with him, would have given a weaker man a sickening sensation, arguing, as it did, a power of restraint so marked.

"I was not in love with him, as I said, but I liked to be loved by a man who wanted to marry me. It gave me an interest in life, a friend, which I had not possessed before. My talks with him steeled me against Wilfrid's insolence, and raised my broken spirits. I was grateful to him."

"I think you loved him a little," he suggested.

"No, I never loved him," she said. "I never loved any man until I met you."

She touched his hand; her fingers closed timidly round it, and he did not draw it away.

"And then?" he said, in a low tone. "What was that scene in the park which betrayed you?"

"Was it overheard?"

"Yes. Wouldn't you tell me the truth otherwise?"

She started, wounded.

"I suppose I deserve that; but God knows I have no desire to keep the least thing back. There is nothing more to conceal. You know the best and worst of me now, George. By degrees I began to doubt him. Rumors floated over to The Holt of his attentions to the heiress his father wished him to marry. I reproached him with double-dealing, and told him that I would not consent to keep my engagement a secret any longer. These meetings might compromise me. Unless he would consent to brave his father's anger for my sake, I should give him up."

She sobbed suddenly.

"Well, I didn't give him up. He begged me to go on, and I consented, but I never saw him again. He was ashamed to come and see me in prison, I suppose, or afraid. When I was told in the condemned cell that he had confessed and was dead, I concluded that he had killed Wilfrid Denver in the course of a quarrel over the old affair. He was a headstrong, passionate man, but I was greatly surprised and shocked, although selfish relief was my chief sensation at the time."

"Is that all?" he asked.

"Absolutely all."

"You should have told me before the trial. If I had known all I might have saved you immense suffering."

"I had promised him to tell no one," she said, truthfully. "I couldn't break my word, could I? His father would have been so angry. It would have ruined him."

"In the circumstances surely your loyalty was a little strained? You might have asked to be released from your promise at any rate."

"I did not think it was of any consequence, or I should have done so, no doubt."

"You had no right to think at all. We were doing the thinking for you. It was your place to speak the simple truth."

"I know I was very foolish, half-distraught."

"You had no other reason for keeping quiet?"

"None."

"I will be fair with you," he said.

"It was my Aunt Adelaide who was kind enough to give me the information, which happens, it appears, to be true for once. Do you know how she wound up her remarks? 'People will say that Robert Ames sacrificed himself to save her!' "

A sharp cry broke from the girl's lips. She raised a blanched face; her eyes, full of trouble, met the man's.

"Ah, poor fellow, poor fellow!" she exclaimed, piteously; "I never thought of that. If I believed it, I should go mad. It is true that he loved me devotedly."

Barrington expelled a deep breath very softly. He gazed back at her without speaking for a moment.

She did not understand him. The sentence, which would have conveyed an accusation to a guilty mind, had borne quite another meaning for her. Not for an instant had he permitted a suspicion of her to enter his mind; he loved her too well, knew her too well, to imagine that she was capable of such a crime, or to accuse her of more than a folly—an irritating and unnecessary reticence. Nevertheless, this proof of her innocence was sweet to him. Even in imagination she was pure.

"You don't understand the full beauty of the insinuation," he said, grimly, wishing to punish her a little. "My dear Aunt Adelaide wished to suggest that you were guilty, after all."

"George, George! You don't believe it!" she gasped.

"Am I not to believe it?"

"Oh, you can't; it is impossible, if you really love me!"

"Once you thought you loved me, I remember; and yet accused me of a very mean action."

"Not of murder! Besides, I—I was sorry afterward."

"Yes—afterward!"

"You are so much wiser than I am. You don't—you couldn't make such a cruel mistake!" she said, piteously.

"Other wise men once made the same cruel mistake."

She gave him a misty, heartbroken glance, and swayed.

"Oh, what shall I do?"

The whisper, so full of anguish, gripped him by the throat.

"Margaret, you will never keep anything from me again for any motive whatever?"

"No—no."

He took her in his arms and kissed her gravely on the lips.

"That is all, then."

"You believe me?"

"Yes. What do you take me for? Of course, I know that you are incapable of a murder. I was only punishing you a little while for your secret."

To his alarm, her body grew suddenly limp in his embrace.

"Margaret!"

She gave a little, ineffectual yawn, and her eyes closed.

He put her on the sofa, his own face almost as pale as hers. When he realized that she had fainted he did not go for Isobel; he was an experienced widower—not a helpless bachelor. He went into her bedroom for some water, and damped the girl's forehead with a corner of his moistened handkerchief.

When she regained consciousness he was sitting beside her on the edge of the couch.

"My poor child," he said, tenderly.

"Did I faint?" she whispered; "I don't think I was ever so foolish in my life before. I can't be as strong as I used to be."

A twinge of anxiety contracted his features.

"You don't feel ill, Margaret?" he asked, quickly.

"Only when you are angry with me," she said, her lips quivering to a smile. Her hand stole to his neck, and he stooped and kissed her with the passion which was in his heart.

"My darling, my darling!"

She began to sob wildly, great, tearing sobs, then both arms were round his neck.

"Oh, if I had lost you; if I had lost you! I can't bear to think of it! In all my life, in all the mental agony I have endured, that moment was the worst."

Barrington held her closely.

"Ah, don't cry," he said, "it is over, and you are my Margaret still."

"But you will always be remembering that the other man came first; you will always be thinking of the kisses I gave to him. You will never quite forgive me in your heart. I deceived you. It will make you question everything I do and say. Oh, if I had only told you. If I had only told you, instead of letting you find me out!"

He smiled, smoothing her hair.

"I think, looking back, that you have punished yourself already with a thousand terrors," he said. "That is as it should be! But I am a merciful judge, and ordain that you are not to work yourself into a morbid fever over what is done with, as far as I am concerned. I am a man of common sense, I hope, not a hero of romance, ready to curse the woman he loves, and go off to Africa to shoot lions because of a thing like this. I was disappointed for a little because I thought you had been in love before. If you did not love him, his lips have not poisoned you. You were engaged. It does not seem to me that your conduct was light in any way. On the contrary, you behaved with quixotic honesty and folly over the trial. If, as you say, you had only told me a long time ago I should have no grievance against you. As it is, I can have the pleasure of forgiving you. Come, come!"

He soothed her weeping with great gentleness, chaffing her a little by-and-by as the storm began to show signs of exhaustion.

"Are you beginning to reproach me. Must I go on my knees and declare myself a brute before you are appeased?"

"You know what I think of you," she said. "There isn't any one like you in all the world!" After a pause she went on: "Half a dozen times I meant to tell you. At Easter——"

"And that afternoon on the river?"

"Yes; but I was such a coward. I took the meanest view of it. 'He'll never know, so it doesn't matter,' I told myself; 'and if I confess, he'll be angry that I didn't do so before!'"

He laughed—actually laughed—but there was a look which was not mirth in his eyes, and he strained her to him with a quick pressure.

"Did you imagine that I should quarrel with you for anything on earth which a man may forgive? You need not have feared. Does one cut off one's left hand because one's right hand sinned? We have gone through too much together, you and I, to talk of parting, Margaret. As much as I could forgive myself, I could forgive you. You need only speak and I can understand. I loved you less than now the last time I put an offense of yours behind me. This has followed it to the past. Come, dry your eyes, dear. We are going to be married. You are mine."

"Oh, how I love you!" murmured the woman, with her lips on his. "How I love you!"

Margaret's wedding-ring was on her hand again. Husband and wife stood together on the deck of the Channel boat which was taking them to the Continent for their honeymoon.

"It is like a dream," she said. "I can scarcely believe it yet. Were we really married yesterday?"

He smiled.

"Really."

"And you belong to me for ever and

ever, at last." Her eyes were misty. "It's wonderful!"

"It isn't every woman," said Barrington, humorously, "who can say that she married the same man twice."

"I am very happy," she murmured. "There is only one thing that troubles me. If I knew the truth about Robert Ames. Do you really think that he was guilty, George?"

He looked at her, and would have answered as he did answer, even against his conviction, to wipe that anxiety from her brow.

"Yes," he said, truthfully. "I think so. Don't worry yourself about that, Margaret. I am sure there is no need."

"Oh, my own beloved," she said, in a mood deliciously feminine and tender; then she breathed a sigh of utter content, and drew closer to his side as their lips met.

The End

TWILIGHT

WHEN the twilight woos the day
In its quiet arms to rest,
When the sun sinks in the west
Far beyond the rock-girt bay,

When the seagulls homeward fly,
With their pinions gleaming white,
And the rosy sunset light
Flushes all the Western sky.

When the breakers, crested white,
Sigh across the sandy bar,
And the silvery evening star
Sheds her pale yet constant light,

I am lingering by the sea,
As we did in days gone by,
When the sunset flushed the sky,
And you came to welcome me.

When your light foot scarcely brushed
Drops of dew from heather flowers,
Tranquil were the happy hours—
All the sounds of day were hushed.

But I wait alone to-night,
By the sighing Western wave,
And you rest in yonder grave,
On the wind-swept neighboring height.

ANNA MAY CLARK.

The WAY TO HAVE AND TO HOLD

BY

Mary Martin

"HELLO, little merry sunshine!" Millie balanced her tray on the table and glanced at the speaker who whisked past, herself laden with a tray of food.

"You don't look like a cloudy day, yourself," Millie's reply came as the girls passed the next time on their way to and from the tables of their station.

"I am though," the other girl shot back.

And so, when the luncheon rush was over and the girls were at one of the back tables folding paper napkins for the next meal, Millie smiled across her pile of neatly folded paper at the girl who had spoken to her.

"What's the matter, Bess?" she asked. "Why the clouds?"

"It's Terry again," sighed the other girl. "I know he cares for me, but I want him to be so wholly mine." The last came a little fiercely from her rather prettily molded lips.

"Some new flirtation?" Millie asked sympathetically.

"No," and there was spirit in Bess' monosyllable, "just a million little things that make me wildly jealous. I think I'm going to give him back his ring and call it finished."

There were no tears in Bess' eyes, but Millie, of the understanding heart, heard them in her voice.

"You mustn't do that," she said gently. "There must be some other way. Promise me, dear, that you won't do anything in a hurry—anything you're sure to regret later. Because I know you love Terry." The last came in a very low tone.

"Of course I love him, but why can't he show a little more affection for me? He must care because he wouldn't have asked me to marry him if he didn't." Bess' rather sweet soprano voice all but broke as she spoke. "If I just could see where it's my fault! I'm going to

call him up to-night and ask him to come out and talk it over with me."

"You called him last night, didn't you?" asked Millie quietly.

"Yes!" Bess' tone was rebellious. "And I called him the night before—and the one before that, I guess! I'd probably never see him if I didn't ask him to come out."

The napkins were all folded into neat little white squares. It was time to begin filling the sugar bowls for the dinner trade. Millie rose a little regretfully.

"Well, don't do anything that will break Terry's heart and yours, too. Promise?" She held out her small, white hand, and, to seal the compact, Bess took it in her own larger and more capable one.

For the remainder of the day there was little time for rest or conversation. Millie was kept busy trotting back and forth between her tables and the kitchen. The best she could do was to flash Bess an understanding smile occasionally as they passed.

As the rush of the dinner hour was all but over, Millie stood at a certain table in her group, looking half expectantly toward the door. Suddenly her gray eyes lighted and her soft, red lips curved into a sunshiny, summer-day smile.

"Waiting for me?" the young man asked as he took his place at the table and looked over the menu.

"Almost." Millie's red lips puckered provocatively and her chin lifted ever so little.

The youth looked up just in time to catch the motion. A frank smile lay in his blue eyes, a smile which somehow seemed to have been meant for Millie alone.

He gave his order in a low, well-modulated voice, and the little, golden-haired waitress sped away to fill it.

As she returned and put the food before him, she lingered just a moment longer than was necessary. Finally she found the courage to voice the question that trembled on her lips.

"Why do men like girls?"

The young man started. He looked up at Millie with surprise in his eyes, surprise that gradually changed to humor.

"For a thousand and one reasons, little lady," he said at length, in a very low and very gentle voice. "Why not ask me something easier?"

"All right, I will," was Millie's prompt response. "Why, then, does a man who seems to really like a girl and who has asked her to marry him sort of forget her—do things that make her jealous, not give her, voluntarily, all of the attention she wants?"

As Millie talked the humor gradually left the young man's eyes, and something almost hurt, almost pained, replaced it.

"That would be a long, long story, Millie. Have you time to sit down and let me talk to you about it?" Tom Berland's voice was very gentle as he spoke.

"I can't sit down with a patron." Millie laughed. "You know it's against the rules."

"Then perhaps you could be my guest at breakfast, luncheon, tea, or dinner on your next day off?"

"Which will be to-morrow," smiled Millie.

"All right; then which shall it be?"

"Luncheon," Millie heard herself saying in a rather frightened little voice. She was just a bit afraid of her own daring, but as she glanced across the white tables at Bess her courage returned.

"I'll call for you, if you'll give me your address." Tom smiled again as he looked up. He took a little book out of his pocket and wrote in it the address Millie gave him.

Millie left him to finish his dinner alone, but as he walked toward the

cashier and then swung out of the door she watched his tall, straight figure with just a little pride that she herself could not understand.

"Remember that you've promised not to do anything rash!" Millie called to Bess as they were in the cloak room putting on their wraps preparatory to leaving.

The world was a symphony of green foliage touched with golden sunlight when Millie looked out of her window in the morning. A bird hopping about inquisitively recalled a biscuit she had in a little tin box. She put out crumbs and was rewarded by shy, grateful glances from the tiny bright eyes.

She chose from her simple and very limited wardrobe a frock of moss green, tight of bodice and fetchingly full of skirt. It gave her slender little figure an exquisitely smart line. She needed no wrap, for the air was balmy. Her hat was a diminutive thing of soft green felt, which hugged her well-shaped head with becoming grace.

She was at the window when Tom drove up in front of the house. Tom was prompt. Promptness had helped to make his garage the successful business that it was.

He all but gasped as he looked up and saw Millie fluttering down the steps like a lovely, colorful flower. He was out of the car before she reached it and stood with all of the grace of a courtier of old, waiting to assist her to enter.

"You look just like a dew-kissed flower," he said in a low tone as the car moved along the street, and Millie wondered why he didn't turn his eyes toward her for at least an instant, why he did not even smile.

"You say such lovely things!" Millie laughed a little as she spoke.

"It's just telling the truth." There was an odd, deep note in Tom's voice.

Instead of keeping to the city pavements, he turned the car toward the country roads, and as the sun rose highest above them and shadows were shortest he drew up in front of a quaint little inn.

"This is the nearest to a fit setting for a lovely flower that I could think of," he said, and he bowed low before her as she stepped from the car.

"Thank you," said Millie sweetly.

They were seated at a small table with a red-and-white-checkered cloth when Millie looked up gravely and asked: "And now what can you tell me about girls and why men neglect them and hurt them when they've cared enough to ask them to marry?"

Tom smiled whimsically.

"You make it rather an involved thing, Millie, little girl," he said gently. "But if you want to know why some women fail as sweethearts after they have attracted the love of some man it is because they are—too possessive."

"Too possessive?" Millie echoed the words wonderingly.

"Too possessive, little lady." And as the words came from Tom's lips there was something sad about them. He searched Millie's lovely young face with a gaze in which there was a touch of longing.

"Tell me just what you mean by that," demanded Millie.

"I mean this—even though a girl is betrothed, she should not call her lover on the telephone, unless she really must impart some news to him. When they're out, she shouldn't try to monopolize him. She should let him talk to other girls and women and not seem jealous or unduly interested. She should let him have some evenings on which she doesn't even ask him where he is spending them. She should realize that if he really loves her he will be fair and square and aboveboard, and if he doesn't all of the watching in the world won't make him so, and the quicker she knows he isn't fair the better for her.

"It amounts, little girl," Tom went on in a tone that might almost have been that of a father talking to a beloved daughter, "to this: first be sure that your man loves you, and then give him all of the freedom he wishes. Don't make yourself look small by trying to keep an eye on him. Don't be too possessive. Man always wants to be the seeker—the possessor. Woman loses something of her charm when she attempts that rôle."

Millie gazed at him with eyes so wide and so serious that they brought a gentle, whimsical smile to Tom's face.

"You see, little lady, feminine folk daren't go actively into battle Their conquering must be done passively. Love is such a beautiful thing that the woman who would keep it alive in the heart of a man must tend it gently. She must never become so energetic in her care of it that she becomes the aggressor."

Tom smiled whimsically across the table.

Millie sat in silence for a few moments. She was thinking of Bess, thinking of the many times Bess had insisted that Terry visit her, and when he said he had made other arrangements she insisted upon knowing all about them.

At length she looked up with a bright smile curving her soft red lips.

"I think I see it," she said. "But you needn't have talked as if it was I who shouldn't be too possessive—because it isn't for myself I asked this."

The light in Tom's eyes suddenly changed. There was something gayer, lighter, brighter about it.

"You won't mind if I say I'm glad, will you, Millie?" he asked in a tone which was softly vibrant.

"I'm glad, too," Millie said as she rose from the table and was piloted out into the sunlight to the car.

"Thanks," said Millie as she put out her small hand when they were back at her own door, "and I'm thanking you for more than just myself."

Tom took the small hand and dared, there in the light of the late-afternoon sun, to raise it to his lips.

"The thanks is all due you, little lady. Thank you for the most wonderful afternoon in my life. And may I hope for another?" he asked.

Millie nodded, blushing until her cheeks were like two pink roses.

She hung the little green frock up that evening with gentle care. It seemed to have suddenly become the symbol of the beginning of a beautiful adventure; something Millie scarcely understood herself.

"Too possessive! Too possessive!" kept ringing in her ears the next morning, and scarcely had she met Bess at noon before she voiced the phrase to her.

"I think I know what may be the trouble," she said excitedly. "You're too possessive—perhaps."

Bess stared in blank amazement so long that Millie was a little frightened. Finally she spoke:

"Too possessive?" The words came from her lips as if she had no understanding of their meaning.

"Yes, too possessive," Millie echoed, still a little frightened.

"Just what do you mean, anyway?" There was a trace of impatience, almost of anger, in Bess' voice.

An avalanche of words seemed suddenly to begin slipping from Millie's pretty lips. She went over all that Tom had told her, adding her own illustrative touches.

"You see," she said breathlessly in conclusion, "the thing you want most to keep you should be least selfish about. If you want to keep a rose, keep its beauty really, you must leave it quite free in a vase or on a bush—where every one else may see it too. If you close it up tight in your hand—you have it, but you'll spoil it. The

thing you treasure most you should be the least selfish with."

Bess stood for a moment staring at Millie's flowerlike little face, and then:

"Um-hum, well, we'll see." With that she walked away, a rather puzzled look in her eyes.

All that day, while Millie looked on in something very akin to fright and regret, Bess walked around with a strange, half-puzzled, half-determined look in her eyes.

The night was a difficult one for Millie. She was torn between belief and unbelief, between fear and regret.

She arrived early at the restaurant the next noon, her face a little anxious. Bess was there before her. She rushed up to the little, blond waitress.

"Say, kiddie," she exulted, "you're all right. It was that too-possessiveness sure enough. Last night I didn't call Terry up like I always did, and he's called me already to-day and asked for a date for to-night. And it's the first day he asked for in weeks and weeks —I've always suggested them before." Her face was beaming.

"It—it worked?" Millie asked, relieved at the new aspect of things.

"Worked? Say, you've got the system, all right. If you want to keep a man, don't try to do it—just look pleasant and ask no questions."

And so the days went on, and Bess refrained from telephoning Terry except when something prevented her from meeting him at the appointed time or there was some such important cause. She refrained from asking him what he did with the evenings he didn't spend with her, and before long he began telling her and hinting that he'd like to spend a great deal more time with her than she allowed.

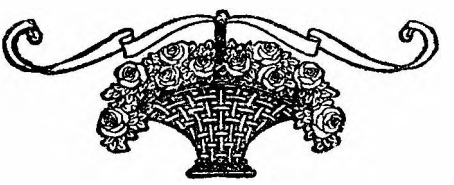
One noon, when Bess' possessiveness lay three months behind her, with her doubts, her fears, and her unhappiness, she came into the white-tiled restaurant with a glad announcement.

"I'm going to leave, Millie," she said in a voice that was tremulously happy. "But you're going to see a lot of me just the same, because after Terry and I come back from our honeymoon you've got to come to have dinner with us at least once a week. And you can bring that nice young man who comes in here to eat at your table every evening," she added with a little squeal of delight.

"But you haven't told me when it's going to be," Millie said.

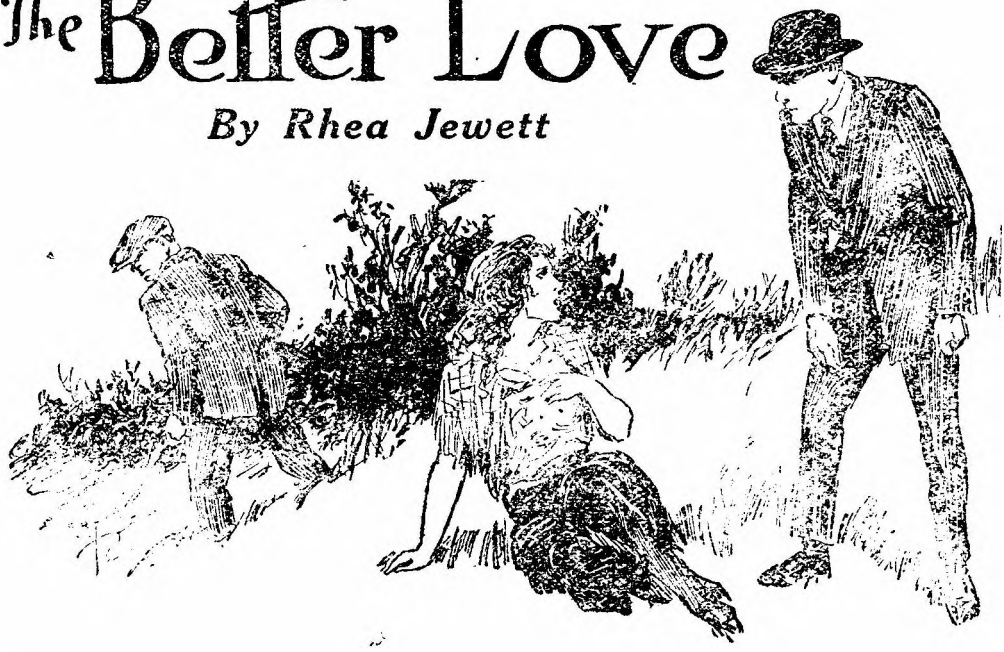
"Next week, little goose! And it's all due to this not being possessive. All due to you, dear!"

And so Bess left the restaurant for good that night. Millie walked part of the way home with her, and somehow, as Bess talked of Terry and the wonderful qualities he seemed suddenly to have developed, Millie, in spite of herself, kept envisioning a pair of frank blue eyes and wondering if they really understood that it was not herself who had needed the lesson in holding love.



The Better Love

By Rhea Jewett



"AND you will come to-morrow, Guy?" The question was put coaxingly.

Guy Mordaunt looked down on the face touched by the silver rays of the moon into absolute loveliness. He hesitated; then his heart, which had been pained by her frivolity, was vanquished anew by her beauty. He answered slowly:

"I will come, Delee."

"Ah, that's right!" The small hands were clasped together; the eyes lost their look of anxiety; the rosebud mouth parted in smiles. "Now you are my dear old Guy again—my dear friend Guy."

"Friend, Delee!"

Guy Mordaunt stopped. His hand was on the latch of the garden gate—he was about to lift it.

"Friend!" he said. "Am I really that to you?"

"Really! You are more, you——" Delee hesitated, gave him a coquettish glance from her wondrous eyes, then let the lids fall sedately, while she added: "You are my brother."

Guy let the latch slip down again.

"Your brother? No! No, dear—I can never be that. Call me friend if you will; it is not all, but it is better than brother. A barrier seems to rise between us at once at the sound of that word."

"Why, Guy?" Delee laughed musically; then her small fingers crept to his coat sleeve.

"What would you rather be, then, if not my brother?" she asked, in accents that fanned his love to passion.

"What! You ask me that? You stand beside me and ask me such a question? Delee, you know—have known for the last six months, ever since you came here to madden and torment me with your beauty. What I have been all along in secret is what I long to be now—your lover before all the world."

"My lover!" the girl repeated, looking at him dreamily. "Do you love me, Guy?"

"Love you! I would die for you. You know it."

His strong, brown hands clasped her

delicate ones. The glow of his eyes forced her lashes to droop again.

"Only say that in the future I may hope," he pleaded. "Only say you will smile on me, speak to me in that angel's voice, and I shall be so happy! Ah, Delee, have mercy!"

"Mercy!" she whispered; one hand glided through his arm. Her head, with its wealth of golden curls, drooped toward him. "Guy, why do you say all this, and not ask me—another question? Why?" She had laid her face on his arm, her voice was muffled. "Why do you not ask if I love you?"

A silence. The man's heart for one whole moment stood still, and joy came to him; doubt, despair, all melted away.

He did not speak for an instant; then, putting his hand under her chin, he raised her head, and eagerly scanned her fair, girlish face.

"Yes! Yes; you do love me," he exclaimed, almost incoherently. "It is too much happiness, Delee—too much."

"Is it?" she murmured. "I do not think so. You are so good, so brave, so strong, Guy, I always feel weak when you are not by. I seem to have known you all my life, not only six short months ago. You have brought me all the happiness I have ever known."

"Say that again," he muttered. "Again and again, my darling." He clasped her passionately to his heart. "Ah, how angry I was with you a moment ago, when you spoke so cruelly! Now I could die at this instant, holding you in my arms."

"Don't talk of dying," she said, quickly. "We are young."

"I will throw all gloom to the winds," Guy cried. "To-night is the crowning of our happiness. Delee, I never dreamed of such joy as this."

She nestled in his arms while he rained kisses on her mouth, hair, and eyes, murmuring the while passionate words of endearment.

Suddenly she started, as a voice was wafted on the faint night air.

"Father wants me. I must go!" she exclaimed.

"But——"

"Have you not said enough?" she asked, laughingly. "It would fill a book. Why, Guy, you are a perfect ogre. You are even jealous of poor dear dad, I do believe."

"I am," the man answered, fervently. "But go, my darling, if you wish to. I pray Heaven you may never regret this step! Recollect, dearest, that Guy Mordaunt is poor—nothing but his brains and his own right arm to keep him—while you are so fair and delicate."

"Stop!" She put her hand on his lips, though it seemed almost as if a shadow had fallen on her face. "Don't speak of such things—at least to-night."

"You are right! Our dream is too heavenly, we will not bring it to earth. But I must go. My sweet, good night."

Once more she was held to his breast. Then the gate was opened, he passed through, and the girl walked slowly up the narrow, winding path to a small cottage.

She looked quite quiet and collected, as though she had been transacting business instead of listening to a passion of fervent love vows. At the low, quaint door she turned.

"He is tall and strong," she mused, "though not so handsome as that lover I read of last night. Yet he adores me." The well-poised head reared itself proudly. "Adores me like a slave. I shall be dull no longer now."

Guy Mordaunt was striding through the village the next day. Norwich seemed more deserted than usual that afternoon; perhaps the fact that the holidays had robbed the college of all its romping occupants had something to

do with it. At all events it was in truth and indeed "a deserted village."

But to Guy it was Elysium. The small Main Street seemed Paradise; even the gray walls of the college, in which he spent many dreary hours drumming matter into dull, boyish brains, found favor in his sight.

He strode along, a tall, fine specimen of manhood. His face was kindly rather than handsome, but his figure bore the evident traces of good athletic development, and his gait was firm and manly.

He was going to Delee—his little sweetheart. All night she had lived in his brain, a lovely image, divine in her womanliness and beauty; and she was his—his!

He almost gasped as he realized it. How many years was it since he had met her walking through the village, a vision of such dainty loveliness that astounded him into silence.

Years! It was but "six short months," as she had said, but it seemed a century to him. Over and over again he told himself it could not be true—that it must be a dream. Still, his feet hastened him over the rough road at a pace that showed him his instinct was right if his senses failed.

He remembered every moment, every second of the time he spent with her. Life seemed to have commenced for him when the little View Cottage was taken by the curious, studious man and his beautiful daughter.

The folk round Norwich made few overtures of friendship to the newcomers; indeed, the girl was eyed askance. She was altogether too pretty to please the stolid mothers and their daughters, though she found great favor with all the men.

Guy felt his face flush as he remembered how Delee's loveliness had been the theme in the college among the elder boys for the last two or three months; but the flush did not linger; joy banished all disagreeable things. She was his, and that sufficed.

He was quite near View Cottage when the sound of a voice—shrill, piteous—broke on his ear.

He quickened his steps, for the voice had come from a field to his left; it rose again in accents of supplication and moans of pain.

A gate was at hand. He leaped it, and saw before him a man, with ruffian stamped on every feature of his face, clutching some object by the hand and raining blows upon it.

To shake the coward aside was the work of a second to Guy, and, after uttering a few indignant words of shame and warning, he turned his back on the man who slunk out of the gate, and stooped over the mass of rags that lay at his feet.

Was it a man or a woman? At first it was hard to distinguish, but as Guy lifted it from the ground he caught a glimpse of slender hands, which, though browned with sun and grimed with dirt, were almost as beautiful as those of Delee herself.

It was a girl, a slender young girl, whose wealth of brown hair, bleached and roughened, fell over her tear-stained face. She was shaking with sobs, but Guy spoke to her gently.

"Now tell me all about it," he said. "Who is that man, and how dare he beat you like that? What have you done?"

"Nothing," the girl answered, wiping her eyes with a portion of her ragged dress. "He beats and beats me till I almost die. I'm sick of life."

Guy felt suddenly saddened.

"But what is he? Is he your father?"

The girl shook her head.

"No! No—oh, no! My father is dead."

She had stopped crying and even with tear stains on her face it could

plainly be seen that she had great natural charms. Her eyes were large and wistful in their blackness; the cheeks were sunken and hollow, but the teeth between the small lips gleamed like pearls.

A mass of hair hung in a tangled web over her shoulders, hiding, yet disclosing the tender flesh bruised by the cruel blows.

"Dead!" echoed Guy, compassionately. "Poor child!"

"Yes, dead. I am alone." The girl sighed.

"How old are you?"

"Father's been dead two years. He used to know, but I have forgotten."

"What do you do?"

"We're a traveling show," she said, glancing round fearfully at the gate. "That's 'Daddy' Dixon, the owner of the car and things. I"—she shrugged her shoulders almost bitterly—"I am his slave."

Guy stared at her in amazement; she looked a very savage—uncouth, unkempt, miserable; yet her voice was sweet and musical, and her speech that of a lady.

"Who taught you to speak——" he began, abruptly.

"Father," she answered. "He was not like the rest. They cannot read or write; they speak coarsely and swear." She shuddered. "Father knew so much; he had a lot of books, and he used to make me read them at night to him when the others were asleep. In the daytime he mended all the things that got broken on the journey; but Daddy Dixon never paid him, and when he died"—the girl had a sob in her voice—"he was put into a grave in a strange town, and I forget where it was now."

Guy felt his heart swell with sympathy.

"My poor child!" he said again, "this must be looked into. Have you no one to help you—no friends, no one at all?"

"No," she answered, simply. "Daddy Dixon beats me, and tells me I'm lumber, and cost him a lot, but he keeps me because he finds me useful. Only I won't steal." She drew herself up, defiantly. "Father always told me not to, and that's why Daddy Dixon beat me so just now."

Guy was silent. What should he do? The girl must be helped. She read something of his thoughts in his face.

"Oh, if you could get me away!" she whispered, eagerly. "I'd work—I'd do anything! Oh, do help me, sir—do, please."

Guy hesitated for a moment; then he put out his hand and took the girl's in his.

"Yes, I will help you," he said. "What is your name?"

"Father used to call me Fairy, sir, but the others call me Fay."

"A pretty name. Come, Fay, I will take care of you; you must have clothes and learn to work. I will see what can be done."

Then a sudden mystifying thought struck him. What was he to do with the waif? He could not leave her alone, such a strange atom of humanity, with gentle blood evidently in her veins; yet what was he to do? A sudden thought came to him like a flash of light.

Delee would know; she would be sweet and kind. Why did he not think of that before?

Guy Mordaunt strode out of the field into the road, and the girl trotted beside him, ever and again glancing up at his tall, manly form with a sense of protection and rest.

He reached the cottage gate, pushed it open, and, still grasping the waif's hand, advanced up the path till a flutter of white garments betrayed the hiding place of his fiancée. Then he loosened Fay's hand and strode forward.

"Delee," he whispered, "my love!"

"Guy," answered the voice that

sounded like music in his ears, "at last! Do you know, sir"—letting him encircle her with his arm, and gazing up with her eyes of rarest blue—"do you know you are nearly half an hour late? I have a very good mind to—— Why, who—who is that?"

Delee drew herself from her lover's embrace and gazed on the dirty, ragged girl before her with undisguised disgust.

"That, Delee, is the cause of my lateness," said Guy; then, taking Delee's hand, he drew it through his arm, and told her all that had occurred, Fay standing motionless the while. Delee frowned once or twice during the recital.

"But what do you want me to do, Guy?" she asked, drawing the young man aside. "How can I help her?"

"I thought perhaps you would let her

Delee drew herself from her lover's embrace and gazed on the dirty, ragged girl before her with undisguised disgust.

have some sort of a bath, and that you might have an old garment to give her —only for to-night, you know, my darling. I will enlist Mrs. Gunning's sympathies on her behalf as soon as possible; as matron of my house in the college, she might be able to do something."

Delee frowned again.

"But she is so very dirty," she said in her clear, distinct voice, every word of which penetrated the ears of the waif listening. "I am afraid to take her into the house. Price, our old servant, is so particular, she would not permit it; besides she could never wear a dress of mine."

Guy looked disappointed, and Delee saw it.

"But I will go and bring her some bread and butter," she added, with a smile into his eyes that effaced all other thoughts: "come with me and you shall see me cut it."

Guy clasped her hand, and without a glance at Fay, turned away with the dainty, girlish form by his side.

The waif, left alone, gave a shuddering sigh, then stole back down the path and out of the gate.

"I must go," she murmured to herself. "He's good and kind, but she called me dirty, and she looked so cold."

Guy and his fiancée walked around the cottage to the rear. As they passed the low French window on one side of the porch, Guy glanced in at it.

"Your father, Delee!" he said, quickly. "Should I not see him at once? It is only right."

"Dad would not understand you if you did," she laughed in return. "He is deep in Sanskrit, and has forgotten the very existence of his daughter. It will be all right, Guy—I will prepare him to-night. Now, come and watch me—it is much better than talking to dad. But perhaps you don't think so?"

She looked up at him, her eyes grown dark and intense. Guy's only answer was to wind his arms about her, and press her to his heart.

"My dear one—as if happiness ever came to me away from you!" he murmured.

Delee laughed and shook out her simple white gown.

"How I wish I could take you now to my mother!" went on Guy. "She would look on you as a daughter. Poor mother! I ought to be spending my holidays with her, but you have kept me."

"Go," cried Delee, laughing. "Go at once, do you hear? No, not another kiss till I have cut this bread! Remember your starving protégée!"

Guy suddenly woke from his delicious dream.

"Yes, Yes; how selfish I am! But you are to blame, dear."

Delee smiled at his grave face, grown almost handsome with the tenderness that shone on it, and led him into a small kitchen, which looked as dainty as a lady's boudoir.

"You cut bread, Miss Delee," ejaculated the sole occupant of it, looking up in scornful amazement as her young mistress explained her presence in the kitchen. "Why, you'd hack your hands to pieces in no time."

"Price will not let me be useful, you see," observed Delee, pathetically, turning to her lover.

"Nor will I," he murmured. "You are my queen, and must reign, not work."

"A queen!" Delee said, as, the bread cut and buttered, they retraced their steps down the garden path. "How nice it would be to reign in reality, Guy! But now for our hungry one. Why, where has she gone?"

Guy ran down the path and opened the gate, then returned to Delee slowly. "She must have grown frightened and gone away," he said.

"Frightened!" repeated Delee, with a tiny sneer. "You have been imposed on, of course."

The young man looked grave.

"I thought she spoke the truth," he said slowly, "but——"

"But," cried Delee, "you great, dear old goose—of course she did not. Now, never mind her; come and sit by me. Think of the long hours I spent waiting for you to come."

Away flew all thought of Fay—her evident deception and his disappointment. Who could resist the glance of those sapphire eyes? Certainly not Guy.

After they had murmured whispers of the old, old story, with no heed of time, Guy, lying on the grass, picked up the book discarded by Delee when he arrived. He opened it half unconsciously, and his eyes fell on a name scribbled inside.

"Is this your book—your own, I mean?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Delee, passing her small hand over his dark hair. "Yes, my very own, dear."

Guy paused.

"And this your name?" he said, half turning to look at her, at the same time pressing his lips passionately to her hand.

"Yes, of course," she laughed. "But I forgot you did not know my name in full. I am called Delilah!"

Delilah! The name haunted Guy strangely as he strode home along the country lane that night, despite the tender memories of his fair, girlish love, of the dreamy, golden evening he had spent listening to her voice, and watching the dying sunlight play on her hair. Delilah! What a name to give so sweet a being!

Then he laughed aloud at his stupid fancies. Was not her father, Dr. Rex, a curious old man? Of course, the name was his choice, given, perhaps, in a moment of occult preoccupation, and never remembered since.

He was walking so quickly that he heard no sound behind, and it was not until a panting voice broke on his ear that he stopped. A figure staggered up to him, and he looked at it in amazement.

"Why, Fay!" he exclaimed, and the girl answered with her breath coming in painful sobs:

"I've come after you, sir, to tell you I'm sorry I ran away this afternoon, but I couldn't stay. Don't think I was ungrateful, sir! I——"

Her voice broke.

"Why could you not stay?" asked Guy gently.

"The beautiful lady called me dirty, and I grew ashamed."

Guy felt troubled.

"She did not mean to pain you, Fay," he observed, hurriedly. "What are you going to do now?"

"I've run away. The car's gone on to the next town. I stole into the village just now, and saw Daddy Dixon coming out of a hotel, very drunk. He'll sleep till the morning, and he won't miss me till then. I shall run that way," pointing to a road that stretched in the moonlight to a solitary distance. "It'll take me a long, long way from them. I saw you, sir, coming home, and I waited to thank you."

"You cannot do as you say," Guy observed, after thinking a moment. "It is impossible for a child like you to be wandering about at night. Come with me; I will take you to a kind, motherly old lady I know who will advise me what to do. Can you walk far?"

"Yes; but——" Fay hesitated, her head drooped; then, in a whisper, she continued: "Will she mind me? I am so dirty."

"She will not," Guy answered. "Come!"

So hand in hand the waif and the man walked into the village.

How fast the holidays passed! Mrs. Mordaunt, in her solitary home, gave many a sigh of longing for her dear son.

She knew what charm held him to Norwich—she had received a tiny letter inclosed in one of Guy's, speaking of her as mother, and signed "Delee Rex."

She had read long, passionate phrases from Guy, and she knew that the moment had come when she must stand aside and let another influence steal into her boy's life.

For the first time Guy forgot his mother, for he was always with his love.

They walked together in the sunlit fields; they roamed through the quiet garden, smiling silver in the moon's rays. They rowed together on the river that ran through the village, and many times some of Guy's hard-earned savings went in ordering for Delee a small car from the village inn, and driving her around to distant spots of beauty.

Every one had grown used to the sight of the fair, girlish form beside the tall, well-built one of the man, and all knew that their vows were spoken and their marriage would follow.

Dr. Rex alone seemed to forget them. He had listened to Guy's declaration, but, plunged in deep literary mysteries, he gave but little heed to it.

Delee did not care so long as she had her own way. She no longer found Norwich dull, and if Guy's ardent protestations and words of tenderness sometimes bored her, she dismissed it in remembering that all the village recognized her "as the beautiful Miss Rex, who was engaged to Mr. Mordaunt."

Among those who watched the lovers and thought most often about them was Fay, the waif, transformed, by the kind aid of Guy and the matron of his house, into a helper at the college.

One afternoon in September he had promised Delee faithfully to be early for a row, but found that an unexpected business matter prevented him keeping the appointment. All he could do was to write a note, and, begging permission of Mrs. Gunning, intrust it to Fay's care to give to his fiancée.

Delee, dressed in one of her simple white gowns which were the admiration of Guy's life, stood at the gate in her wide-brimmed hat.

It was long past the time for Guy, and the girl did not like waiting. There was a frown on her pretty face, and a decided pout on her lips.

"I declare it's too bad!" she exclaimed, at last, gazing again down the lane. "I won't go now when he does come."

The sound of horse's hoofs broke on her ear; and, moving quickly from the gate, she stood in the lane and looked in the direction whence it had come. The frown vanished like magic from her brow; her lips curled into a smile, and she looked the personification of maidenly loveliness as a man on horseback approached her.

His attire was irreproachable, and Delee felt a strange thrill at her heart as she met the glance of admiration he cast upon her.

His horse advanced at a walking pace. Delee could see that it was lame. Just as the man was passing her gate, he drew up with a sudden movement and raised his hat.

"I beg your pardon," he said, courteously, "but would you kindly tell me if I am right for Norwich village?"

"Yes, go straight on," replied Delee, glancing up at him.

"I want a blacksmith. My mare has cast a shoe."

"There is a blacksmith in the village, I know," Delee answered, smiling.

"Yes, and some way ahead. What a bore! My mare can hardly do it, I am

afraid. I have a very good mind to——"

He loosened his reins and moved his right foot from the stirrup.

"Would it be any convenience to you to wait here and telephone the smithy? It is very cool in the garden. Come in if you like to."

Delee put her invitation so simply, yet so prettily, that the stranger did not hesitate.

"Thank you very much—I will come in with pleasure," he said, alighting. He telephoned immediately. "The man will be here directly." He paused, while his thoughts were busy. Who was this girl, and whence did she come? She was a vision of loveliness, such as he had seldom seen.

Delee, too, stole many glances at the stranger. How unlike Guy he was! His clothes were so well cut, his whole bearing so different. Who could he be?

They chatted easily and naturally, until the clatter of horse's hoofs announced the arrival of the blacksmith.

"And now I suppose I must go," said the stranger, after they had watched the man lead the mare away. "I feel quite disappointed. I don't often come into the country, and this little accident has spoiled my ride. I think I will have a stroll. I dare say you know the beauties of the place well."

"I ought to," Delee laughed, merrily. "I have seen nothing else for the last eight months."

The stranger turned, and was about to say something, but checked himself. He moved his foot impatiently to and fro, feasting his eyes on the lovely face before him, then said, suddenly:

"Would it be very terrible if I asked you to show me the way to the river? I think I can get back to my place by water, if I remember rightly. I feel ashamed to ask you."

"I will come with pleasure," Delee answered, with a faint blush.

They passed out into the lane. Delee felt strangely pleased and thrilled. All thought of Guy was gone.

This man fascinated her. He was the image of an actor whose portrait graced her bedroom, and whose inanimate face had been the recipient of her heartiest admiration. Never had she beheld before such a man as the one beside her.

"This is unorthodox, but none the less pleasant," he broke the silence to say; "but suppose we introduce ourselves."

Delee smiled.

"I am Delee Rex," she said, gazing up into his dark eyes artlessly.

"What a sweet name! I might have guessed you would have owned one like that! I have heard of your father, Miss Rex—indeed, I have met him. I am Fulke Gaston, at your service—of Norwich Castle—a wanderer, I blush to say, from his home for so long that he has forgotten its surroundings."

Delee's heart stood still, then thrilled with joy. She had not been so many months in the village without hearing of the great estate and its owner, Mr. Gaston, but she had never dreamed of meeting him.

Now she felt life at its brightest, for her beauty was winning undoubted admiration from none other than Gaston himself.

The days passed on, and Guy, working hard at his classes, had little time to sit down and give way to trouble. He felt it, though, none the less, and Fay noticed how pale his face looked.

He had sent two letters to Delee—she had told him that she was leaving the village for a time, and going to stay with friends in a neighboring town—but he had received no reply.

He was sitting one evening in his little room, busy with his books, when the door opened and Fay entered. She carried a small tray with a dainty supper on it.

"Why do you do this, Fay?" he asked, reproachfully, rising and taking the tray from her hands.

"I love to wait on you," she answered, simply.

Guy smiled down at her.

"I have a message for you," he remarked, gently. "My mother has grown to know you so well from my letters to her about you that she sends you her love and her earnest hope that you will some day go and stay with her. There, you can read the passage for yourself."

He held out the letter, and the girl took it. Then, suddenly losing all control, she pressed her lips passionately to his hand, and, bursting into sobs, ran quickly from the room.

Guy felt strangely moved, but, manlike, he put down the emotion to her gratitude, and, after a moment's thought, let his mind wander back to Delee.

Why did she not write? His heart felt strangely heavy, weighted with forebodings.

He pushed aside his supper, almost untasted, and turned to his books. A good two hours' work lay before him, and he settled down to it with a long-drawn sigh.

The next morning dispelled the gloom that seemed to have come over Guy during the past few weeks. He rose earlier than usual, and determined to take a brisk walk before beginning the day's toil.

Only a few villagers were about. The morning sunlight illuminated the earth, and gradually, as he walked, his spirits rose. As he approached the church, which was at the upper end of the village, some distance from the college, an impulse came over him to enter and praise God for the happiness he dreamed was his.

He pushed open the gate and walked slowly up the path, never noticing a girl in a black dress who was seated on one of the gravestones. It was Fay, who often left the college at daybreak, and found her way to some secluded spot to think and dream. The rest of the day she devoted to work.

She was so lost in thought that she did not observe Guy's approach.

The young man pushed open the church door. To his surprise he heard a voice, grave and solemn, and noticed that a small group of people stood by the altar. He realized that a marriage was proceeding, and he stole back into the porch, leaving the door ajar; he would not intrude on the secrecy that was evidently desired; so he sat down on the bench listening to the beautiful words that linked two lives together, almost fancying at that moment that the vows were his, and that Delee stood beside him.

The service was soon over. Guy stole into the church and seated himself at the end of a pew. He felt excited, yet nervously happy, almost as though his own marriage had just been solemnized.

He would look at this happy couple and imagine himself for a moment a participant in their joy.

The man was tall and handsome, with happiness written on every feature. The woman was small; her face was covered with a veil, but a tress of golden hair escaped the covering, and shone like a ray of sunlight in contrast to the dress she wore.

Guy Mordaunt suddenly started and clutched the pew.

They had not seen him. They came nearer, and his eyes, glowing like coals, penetrated the veil's thickness. Then he saw, beneath, a fair, lovely face, a face that had, but a few short weeks ago, been raised to meet his kisses. It was no myth—it was Delee!

Bursting forward as they reached the door, he seized her arm. With a swift movement tore aside the veil, and De-

Bursting forward as they reached the door, Guy seized her arm. With a swift movement he tore aside the veil and, Delee with a smothered cry, cowered close to her husband.

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"Delee!" gasped Guy. "What does this mean? You——"

"Who is this man?" cried Gaston, throwing his arm round the girl's slight figure, and glaring into Guy's white, distorted face.

"Who am I?" asked the latter, with a deadly calm. "I am the man who should be where you are! I am the man who loves her—almost to madness!"

Delee turned to her new husband. Her lovely face was hard and cold.

"Fulke, I am frightened," she murmured. "The man has mistaken me for some one else. He is mad! Don't you hear him say so? Let us go! I don't know him! We don't know him, do we, Price?"—turning around feverishly to the old servant, who had come to witness the marriage.

The woman hesitated, then said, slowly:

"No. We don't know him."

Delee shuddered.

Guy sank down on the bench with a groan, then started up again as Gaston made a gesture to draw Delee away.

"She is false!" he cried, thickly. "Look how she has lied even by the church door! She does know me—it is——"

"Fulke," cried Delee, imploringly, "it is not true! I don't know this man—let us go!"

Gaston hesitated. He had grown pale with the shock, and glanced from the man standing, white and haggard, with a passion of horror and pain in his face, to the girl who, with genuine fright in her eyes, was clinging to him with pleading gestures.

"We will go now," he said, slowly. "This is no scene for you, Delee. This gentleman has made some mistake. Doubtless he will explain it better after an hour's reflection. Come! That, sir"—handing his card to Guy—"is my name and address; yours is——"

Delee put her hands on her husband's arm.

"Come away," she murmured. "I am growing faint. Please come!" Her face looked ghastly white.

Gaston put his arm round her, and prepared to lead her away.

"We will meet again and explain this; it must be a mistake, I am sure," he said, as he turned from Guy.

The other looked up and met his gaze. He read no deceit or treachery in the bridegroom's glance, and he knew in that instant that she had been false to both.

He forced his white lips to open.

"Yes, I see now," he said, huskily. "I do not know this lady. It is all a mistake."

Gaston raised his hat, while Price hurried to the bride's side, and helped to lift her, half fainting, into the car that was waiting at the gate.

Guy did not move as the others left him. He seemed paralyzed with the shock. Then suddenly his memory returned, the angry blood coursed to his face, and his hands were tightly clenched.

"False!" he muttered. "Hope, love, happiness, all gone! She has killed my very soul! Oh, Heaven, what have I done that she should treat me like this?"

He moved into the sunlight. His step seemed weak and faltering.

He moved as if in a daze. Everything had happened in so short a time that it had stunned him. It seemed impossible that it should be true that Delee was really the wife of another.

A little figure advanced swiftly toward him. Two small hands crept under his arm and tried to lead him down the path. He turned his eyes on the fingers without appearing to see them; his senses seemed to have faded.

"It is not true!" he muttered. "It is all one long dream. You are not gone, Delee? You are——"

The last word ended in a sob, and, before the girl could prevent it, he staggered and fell to the ground.

So on the very step that she trod on her wedding morn, lay Delee's first lover, his heart well-nigh broken, his brain snapped, and beside him, tears streaming from her eyes, knelt Fay, the tramp-girl, who would have died to have spared him one moment's sorrow or pain.

All Norwich rang with the story of Delee's falseness and her marriage with Gaston. The news even penetrated View Cottage, and reached the ears of her father, who had not been made aware of the approaching marriage.

After the first moment of indignation, he allowed himself to be soothed by Price, who was loyal to her mistress, even while her heart ached for Guy Mordaunt.

Day after day she made her way to the college to inquire after the sick man, for Guy Mordaunt lay at the point of death; and she would retrace her steps, sighing over the misery wrought by her beautiful young mistress, who, basking

in Italian sunshine with her husband-lover beside her, gave no heed to the result of her deceit.

Two women watched by Guy's bedside almost incessantly—one silver-haired and sweet-faced, the other a girl, whose eyes, black and luminous, shone like stars. They were Guy's mother and Fay.

At last the crisis came, passed, and Guy Mordaunt was out of danger.

Day by day he grew better. Day by day the girl who had watched him so tenderly grew paler and paler; and, when the doctor commanded that the invalid was to be taken to the sea, Mrs. Mordaunt exerted her authority, and carried the girl away with her also.

"Mother," said Guy, one afternoon, as he sat by the window, a mere shadow of his former self, "what is the matter? You look disturbed."

"I am anxious about Fay," answered Mrs. Mordaunt gravely.

"Fay!" he echoed. "What about her, mother? Is she ill?"

"Not exactly ill, but there is a look in her face that distresses me dreadfully. I thought the sea would do her good, but——"

"How selfish I have been," he said penitently. "Poor Fay! She has sat too long in my sick room. You should have sent her out into the air, mother."

"She would never go," Mrs. Mordaunt replied. "You gave her life twice, she said, and she would not leave you."

Guy was silent for a minute, then he said slowly:

"What a contrast!"

His mother knew what was in his mind, and her hands trembled a little as she sat knitting. She had never mentioned Delce to her son, but her heart was none the less bitter toward the heartless woman who had all but killed him.

"Where is the newspaper?" Guy asked, after a pause.

Mrs. Mordaunt handed it to him, and watched his face first contract with pain, then gradually grow calm, almost content as his eye rested on a paragraph.

"Reception for Mr. and Mrs. Gaston," he read slowly. Then he rose, flung down the paper, and commenced to walk to and fro. At last he stood by his mother's side.

"Mother," he said gently. "My heart is cured, the past is gone. I see it all now. I know the shallowness, the falseness, the deceit, and I am once more the Guy of old."

Mrs. Mordaunt clasped him to her, and they sat together silently, their hearts too full for words.

The days slipped by. Guy could walk; and he took many strolls by himself on the seashore, though his eyes would roam all the time in search of a slender form, with warm brown hair and eyes like stars.

Fay loved the few walks she had taken with him, but when they were over she suffered again the pain she had endured all along.

"It must end," she said to herself one day, pressing her hand to her heart, which throbbed so painfully. "I cannot live longer like this! It will kill me. I must go away—get work—bury my love in the world! And yet—— Oh, Guy! Guy!"

That evening the mother and son went for a stroll. Left to herself, Fay crept to the sofa and nestled down on it. Her resolution was taken—it was agony to her to live near Guy, so she would go away—away from him forever, and take her place in the working world. She felt strangely tired, and her eyes closed.

Suddenly they opened, for Guy was in the room.

"Are you here, Fay?" he asked gently. "My mother sent me to bring you out—the evening is so lovely."

"I will come," she said obediently; but before she could rise he was beside her.

"Fay, what is the matter? You are ill! Fay, my own little girl! My love!"

His arms impulsively drew her slight form close to him.

"Your love!" she murmured softly. "Am I really that?"

"My own darling, yes! Ah, look at me, dear. I have been mad—both mad and blind! But now I am sane, and I see. I did not love that other; it was passion, not love. You, Fay, are my ideal—will you be my sweet, true wife?"

The question came tenderly.

Fay tried to speak, but the words would not come. Guy, looking down at her, read in her lovely, luminous eyes the unspoken answer to his question.

"Darling," he whispered, his arms holding her close against his heart, "until this moment I have not known what real love meant. I have known only a shallow sham of something so beautiful that it has filled my soul with calm content. I love you—love you, dear, more than words can ever tell you. I shall spend my life for you, dear little girl." His voice trembled under its weight of emotion.

There was a little pause.

Then:

"Sweetheart, will you marry me? May I call you wife?" He held her in a passion of tenderness.

"Your wife!" came from her lips faintly. "Oh, say that again, Guy. I——"

"My wife!" he repeated solemnly. "Day by day it has been growing in me—this love, but I did not know it till this morning. But, thank God, it is not too late! You do trust me, Fay? You do love me a little, don't you?" He spoke very, very gently.

"Love you!" she whispered faintly. "Why, I have loved you since the day you took me from Daddy Dixon. I shall always love you, my dearest one! Only I am not worthy of you."

His only answer was to crush her closer in his arms. Her head sank on his shoulder, and then their lips met in a kiss of perfect understanding and peace.

The moon was bathing the sands in silver light when the lovers sought the woman who had been waiting for them on the veranda of the hotel.

"Mother," said Guy, gently leading the girl toward the older woman, "will you welcome a daughter?"

There was a single second of tense silence—a second during which the older woman rose and stood looking deep into the eyes of the younger.

"Daughter." The word came softly from her gently smiling lips. She opened her arms and Guy, with misted eyes, watched the two women he loved most in the world, clasp each other in a tender embrace.

A HEART DIVIDED

By

Louisa Carter Lee

"ARE you going to give me a dance to-night?"

Two people were standing in the large, luxuriously furnished library of Bellairs Chase, a beautifully situated house in Westchester.

One of them was a fair, good-looking youth of about two and twenty, immaculately attired and bearing the unmistakable air of wealth and good birth.

The other was a sweet-faced, shy-eyed girl a year or two younger. She looked neat—not much else could be said of her plain blue-serge frock—but she did not carry the stamp of riches as did her companion.

Phyllis Dene filled a paid position in this house and was not a guest. She had just risen from the table at which she had been answering some of the weighty correspondence with which her employer, Francis Tremb, the popular politician, was daily favored.

She had had a heavy afternoon, but the pink flush upon her cheeks had chased away the somewhat weary look she had worn before Bertram Grey's entrance. She had become accustomed to these quiet, easy entrances of his.

He seemed to be always seeking her, as if he were sorry because of her loneliness, her aloofness from the other girls. She had never received so much attention before, had never met an earnest gaze of blue eyes, which looked out frankly and fearlessly upon a pleasant world, as Bertram Grey's did.

At his softly uttered question she turned quickly, a shade of reproach in her dark-blue eyes.

"A dance to-night! You know I shall not be there," she answered.

"Not there! Why not?" he demanded indignantly.

"I—I should not expect to be," she explained. "I am not one of Mrs. Tremb's visitors, you know, Mr. Grey. Why should she ask me?"

Bert Grey knew very well that she was not likely to be at Mrs. Tremb's ball, but she was what he designated to himself "a pretty girl," and it was hard upon both her and himself, who were, as he believed, enjoying a pleasant flirtation, that she should not be present.

His blue eyes had a genuinely regretful expression as they rested on her embarrassed face.

"What a shame!" he murmured. "Then there won't be much enjoyment in it, so far as I'm concerned. I shall cut the whole thing. I don't want to prance about with a lot of silly women while you're out of it, Phyllis." His tone was tender.

The girl colored deeply and hastily bent over the typewriter beside her that he might not notice her confusion. She did not understand it as a flirtation. She thought that he spoke in sheer kindness and pity, and she felt a deep gratitude to this young man, who was the only one who seemed to remember her existence.

The flattering speeches and the expression he threw into his handsome, boyish eyes were by no means really kind or sympathetic, but simply his "way," especially with a girl in such a position as Phyllis Dene.

During the ball that night he missed her greatly, and did not even care to get up the smallest flirtation, although there was plenty of material for it ready at hand.

He thought it all very dull, and lounged about instead of dancing, spending his evening between the supper room and the conservatory, where he could remain screened from observation among the palms.

It was in this dim retreat that Phyllis, who had stolen away from her own apartment to obtain one glimpse of the festivities before going to bed, suddenly perceived him coming toward her.

A sense of humiliation at her inferior position rushed over her, and she would preferably have escaped as speedily as possible. But Bertram, catching sight of her, prevented a retreat by throwing himself before her and laying a delighted hand upon her arm.

"You!" he cried. "What luck! Phyllis, come here and sit down. Yes, you must for a minute! You wouldn't have the cruelty to run off again without a word, and leave me to that pack in there, surely! I've had three blessed hours of them already. Can't you spare ten minutes?" His tone was low and tender.

There was a change in him. Phyllis could hardly explain what it was, but he seemed much more demonstrative than he had ever been before, and careless as to whether they were observed. He spoke rapidly, his blue eyes shining, his handsome face flushed, it seemed, with joy at unexpectedly beholding her.

The girl's head swam a little with wondering pleasure that he, so far removed from her, could unfeignedly desire her society.

"I—I did not think I should be seen," she stammered, glancing down at her shabby frock. "I have been working very late, and I thought I would just peep in at you all." Color tinted her cheeks.

"Why did you spoil it by adding that 'all?'" her companion broke in gayly. 'I don't believe you came to look at anybody but me. Ah, it's no use blushing"—as she started at the boldness thrown into their strange friendship, for Bert's manner had never possessed this openness hitherto—"I know you don't care a straw for any one else in the room, and I don't care a straw either! It's only you I am interested in. You're the finest girl I've ever met, and the prettiest, too!"

Phyllis stood up uncertainly. "Please don't talk like that, Mr. Grey," she faltered.

She was surprised and bewildered. In all her twenty years nobody had spoken to her so, and her heart beat fast. Usually Mr. Grey was almost quiet, but now he seemed to have lost all his coolness, and she hardly knew what to do.

"You are," he insisted. "There isn't one of them in there fit to hold a candle to you. Phyllis darling, I don't care

Bertram Grey spoke rapidly, his blue eyes shining, his handsome face flushed, it seemed, with joy at unexpectedly beholding her.

what any one says, I'm going to marry you if you'll have me. Will you? You needn't look so taken aback! You're as good as any of that lot, and a deal better! Kiss me and say 'Yes.'"

He tried to pull her back upon the seat behind the palm, throwing an insistent arm round her, but Phyllis struggled away in a sort of stupor of amazement. Mr. Grey to ask her to marry him! She was overwhelmed.

"Oh, you don't—I mean—you haven't considered who I am—the difference between us!" she stammered, blushing.

She did not know much about him, but that he was a popular guest of the Trembs was enough, and she could not face the question he had put to her so suddenly.

"There isn't any difference between us! And who cares if there is?" broke in Bert. "Just say you'll be my own little wife, and you'll see very soon if we can't defy any interference. Whose concern is it but ours? Will you? Will you? Why are you hesitating?" His tone was tender.

Phyllis was hesitating because it seemed impossible to answer such a question, asked so unexpectedly. If she had had time to grasp what it meant, to consider anything—one hour, even—she might then come to a decision.

Bert had sprung to his feet, and, clasping her in his eager, boyish arms, was trying to force a decision from her by a kiss; but she pushed him away and covered her face with her hands.

"I must have time," she said. Paramount with her was the desire to consider whether it would be the best for him, for of herself she hardly thought.

She was entirely unselfish.

But this did not seem to suit her lover. He wanted no delay—would not hear of it. It was in the present that he wanted to be happy, not in the future.

He threw himself on his knees beside her and poured forth a flood of devotion that threatened to shake the girl's resolve, but her sense of gratitude for the kindness he had shown her since they first met made her hold fast to her determination to weigh the matter more carefully for his sake.

"No! No, I will not promise," she declared. "I will not answer you now! It would not be right. I will go away and think it over, and then in the morning—early—I will let you know. I won't keep you waiting. Yes, I will promise you that—but not the other! I must think it out."

Then she broke from his passionate, detaining fingers and hurried away to the darkness of her own room.

Phyllis Dene was sitting working, as usual, in the library, or rather trying to work. Her young face, more noticeable for the sweetness of its eyes and lips than for any distinct beauty, bore a faintly bewildered, wistful expression as she turned it often to the window before her, as if striving to concentrate on her occupation.

A manservant entered the apartment and handed her a card. As her glance fell only upon the short, well-known name, she sprang to her feet, a crimson flush sweeping over her features, the half-hurt, childish wonder in her eyes vanishing as by magic.

"He has come back!" she exclaimed half aloud.

The servant departed, and when Phyllis next looked up, at the sound of the opening door, she beheld her visitor.

Grey! But it was not Bert!

A chill, somehow not all born of her disappointment, fell upon the girl. Who could this be, this man, somewhat like Bert, her lover, but with a colder, haughtier face? She did not know him, but her heart began to beat with a prescience of evil.

"I understand you are Miss Phyllis Dene?"

The visitor's voice did not sound quite so assured as his face and manner appeared. It seemed hurried, curt, and uneasy, but resolute—as though he were anxious to get through an unpleasant business quickly.

The girl bowed, but as he scarcely glanced at her she answered aloud in the affirmative.

"Then I think I had better state without delay what has brought me," continued the young man, drawing a paper from his notebook. "You will recognize this, which a couple of days ago you sent to my brother Bertram!"

Ah, that was it! This was Bert's brother. Why had he come? Phyllis read the letter as one in a dream:

> DEAR MR. GREY: I will do as you wish, and become your wife. I hope it will be for the best for you. I will try to make you happy. PHYLLIS DENE.

"I sent this to your brother two days ago? Yes! But how did you get it?" she asked, looking up, surprise, dread, and a sort of anger in her eyes.

"It has come into my possession because it is utterly impossible for my brother to marry you, Miss Dene," replied the man who was like, yet so unlike, Bert. "My brother is not able to marry any one—he has not enough to keep himself, much less a wife."

"But—but," stammered Phyllis, "why did he ask me to marry him?" She said it in defense of having written her acceptance, not in defiance; but Essex Grey, not reading her bewilderment and shame aright, answered her with an accent of cold scorn.

"You can answer that better than I, Miss Dene. It is often made very easy to young men to propose—young men in my brother's position, accredited with far larger means than they possess."

Phyllis did not understand him. It was strange that he should continue in a

mistake he had perhaps naturally fallen into before he saw her; strange that he should still imagine her—as his manner seemed to infer—an adventuress, for the girl's face was a singularly innocent one—as innocent as her heart—and her voice and manner might have shown him that she was plunging into a gulf of troubled wonder.

She stared at him without retort, for the satire escaped her.

"But whatever may have induced him to propose to you so rashly," continued Essex Grey, "it is certain he cannot marry you. You are, I am sure, a young lady of sense and discrimination, and will see that there is nothing to be gained by trying to hold him to his word." The voice was cold.

"Trying to hold him to his word?" repeated Phyllis faintly.

"Yes," returned Grey impatiently. "Of course, it is in your power to hold him to his mad offer, as you know, but what benefit would you gain by such an empty position? Ask yourself that. My brother is young and almost dependent upon me. I do not countenance his marriage with you, and though I admit that you have some ground of grievance against him——"

"I have no ground of grievance against your brother, Mr. Grey," Phyllis suddenly broke in. "He treated me with every kindness and respect until he asked me to marry him three days ago. I was very surprised, and at the moment I could not answer him, but the next morning I wrote to accept him." Her voice was low.

"Precisely!" Essex Grey's lip curled. "It was wise to have it all down in black and white!" There was sarcasm in the tone.

"And—and I have not seen him since," finished Phyllis. "They told me he had been called away. But he has not behaved badly to me—how could he?" Her voice trembled.

"He cannot marry you, you understand that," said Bert's brother firmly and sharply. "But I am here to do what I can to—to atone for his rash folly and to make up for your disappointment. I am willing to give you a thousand dollars if you will release him—release him absolutely—and give me a statement in writing to that effect."

There was silence in the room for the space of a moment or two, as though Grey's companion had either failed, as she had failed all along, to fully understand him, or as though she had done so and was considering his terms. He thought it was the latter.

He had abstained since his entry from really looking at Miss Dene. He was sure he knew the kind of girl she was.

The silence was suddenly broken, but not in the way that he had expected.

He turned at what seemed a low, choking torrent of sound to see the girl with whom Bert had become entangled standing before him with a pale face and blue eyes that were like a flame of fire.

"How dare you? How dare you!" she panted. "Is it not enough that you should have told me I am not a fit wife for your brother, that you should have forced him to give me up when he—he said he loved me—that you should insult me still further by offering me money? You are no gentleman! Go! Leave the room!"

She pointed to the door, and it was then—her attitude, her voice, her every feature expressing her loathing of him—that Essex Grey really saw her for the first time.

He realized from his sudden view of her, more even than from her words, that he had made a mistake—a gross, an amazing mistake.

She looked a young, innocent, refined girl who had been deeply wounded and unspeakably insulted by his visit and his concluding words—a girl who had, perhaps, not attempted to ensnare his weak brother, but had imagined her-

self honorably wooed. He, proud, cold, angry as he was, quailed before her look and gesture, and a genuine flush of surprise and shame rose to his sun-browned neck and face and spread even to the roots of the fair hair that was so like Bert's.

"I—I—forgive me," he pleaded, stammering, overcome with shame and

before him looked like a young queen. "All that I request is that you go." It came in a low tone.

It was strange that at her words a keen-edged sword seemed to pierce Essex Grey's breast.

Into this room, into the haughty, worldly-wise heart of the young man whose errand had been to wound and

Phyllis pointed to the door, and it was then—her attitude, her voice, her every feature expressing her loathing of him—that Essex Grey really saw her for the first time.

contrition. "We—I—have made a great mistake."

"You have made a great mistake," she interposed. "I will never forgive you! Go!" Her voice trembled.

"No! No! Pray hear me! I must tell you—but how can I tell you?" as some thought, an appalling remembrance, suddenly rushed over him and checked his explanation. "Good heavens!"—fiercely to himself—"I can't tell her anything! I can't explain! What a hole I'm in! I can, at any rate, say this much," he went on aloud, miserably distressed. "I——"

"I refuse to hear what you have to say! I refuse to hear another word from you." The girl—almost child—

insult her, love, the conqueror, had suddenly entered, and had laid his foe, weak, gasping, defenseless at his feet.

Phyllis Dene was suddenly changed from a scorned and unknown individual to a woman to be feared, reverenced, beloved—the only woman in the world for Essex Grey henceforth and forever.

"Miss Dene, you have just cause to be angry with us—me," he burst out in sheer desperation. "I know my behavior appears inexcusable, but I beg of you to forgive me—to listen for one moment."

But he had utterly banished mercy and tenderness from the girl before him.

"I have told you I will not forgive you," she reiterated proudly. "I hope I shall never see you or hear your name again as long as I live! Leave me!"

The young man had no choice but to depart. His handsome head was no longer held erect, the proud light in his steel-blue eyes was quenched. Phyllis had gained the day and had planted a sting in his heart that would ache on and on.

But she did not look as though she had won a battle, as the door was slowly closed behind her visitor.

Throwing herself into her seat at the table, she covered her face with her hands and wept such tears of anguish as she had never shed before in all her short life.

A prospect of joy had been spread out before her two days before, the joy of being loved and cared for. Now she had lost the only friend she had, the only lover.

Though understanding nothing, she knew that she should never again meet the gay, boyish eyes that had smiled into hers, for his brother had come between them, had torn them apart.

She had hesitated long before she wrote that little note, for fear of doing the slightest injury to her generous young lover, and a word of appeal from his family would have been more than sufficient to gain his release.

But he had loved her—perhaps he was suffering now—and at the thought her tears flowed afresh.

Phyllis stood at the end of one of the lawns in the beautiful gardens surrounding Bellairs Chase. Her hands were clasped together, her eyes sparkled with anger.

"That man is here again!" she said aloud to the forget-me-nots and narcissi which grew on all sides of her and were her only companions in the solitude. It was spring, and eight months had passed since she and Bert Grey had often traversed these same paths.

She had never seen the young man since he had passionately declared his love to her in the conservatory on the night of her employer's ball; but Essex Grey she had met, or rather seen, on two occasions during the time that had elapsed. He had paid several visits to the Trembs, and for the first time in her life Phyllis was glad that she did not belong to their world, for otherwise she would have been thrown into contact with him.

She did not guess that he had come only that he might catch a glimpse from a distance of the girl who considered him her bitterest enemy, and that he was fiercely impatient of the conventional restrictions that kept them apart.

Now the passion that had awakened to life within him eight months before refused to be held longer within bounds, and he had determined to make a fight for happiness, even though failure was almost a foregone conclusion.

Phyllis, raging with anger at the sight of him once more among Tremb's guests, and saddened by the memories he could not fail to conjure up, turned from the garden, scented with all the sweet odors of May, and reëntered the house, making her way to the spacious library, where the table upon which she conducted her employer's correspondence was drawn up to the open window.

As she reached the center of the apartment she gave a violent start, and her heart seemed to stand still. Essex Grey was in the room, in a corner near the door, where, with his back to her, he appeared to be examining the shelves of volumes.

How he had retreated so quickly from the lawn, where she had just beheld him, the girl could not imagine.

The next moment Essex, abandoning his pretended search, crossed the room and stood beside her. She glanced up, pale with indignation, but the look that she met took away her breath, and she remained staring at him, fascinated.

"Miss Dene—Phyllis," the young man exclaimed hurriedly, as though realizing that his opportunity would be short. "I know that you will not understand—that you will call me mad and resent my daring to speak to you as I must. Since I first saw you I have had no other thought. I love you—I love you with all my heart and strength, and I hate myself for ever having given you a moment's pain, which—which I would have avoided if I could. I never see you as I see others, and can never speak to you, so I am forced to be abrupt and to seize a time like the present, although I can see that I have startled you. Will you forgive me? I am asking you to be my wife." His voice sank away in deep agitation just as Phyllis struggled to her feet.

"You—you ask me to be your wife!" she uttered. "You whom I despise and——" Her voice broke.

"Phyllis! Phyllis, don't say it," the young man broke in in passionate entreaty. "You don't understand, and I cannot enlighten you."

"No," burst out his companion, pale with anger. "I indeed do not understand. It would be difficult for most people to understand why you who forbade you brother to marry me, who separated us, should dare to come to me with such a request." Her voice trembled.

A look of disgust swept over her delicate features, and a little, scornful laugh broke from her soft red lips.

"I told you I never wished to see you or hear of you again," she finished. "And that you should dare to attempt to make love to me when you prevented your brother from doing so is even more of an insult than trying to buy his freedom."

Essex Grey's handsome features were agitated by what seemed like a secret struggle, a wrestling with himself.

"Then there will never be any hope for me?" he asked quietly, after a moment's pause. "Never? Though I swear to you that you—you do not know all—and I love you in spite of what you believe to be the truth?" His voice was weighted with emotion.

"I do not want such a travesty of love," she broke in passionately. "My only desire is to never see you again."

She turned from him, trembling. What had he brought into her life? Nothing but shame and sorrow, humiliation and regret! Then as he left her for the second time Phyllis again sank into her chair by the window and wept with covered face.

It was this interview which first introduced into the girl's mind the idea of leaving Bellairs Chase.

She had been more than two years with Francis Tremb, and they had been years of comfort and happiness so far as her employers were concerned. But in everything except her work she had had a sad time in the beautiful old place, and she began to feel that she might forget many things that disturbed her peace in fresh scenes.

So, though the idea was only born as Essex Grey left her alone in the library, it began to grow very strong as the days passed. He seemed to have departed from the house—at any rate, she saw him no more, but she never felt secure.

So she left the Chase, and while she was looking for another situation she went to stay with her only relative, an old lady of straitened means, who had buried herself in the heart of the country.

It was three months later that she received a satisfactory answer to her advertisement—for she had even refused to be recommended by the Trembs to their friends, lest these friends should be, like themselves, acquainted with the Greys—and entered the household of Mr. Ulverston.

Here she was left almost entirely alone, for her new employer was always away. His house, a picturesque and charming abode rather than a stately mansion, was managed by an elderly housekeeper, and Phyllis' work was generally delivered to her in batches through the mail, or she received instructions through Mrs. Hunsden.

She had been four months in her new home, and was engaged for some hours of each day in cataloging the books in Mr. Ulverston's large and valuable library, when she received, one afternoon, a summons from Mrs. Hunsden requesting her to attend the old housekeeper in her master's little study.

She found Mrs. Hunsden seated before a large bureau with a bunch of keys in her hand, with which she was apparently opening the different compartments.

"I asked you to come here, Miss Dene," said Mrs. Hunsden, "because I've just had an order to go through the small drawer on this side of the bureau. Our employer wants me to forward him some important paper, and has sent me his keys, which nobody ever handles but himself. But I have turned rather faint, and I thought I'd like to have some one in the room with me. I wouldn't care to have any of the servants help me in this, because they're his own private matters. But if you wouldn't mind——"

The old woman did look, as she said, far from well, and Phyllis hastened to assure her that she would help her to finish her task, over which she had already spent more than an hour.

She had all the faithful dignity of an old family servant, and had struggled on, trying not even to call the secretary to her aid. But the weight of her seventy years had overcome her at last, and under her direction Phyllis took the keys and continued to unlock the drawers and hand their contents to her companion to be looked over.

They had proceeded in their occupation some little time without coming across the particular document of which Ulverston was in need, when Mrs. Hunsden suddenly collapsed and fell among the papers.

Abandoning the search in alarm, Phyllis hastily summoned assistance, and the housekeeper was conveyed to her room. Here she speedily recovered, and as she looked up and saw the young secretary standing by her side the remembrance of her duties returned to her.

"Oh, Miss Dene, you've locked up the bureau, I do hope!" she explained in anxious distress. "I wouldn't have his things pried into by the servants for the world, and if anything got mislaid or lost—my goodness! He must have the paper, and when I'm better I'll come down and go on with the search. But in the meantime do—there's a dear young lady—go and see that every scrap's put back again till I'm fit to attend to them."

Phyllis hastened down to the study and, finding all the papers undisturbed, began to methodically return them to the drawers.

She had picked up a small bundle of letters, the envelope of one of which had become torn and exposed the writing beneath. The girl's eyes fell suddenly upon this, and there she saw her own name, accompanied by such extraordinary words that she stood by the bureau uncertain for the moment that she was not in a dream.

"A pretty girl, a typist or secretary or something here, called Phyllis Dene, to whom I have unfortunately proposed, but do not for one moment intend to marry."

These were the words that faced her. She stared at them in the utmost bewilderment. Then something occurred to her.

Only two men had proposed to her—the brothers, Bertram and Essex

Grey. Could it be possible that the latter had dared to thus write of her to his correspondent—presumably Ulverston? It must be so.

Phyllis was an honorable girl. In all her experience she had not stooped to inspect such private correspondence of her employers as had fallen into her hands, but now she was not conscious of any scruples at all.

She sat down in the housekeeper's chair, and with half-incredulous, quivering fingers tore open the little packet. And this was what it contained: a telegram, from Grey, Bellairs Chase, to Grey, Bassett House:

Am in a mess, and am leaving this at once. Shall want to see you somewhere. Letter to follow; will explain.

Then a letter:

DEAR ESSEX: I am in an awkward fix. There is a pretty girl, a typist, or secretary, or something here, called Phyllis Dene, to whom I have unfortunately proposed, but do not for one moment intend to marry.

I admit that I have been a little taken with her since I first came here, and have carried on rather a strong flirtation, but naturally I have never had a serious intention in regard to her. The fact of the matter is that I was not quite myself at the time.

The Trembs gave a ball last night, and it was so slow that there seemed nothing to do but stand about and drink with the result that this morning the inclosed was handed in to me, which showed what a fool I had made of myself.

I never had such a communication in my life. I certainly won't marry her! Never dreamed of such a thing for a moment! You, my dear, must come to my assistance.

I pleaded an urgent summons at once, of course, and came away without seeing her, and shall not write unless you positively can't manage to put an end to the affair immediately.

You've often helped me before, old fellow, so I'm sure you won't refuse me now—for your own sake as well as mine—as a *mésalliance* in our family would be by no means to your taste.

How it will all end goodness only knows, but I trust to you to settle it somehow. Yours,

BERT.

Another letter:

MY DEAR ESSEX: Your letter came upon me with the shock of a thunderbolt. You say you have had the interview with Phyllis, and that you wish me to marry her! You say, too, that both you and I have made a mistake, and that she is quite a different girl from what you imagined she would be.

Well, I quite admit she is superior to her position, and I told you she was awfully pretty, but marry her! And you to give me the advice—you of all people in the world!

I feel that I haven't treated the poor girl well, but must say, in my own defense, that I think she ought to have seen I was in no condition to mean what I said, and that it would be taking an advantage of me to seriously accept me.

Thanking you for doing so much on my behalf, I am your affectionate brother,

BERTRAM GREY.

Phyllis stood with the packet of papers in her hand without uttering a word. What had become of her one great, possession, her cherished ideal, the sweet memory of her life?

She moved at last, and as she did so she suddenly saw that Essex Grey was standing beside her, looking anxiously down into her face.

Phyllis felt no surprise at the presence of the man who had had so much to do with her past. She made no attempt even to hide the letters she had just perused. When he seized them and took them gently out of her fingers she yielded them without resistance or excuse.

He gave them one quick, apprehensive glance and then dropped them into the still-open drawer.

"I am too late!" he exclaimed in a tone of pain and regret.

Phyllis looked at him then with returning consciousness.

"Those are your letters," she said, "but I have read them. I—I owe you an apology." Her voice was low.

"You owe me no apology," he returned hastily. "I am only sorry that I did not get here in time to prevent your seeing them. It was that which brought me down." He spoke gently.

"Was it?" she murmured hazily. "I

didn't mean an apology for reading the letters—I am very glad I did that—but an apology for the past—the mistake—which I found out by reading them. I suppose I misjudged you, but—but it seemed the only explanation to me. The truth was very far from me."

"I knew it," answered her companion gently. "I would have kept it from you forever if I could, though it cost me much—more than you can ever know—to keep silence. But I must tell you that I also made a mistake as well as Bert. I was proud. I had an old and honorable name, and I did not wish my brother's bride to be some unknown girl with whom I thought he had been having a flirtation. I made a mistake, but when I met you I loved you. So, as I saw you really cared for him, I wrote to him——"

"But—but stop a moment, please," interrupted Phyllis. "I want to tell you—I am not saying this because I find he did not care for me—I did not love your brother. I admired him and felt so grateful to him that I thought I should be happy if I married him, and I was very, very lonely." Her voice was little more than a whisper.

"But you did not love him?" A great relief sprang into Essex's eyes—a wondering inquiry.

"No—not as people understand love—not as I believed he loved me," explained Phyllis slowly and truthfully. "It was because I thought he cared for me so sincerely that I treasured up my ideal of him, and I felt that I hated you for stamping out such an unselfish affection. I was so mistaken, you see," and the girl's lips quivered. "I have always imagined that he was forced to give me up. I believe it will be much easier now." She drew a long, thoughtful breath.

"What will be easier?" asked Essex wonderingly.

"Oh, my life! Easier to get through the days," she explained. "There was such a sense of burning injustice, and such great pity for him, that somehow I was always miserable. But now——"

Essex seized her hands.

"Oh, Phyllis, my darling, will it make you forgive me?" he cried, filled with a passionate longing to clasp her to his heart.

"What is there to forgive now?" she returned in a weary self-scorn. "Now that I have learned all the truth, I suppose you have a great deal to forgive, too."

"I have nothing to forgive! I love you," cried Essex. "I love you, and my only desire is that you should learn to care a little for me in return. Phyllis, do you think you ever can?" His voice was weighted with emotion.

The girl looked through the window half sadly, half dreamily.

"I don't know. You have been very good to me," she said. "When I had finished the letters almost my first thought was that I was sorry I had been unjust to you." She spoke softly.

"If you would only say you would try to love me, I would devote my whole life to making you happy!" Essex cried passionately. "Will you, Phyllis? Forget all this past mistake and turn to me?"

"But somehow now I feel—numb," she answered. "Almost without any feeling for anything or anybody."

"I will wait," he declared gently.

"What do you want me to do—to promise?" asked Phyllis. She looked at him suddenly, and a sweet smile came into her eyes It was the first dawning of love, and she did not know it, but only wondered why all sadness seemed to be slipping away from her.

"I want you to promise to be my wife—to try to care for me," returned Essex. "I will wait only too gladly for you, Phyllis—only too gladly, until you love me. His voice was very tender.

"But if I promise, and afterward I——"

"I will let you go free without reproach." He spoke gently—as one might to a much-beloved child.

There was a silence in the little room. Then the girl stretched out her hand like a tired child, and her lover took it in his.

"But there is one thing that puzzles me," she said, after a moment. "How could your letters—your brother's letters to you—come here in Mr. Ulverston's private cabinet?" She raised sweet, wondering eyes to his.

"I am Mr. Ulverston," said Essex Grey quietly.

"You Mr. Ulverston! You my employer! You——" Phyllis' voice failed in her astonishment.

"Yes, I am Mr. Ulverston. And it was because I remembered that these letters were here that I came down today. A sudden fear came over me that you might see them, although I tried to persuade myself that only poor old Hunsden would interfere with my private papers.

I took the name, dear, and gave you the position because I would have gone mad had I not known that you were safe."

"And you have known all along that I was here?"

"Of course. You are not angry, are you, darling? I should not have troubled you, and I should not be here now, only that I could not get that foreboding out of my mind. I was afraid you might see the letters."

"And you came down to find it fulfilled? I am not sorry—I am very glad I have found out the truth."

"Only—to lose your ideal! I was afraid it would be so bitter——"

"It was. But only for a moment. Now in its place I feel as if I had a reality." Her voice thrilled and trembled with her sweet new happiness.

"You have, my sweetheart," he whispered tenderly, taking her hand in his. "You have—a reality faithful and true."

He opened his arms, and she went into them with something of the sweet simplicity and confidence of a child.

"Dearest little girl in the world," he murmured as his arms closed around her slender form and held it tenderly against his heart. "If I had a thousand lives to live I should want to spend them all for you, beloved."

"I never dreamed that love could be so wonderful, that it could transform the whole world," she whispered, scarcely daring to trust her voice, so great was the emotion welling in her heart. "I shall feel that I am more than a queen when I can call myself your wife."

"My darling!" The words were tremulous with their weight of emotion. "There is no man in the world more favored than I who shall so soon possess you."

Her Mad Adventure

By

Georgette MacMillan

THE STORY SO FAR

Audrey Felton leaves her father's luxurious home to prove that she is not a weakling. She accepts a position as a general servant in the home of a farmer. When in town one day she meets the hardened and uncouth, Steve Hughes. He makes advances which are rebuffed by Audrey. Jim Doyne, the village schoolmaster, comes to read to the blind Mrs. Hickson. Audrey meets him on one of these visits.

CHAPTER VI.

AND so it came about that, having said good-by to Mrs. Hickson, Audrey, with a small bundle containing the few articles of dress which she had bought in Ship Harbor, went from Black Tor Farm with Jim Doyne by her side. There were tears in her eyes, and when at last she and her companion reached the high road, he glanced at her and spoke awkwardly.

"Now, don't allow yourself to be too much upset by what has happened," he urged her. "What Jeremy Hickson may think doesn't matter. I'm quite sure that his wife believes you to be innocent of any wrong, and I'm perfectly certain that *I* do."

Somehow the tears came faster after that.

"I don't know how to thank you for your trust and for your kindness," Audrey whispered. "There was no reason why you should have defended me as you did, but it is very good to know that you do believe me. And now, where are we going, Mr. Doyne?"

Putting up a hand he passed it once or twice across his brow.

"While I was waiting for you I was facing that difficulty," he answered.

"You think it best to stay on in Ship Harbor?"

Unconsciously she moved her shoulders.

"Anywhere where I can get work and keep myself would do," she told him. Ship Harbor seems as good a place as any."

"All right. We'll decide on that, then. As I told you before, there are but few jobs in the village, and the only possible one I can think of just now is one which you couldn't tackle, I'm afraid."

"I will tackle anything," Audrey told him.

He smiled at her.

She felt willing to do anything to get away from Hickson. She shuddered as she recalled the scene that met her eyes when she opened her bedroom door.

"Yes—I've no doubt you will," he said. "But somehow you don't strike

me as a girl who has really had to rough it. There's a man called Waller who makes a fairly good thing out of the fishing industry here and employs a number of girls and women, partly in packing the fish in barrels at the harbor. I imagine that possibly he and his wife would be willing to give you a job. But I warn you that if you take it, it will be hard work, and horrible work in a way. However, we've got to find a place for you somewhere, and if Waller will take you on, there is little doubt that he will either give you a room in his house or an advance in wages so that you can get a room somewhere else.

"I don't think we need say much about your reason for leaving Black Tor Farm. Hickson won't be likely to mention it at all, and he's so well-known for his gruffness that nobody will be surprised at your having left him."

"And Steve Hughes?" Audrey asked. "Do you think that he will say anything?"

Jim shook his head.

"He'll be the last person to do so," he returned. "Anyhow, I'll keep an eye on him, and perhaps one of these days we'll get a chance to square the account. There's Waller's house, at the corner. Shall I take you there now? I can say that I was the person fortunate enough to pick you out of that boat at sea, and that I consider myself responsible for you while you are in Ship Harbor, also that I think you'll prove a useful and good worker."

His tone was almost tender.

Audrey's eyes were dry now, but their expression softened as she heard him.

"If you will please take me to Mr. Waller's, I will be greatly indebted to you," she said. "I wonder how many people in this world would be so kind to an unknown, poor girl, as you have been, Mr. Doyne?"

"I think," he said, not looking at her, "that that would depend very largely on the girl herself."

Nothing more was said between them then until they stood in the squarely built, graystone cottage where Matthew Waller and his wife lived.

Mrs. Waller took almost as active a part in the business as did her husband, and they both listened intently while Jim put forward as briefly as possible a plea on Audrey's behalf.

When he had finished husband and wife glanced at each other, and then, with a nod, the former spoke to Audrey.

"Well, we're willing to give you a trial," he said, "and as Mr. Doyne says you've made no arrangement for a room, I expect that Mrs. Waller can find a corner for you somewhere. That so, Bess?"

The woman, who was stout and not unkindly of face, though the lines about her eyes and mouth seemed to tell of many troubles in the past, nodded.

"Yes," she said. "I'll find you a bed for to-night and to-morrow, and you can see about a room somewhere else on Monday, if that's necessary. Mind you, if you haven't done any of this work before you'll find it hard—cruel hard at first. Still, it isn't being forced on you, and if you want to keep it you'll have to do your hardest to please. You understand that?"

"Yes, Mrs. Waller," Audrey said, "and I thank you very much for giving me the chance."

A minute or two later she had said good-by to Jim Doyne and was being shown to the little room which was to be at her disposal for a couple of nights.

"Neither my husband nor I know anything about you," Mrs. Waller remarked, as she was about to leave Audrey, "but there's no particular reason why we should. If you're a good worker and honest, that's all that matters, and it's something to have been recommended by Mr. Doyne. You look pretty done up now, and as there's no

She shuddered as she recalled the scene that met her eyes as she opened her bedroom door.

work at the harbor to-morrow, the best thing you can do will be to have a long rest. I won't expect you to work in the house."

Audrey went to bed early that night, but, even so, the church bells were ringing when she woke next morning. She stayed in bed for the greater part of that day, and as she thought of the prospect ahead of her she gave a small, unconscious shudder.

The work waiting certainly did not promise to be other than revolting to one brought up as she had been, and yet as she lay there looking through the open window to where the sea, calm and beautiful, sparkled beneath the warm sunshine, she felt a strange glow of contentment suffuse her.

Some wonderful and benign force outside herself seemed to be adding with gracious sympathy to her store of courage. Actuated by motives which had about them nothing base, she had undertaken to walk, what was for her with her delicate upbringing, a rough road. And because she wanted to walk it so that when she came to the end of her short journey she might hold her head high, she sent a plea up to Him who looks with loving kindness on the humblest strugglers in life's workshop: a plea that her heart might remain high, and that, no matter what trials or misadventures befell her, she might emerge undaunted and with no slightest cause for shame.

On Monday, Audrey started work at

the harbor. Within the first half hour she felt as though she could not possibly complete the day's task. The girls beside whom she worked looked at her askance, and one or two of them mocked openly at her clumsiness, and still more at her manner of speech and her appearance.

"It seems to me," said one big-boned girl whom the others called Sally, "that you've chosen the wrong job, old top. You should be a nursemaid, taking kids out for a walk. Or, maybe, you'd do all right in the chorus of one of the pantomimes that come to Bramworth in the winter. But packing fish——"

She broke off, and there was a general laugh.

For a moment or two Audrey's self-control seemed in danger of deserting her. Then, though her head was aching and a spirit of physical nausea had crept over her, she managed to smile.

"This is my first shot at the job," she said. "Give me a day or two and you'll see that I'll try to do as well as any of you."

But that afternoon she fainted and, toppling, fell over a little heap of wooden boxes which had been packed and nailed down.

Some of her fellow workers half carried her away from the edge of the quay and laid her on a heap of dry nets. All their mocking and banter was forgotten, and in a little group they stood about her, talking quietly as they watched the flickering of the long lashes against the pale cheeks.

Later, when she was back in the Wallers' house and had been told that, temporarily at least, she could stay there, Mrs. Waller came to her and shook her head slowly.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but I don't think you're strong enough for this job. Don't you think you should try something else? Not that I know of any other thing I can suggest."

"I—I'll be all right, Mrs. Waller," Audrey answered. "Please don't send me away. It was only the first day and everything seemed strange to me, and —and perhaps I've been working too hard at Black Tor Farm. You'll let me stay on, won't you?"

"Well, we'll see," Mrs. Waller returned. "Only, if you see that it is too much for you, the best thing for you to do, from everybody's point of view, will be to say so."

But what Audrey had said proved to be right, and during the days that followed she performed her duties just as strenuously and just as effectively as any of the women who had been at the work for years. Day by day the actual bodily strain seemed to lessen, and with the fresh air blowing in from the sea, she became stronger, more imbued with a sense of physical well-being than she had been for a long time past.

During this first week, though she saw Steve Hughes more than once, she escaped, thankfully, any actual meeting with him. But such a meeting was inevitable, and when it came, formed the prelude to a short period of bitterly enacted drama.

With her day's work over she was strolling along the cliff road, when Hughes, who had been sitting on a great rock, rose and, coming toward her, nodded familiarly.

"Evening," he started. "You and me haven't had a word for some time, and I'm bound to admit that the last time we did meet and speak I wasn't quite myself. Still, I hope you'll let bygones be bygones."

It was with difficulty that Audrey beat down the flame of righteous anger that rose in her. With great difficulty she kept herself from charging him there and then with having taken a coward's way to make her suffer for what, apparently, had been in his eyes the crime of refusing to meet his uncouth advances.

"I don't think," she said now, and

knew a little thrill of mingled relief and pleasure as she saw not far away to the left the figure of Jim Doyne, "that you and I have anything to say to each other, and now—I will go on, if you will let me pass, please."

don't know how to tackle your sort of woman, I know how to handle a man. We'll see what he has to say when he comes up."

She strove to pass him, but he caught roughly at one of her wrists. But even

Without speaking, without so much as a glance at the girl who stood terrified and chilled watching them, Hughes drove a great fist into Jim's face.

Something evil showed in his eyes. He, too, had seen the approaching figure of the schoolmaster.

"So you're still going to be hoity-toity, are you?" he sneered. "I suppose I've interrupted a meeting between you and Doyne yonder. Well, if I

as she struggled to free herself from his grasp Jim Doyne reached them.

"What's this, Hughes!" he exclaimed. "It seems that you're interfering once again with Miss Felton. Well, you've got to deal with me as well this time."

While he spoke he gripped the other

by the shoulder and jerked him back. In that moment it seemed as though a whole world of hate leaped to life in the fisherman's being and rendered him temporarily half insane.

Without speaking, without so much as a glance at the girl who stood terrified and chilled watching them, he drove a great fist into Jim's face.

"Take that!" he cried thickly.

He would have struck again then, but Jim stepped aside and the blow passed him harmlessly, and then the real fight started.

It was of short duration, but bitter in intensity, and Audrey, covering her face with her hands for a moment, sensed rather than knew that a low moan had come from her lips. Then she dared to look again at the combatants and, ignorant as she was of boxing, she knew instinctively that in Jim Doyne, the bullying fisherman, had met his master.

Once, twice, three times he was felled, and at last he rose, wiping the blood and dust from his face with the sleeve of his jacket, prepared to turn away.

"This time, mister, you've bested me," he said, "but we'll be meeting again, you and me. And as for you——" He turned toward Audrey, and his cut lips were twisted wickedly. Then, with a shrug of his great shoulders, he turned and walked toward the village.

It was only when he had gone that Audrey noticed that Jim swayed slightly, as though a sudden weakness had fastened on him.

Timidly she laid a hand on his sleeve, and at the touch of it he looked down and smiled.

"He hurt you," she said slowly. "Oh, I'm so sorry that this should have happened. I feel as though I am to blame."

He put a hand on hers.

"That's all right," he said. "I'm only thankful that I chanced along when I did."

"Perhaps—perhaps," she said, "I should leave Ship Harbor, after all?"

As he heard her his face stiffened.

"Surely not?" he said. "You are not going to let yourself be frightened away from the place because of one cowardly bully? Then I should be more sorry than I can say to see you go."

"What do you mean?" she asked, and dared to meet his eyes.

"I'm not quite sure," he said. "All I know is, if you went away, I should be worrying about you, your happiness and your troubles. Audrey!"

It was the first time he had used her Christian name, and she felt her face flush.

"Yes?" she asked.

"I'm a curious sort of man, I suppose, and perhaps living so long in a village like this has made me too set in my ways, but if I am slow to make friends, I know when I meet some one whom I *wish* for a friend."

"But," she faltered, "friendship with me, it seems, is only a maker of trouble for you, Mr. Doyne. You are some one of importance here. Your friends are not my friends. What would the doctor and the clergyman, and the members of your school board say if they knew you were friendly with a girl who works in the harbor packing fish?"

Suddenly the gravity of expression passed from his face and he laughed.

"Do you think that I care for what any one of them might say about me?" he asked her. "I don't, Audrey. And to prove how sincere I am, I want you to walk with me through the village now. Yes! and to walk with me whenever you will in the evenings, for, if you can put up with my society, then I will be not merely glad, but honored. Will you come with me now?"

Not knowing that she would be bringing any harm to him; ignorant as yet of just how quickly news spreads and how malicious gossip often was in places such as Ship Harbor, she went

with him. More than once during the long, drowsy evenings that followed, these two, oblivious of the keen eyes that watched them and of the wagging tongues that discussed them, went on long walks together.

It was on a warm Saturday afternoon, when Audrey was lying asleep behind a hedge, that she was roused by the sound of men's voices. She stirred herself to a sitting position and, being compelled to listen, heard the voice of Jim Doyne and of a certain Mr. Marwood, a retired business man, and, as Audrey had learned, one of the prominent members of the local school board.

"Well, I've spoken to you as a friend, Doyne," the latter said, "and, of course, it's for you to disregard my advice if you wish. But in a place like this one is bound to pay some attention to the talk that goes on, and I tell you frankly that I think you will be wise to give up this friendship which you have formed with that strange girl who is working for Waller."

"Thank you, Mr. Marwood," Audrey heard Jim answer. "I'm quite sure that you are speaking to me as a friend, but I must ask you to understand that so long as I perform my duties properly in the school I regard myself as free in my leisure hours to choose what friends I please."

"Well, I warn you, the parents of some of the scholars are beginning to talk, and so are some of the members of the board, and I tell you, if you're seen much more with this girl, then you'll be asked to leave."

The tone was threatening.

"I'll risk that," said Jim.

Audrey heard the other murmur something in reply and then turn away.

Then a sigh reached her ears.

That moment a resolution was made in her turbulent mind.

And when a minute or two later she heard Jim move, she crouched closer into the hedge.

CHAPTER VII.

An agony of suspense held Audrey until the sound of Jim Doyne's receding footsteps assured her that he had been unaware of her presence.

Not for worlds, she told herself, would she have had him know that she had overheard what had passed between Mr. Marwood and him regarding herself.

Lying there under the green shelter of the hedge, she faced resolutely the new situation that had arisen where she and the handsome young village schoolmaster were concerned.

It was obvious to her that the friendship which had sprung up so naturally was already proving an unfortunate maker of disturbance where Jim's interests were involved. Of course the viewpoint of Mr. Marwood, and of those others who shared it with him, was all very petty and stupid, but it was apparently firmly established, and the power which they wielded where the schoolmaster's fate came in question, was not to be disregarded.

Already she was deeply in debt to him. From their first meeting he had extended toward her nothing save kindness and help. Was she to repay him by getting him talked about in such a strain as would inevitably result in his life in Ship Harbor being made unbearable?

Such a thought was not to be entertained for a moment, and the only course, therefore, was to cease giving any reason for such talk. Audrey knew perfectly well that no threats, no village gossiping, would make any impression on Jim. He had said that he was glad of her friendship and desired it, and would rebel against any outside influence which strove to turn him from that friendship.

Inevitably, therefore, it was she who

must take action. It was upon her shoulders that the burden of saving him from the outlined results of his manly attitude must fall.

First, it occurred to her that, come what might, she should leave Ship Harbor and go somewhere else, but very soon she dismissed that notion as being impracticable. Perfectly certain—and this without the slightest trace of self-esteem—that the schoolmaster had been altogether sincere when he had confided how deep his interest in her was, Audrey foresaw that if she were to go away without an explanation, he would strive to find out. And to give an explanation would be impossible.

Born fighter that he was, and upheld by a native dignity, he would have thrust aside with scorn any proposal or suggestion which would have spelled compliance with the narrow view of those who strove to direct his actions and choose his acquaintances.

She must *make* him dislike her. She must act in such a way that any regard which he had for her would be crushed and killed in such a way that he would come to look upon her as some one unworthy of his slightest attention. No matter what it might cost her, personally, no matter what self-inflicted pain she might have to bear, she must, for Jim's own sake, endeavor to cheapen and blacken herself in his eyes.

With that conclusion firmly established in her mind, she set out for the village and hurried as she neared the small schoolhouse. A rapid glance showed her Jim strolling, pipe in mouth, in the garden, but with her lips tightening she looked straight ahead again, and when he called out to her, she affected not to hear.

At first she thought that he was going to follow her, but he did not, and when she reached the Wallers' house, she felt as though the first step had been taken on the difficult path which she had chosen to tread.

"There's a parcel here for you," Mrs. Waller told her. "Mr. Doyne, the schoolmaster, left it soon after you'd gone out. I've put it up in your bedroom, but if you're not in a hurry to open it, you'd better go to the kitchen now and have your supper."

Wondering what the parcel could be, Audrey yet fell in with the other's suggestion.

Throughout the half hour or so that passed before she went upstairs, Audrey was conscious of an eager anticipation regarding the parcel which had arrived for her, and when she opened it at last, her eyes lighted as she saw a set of book proofs, on the outside of which and underneath the title were the words "By James Doyne."

A single sheet of paper fluttered to the floor, and picking it up she read what Jim had written.

When I got here last night, I found these proofs of my book about child training, which had been sent on for correction, by the publishers. I hope I was not wrong in thinking that you were genuinely interested in what I told you about it. In any case, I am going to leave the proofs at Waller's, in the hope that you may have time to go through them within the next few days, because I should like to know just what you think, and I assure you that any criticisms, no matter how severe, which you may pass, will be welcomed and appreciated.

If you have time to dip into it at all, then perhaps you would meet me to-morrow evening about eight o'clock at the seat on the clifftop to the north of the harbor? In any case I shall be there waiting for you, and I hope that you will join me. I am quite sure that you will do so, unless you are too tired to come out at all. Yours sincerely,

JAMES DOYNE.

With a small sigh, of which she was unaware, Audrey laid the note aside and, picking up the proof sheets, settled herself in a chair by the window and began to read.

When the daylight faded at last, she lighted her candle and read on and on with an ever-growing interest and ad-

miration, until she heard the village clock strike the hour of midnight.

Then, the last page finished, she laid the book aside.

"It is wonderful," she whispered to herself. "Wonderful!"

Always from the first she had given to Jim Doyne admiration and regard for his kindliness of bearing. Now she found herself taking a real pride in the knowledge that, despite what she planned should happen in the future, he could be regarded by her always as a friend.

She dreamed about him that night—a pleasant, strangely contenting dream. But the next morning when, a little tired, a little sad at heart, she went to the harbor to work, the resolve of the previous night came back in full force.

How she got through the day she hardly knew, but when evening came, the thought that she was to disappoint the man who had asked her to meet him, hurt her with a keenness which almost frightened her.

Yet fate, it seemed, was to take another turn with her affairs, for Mrs. Waller came to her with a request which, in its way, was a command.

"I want you to go to the Simpsons' farm, Audrey," she said. "It's just about half a mile up the cliff road on the north side of the harbor, and as it's the only farm for a long way round you can't miss it. You ask Mr. Simpson to be sure to be here first thing in the morning to see Mr. Waller. Now, it's very important, and if you don't see Mr. Simpson leave a message."

Audrey's heart seemed to sink in her. For a moment or two she hesitated on the verge of a refusal. If she fulfilled this commission, it was certain that she would pass the spot where Jim Doyne would be waiting, and, after the mental unrest which she had passed through during the day, it seemed almost cruel that circumstances should force her away from her purpose.

Next moment, however, she realized that no excuse would be accepted. If she refused to go to the Simpsons' farm, she would alienate the sympathies of her employer's wife, and to do that might mean a dismissal in the near future.

"Very well, Mrs. Waller," she said. "I will go at once."

When Audrey passed the seat placed near to a heap of great boulders near the clifftop, it was untenanted, but when, half an hour later she returned, she saw, as she had expected to see, that Jim Doyne sat there, leaning forward a little, and smoking meditatively.

Hoping against hope that she might escape his attention, she quickened her speed, but he seemed to sense her presence before he saw her, and when he did see her, he came forward, cap in hand.

"I almost gave you up, Audrey," he said, "and I began to think that perhaps you were too tired out with your long day's work to meet me. Still, here you are now, and it isn't too late, is it, to come and sit with me for a while, and talk?"

A mist seemed to float in front of her eyes. Her inner strength was being tested more severely than ever before.

"It is for him," she told herself mutely. "If he hates me, then that will be well."

"I can't stop now," she remarked, with a flippancy both of manner and tone which was produced only at the cost of an uprush of shame. "I've been delivering a message to Mr. Simpson, on the farm back yonder, otherwise I wouldn't be here at all."

His eyes seemed to become hazed with wonder, and a frown, not of irritation but of perplexity passed across his brow.

"But—didn't you get my note last night?" he asked.

"I got the note," she replied, with a

toss of the head, "but—well, I didn't feel like sitting and chatting to-night. And now—I'm off. Good night, Mr. Doyne."

"Just a moment!" he said, his voice troubled. "I can't understand it at all. Have I offended you in any way?"

"Not that I know of," she returned. "Only I don't want to sit and talk now. I don't want to speak at all."

She saw a muscle in his cheek twitch, and once more she was conscious of that searing shame.

"I shall not ask for any explanation just now," he answered quietly. "But about that book of mine. It's foolish of me to mention the thing, I suppose, but it contains the best of my life's work."

"Oh, the book! Yes—I glanced at it. I thought some of it was quite—quite funny."

A hot flush came to mingle with the tan of his face.

"It was not meant to be funny," he said. "Perhaps it is best that you should go home and that I should go back to my seat and—think. But when we meet next time——"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"There needn't be any next time where I'm concerned," she said, and with that turned and walked toward the village.

As she went, her pulses were thudding and her fingers were pressed tightly into the palms of her hands. A feeling of faintness had crept over her insidiously. Her world for the moment was out of joint, and only the thought that she had acted for Jim Doyne's sake, and not for her own, kept her from going back to him and telling him that she had been merely playing a part.

As it was, she kept her face resolutely toward the group of houses huddled picturesquely at the foot of the road, and as she walked along there passed through her mind a procession of troubled thoughts. Not only those where Jim Doyne was concerned, but thoughts of her father, her aunt, her friends, Walter Trenton—all the people whom she had known and mingled with in her own particular sphere.

Later that night when she lay down in her small bed, she became aware suddenly that her cheeks were tear stained.

She could not have told you why it was that she was crying; she had herself not the vaguest idea.

CHAPTER VIII.

Next day, when she came back from the harbor at the dinner hour, she found a second note from Jim awaiting her. It was brief, and had quite evidently been written with a careful elimination of anything which might seem to hint at reproach.

DEAR AUDREY: When we parted last evening I returned to the seat on the cliff and thought. I came to the conclusion at last that I was perhaps rather dull myself.

With regard to the book proofs of which I sent to you—I am afraid I erred out of pure conceit in thinking that you would care for so unentertaining a work. If you would be good enough to send them back to me, I would be grateful.

I hope sincerely that we may be meeting again soon and have one of those talks which have been, from my point of view at least, very pleasant. Yours sincerely,

JAMES DOYNE.

Audrey did not answer that letter, and that same night she paid a boy to take the book, carefully wrapped up, to the schoolhouse.

So far, she told herself, she had merely astonished Jim Doyne. Perhaps, too, she had distressed him a little, but she had not shocked him nor, it seemed, made herself contemptible in his eyes. And that was what she must do if she was to be successful in driving his kindly interest from herself, and in saving him from the troubles which otherwise were fated, it seemed, to be gathered about him.

It was by chance that the thought of employing Steve Hughes' unconscious aid presented itself to her. She knew that Jim would, in all probability, be in his garden at the time and, seeing Steve Hughes in the village street and almost directly in her path, she deliberately slackened her walk and, when he half leered at her, gave him a friendly nod.

On the instant the glint of venom passed from his eyes, and its place was taken by one of astonishment which, in its turn, gave way to something of triumph.

"Good evening, miss," he started, and stepped forward a pace so that in any case she would have had to halt or move aside in order to pass him.

"Good evening," she answered, forcing the words from her lips, and conscious of a numbing sensation of repugnance.

"I'm glad to see," he went on, "that your head isn't so high in the air as it was the last time we met. You're not bearing any ill will, then, for what happened on the cliff that night?"

Her eyes were half closed, and she dared not meet his. But:

"Why should I?" she asked lightly. "Nothing important happened that I can remember, except that you and Mr. Doyne were silly enough to fight with each other."

He was regarding her with genuine wonder. In his way he was just as surprised as Jim Doyne had been at the change which had taken place in this mysterious and undoubtedly beautiful girl.

"Yes, it was silly," he admitted. "But then men do silly things when they happen to have a fancy for some one with a pretty face. Still, that's over, and if you're going to be more friendly with me and not stuck up about things, then that'll be a good thing all round. You see, I was laying for Doyne, and if you'd gone on treating me the way you were doing, I'd have fixed him somehow or other. But need we stay here talking? You were going west. Can't I walk with you this time?"

She seemed to hesitate for a moment or two.

"You can walk with me if you like, as far as the crossroads beyond the village," she said. "I'm going to stop at the Spriggs' cottage there for a while."

"Can't I wait for you and bring you back?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"Not to-night," she said. "I don't know how long I'll be, and I'll walk back alone. I won't let you come now if you don't promise not to wait."

His eyes narrowed slightly, then he laughed exultingly.

"It's good enough," he said. "It's a start, anyhow. You've got pride, I know, but I'll be as proud as any one when I'm walking through the village with you. Come along, then!"

What passed between them in the matter of conversation during the ten minutes or so that they were together Audrey did not know. She had a confused memory that this hulking fisherman had striven to find out something of her history prior to that night when she had been picked up at sea, but nothing which she said in answer could have been of any service to him.

The one outstanding incident of that intensely trying walk was when, passing very slowly the schoolhouse garden, Audrey saw—and Steve Hughes saw, too, for that matter—Jim Doyne standing by one of his rose trees. He glanced up as they approached, and the pipe, which had been hanging loosely in his mouth corner, stuck out straight as his teeth gripped on the stem.

Meeting his eyes, Audrey gave him the merest nod of recognition, and as she did so saw how the color flamed up in his face and then receded, leaving it almost pale.

He took a step or two in her direction, then his eyes filled with something which was akin to horror.

"Mr. Doyne doesn't look too happy now," Hughes sneered, and it was only by exercising all her will power that the girl managed to walk on by the side of the taunter.

At the Spriggs' cottage she left him and went indoors to spend a few minutes with Lucy Spriggs, who was one of her fellow workers at the fish market.

When Audrey came out Hughes had disappeared, and with a dull agony in her heart she went slowly back toward the village.

Tears welled up in her eyes, and in her heart there was a mute prayer.

"Oh, help me to do what is right," was the plea which she sent up. "Give me strength, please, and a higher courage to act so that this man who has been so kind and good to me may not suffer on my account. Help me to hurt him now, if that is best for him, and if I should falter because the duty is so hard, grant me a greater power than I have just now."

At the Wallers' house Jim Doyne was waiting for her, his face set and stern, his eyes almost hard.

"Miss Felton!" he said. "I would like a word with you!"

Her nerves strained as it seemed almost to breaking point, she faced him.

"I'm tired," she said. "I want to go indoors. Is it anything very important?"

"Yes," he told her. "So important that even at the risk of angering you I demand your attention."

"You demand?"

"Yes, and I have a right to demand, I think. What has happened to you I don't know. If you have heard any story against me, that story was false. I think I was the first person to speak to you in Ship Harbor; certainly I thought we had become good friends. Suddenly you treat me as some one whose presence is almost an offense. I do not allow people to treat me like that, be they men or women. At best I can think that you have listened to some crazy tale, but if you cannot trust me and do not believe me, then you are not the girl I thought you to be, but merely a weak and vapid person and unworthy of my interest."

"You think rather well of yourself, Mr. Doyne, don't you?" Audrey asked.

"In some ways I do," he answered, and his eyes seemed to be looking through hers and into her soul. "But about myself it doesn't matter so much. When I give friendship, that friendship is sincere, and I won't stand by and say nothing when I see you walking in the public road with a man like Steve Hughes. Was it by your will that he was in your company?"

"Yes," she said, and felt as though she were near to swooning. "It was by my will."

Before he could answer she had moved swiftly past him and the door of the Wallers' house had closed behind her.

On the next day, despite a threat in the weather, plain enough to the fisher folk, the boats went out and, one by one, were lost to view on the wide horizon.

Toward noon the storm broke on sea and land, and as the hours went by the violence of the gale increased, and when evening came Audrey learned just what a price is demanded of those women whose menfolk, when they go to their daily toil, take their lives in their hands.

Through her mind, as she watched the strained and in some cases tear-stained faces of the women gathered about the harbor head, there passed through her mind some of those phrases of comfort which wise men wrote in

the long ago about those who go down to the sea in ships.

"There will be no sleep for any of the fishermen's wives in Ship Harbor to-night," one woman told her. "The boats should have been back long since, but it will be a God's mercy if they have lived on a sea like that. You're lucky that you haven't got a man out there among the cruel waves—some one who is dearer to you than anything else in the world."

"Yes," Audrey whispered.

But something seemed to have gone wrong with her heart, for less than an hour before she had learned that, as he so often did, Jim Doyne had sailed on one of the boats, the *Mary Harper,* which otherwise would have been short-handed.

With the rain beating down and the wind coming in great gusts, the waiting, watching women stood on the wharf, their eyes strained to look into the mist that had gathered out at sea.

At last one boat was seen driving in with the spray and spume beating up from under her broad bows. Quarter of an hour later another came in sight, and when at last toward midnight the storm calmed down and the skies cleared so that the moon showed, lighting a still world, there was only one boat missing. And that boat was the *Mary Harper.*

There was still a little group waiting near the wharf, and among the women was Audrey. Beside her stood the wife of the *Mary Harper's* master, a woman called Joynson.

She was weeping softly, and Audrey dared to put an arm about her shoulders.

"They will come back," she said brokenly. "I know they will come back."

"Every time there's a storm and the boats are at sea it's the same," the woman answered in what was little more than a whisper. "There aren't many of the fine ladies who eat fish in their dainty houses who know what the catching of them costs some other woman. If ever you marry, my girl, don't marry a man who takes his life in his hands each time he goes to work."

"If ever I do marry," Audrey returned, "I should like to marry a brave man. One who is not afraid to share the dangers of his brothers."

"You might be speaking of Mr. Doyne, the schoolmaster," the other said, and then a strange silence hung between them.

It was nearly one o'clock in the morning when a member of the *Mary Harper's* crew walked down to the harbor, and the news that he had to give to the strained and excited crowd brought comfort, as the great sigh of relief that went up told.

"The *Mary Harper* is lying half broken up on the rocks by Beamy Head," he announced. "We're all safe, and nobody's hurt except Mr. Doyne."

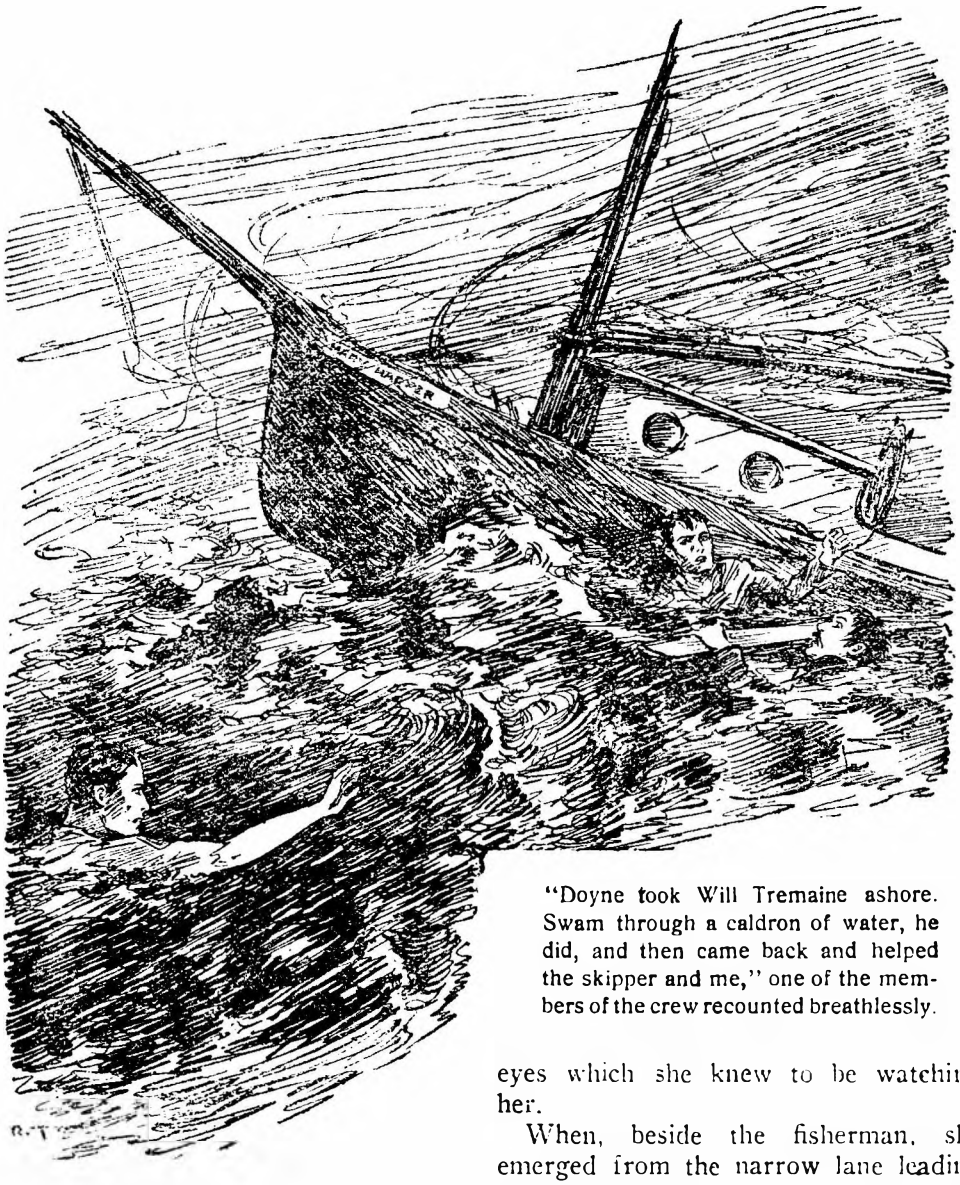
"Mr. Doyne?" Audrey asked.

The man turned toward her.

"Yes. If it hadn't been for him, none of the rest of us would have been alive. Your husband's all right, Mrs. Joynson, but he and Will Tremaine are waiting with the schoolmaster. I don't think there's anything broken, but I've come to take a doctor over. When the boat went on the rocks, Mr. Doyne was the only one who wasn't shaken up for the moment. We all seemed to be dazed. He took Will Tremaine ashore. Swam through a caldron of water, he did, and then came back and helped the skipper and me. We were nearly done up, and we are strong swimmers as you know. But he got us beat, and it wasn't till afterward that we knew there was anything wrong with him. He was unconscious when I left."

With that he turned, and when he reached the outskirts of the crowd, Audrey plucked at his sleeve.

"I'm going to ask you a favor," she said. "I want you to grant it."



"Doyne took Will Tremaine ashore. Swam through a caldron of water, he did, and then came back and helped the skipper and me," one of the members of the crew recounted breathlessly.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I'm going to ask you to let me come along with you and the doctor."

The fisherman, still in his wet clothes and with an expression of weariness about him, looked her up and down. Then he nodded.

"All right," he said. "I'll take you. Come along!"

Her pulses throbbing with an unnatural vigor, she followed him eagerly, not heeding at all the score or so of eyes which she knew to be watching her.

When, beside the fisherman, she emerged from the narrow lane leading into the harbor, she saw the dimly flickering lights of the wagonette which had been chartered, and something of confusion came to her as she heard her companion address the local doctor, who, with as it seemed a multitude of cloaks and rugs about him, was already seated behind the driver.

"This is a young woman who wants to go with us, doctor," the fisherman explained as he opened the door for Audrey. "She be a special friend of

the schoolmaster's and, anyhow, she's not one of the silly sort. She won't be in the way, and you don't mind her coming with us, do you?"

"Eh?" The exclamation came from old Doctor Welland as though he had wakened abruptly from a period of sleep. "Mind her coming with us? Of course not, Ben! That's right, my dear. Sit down and make yourself as comfortable as you can. See! here's a rug to put about you."

Almost inaudibly Audrey thanked him, and next moment the old-fashioned vehicle was rattling over a portion of cobbled street and making for the road that wound along the cliff-tops toward Beamy Head.

During the journey no word came from Audrey, and a tumult—almost agonizing in its intensity—grew in her and seemed to shake her whole being. But, perhaps mercifully, that tumult faded in some strange way when at last, a pace or so behind Doctor Welland, she stood on a stretch of beach, looking down on the still form of the schoolmaster.

He lay on his back, one foot crossed over the other, his arms outstretched, his fine-featured face woefully still.

One of the lanterns from the wagonette had been brought, and by it the doctor, going on his knees beside the motionless form, made his examination. After what seemed to Audrey a tragically long time, he ran lean fingers across his chin once or twice and, with a scarcely perceptible shake of the head, rose and, with an odd mingling of brusqueness and gentleness, he turned to Audrey.

"Is Mr. Doyne a particular friend of yours?" he asked.

"He—he's been kind to me," she managed. "I admire him and like him, but why do you ask, doctor?"

"To be frank," he said, "I thought there might be something more than friendship between you and him. However, I can tell you that it'll be touch and go with him during the next few hours."

A whispered exclamation came from Audrey's lips tremblingly.

"You don't mean," she asked, "that he may—die?"

Doctor Welland put up a hand and wiped some moisture from his brow.

"He's a strong man, who has looked after his strength," he returned, "and so his chances are good. We must get him back soon now, and once we have him at Ship Harbor you may be sure he'll be given every attention. I'll just leave him for a moment while I go and see the others."

Once the figure of the old doctor had disappeared round a jutting mass of rocks. Audrey, scarcely knowing what she did, gave free rein at least to some of those mysterious impulses which had come to her since she had first looked into the eyes of Jim Doyne. She went down on her knees beside him and laid unsteady fingers on his brow.

At their touch it seemed as though a tremor ran through the great frame of the man. Just for an instant his eyelids flickered and opened, and he looked into her face. There came a sudden glow in his eyes then, and his lips twitched in an odd smile.

"A dream," he said just above his breath. "A dream——"

"Jim!" she heard herself articulate. "Jim, my love!"

Her voice trailed feebly away, and a shudder shook her as she realized how stiffly he lay, and that all expression had once more faded from his face.

As deftly as circumstances would permit they took him back to his little house at Ship Harbor, and when Audrey stood facing the doctor at the garden gate, she turned and, in the gray light of the early morning, met his eyes steadily.

"You think that there's—hope?" she asked.

Just for an instant as Jim Doyne's eyelids flickered and opened, he looked up into Audrey's face

She saw him nod, felt a kindly hand laid for a moment on one of her shoulders.

"There's every hope," he said. "There's nothing broken. It's just a case of slight concussion of the brain. Now, my dear, I think that you should go home to bed. It's been an upsetting night for you."

"Thank you, doctor," Audrey answered. "You've been very, very good, and I—I'll never forget it."

CHAPTER IX.

It was when the next day's work was halfway through that Mrs. Waller herself came to the harbor with a message for Audrey.

"Doctor Welland called a little while ago and said that he'd like you to go along to the schoolhouse right away," she said. "Mr. Doyne's been asking for you, and the doctor seems to think that it would ease him a lot if he could just hear your voice. Perhaps," she ended, as she noted with what swiftness Audrey prepared to follow her, "you'll be telling us some of these days why Mr. Doyne should talk about you in his delirium."

With never a word in answer, Audrey stepped past her employer's wife and made her way swiftly from the harbor and along the village street. In the schoolhouse she was met by the doctor, and he took her to the bedroom where Jim Doyne lay.

"You can have only two minutes with him," Doctor Welland said. "I doubt if he'll know you."

When she was left alone in that quiet room a strange weakness crept over Audrey insidiously, and it was not till she heard Jim's voice speaking her name that, for his sake rather than for her own, she managed to control her jangled nerves.

"Yes, Jim. Yes?" she asked half brokenly.

A smile as tender as a woman's touched his face.

"You're there!" he said. "Ah—that's good. It's a dream still, but—wonderfully real, with your voice in my ears——"

The tears hurt in her eyes, and, one hand pressed against her breast, she waited there in the still room till she had assured herself that he slept. Then she tiptoed out, and, thankful that not even Doctor Welland came to speak to her, made her way from the house.

On the following day when Audrey, along with several others of the girl workers of the harbor, was returning to the Wallers' house for her midday meal, she caught sight of Steve Hughes. He was standing, leaning indolently against the wall of The Jolly Smugglers' Inn, and when he saw her something of sour satisfaction showed in his face, and, moving forward, he addressed her with a clumsy attempt at banter.

"Well, my dear!" Hughes started. "And so you haven't given this schoolmaster the go-by, after all, it seems? It's all over the place that you drove to Beamy Head the other night, and that you've been to Doyne's house this morning. It seems as though you were set on getting yourself talked about!"

With contempt in her own, Audrey met the big fisherman's eyes.

"I've no wish to discuss the point with you," she told him. "I—I don't want to speak to you at all."

"So that's the way of it, eh? A bit of a change from the last time you talked to me! Well, there's one thing —— Your schoolmaster friend isn't likely to be hanging around you, or getting in my road for the next day or two. Perhaps it'll be a lesson to him to stick to his own job, and not get interfering with work he doesn't understand."

Audrey flushed hotly, and her small and lately work-roughened hands clenched, as though they were eager to strike at the sneering bully confronting her.

"I don't know anything about Mr. Doyne as a fisherman," she answered, and her words were overheard by the girls ahead. "He seems to be welcome enough on any boat that he goes out on. But I know one thing. He may not talk and bluster as some do, but there isn't a braver man in Ship Harbor! If he's lying ill and weak just now, that's because he risked his life to save the lives of others. You might think that over, Mr. Hughes, before you criticize in the future."

During the days that followed Audrey knew depression at its worst. Not once, but a score of times she allowed herself to consider seriously the idea of ending the masquerade in which she was involved and returning to Boston. Always, however, the memory of her promise to the workingmen's wives caused her to halt, and she took what comfort she could from the knowledge that day by day she was drawing nearer to the end of the time which she had prescribed for herself.

She did not go again to the schoolhouse, but learned, with a carefully concealed joy, that Jim Doyne was progressing even more favorably than the doctor had thought to be possible. He would, unless there came any unexpected setback, be fit enough to resume his duties before very long.

On the Saturday afternoon of that week Audrey was making her way along the cliff road when the sound of an approaching motor car roused her from the reverie into which she had fallen.

As the car passed her she raised her head momentarily and glanced at the motorists. Colonel Wilmot-Jevons sat beside the chauffeur, and in the back seat Audrey recognized his wife, and, with a sudden, nervous thrill, recognized, too, the man who sat beside her.

Next moment the big car, leaving a slowly settling cloud of dust behind it, had rounded a bend in the road and was out of sight. However, there was no sort of doubt in Audrey's mind but that she had seen Walter Trenton again. And how odd it was that he should be visiting people in this very town. She recalled his mentioning Nova Scotia in telling of his travels.

Miserable, and with, as it were, some mysterious and callous force tugging at her already overstrained nerves, she stepped from the roadway and wandered aimlessly down a narrow path leading to a small, secluded bay where more than once she had gone when she wished to be entirely alone with her thoughts.

On this occasion, however, the bay had already an occupant. When she saw the figure of a man stretched luxuriously there on the warm sand, something of vague consternation stirred in her. But this consternation became amazement when she recognized the face of Jim Doyne, and presently heard him speak.

"Audrey!" he exclaimed, as he scrambled to his feet and took her hand. "It's like a miracle almost."

For a moment or two she did not answer, but just stood there, her fingers held closely in his.

"Why—why does it seem miraculous?" she asked awkwardly.

"Because," he went on, and his gaze was searching, as it were, into the depths of her, "ever since I've been lying here I've been thinking about you, and wishing with all my heart that I could see and talk to you again."

In the silence that followed both recalled those personal events which had preceded the storm at sea, when Jim had come by his injuries. He referred to them now with a quiet dignity, which helped to soothe the tumultuous emotions which had gripped them both.

"I can't forget," he went on, "that something seemed to go mysteriously awry with out friendship a little while ago. I had an idea that our friendship no longer held for you anything of pleasure. That you wished to end it. Audrey, have you nothing to say to me?"

For an instant she dared to meet his eyes, then looked away across to where she could see little white-crested waves breaking on the yellow sand.

"I don't think," she managed, "that we need talk about that just now, need we? What I want to say is that I'm very, very glad to see you again; to know that you're better."

"Won't you sit down with me for a little while and talk? I've something rather important to tell you, and something rather important to ask you."

If not entirely against her will, certainly against her reason, she let herself be persuaded, and next moment they were seated near to the great rock, their faces toward the sea.

"First," Jim began, picking up a handful of sand and letting it run through his fingers while he spoke, "I've two bits of good news. One is, the publishers of my book write me to say that they've got advance orders, which would mean a moderate success, even if not another copy were sold. But that isn't the big thing. The big thing is that I've disposed of my patent—you remember the life-saving apparatus I told you about? I can't even guess, as yet, what I'm going to make out of the thing, but as I'm doing it on what's called a 'royalty' basis, and as the government has taken it up, it seems likely that my days as a village schoolmaster are about over. I thought you'd like to know," he ended, the first enthusiasm

in his voice fading and giving way to a note of uncertainty.

She felt very proud of him and gloried in his success. She pictured him as some one destined to be, not merely famous and perhaps with wealth added to the fame, but as some one who had done a splendid service, particularly in this section, to his fellow men. She saw him as some one, in short, who was to stand, by the merit of his own achievements, on so high a place that no one in the land, even prince or peer, would be other than proud to claim his friendship.

"I can't tell you," she said, her voice low, "just how glad I am about your success. You deserve it—you always have deserved it. It must be a very wonderful thing to know that by one's own efforts, without help from any one at all, one has reached a high position. You'll be honored by every one."

There was a glow of light in his eyes, and, turning toward her, he laid a hand on one of hers.

"Audrey," he said unsteadily, "there's only one person for whose opinion I care at all, and that person is you. Listen! I must speak now. Why you began to treat me so coldly I don't know, but perhaps there may be an explanation. I'd come to think of you as some one set apart, a shining and lovely figure, who meant everything in my small world! No, let me go on, please! If nothing comes of what I'm going to tell you, then I'll try to take the thing as gracefully as I can. But I know—more than one person has spoken of it to me—how you came to Beamy Head that night when I was hurt. I thought I was dreaming at the time, and in the dream I saw you bending over me and heard you speaking to me, and the words that you said were wonderful! It was no dream in so far as you were beside me then, but I suppose that I must have dreamed the bit about your speaking to me."

She was trembling now, yet told herself that she must call on every particle of strength in her being. Whatever the future might hold, at least she dare not let this man know how greatly she cared for him. The thought that he might in time discover her identity and realize that for weeks she had, in a sense, been deceiving him, chilled her.

"I—I did go to Beamy Head to see you," she said now. "Perhaps it was conscience. You know what I mean. I'd behaved rather nastily toward you, and the thought that you were badly hurt—— Oh, I don't know how to put it."

His fingers were still about hers, and she felt their pressure increase.

"Afterward," he said, "it appears that I kept asking for you, and then at last some good-natured person went to you and brought you to see me. That was another dream with my way of it, but you *did* come and you *did* speak to me?"

"Yes," she whispered, "I did."

"Well, then, surely there must be some hope for me? I love you, dear! There isn't any new way to phrase it, and no words that I could find could describe just how great my love has come to be. You mean everything to me. You stand to me for all that's beautiful and pure and gentle and true. Pettiness, unkindliness, deceit—these are the things which could never touch you at all."

"Oh, stop please," she begged him. "You mustn't go on—really, really you mustn't!"

His hands slipped from hers, and it seemed as though all his facial muscles had softened. The light that had been in his eyes faded, leaving them dull and full of pain.

"I—I made a mistake, after all?" he asked. "Is that it, Audrey? You mustn't be afraid to tell me, dear. It's better, far, that I should know now, than I should go on living in a fool's

paradise. Don't you care for me at all? Not even enough to say that one day, perhaps, you might honor me by being my wife?"

With all her heart she wished then that she could creep into the shelter of his arms, and cling to him and let him comfort her, but dread had laid a chill and restraining hand on her. She feared what he would say if she told him the truth. Guessed, rather than knew, that in all probability he would rise and go from her, and never want to see her again. She could imagine the sort of things that he would say. Could imagine how he, with all his sanely balanced, democratic views, might tell her that, her birth being what it was, she would be no mate for him.

"Well?" she heard him say again.

"You've talked about dreams," she said presently, "but I feel as though this was a dream. I don't think that—that what you ask could ever be. I don't think it could be possible."

"But why not? Don't you care for me? That's what you must mean, Audrey. You must mean that you don't love me."

"I like you," she said, her head lowered. "I don't think I can say more than that. I like you better than any man I've ever known in all my life, but I don't think there can be any more." She rose to her feet while she spoke. "Now I'm going to leave you. You won't be angry with me if I do that? You see, I—I want to be alone."

Her voice trembled slightly.

He rose and, for an instant, laid a hand on either of her shoulders.

"I wouldn't give you one moment's pain or sorrow if I could help it," he said. "We'll leave things where they are just now, then. But remember that what I've told you stands for all time. I'll never change. If you will not be my wife, then—why, then marriage will not come into my scheme of things."

She had no answer for him, and he stood there watching her while she made her way slowly up the path to the clifftop. That night Fate made one of her most disturbing moves.

Audrey, who had gone on a message for Mrs. Waller to a house a little way outside the village, was returning home when, at a sharp corner in the road, she came face to face with Walter Trenton!

This time there was no avoiding him.

She saw the look of amazement that came to his eyes, and then, excitement seeming to sap all the strength from her, she waited for him to speak.

Love and Old Brocade

By Kate Morris

"IT'S real old brocade, mother, and Mrs. Dempsey will let me pay for it by installments."

The speaker was a fair, slight girl, with something of a worn appearance on her pretty face. Her mother also looked as if the hand of poverty had pressed pretty heavily upon her.

And so it was. She had been idle for many months, and in the busiest part of the year, when other women of her class were reaping their harvests and work was plentiful.

She had the remains of great beauty in her pallid face, and there had been a time, long years ago, when she had been a very pretty dancer and figured to great advantage in the front row of the ballet at more than one theater.

She had been graceful, slim, and agile in those days, with her life before her, and had married a rising scenic artist, with whom she was passionately in love.

Within less than three years after her happy marriage Charles Frost had died, and she was left alone to battle with the world for herself and her little daughter.

The manager gave the sorrowing widow the expenses of the simple funeral, and the people of the theater made a little fund, which they presented to her with words of affection and respect for her dead husband that were sweeter to her than the gift itself.

She was bidden to continue her dancing and keep her home if she could; so she dried her tears and resolved to look the world in the face and work, instead of repining.

Her salary was small but regular, and for six years she managed to exist in comparative comfort and bring up her child as she knew her husband would have wished.

When the little girl was nearly seven years old, her mother was brought away from the theater one terrible night and taken to the nearest hospital, no longer the bright, winning-looking dancer, of whom it was difficult to believe that she was a widow and a mother, but a maimed, scorched creature with all her finery black tinder and her face pitifully scarred.

It was no one's fault—an unprotected gas jet—a sudden draft—the fairy draperies had touched the flame, and the stage career of "Miss Mabel Durant" was at an end.

For many a weary month she lay in the hospital, dependent on strangers for the care of her child, and she rose from the bed to find herself destitute. Her occupation was gone, her home broken up, and her health shattered.

The manager and the company had been kind—as kind as they had been in that other trouble—but she was useless now, and must find some other way of

earning a living for herself and Susie. So she slid down in the social scale and became a dresser in the theater, and let her child, when she was old enough, go into the chorus.

That was all a great many years before, and now Susie was a tall, pretty girl of twenty, the mainstay of their little home.

She had a sweet voice and was fairly educated, considering all her mother had to do. She was naturally quick and observant, so she had already unconsciously incurred the displeasure and jealousy of some of her companions by being put into tiny parts, and now and then being allowed to speak a line or two.

She had also, as an ally and teacher, a clever young actor, Edward Dacre, whose heart had gone into her keeping from the first hour of their acquaintance.

In a very little while after his arrival in New York he had met Susie and told her how dearly he loved her, and how it was the wish of his heart to make her his wife.

She had blushed and admitted that she liked him very much and thought the world in general and the theater in particular would be very dull without him.

There was no talk of marriage yet a while. Edward Dacre's position was not sufficiently secure, and Susie could not leave her mother; but they were engaged, and content to wait till something should enable them to start housekeeping and take Mrs. Frost from her duties at the theater altogether.

At a shop on Broadway much frequented by the theatrical profession, Susie had discovered a treasure—an old brocade dress, a good deal worn and dowdy to lovers of smartness, but with capabilities that the artistic eye of the girl took in at once.

The colors, though subdued, were delicate and capable of renovation, and the lace with which the dress was trimmed was real and of some value, though it was dirty and torn. The robe was beautifully made, with the exquisite neatness of the days of our grandmothers.

It was just Susie's size, too, as the good woman who kept the shop, and who had remarked the girl's admiration for it more than once, showed her, when, at last, she ventured to ask the price.

"It's a lovely thing," Mrs. Dempsey remarked, "and there's many ladies after it; but I'd rather see it on some one who knows what's what than sell it to a girl as will cut it up into a tight-fitting frock and think she's dressed in the latest fashion. You shall have it for thirty dollars, Miss Frost," she added, "and that's cheap. If I hadn't bought it with a lot I couldn't have done it at the price."

"Where did you buy it?" Susie asked, curious to know the history of such a perfect specimen of the dress of a bygone day.

"It was part of Miss Sherton's wardrobe," the woman replied, mentioning the name of a celebrated actress who had just made a splendid match. "But it was never made for her. It's a genuine antique, and that's the reason that it hasn't been snapped up. It's too real. They like 'em nowadays with a bit more color about them. You'd look sweet in it, my dear."

Mrs. Dempsey forgot that she had just told Susie there were a great many people after that particular article, but the girl was too absorbed in her examination of the dress to heed what she said. She was considering ways and means, and whether she could manage to afford the payment. Mrs. Dempsey knew her customer, and that if Susie said she would have the dress she would pay for it, and she was inclined to do her best for the gentle, quiet girl who never made a promise she could not

fulfill or wanted finery for finery's sake. Susie had already managed to get a few dresses together in anticipation of trying her fortune in stock, and this old brocade would be a grand addition to her wardrobe.

what was going on, bought the dress—getting a discount of Mrs. Dempsey for cash—and carried it home to Mrs. Frost's lodging, giving it to Susie with a mock parade and a bombastic speech.

"It is very beautiful," Mrs. Frost re-

Susie had already managed to get a few dresses together in anticipation of trying her fortune in stock, and this old brocade would be a grand addition to her wardrobe.

After one or two consultations with her mother, Susie announced to Mrs. Dempsey that she was ready to begin the payments for her old brocade, and the coveted gown was put aside for her.

The installments did not last long, however, for Edward Dacre, finding out

marked, when it was shaken out and held up.

"And it's going to be very lucky," the young man said, with a loving smile at Susie. "My little girl, here, is going to wear it and make such a good impression she'll get her a leading part."

And Susie laughed and blushed and thought herself the happiest girl, despite the poor lodgings and the constant trouble that it was to make her slender salary cover expenses.

Very lucky the old brocade proved to Susie. It fitted her to perfection, and she wore it in a small part she was taking in some private theatricals got up by Edward Dacre.

She looked so pretty and natural and delivered the few lines given her to speak with such appreciation of their meaning that a well-known agent, who happened to be present, declared her exactly suited to a piece he had in view, and offered her a three months' engagement at a repertory theater in one of the large Northern towns.

This would enable the girl to take her mother out of New York and give her better food than had been her portion lately.

Altogether, the future seemed very bright to her as she went to the manager with her story and asked leave to accept the unexpected offer. He had a real interest in her, and laughingly bade her go and come back again, when she was a great "star," to make his fortune.

It was hard to have to leave Edward, but he could come and see her very often, and, if things went on improving with them as they were doing just now, there would soon be no reason for them to part at all.

"And it's all through the old brocade," Susie said, as she bade her lover a tearful farewell, for she was not going to see him for a whole week. "You said it was to be lucky to me, dear, and it has been."

"And will be again—who knows?" the young man said hopefully. "You look as if you had stepped out of an old picture, darling, when you have it on. No modern dressmaker ever turned out anything like it."

He was quite right. The frock had the genuine flavor of antiquity about it. Susie had cleaned and mended the lace that had hung about it in rags, and put it on as it was originally. She had good taste, and had not defaced the gown by so much as a bow of ribbon or a scrap of lace that did not belong to it.

For some time after her début in her new rôle, the brocade dress lay unnoticed in her box.

Modern plays were being acted just then, and the old comedies were in abeyance. But one night, after a few weeks of stirring melodrama, Mr. Leitch, the manager, sent for her and told her he had a new part for her.

"I want you to make a study of it, my dear," he said. "It will not be difficult. The piece may never see the light again, but the author is a friend of ours, and has done me many a good turn, so I wish to gratify him if I can. It is a piece called 'The Requital,' and is written by a gentleman you have often seen—Mr. Treherne, of the River House."

Susie knew Mr. Treherne very well by sight. He was an old gentleman with a kindly face and white hair, and he was very fond of the theater and often came there when anything was being played that he liked. He lived alone, and looked like a man who had had some great sorrow in early life, but he was very wealthy and did a great deal of good in the neighborhood.

He had written a piece in which swords, wigs, and powder figured, and the manager of the theater had consented to play it and see what it was like on the stage.

There was no difficulty with the members of the company. They studied with a will, and the play was voted "not so bad" in private, and praised up to the skies in public.

"I hope you have a nice dress, Miss Frost," the manager said to Susie, as

she left the stage one evening after a rehearsal. "If not, my wife will be pleased to lend you one."

"I think I have one that will just do," Susie said, blushing. "It is a real brocade trimmed with old lace. I wore it for a piece of the same period in New York, and it was much admired."

"That's right, my dear. Dress as well as you can, though I need not say much to you on that score. You are always in good taste."

On the eventful night Susie, in her old dress, with a fan that harmonized and high-heeled shoes that seemed all of a piece with the costume, and a wig selected and fitted on under the manager's own eyes, looked like a bit of Dresden china, the sweetest, daintiest little actress that ever trod the stage.

The piece was rather intricate and confused, as amateur work is apt to be; but everybody worked with a will and made it go. Mr. Treherne and his friends were pleased, and the rest of the audience applauded.

"I think the old gentleman must have worried himself over it," the manager said, when the performance was about half over. "He looks like a man who has received a great shock."

And, indeed, Mr. Treherne was frightfully pale, as if it were altogether too much for him. At the end of the second act he sent for the manager.

"I hope it pleases you, sir," that gentleman said, when he entered the box where the author was sitting with one or two of his friends. "We are pretty smooth in it, I think."

"It is excellent! Nothing could be better," Treherne replied. "But I sent for you to ask you—to inquire——"

His voice faltered for a moment, and he could hardly go on.

"The dress worn by *Molly,*" he said —"that pretty girl, Miss Frost, plays it, I see. Where did you get it? Of whom did you buy it?" He spoke eagerly.

"It does not belong to me," the manager replied. "It is the young lady's own property. I don't think she could have selected one much better for the part."

"No, indeed. It is exactly what I should have suggested myself. May I speak to the young lady when she has finished her performance? I should like to see her just as she is now, before she changes her costume."

"Certainly, sir. She shall come around to you at the next interval. She will give you all information, I am sure."

Susan was rather fluttered on being told that Treherne wanted her, and she went to the box with a flush on her face that made her prettier than ever. The old gentleman drew her aside and pulled the curtain of the box, so that she should not be seen by the audience.

"You must excuse me, my dear," he said, "but I wanted to be quite sure that I was making no mistake. No, I am not! It is the very same." His voice trembled slightly.

He was examining the dress and lace very critically as he spoke, and Susie wondered why he looked at her so oddly.

"This gown, my dear—where did you get it?"

"I bought it in New York, Mr. Treherne."

"Just as it is?"

"I have done nothing to it except clean the lace. It fitted me as if it were made for me." She looked up, smiling.

"So I see; and it fitted her, too. My dear, don't imagine I am insane. I am only recognizing an old friend. It belonged to my grandmother."

"To your grandmother!"

Susie stared at him with her eyes quite round with amazement, and he smiled at her astonishment.

"You wonder that I know it," he said. "It is peculiar in pattern—I never saw one quite like it. If it is my

grandmother's gown it is lined with red around the bottom and has little weights about it here and there to keep it down."

He was right, and Susie told him so—the pattern of the brocade was very peculiar. Wild flowers hung onto the material, as it were, in inextricable confusion, yet blended so beautifully that every one seemed separate and ready to pick up.

The colors were dimmed with age, and the delicate hue of the silk itself had faded into a neutral tint; but it was a delicate, pretty dress still, and unmistakably aristocratic in its old age.

"It gave me a shock to see it here," the old gentleman went on, after a little pause, "and I want to hear its history, as far as you can tell it me. My wife—it is many years ago—was brought home to me from a fancy-dress ball, dead, with that frock on. You will understand how the sight of it upset me at first. After her death it was lost, and we have never known what became of it till I saw it on you to-night." The old man's voice broke.

"Oh, Mr. Treherne, I will give it up!" Susie said, very much inclined to cry. "I didn't know, or I shouldn't have worn it. I—I——" She looked up at him, her lovely eyes brimming with tears.

"You will do no such thing, my dear," the old man said kindly. "It gives me pleasure to see the dress on such a dainty little wearer. I should like you to come and visit me, and I will show you the portrait of the dear lady who was all the world to me for a short time. Come to-morrow morning. You will be pleased with my garden, and there are plenty of flowers. Ask for Mrs. Flint, my housekeeper, and she will bring you to me."

"Thank you very much," Susie said, smiling and blushing. "I have heard so much of the River House and——"

"And you would like to see it? So you shall. Your manager and his wife know it very well. You can ask Mrs. Leitch to come with you, if she is a friend of yours."

"Thank you," Susie said again, almost too pleased to find suitable words.

Everything had gone well that night: her part had been a success, and she had been conscious of looking her best; and the prospect of seeing the beautiful gardens of which she had heard so much, and the pleasure of having found favor in the eyes of the kindly old man whom they all liked—it was almost too delightful to be real.

"It is pleasant to see a bright young face looking at me out of that dress," Mr. Treherne said, as Susie rose to go back to her dressing room. "Its original owner was anything but a pleasant personage, by all accounts—I mean my grandmother. I do not remember her much, but she was a monomaniac, a hoarder of all sorts of things. There was a great fuss when she died—people expected to find a good deal of money—but her hoarding did not run in that groove; she was a collector of all sorts of worthless odds and ends." He laughed, a gentle, whimsical little laugh.

Susie took off her dress and carried it home—it had acquired a new interest. She told her mother all that had happened, and how Treherne had recognized the old brocade and spoken so kindly to her.

Mrs. Frost was not always able to go to the theater with her daughter; she was very delicate, and this had been one of her bad days, but she was better and pleased to listen to all Susie's prattle about what had gone on during the evening, and delighted with the news of her child's success.

"It was the dress, not me, mother dear," Susie said. "It has brought me luck, and no mistake." Happiness rippled in her lovely voice.

She turned it over and examined it more closely and with greater interest

Susie had been picking at the sewing around one of the weights as she spoke, and it came out in her hand—not brass, but a bright gold piece.

than she had ever before, speculating on who the wearers of it had been and what accident had killed Treherne's young wife.

"I'm glad I did not know it before this evening," she said, turning up the hem and looking at the red lining around the bottom. "To think of his remembering this and telling me of it, and recollecting these little weights. I wonder what they are."

"They're the little lead things that are used now, I expect," Mrs. Frost said. "Fashions come around again after many years, and all the costumes now are being made with weights in the jackets to keep them in place. I don't think that brocade needs them, though. It is quite heavy enough of itself."

"They're brass," Susie said. "Anyway, they're yellow."

She had been picking at the sewing around one of the weights as she spoke, and it came out in her hand—not brass, but a bright gold piece.

A little exclamation of surprise escaped the girl's soft, red lips.

"What is it?" Mrs. Frost looked across at her daughter with mild interest.

"Mother!" There was a little pause after the one word—a pause during which Susie's astonished eyes examined, all but unbelievingly, the coin which lay in her palm. "Why it's a five-dollar gold piece!"

"It can't be." Mrs. Frost rose and was quickly at her daughter's side examining the coin. "But it—it is!"

Susie squealed delightedly.

"Do you suppose they're all—all the weights are gold pieces?" Susie asked, looking up at her mother with wide, wondering eyes.

"They can't be!" The other woman laughed a little. "No woman would be foolish enough to weight her dress with gold or use a gown as a bank."

But Susie's slim fingers were picking at the next weight, and as it rolled out into her hand she found that it, too, was a five-dollar gold piece.

"Why—why, mother, we're rich!" Her voice lilted with happiness. "Now Edward and——" Suddenly a shadow crossed her face. "But the money isn't really ours, mother dear," she said in a low tone. "It really belongs to the relatives of the woman who first owned the gown."

"Nonsense, child!" Mrs. Frost laughed softly. "You don't know them. How would you set about finding them?"

There was a little silence.

"But I do know them," Susie said at last.

Mrs. Frost sat up straight.

"Mr. Treherne, mother," Susie said. "You forget about him."

"Mr. Treherne! Yes, I had forgotten!" The other woman spoke quickly. "There is only one thing to do then—go to him and tell him what you have found."

"Of course! We'll go first thing in the morning—you must come with me."

And so Susie and her mother set off, next morning, to give away the small fortune that had been theirs so short a time.

Treherne's face lighted as he saw Susie.

"Ah," he said, "this is a pleasure, indeed." He took the girl's hand in both of his.

Susie introduced Mrs. Frost, and Treherne managed to set them both at ease in a minute. He informed the elder woman how he had asked her daughter to come to him to tell him what she could about the dress he had recognized in such a strange fashion the night before.

"I am afraid we cannot tell you very much," the widow said. "It was part of the wardrobe of Miss Sherton. You have heard of her, perhaps?"

"As all the world has—no more. She has made a lucky match. I never remember seeing her wear that gown."

"I shouldn't think she ever did," Susie said. "It hadn't been touched for the stage when I got it. Miss Sherton bought lots of dresses and never wore them. There was quite a sale when she left the profession."

"She certainly never did anything to this one," Mrs. Frost said quietly. "Susie has made a discovery, and she thought it best to come to you about it at once."

"A discovery?" Mr. Treherne said, looking at the blushing girl. "Anything very wonderful?"

"Oh, yes! It's full of money!"

"What is?"

"The dress," Susie said eagerly. "The little weights are coins, and there are such a lot of them."

She undid the parcel and showed the spaces where she had found the coins, also the two that she had removed. She felt as if a great load were taken from her shoulders when she had handed the gown to her new acquaintance and begged him to take it and the money.

"My dear child, the dress is yours," Treherne said, smiling at her eagerness.

"Yes, but I didn't buy all the money, and you know what you said about your grandmother when you were speaking to me of the dress. She hid some of her money in it, and——"

"Yes," Treherne replied. "We must make sure, first, that it is the same, after all. Before I look at it any further, I will tell you another thing. If this is my grandmother's gown, there is woven into the silk somewhere on the right side of the skirt a dove fluttering among the flowers. It was a conceit of my grandfather's, who had the stuff manufactured for his wife."

"Oh, yes," Susie said. "The dove is there—a flying bird, with a kind of scroll in its beak; it is yours, Mr. Treherne, so please take it."

"No, I do not please, my dear," the old gentleman replied, handing the parcel back to Susie with a kindly smile. "I should like to know where it has been since I saw it last, and where Miss Sherton procured it. One thing is very evident: it has not been tampered with. No one has suspected the existence of the golden weights. I hope you will find they are all gold, Miss Frost. I give it you with all my heart, my dear, and you must take it as a souvenir of the pleasure you gave me last night. Oh, don't look so overwhelmed; the weights are not plentiful enough to make a millionaire of you. I am glad to think the old brocade has fallen into such appreciative hands. Don't alter it, Susie; I am a fanciful old man, I dare say, but I certainly should not like to think of the last dress my wife wore being vulgarized and destroyed by rough usage."

"It shall never be changed, Mr. Treherne," Susie said earnestly. "I will keep it as long as I live, in remembrance of you."

"That's a good girl, and if the rest of the weights turn out brass, you let me know."

Susie and her mother were kept to lunch and sent home in a luxurious car, with more fruit and flowers than they knew what to do with. And then Susie shut herself up in her room and set to work to get the weights out of the dress. The eccentric old lady had evidently made a storehouse of her brocade, and very likely of other dresses, also, which had not fallen into such honest hands, and when she had extracted all the little lumps of seeming lead Susie Frost found herself in possession of over five hundred dollars.

There was more than that; there was a packet sewn into the bodice that yielded two bills, making the sum more than one thousand dollars altogether, and again she went to the River House and interviewed Treherne, but he would have nothing to do with the money.

"I have more than I want already, my child," he said. "We should all of us have liked to find more ready cash when the old lady died, but it is different now. My money will go to people I don't care for, when I die, so let me have the happiness of helping some one while I live. I suspect, if my grandmother's wardrobe had been cut up when she died, we should have understood why she kept no banking account and left no money behind her. I shall make it my business to endeavor to trace this particular dress; it was lost when my poor wife was killed."

"Edward told me it would bring luck," Susie said, as she put the money back into her purse. "He gave it to me."

"And who is Edward?" Mr. Treherne asked, smiling gently.

"He's an actor, and——"

"And you mean to be Mrs. Edward some day? No, don't blush, child; if he is a good young man—and somehow I don't think you would have chosen him if he were not—there's nothing to blush about in honest love; I shall make his acquaintance some day, I hope."

Whereupon the girl, with more blushes, intimated that Edward was coming to spend next Sunday with them, and she was bidden to bring him to the River House.

It was a wonderful revelation to the young man to find Susie with a small fortune and to hear how she came by it.

"Through you, you know," she said. "I should never have got the dress, perhaps, without you; it is yours as well as mine, Edward dear."

It was a great matter of speculation among their friends in the theatrical

profession where the young folk obtained the money that enabled them to marry and set up a comfortable home so much sooner than was expected.

From that time fortune seemed to favor them in every way, for through some private influence Edward Dacre procured a leading engagement which made it unnecessary for his wife to be upon the stage at all.

They have a pretty little house a few miles out of town which is their very own, bought with Susie's money, though where she got it from no one can make out; nor who the elderly gentleman is who now and then pays them a visit, and who is always so polite to Mrs. Frost. It is no one's business in particular, and Susie does not tell any one, though there are one or two people in the world who declare that Mrs. Dacre's money came to her in some mysterious fashion through an old brocade dress that she keeps folded away carefully in her wardrobe.

Susie always laughs softly when Edward comes home with some new story that has been circulated about the mystery of their money.

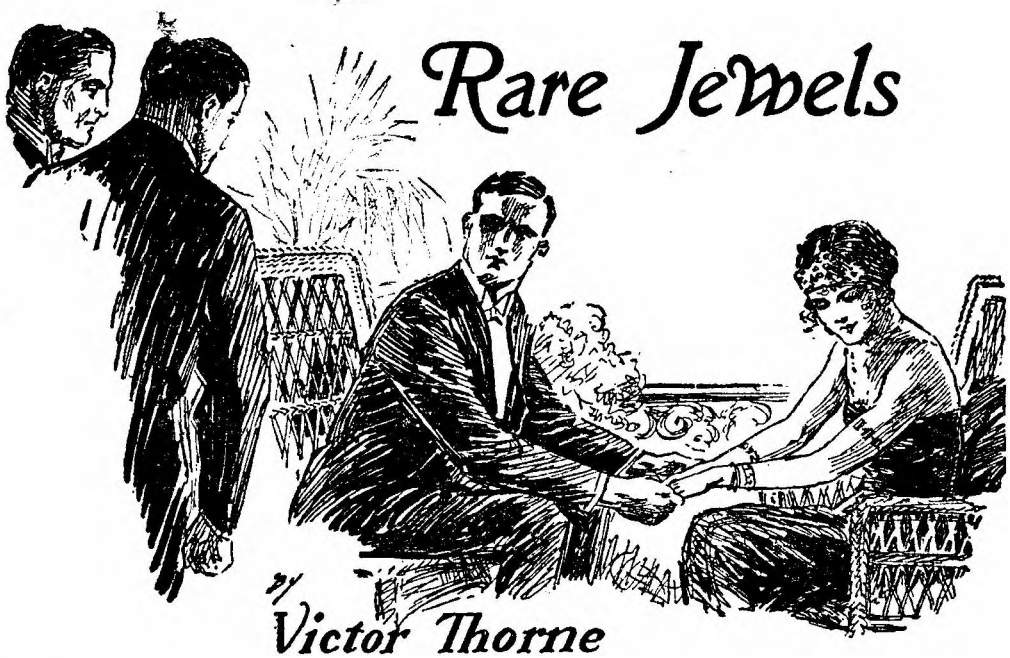
"But for that old brocade dress," Susie says gently, "I might not have the dearest and best husband in the world."

"Nor I the sweetest wife," Edward generally replies while he kisses his wife's soft hair.

WHITE FLOWERS

I WANT to come to you when I am glad,
When some great happiness has filled my heart
And see you smile, because I wish to share
With you each joy, to give you all my part.
I want to seek you out when all the night
Envelops me and makes me feel so small;
I want to say your name there in the dark
And hear your low voice answer to my call.
I do not want to be alone, but feel
Your arms encircle this tired head to rest;
To whisper little things to make me sleep
Upon the rose-leaf fragrance of your breast.
I cannot speak of how I want you now,
I cannot tell you; thoughts like this are made
To grow as flowers white, far from the heat
Transplanted in the cool of your heart's shade.

L. OZELLE MATHIS.



Rare Jewels

by Victor Thorne

THERE were tears in Mrs. Halliday's blue eyes, and consternation on the faces of her two nieces.

"Leave Monastery House, Aunt Aggie?" cried the younger girl. "Leave this house? Oh, we can't. Why, you would never be happy anywhere else. I've heard you say so dozens of times."

Mrs. Halliday smiled through her tears.

"I'm afraid we shall have to do so, Brenda," she said. "Of course, I am very much attached to the house"—and her voice held a plaintive quaver—"but, all the same, it can't be helped now. The bank has failed, and except for eight hundred a year I shall have nothing left. One can't keep Monastery House up on eight hundred a year."

"But what will you do, Aunt Aggie?" asked Margaret, the elder girl.

"Take a little cottage somewhere or other right out in the country," she said, with a smile. "Of course, you girls will come with me if you like. With care we can manage. We can keep a few fowls and do our own garden, and I dare say we shall be happy enough."

"Dear old Monastery House," said Brenda, looking around the oak-paneled room. "It seems terrible to think it will have to go to other people. What will you do with all the furniture, Aunt Aggie? You'll have too much for a country cottage."

"Sell it," she said; and again the girls saw her lip tremble. "It ought to bring a good price; and when the house itself is sold there will be quite a goodly sum to invest for you two girls. Your Uncle Ben always meant to provide for you both, but, you see, he died suddenly, and all the money was left to me. We never expected that things would go wrong, never dreamed that the money was not absolutely safe. Had I ever thought of it I might have taken some of the capital and set it aside for you."

"Oh, don't worry over us, Aunt Aggie. Don't bother about us," they both cried.

But Mrs. Halliday was shaking her head slowly.

"It's a miserable business," she said, and, gathering up the papers that lay in her lap, she rose and left the room, while both girls looked after her with pitying eyes.

"I wonder how much I could earn as a governess?" said Margaret. "I play pretty decently, too. I might be able to earn money at that, then you could stay and look after Aunt Aggie."

"And feed the hens," said the other, laughing. "But she would never be willing, Margie, I'm sure. She's very obstinate, you know, when once her mind is made up. She'll sell the house and furniture, and do as she said just now. You mark my words if she doesn't."

Margaret looked around the room, where beautiful specimens of old oak had been collected by their uncle, who had been a connoisseur of old furniture and china.

"It does seem a shame that all this should go," she said.

Brenda was thinking hard, but she looked up suddenly with sparkling eyes.

"Suppose we kept one maid," she said, "couldn't you and I manage to do the work of the house? Couldn't we? Oh, couldn't we, Margaret?"

Her sister smiled.

"We might," she said slowly, "but what then, Brenda? What plan have you in your head now?"

Brenda got up and danced around the room, while her sister stared at her in astonishment.

"Paying guests," she cried. "Paying guests, Margaret! Why didn't we think of that way before?"

"I don't see what you mean," she said.

"Why, the thing is so easy," said Brenda, smiling. "Beautifully, wonderfully easy. You advertise for paying guests. You have a photograph taken of the house, and put it in the paper. Then you fix your terms; you get shoals of replies, and you select those you think are nice, and, hey presto! The thing is done! Paying guests pay three and four dollars a day, my dear. Think what that means. In Monastery House there is plenty of room. We might take three or four; and just figure that out for yourself, Margaret. Why, we should be quite rich. Keep one maid to do the cooking, and you and I could do all the housework between us, leaving Aunt Aggie to arrange tables and to supervise generally."

Margaret was smiling still, but looked interested.

"I wonder if it could be done?" she said after a pause.

"Of course it can be done," snapped Brenda. "I'm going to see Aunt Aggie about it right away, and then we can soon arrange things. Just imagine, Margaret, what it means."

"Wait a minute!" cried Margaret, but Brenda was gone.

There was a great deal of excitement while they waited for replies to the advertisements, and the first one that arrived promised well.

A young man who had been living in South merica for some time wished to find a comfortable home where he might be treated as one of the family, preferably where there was plenty of tennis and games.

Brenda clapped her hands.

"Good!" she exclaimed. "I like his name, too. Mr. Douglas West sounds nice, and if he's fond of games he's sure to be all right. I wonder if he'll be willing to pay as much as we ask?"

But that was soon settled.

Mr. Douglas West made no demur whatever about the terms, and settled to come at once.

He was a tall, athletic-looking young man, with a healthy, clean-cut face, dark curly hair, which he persistently kept cut short, and a genial manner, which both girls found very pleasing.

Greatly to Brenda's delight, she found he was, as she expressed it, "great on games," and secretly rejoiced that two servants had been kept in lieu of the solitary one she suggested, as this left her plenty of time for golf and tennis.

Margaret, who was musical, played during the evenings; and Douglas West quickly discovered that she was well read and better educated than the rest of the girls he had met. Her playing, too, delighted him, and he was never tired of hearing her sing.

"Your sister is immensely clever," he said to Brenda whom he treated as a chum. "She plays as well as any professional I have ever heard."

"She wanted to go out and try to earn her living that way," said Brenda quickly. "When Aunt Aggie lost all her money and said she would have to leave Monastery House, Margaret said she would go out and earn money by her music, but Aunt Aggie would never have agreed, even if I hadn't thought of the other plan."

"What other plan?" he asked, and Brenda blushed, which made him more curious. "Do tell me," he added; and impulsive Brenda, feeling that it was foolish to be so secretive, told him the whole story.

"So you see," she ended, "if you hadn't come as a paying guest we should have had to leave the dear old place. There are several more people coming next week, you know, so you won't be lonely."

He turned indignant eyes upon her, and demanded why she should say such a thing as that.

"I wish I were going to stay here forever, that's all," he affirmed.

"It is lovely, isn't it?" she cried. "I know Aunt Aggie loves every stick and stone in the place, and I don't wonder. It is so romantic, too. You've no idea how many stories there are told about the place. Report says there is a ghost that walks at different times, and there is a story of buried treasure. How I wish I could find it!" she cried. "If I could drop across it we need never be poor again, and we could keep the house to ourselves."

"That is unkind," he said quickly.

Brenda laid an impulsive hand on his arm.

"Oh, I didn't mean that, of course!" she cried. "I meant the other people. I wouldn't like you to go now. You seem exactly like a brother. It would be hateful if you went."

A flush had crept up to his forehead.

"Do I really seem like a brother, Brenda?" he asked, and she nodded quickly.

"We might pretend you were our brother if we found the treasure," she said. "Then you could keep on living here, and I could golf with you just the same. Snakes alive!" she cried excitedly, "I believe I shall start and look for it again. I used to, you know," she added. "When I was a small girl I used to hunt from garret to cellar in the hope that I should come across the famous necklace that means a fortune to whoever finds it."

"A necklace!" he cried. "Is the treasure a necklace, then? Oh, do tell me all about it."

"Well," she said. "The story goes that one of the men in the family was going to be married to a very beautiful and wealthy lady, who was murdered the night before her wedding for the sake of a lovely and valuable necklace she possessed. It was a thick gold collar set with precious stones, and had disappeared when they found her. Report said that he was mad with grief at first, and then suspicion attached itself to him. It was said that he had killed her to gain possession of the precious necklace. How it happened nobody knew, but it was discovered later that he had really got the necklace, and he had brought it here with him. One of the others saw it, and went to tell the authorities, and when they came to accuse the guilty man he had killed himself, but again the necklace had disappeared. It was said that he knew of a secret hiding place—a hiding place that no one else knew, and so put it away.

But nobody could be certain what had happened. He was dead, and no one has ever seen the necklace again. Then three generations ago it passed into the hands of our family."

"What a romantic story," he said. "And you really believe the necklace is hidden somewhere?"

"Certainly I do," she said. "So does Aunt Aggie; and even Margaret has a secret hope that some day its hiding place may be revealed. There must be something in the story, and if such a treasure could be found it would relieve Aunt Aggie of all anxiety for life."

"Then you would take in no more roomers," he said with a smile. "Really and truly, Brenda, I wish those other people were not coming next week. Why don't you let me pay more? I can afford it. And this is like home to me now. I hate to think of other folks sharing it."

But the week after two other guests arrived, and Douglas West ground his teeth with vexation when he found that one of them altogether monopolized the attention of the fair Margaret.

Go when he would—morning, noon, and night—he was always there, and one day he grumbled openly to Brenda.

"I can never get a talk with your sister now," he said. "That Snooks is always there."

"He's very rich, said Brenda slyly. "I believe he's fond of Margaret, too."

She had guessed his secret, and wished to tease him, but was startled at the look in his eyes.

"If I thought that——" he cried, and turned away.

Brenda laid a hand on his arm.

"Why don't you tell her yourself, goose?" she cried. "If you don't, somebody else will; and the Snooks man is awfully rich. I wish I could really find that gold necklace," she added, turning away with a disconsolate face.

"Tell me, Brenda," he cried, "do you think Margaret cares for Snooks?"

"Care for him?" cried Brenda. "Haven't you eyes in your head, silly? She hates him, but he's always hanging round her. I believe if he proposes, Aunt Aggie will say she ought to marry him because he is so awfully well off. That's partly why I'm trying to find that treasure," she added ruefully. "You haven't seemed to care a bit lately, and I thought I must do something to save Margaret from that wretch."

"Go on looking, Brenda," he said in a low voice. "I've got to go up to town to-day, but to-morrow I'll turn to and help you. What do you say?"

"You're a brick," she cried. "I'm going to start up in the attic to-day, and see if by any chance any of those old things up there belong to the past. "You see," she cried, "there are oak chests up in the attic. I shall look through those to-day."

"Good luck go with you!" he cried; and Brenda saw him no more that day.

But she would have been greatly mystified could she have followed his movements in town.

He seemed to spend half the day with jewelers of one sort and another, and finally left bearing two packages, both of which he regarded with immense care. One was a tiny parcel, which he could well confide to his coat pocket, and the other was much more bulky and of considerable weight.

That evening he approached Brenda, and whispered that he wanted to show her something.

"Look here, Brenda," he cried, "you've been such a good little pal of mine, I'm going to confide in you. I love Margaret, and I am going to ask her to marry me. Do you think she will?"

Brenda's eyes danced.

"Oh, you must really ask her yourself," she said.

"I mean to," he said, "if you will manage to keep that little brute of a Snooks away. Do, Brenda, there's a

...ok," and, opening a velvet-lined case, he showed her a sparkling hoop of diamonds.

"I got that to-day," he said, well pleased at her praise. "I thought I'd ask her to-night, and if she says yes—why, there's the ring ready. Snooks can go then in the morning, eh?"

Brenda laughed again at his impetuous mode of wooing.

"Well, I'll keep Mr. Snooks away," she said. "See, there's your chance now. Margaret is just getting up from the piano. I'll waylay Mr. Snooks."

She did, with such success that Douglas got his coveted opportunity.

For more than an hour Brenda skilfully managed to keep the Snooks man, as the called him, close in her train. But when Margaret returned to the room there was no sparkling hoop of diamonds on her finger, her face was flushed, her eyes looked as though she had been crying.

Wondering, Brenda sought West, whom she found wandering outside smoking a cigarette.

"She won't promise," he said ruefully. "It's your fault, Brenda."

"My fault!" she cried in astonishment. "Why? What next?"

"She's bent on finding that blessed necklace," he said. "You've been talking to her, it seems, to-day, and she's mad on searching for it. Says she will give me my answer in a week's time."

"Well," said Brenda, "isn't that enough? Don't be too impatient."

"But you'll never find the necklace," he said. "It's hardly likely.

"If we found it I suppose Margaret would marry you," she said.

"It looks like it," he made answer, and again turned away so that Brenda did not see the light in his eyes.

True enough both Margaret and Brenda were busy indeed the next morning, for the elder girl, who had never given the lost treasure a thought since her childhood days, when its possible discovery seized every waking moment, was as eager as Brenda to unearth all the old furniture in the attics in the hope that a chance hiding place might be revealed.

Once Brenda sat back on her heels and looked at her sister.

"Margie," she said, "do you care for Douglas?"

The other flushed.

"Why do you ask?" she said.

"Why won't you marry him?" came the next question.

"I'm a pauper," came the bitter answer. "How can I go to a man like that?"

"Then you do care," cried Brenda. "You do care. If we really found the necklace you would marry Douglas West!"

Margaret said nothing, but in a short time Brenda seized her hand and forced her to look in her eyes.

"You are crying," she cried. "I know why. You do care for him after all."

"I believe I do," came the low confession, and Brenda's eyes shone.

"I'll leave you to go on searching through this rubbish," she said. "I'm tired of it all," and, suiting the action to the word, she left the attic and ran downstairs, looking everywhere for Douglas West, whom she found at last knocking croquet balls idly about on the lawn.

"She does care," she said in an excited whisper. "She does care for you. She has told me so. She's up in the attic looking for that old necklace. Go up and tell her so."

He dropped his mallet and seized her hand.

"Really and truly?" he cried.

"Really and truly," she said nodding, and he took her at her word.

But as he opened the attic door the words died away on his lips. He was going to say "Brenda told me you were here," but at sight of Margaret he sud-

denly went forward and dropped on one knee beside her. She was kneeling, her eyes full of wonder, a glittering object on her lap, and as he touched her hand she stared.

"It is the treasure," she said in a low whisper. "I have found it. It is here. The chest had a double bottom and the wood was rotten and had worn away."

It was indeed true. The necklace lay there, the moldy, worm-eaten wood showing where had been its hiding place. But as she looked in his eyes suddenly her hands went out, and the next moment she was in his arms.

"I love you, Margaret," he cried. "I love you," and he kissed her, but he thought with a wonderful smile of the necklace he had bought the day before, and which lay still in his drawer, safely locked away.

He had paid a fabulous price for this, intending to put it somewhere where Brenda would hit upon it in her search, when, lo and behold, the real thing was discovered after all. More than an hour after Brenda came, eager to find out how matters had gone, and her eyes opened wide with wonder as she saw the glittering necklace lying there forgotten.

"Oh, Margaret," she said, "we shall have Monastery House to ourselves again. All the guests will ... have to go."

"Except one," said Margaret quietly.

"Aren't you glad he came?" she cried, and Margaret's shining eyes were answer enough.

At her wedding three weeks later she wore a wonderful necklace, "the gift of the bridegroom," a quaint band of old gold studded with precious stones.

"It is very beautiful," she said to Brenda, who admired it with the rest, and Brenda's eyes shone. She alone had guessed the secret, but, sworn to secrecy, would not have breathed it for worlds, and to this day, although Douglas West solemnly assures her to the contrary, she has some suspicions that the necklace found at the bottom of the worm-eaten old chest was really placed there by her brother-in-law.

"Talk about guests," she sometimes says with a twinkle in her eye. "I reckon our paying guest paid us exceedingly well."

But nobody knows what she means, and Mrs. Halliday smiles.

"All the same, it was your notion, Brenda," she says. "I'm very glad you thought of it."

"And so am I," adds Douglas West, and Margaret smiles, for she, too, is well content with her lot.

THE GIRL WHO HASN'T FOUND HER PLACE

By Helen Roberts

THE most astonishing thing about a girl in a wrong groove is that she does not know that she is there, and that the people who put her there don't know either.

It is the people to whom the groove belongs that have to suffer.

Nowadays thousands and thousands of girls have to earn their own living, or prefer to do so.

Boys are allowed to choose their own career in most cases; girls generally have no such luck.

Sauce for the goose and sauce for the gander are very different in such a question as this, and Jill is a thousand times less fortunate than Jack.

Which is a pity and a shame too!

Papa and mamma, when a girl who has to earn her own living is about sixteen, no doubt discuss the question of her career.

Nine times out of ten the father is not particularly interested. In his heart of hearts he thinks that Jill will be sure to get married some day, and, let us say, Jill is dispatched to a commercial college for a few months to take up business routine, typewriting and shorthand.

She goes through her course with more or less success, and at the end of her time a position in an office at a small salary is found for her easily enough.

Jill is launched.

It does not seem to matter that for Jill a typewriting machine is a combination of rack and treadmill. It is of very little importance, apparently, whether to spend the day in mechanically rapping out "I am in receipt of your favor of 3rd inst." is or is not interesting to Jill.

In the result she is wasted on her job, and only provides another instance of that incompetency in regard to which all employers of female clerical labor join in a chorus of condemnation.

"One has to put up with it," a man said to me the other day. "You cannot get most girls to take an interest in what they are doing. They won't do it; it is not in the bargain apparently. The result is I pay them as little as pos-

sible—which, by the way, is far more than they are generally worth."

"Girls in wrong grooves," I remarked.

"Exactly," he answered. "It's not because they're stupid; it's because they are forced to do what they hate. It's the parents' fault; you can't blame the girls."

"They ought to revolt," I answered. "They ought to insist on doing what they want to do, like boys. A high-spirited damsel, within limits, is the most charming thing alive."

"Oh, some of them do," he replied. "I once had a secretary who was just everything that she ought to be. She loved the work. And yet—you'll hardly believe it—she had begun her career on the stage. She was an actor's daughter, and forced into it, till she took the bit in her own teeth and started business life.

"She was a perfect peach," he continued reflectively.

"She began by taking down my private letters, but I found out before long that she had a head for business as good as my own. She made suggestions that were adopted throughout the office. I raised her salary again and again. I would not have done without her for anything; and then, of course, she goes and marries my junior partner," he concluded with a sigh of regret.

I suppose no more striking instance than this—it is quite authentic, by the way—could possibly be given of the stupid and unnecessary way in which girls have careers forced upon them.

Surely it is only fair that a girl who has to earn her own living should be given a wider range of choice than those who direct her studies and assist at her launching are generally to allow?

Her real bent ought to be ascertained. She should be given some "trial flights," to use a pigeon fancier's simile, should she not?

Maidens, rise up in your power! Exercise that sweet witchery, that delicate, charming and persistent persuasion that is the attribute and privilege of your sex!

Choose for yourselves the groove in which you shall slide to success and fortune.

I say with real concern and pain that there are, at the present moment, girls who can make a perfect omelette engaged in painting pictures that not even a Florida millionaire, who purchases such things by the yard, would care to buy!

And take the question of such a simple thing as breakfast bacon. What a scandal it usually is when it appears upon the table; and yet, when perfectly cooked, hot from the pan, the delicate pink-and-pearl color preserved by watchful eyes and careful hands, what more could a gourmet desire with which to start the day?

And yet—I say it with mingled pain and indignation—there are girls who really *can* cook bacon spending joyless days over invoices and bills of lading; or teaching five-finger piano exercises to muddle-headed little girls in private schools.

And worse than all this—far worse—there are girls who cannot cook bacon or make omelettes, and who try to!

Confronted with the apparitions of food which they industriously set before one, how one longs to provide them with opportunities for keeping books, teaching music, or singing in the chorus.

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, June 13th

This is a fine day for all Sunday duties and pastimes. The people who entered the world between July 21st and August 2d should guard against haste and impulsive action, especially around 6 o'clock in the evening. If you go for a ride or on a trip, try to return before 6 p. m., when there is a tendency toward accident. The evening is quite pleasant, being especially good for intellectual pursuit. A transit of Venus will lighten the hearts and cares of those born on or about May 3d.

Monday, June 14th

There isn't a single good aspect in the heavens to-day governing the general conditions, and it would therefore be wise to take everything rather slowly, awaiting a more favorable time for auspicious undertakings. Especially should those born between August 2d and 15th keep the four-wheel brakes on and give attention to their health. Watch the diet and try to keep peaceful domestic relations. Even the young men and young women who were born around May 4th, despite the influence of Venus in their lives at this time, will find themselves depressed and in danger of quarreling.

Tuesday, June 15th

The morning is very favorable for approaching and dealing with men in executive positions, but this is the only good period in the day until after 9.30 p. m. In the afternoon one is likely to use poor judgment and people will try to deceive you. Business men and women born between August 15th and 27th should keep this in mind and move with caution in all financial matters. The evening after nine thirty is one of expansion and is favorable for those born on or about May 5th in regard to their social and affectional affairs.

Wednesday, June 16th

As good to-day as yesterday was bad. The entire time up until 8 p. m. is splendid when every one may push matters successfully, with the day being particularly good for

the individuals who entered the world between August 27th and September 7th. The evening is one, however, in which great self-control and caution will have to be exerted. Venus, the emotional planet, is in bad aspect to the fiery and energetic planet Mars, which speaks for itself, more or less—but shows particularly extravagance in the mental, physical, and emotional departments of the life. The young people born on May 6th or thereabouts should be most careful.

Thursday, June 17th

An harmonious, constructive, progressive, and artistic period throughout the entire day until midnight. If you have been putting things off, now is the time to get after them. Very fine for the professional people born between September 7th and 20th, likewise for teachers and technical men and women. Affectional and amusement interests will be to the fore in the lives of those born on or about May 7th.

Friday, June 18th

Very adverse. Those born between September 20th and October 2d should proceed very slowly, watching their health, temper, and impulses. Tendencies toward accident. Transact no business of importance. The time from 9 until 12 p. m. is good, however, and will serve as a breathing spell to all after a rather hectic day. If you were born on May 8th or 9th and have a date with your loved one—better stay away until 9 p. m.

Saturday, June 19th

Another hasty, forceful, and dangerous day; put off until next week what you intended to do to-day if you were born between October 2d and 15th. Watch the affections and avoid stimulants if you were born on May 10th or 11th.

THE WHOLE WEEK

Social activity and progressive plans and undertakings will be felt in the lives of those who celebrate their birthdays during the coming week.

Do not trust your judgment; watch out for deceptive schemes and plans which may appear perfectly bona fide on the surface. Do not allow your mind to become unnecessarily disturbed if you are one of those people now feeling the influence of Neptune—that is, born around August 16th.

Uranus, the disintegrating and disturbing mental planet, is now upsetting the existence of those born on March 20th. Everybody is out of step but you and nothing is right in the whole w[illegible]y to be co[illegible]
as cool as possible. It is not [illegible]
travel, but these people will probably
experiencing a complete change of co[illegible]

The individuals born between Noven[illegible]
and 15th have been undergoing a tran[illegible]
Saturn and are feeling it particularly
week. They should watch their health and diet, stay out in the open air and sunlight as much as possible, lend no money, and watch financial conditions in general. This condition won't last much longer.

The fortunate and happiest people right now are those born on or about February 16th. The sky is blue; the birds are singing; opportunities are galore and general prosperity for these folks is making the universe a pleasant place in which to live. They should remember, however, that good fortune does not last forever and should put some away for the future. It would be wise to accept any opportunities offered at this time.

Answers to Questions

What does life hold for me in love and vocation? Born March 20, 1903, 11.30 a. m.
C. C.

I think you are due for a great many changes in the next twelve months, and advise you to become interested in an occupation that would give you a great deal of traveling and much activity. It is very unlikely that you will be located in any one place longer than a day at a time during the coming summer. You will probably marry very suddenly next year or during the first part of 1928.

Shall I ever marry? Born March 24, 1900.
SUNSHINE B.

Yes, I think you will marry rather suddenly in the summer or fall of 1927 some one whom you do not know now. If you will take pains to store up a lot of good practical common sense and philosophy, I am sure they will serve you in good stead during the next five years. You are entering upon a period of your life at the present time which will either make or weaken your character. If you are a wise young lady you will tell yourself that everything happens for the best. Don't fret!

Of two brothers, which shall I marry? Born March 4, 1910. MISS A. W.

You should have given me both these dates. It is absolutely impossible to judge a person's chart without their date, as you know. From

I said, let me advise you sincerely and earnestly not to marry until at least 1930. I'll tell you what you should do. Your horoscope shows a keen interest in human nature and an ability for medical work. You have excellent aspects this year for engaging in a new undertaking, and you will be much happier and better off if you use these good business influences instead of getting married.

Will I be able to get some one to go in with me on this venture? Born November 18, 1871.
C. B. A.

No doubt you will have already experienced disappointment and delay to this worthy plan of yours before the printing of this information. You are experiencing a transit of Saturn over your Sun, affecting your husband and public life, whereas you yourself have been feeling rather well and highly optimistic. Your own personal contact with people is satisfactory, but not your relations with the public. I advise you to give up the idea of getting any one in with you. About the only thing you can do is to push ahead, slowly but surely, and not be daunted by disappointment and delay. This Saturnine influence is given you this year to school you in patience, displomacy, and tact, and you will have to wait until 1927 before things change very much for you.

Would it be wise to sell our home? Woman, born November 19, 1873.
Mrs. A. E. G.

No, I wouldn't sell this year if I were you. In the first place it will be hard to do so, and anyway you won't get your price for it. Hold on to everything you have during the entire present year and take care of your own health. Keep as cheerful as possible and don't let your system get out of order. Don't risk any money at all during 1926 in any way, and do not lend, regardless of the petitioner's circumstance. You may as well kiss it good-by if you do. The year 1927 will begin a much happier and more prosperous period for you.

Will I make a success of the millinery business? Born July 21, 1900, 11.55 a. m.
Mrs. S. R. C.

You have the ability and the horoscope for that sort of work and you ought to find it very remunerative. However, 1927 isn't a very good year for you to be in a business of your own, and I advise you not to put your own money into it. Contribute your brains and artistic ability and management, but as surely as you dabble with the financial side, you will lose it in 1927. To be frank about your husband, I think you would be a wise woman to realize that you cannot hold him this summer at all. He will not want to stay in one place ten minutes. Look in another part of this department and you will find a description of the transit of Uranus, which he is now experiencing.

Will I make a success on the vaudeville stage? Born February 20, 1901. M. H.

Yes, I believe you should be connected with the theater in some way, and presume you must have a fairly good voice, but would judge that you would find it difficult to put yourself over with the public. This interest is merely temporary and you would find yourself hating life behind the footlights before very long. I do suggest, however, that you become affiliated with amusement enterprises. Always be prepared to work for everything you get. Nonresistance is a failing with you.

Will my husband recover his health? Date omitted by request. Lonesome Wife.

I am sorry to be negative in my answer, but I do not see any radical change for the better for some time yet. Conditions of this sort are hard to bear, I know, but it is a part of life that we all have to experience at one time or another, and I believe you will find circumstances less depressing, if you kept as cheerful as possible not only for your own sake, but for your husband's especially. Try to be philosophical about it all, and if you experience difficulty in making your brain rise to this point of view, I advise you get some books on philosophy. I wish you had included your own date.

Will I marry either of these men? Born January 22, 1904, or February 5, 1905; girl, born February 14, 1908. Miss T.

Well, of course, you shouldn't marry either of them. You're too young, and neither marriage would last, I am afraid. Why don't you wait, my dear? I realize the temptation is very strong, but you will certainly regret the step. It will really be a tussle between these two boys and the fight will be merry. They are very much alike—the 1905 boy rather like yourself, whom you will probably marry, although the other one is nice and likable—and would probably understand you better.

The Friend in Need

Department conducted by Laura Alston Brown

I'M always glad to hear from happy wifes. I'm going to let A Happy Wife and Mother of Mexico talk to you this week. She has some good suggestions for other wives.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I find in your answers only the best for everybody. If the girl will only take your advice!

I met my husband thirteen years ago and we were both quite young. I was fifteen and he sixteen. We lived six miles from each other.

He used to come in our community quite often after we became acquainted and would come to see me. I had very strict parents, and they thought me too young to go with the boys. Being taught to mind my parents, I never went out of my way to talk to any boys, although I had plenty of boy friends.

I loved to go to play parties and dances, but didn't go without my parents' consent.

I went with my hubby the sum of three times and were married the fourth time we were together. Neither of us have anything to regret by our short courtship. We understood each other.

It was love at sight!

We have been married ten years and we still do not quarrel with each other. When one sees the other is out of humor we go in different directions. We try to keep happy and help the other to be that way, so the bad humor does not last long, and usually ends up in a petting party. I try to make the home and his children as attractive as I can, and I keep myself as neat as possible for him.

My husband is an oil driller in the Mexican oil fields. He is home only a few minutes once or twice a week, and sometimes it is only every two weeks he gets home, so my life is pretty empty. Instead of going out and spending his money and having a petting party I buy me good storybooks and take care of my house and two babies. I daydream of him and no other man crosses my mind.

I think if girls would give more time and thought to work and cooking and read their books, they would have less time to be worrying over their love affairs.

I can say my life is happy. There is only one thing that mars my happiness—that is that the mainstay of the home can't be at home always.

This is one country girls have to be careful in. There are good people here, but most of them are rough. The liquor flows freely here.

I am like Helene, I like to dance and have a good time, but not unless husband is along. He goes when he can, but when he can't I stay home. I don't smoke, as it makes me sick. I have bobbed hair of brown. Hubby doesn't say anything, because he knows he can trust me. He has done this for ten long, happy years! I feel sorry for the Mill Foreman.

Not all girls are like those you spoke of.

A Texas Girl—make up your mind. Either quit him or break him of his temper. You can do this by being loving and kind to him. He will get ashamed of himself. Don't get angry at him and fly off the handle just because he does.

Our home would be a wreck if either of us had of taken up the habit of nagging. We have always been loving and kind to each other and our home has been a happy one. I wish every one could say the same. My husband is of one religious belief and I am of another, but we don't let that stand in the way of love and happiness.

We go out together when we get the chance, but when he comes home I don't beg him to go out other places. I love to have him home—just the children and us.

Mrs. Brown, I want you to help me solve the puzzle of how to make my home, my two babies, and myself more attractive for his sake, as every man loves a happy wife, sweet babies, and a nice clean home and good cooking.

A HAPPY WIFE AND MOTHER OF MEXICO.

Seems to me from what you say, you are already well on the way toward mastering the art of keeping your babies, your home and yourself attractive for your husband. You have the

.. a big step toward ..ondition a reality. You so use that way of finding .. methods of housekeeping. It .. be the amibtion of every woman to put her home and husband's happiness first like you do. Glad to hear from you! Hope you will favor us again some time.

Your letter is good.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am twenty years of age and am rather nice looking, but not handsome. I have been going with the girls ever since I was eleven years of age. I do not like fast girls—flappers, as they are called—who let a boy kiss them for a kick. I've never kissed but one girl, and that was on her deathbed.

My last year in high school I met Juanita. I loved her and she loved me. We made plans to marry on Christmas Day of 1924. Owing to some trouble and sickness in the family she went out West to her mother. I was to receive my diploma the last of May. The twelfth of May I received a telegram saying her mother was d d, and asking me to come to her.

I quit school and left immediately to be with her. I was with her only an hour. She died in my arms. This was the worst shock I ever received. I kissed her lips once in my life, and she is the only girl whose lips I have kissed.

After her death I returned home and went to work. I started to leading a wild life. I drank and gambled. If my father and mother knew this I know they would turn over in their graves, for long since they have gone to meet their Maker. During this period I met Nellie. She loved me, but I failed to return her affection. I can never love but once.

Nellie was wild. She met me secretly, for she had a good name and mine was becoming a bad one. While with her during one of these meetings the bank was robbed. Suspicion pointed toward me. I refused to tell where I was and would not let Nellie do so, either. There was only one outcome. I was sentenced to serve thirty years in the pen. I served eleven months of this time and was pardoned. I came home—what a home!—no friends or relatives. I started to work to clear my name. Nellie had moved to California. I didn't try to locate her, because I wanted to forget all and do right.

Then one day she came back. She came alone. She was a mother. No one knew but me. She wanted me to marry her. I refused. I was accused of seduction, but beat the case. What am I to do? I swear by Heaven above I am not the father of Nellie's child. I am asking for your help.

Once a month I take a trip to Juanita's grave and place forget-me-nots or some flowers that she loved on it.

Please help me!

AN EX-CONVICT WHO IS GUILTLESS.

Since you won the case, isn't that proof enough of your innocence? If you are square with yourself and the world, your own consicence will tell you what to do. It will tell you the man you are! Tragedy has played quite a part in your life, but know the taint of the past has nothing to do with the future. Live for the living! Help them! Love them! You in turn will help yourself! I am sure you will recover from this unhappy, unwholesome state of affairs and become a man of promise!

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN: Please tell me, after reading my letter, if you think I am prudish. All my friends believe, although they respect me for it, that I am hopelessly old-fashioned because I will not kiss, pet, drink, smoke, or allow myself to be picked up by any man. Indeed, I consider it an insult when a stranger speaks to me on the street.

I want to save myself for the one man, so I can go to him with a clean mind and heart. Of course I must dress modernly, and I take great pleasure in doing it, but an acquaintance of mine hurt me very much when he called me a hypocrite for not dressing according to my ideas. I love outdoor sports, but when it comes to dates, I refuse to go out. I am afraid. Twice men have deceived me and I have lost all faith in them.

It is tragic, because I am so young, still in my teens. Do you think any man is worth trusting? To me they have proven themselves worse than dogs, even though I have gone with some mighty fine young men, as my friends say.

Most men like and respect my ways, but it puzzles them when I refuse to go out with them. How can I say that I am unable to trust myself in their hands? Am I too prudish and exacting? Please, dear readers, give me your opinion, also, as I need advice badly.

PAM.

No! I do not think you are prudish! You are merely self-respecting, which

means you are careful with whom you associate. It is unfortunate that your experience with men has been such as to cause you to mistrust them. You will get usually just what you hand out. Why not a few more trustful thoughts? Let men feel that you have confidence in them! Expect more of them in the way of courtesy and right actions and you will get it. I cannot see that dressing in modern style could be anything but an asset. We should all strive to be as attractive as possible!

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I'm twenty-one and although I wouldn't take a beauty prize, I don't think I am entirely unattractive. I don't believe in petting and I'm the little girl who always said that the only man who was going to get too affectionate with me would be my husband. But that was before I met Jimmie.

You see, I had never fallen in love, except a light case of puppy love, and even in these modern days I had always secretly looked forward to the day when my prince would come riding by. Silly, wasn't it? And when I met Jimmie I simply lost my head. Honestly, a glass of wine couldn't have made me feel as deliriously happy as Jimmie did when he called me "Sweetheart." But Jimmie was, and is, a regular Don Juan in my eyes. Perhaps it is my vanity, but I believe he really did care something about me. But it seems he couldn't possibly care for one girl very long at a time. Well, anyway, I can't ever again say that I haven't petted. But Jimmie jilted me!

This happened way last summer, and I still can't get over it. It's not that my heart is broken over Jimmie and, to tell the truth, I don't know whether I'm still in love with him or not. I haven't seen him for eight or nine months. I do know that I can't bear to date any one else, for the memory of that affair still sticks. So please, please, Mrs. Brown, tell me what to do so I can forget it and Jimmie. NITA.

The effects of a love affair usually leave the girl stranded on the shores of lost hope, while the man strides gayly on making new conquests. The masculine proclivity to dominate causes men to take great delight in playing the rôles of heartbreakers. Bear in mind it is only [illegible] do this. It only takes a [illegible] on the girl's part to wigg[illegible] little pool of tears she finds when her admirer has jilted her. that you can love and be loved others! A girl has her rôle to play, too—that of making men want to love her. She can make her conquests, too!

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am nineteen and a bride, and considered good looking in an old-fashioned way. I have long, brown, curly hair, and brown eyes. My husband is the dearest man in the world, and I love him.

Here comes my problem. To get my husband I played around with a wild crowd and treated him horrid.

I wanted a cute house, babies, and everything, and did not intend to keep running around after we were married, but I am dissatisfied and want things my husband cannot afford to buy for me.

He forbids me learning to dance. But his mother and sister wanted to learn the Charleston, so I've started taking lessons at the studio.

He said he would run around with his old girls if I learned dancing. So a friend of his saw me at the studio by accident the other day. What shall I say? Must I deny it, and say it was my twin sister?

Please don't think me a fool! But I guess I am, for now that I've started I'm dissatisfied with my home, my cute kitchen, and things I use to fix. I think the flappers are grand, for I used to be one myself in many ways. I thought men wouldn't like a girl that was old-fashioned—neither did my girl friends. Now they have to watch my smoke, for every one called me a granny and made fun of me because I sat around at home waiting for the right man, instead of running around with my sister and her crowd.

Mrs. Brown, I think a girl can act modern and still be ladylike and mannerly. That is the way I have done and, I think I was right in my judgment, for I have something I value more than anything in the world—a good husband.

He used to be wild—drank and everything, but now he's just as good as can be.

I think you're right about things. A man knows all the time whether a girl is the true sort, even if she pretends to be wild.

Would it be right to keep on taking lessons in dancing? I'm a graduate music instructor and am therefore interested in dancing. Would you insist on him going to dances with me? Yes; he dances. Is it

.. dance the Charleston?
JUST A BRIDE.

husband and a cozy little
are worth more than any mad
.e for excitement and pleasure. Where does this mania for a good time lead you to? Down the vale of unhappiness and dissatisfaction! Contentment comes from time well spent, moderation in all things, and in trying to live normal, useful lives. Pleasure-getting does not bring satisfaction! I see no harm in learning the Charleston. It is our thought behind dancing that counts; the activity itself is harmless and should be good exercise. Yes, do insist on your husband going with you to the dances.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a reader of LOVE STORY MAGAZINE and I never miss reading the letters from your friends.

I am sixtee.. years old and have dark-brown, wavy, bobbe. hair and dark-br.wn eyes. I am five feet and one inch in height. I am considered good looking and love to have a good time. I like the flapper and am one as much as I know how to be. I smoke once in a while, when the crowd smokes, but never have been drunk. I think it's a girl's business if she cares to smoke and drink. I have smoked before my mother and she doesn't approve of it, but does not try to make me stop. I'm strong on the rouge, lipstick, and all other cosmetics. I dress according to the latest style. Yes, I'm wearing them short!

Do you think I'm too young to love? I think I am in love. If it isn't love, it's something next to it. The young man shall be called "Bill." He is twenty-six years old and has been married, but has been single again for almost three years. He goes with lots of girls and has many friends. He smokes and drinks sometimes. He was even in jail once for a night, but still I love him just the same.

I used to go with him at least once a week until he moved away to a little place fourteen miles from here. We corresponded while he was over there. I never went with him many times. We had a quarrel one night at a dance and never wrote any more for a while. About two weeks after I got a letter from him asking for me to accept apologies, and I was more than glad to. He has now moved his tailor shop back over here and I see him every day. We always speak and sometimes have a friendly chat, but that is all. He knows I like him, but he doesn't seem to care anything for me. Reckon I will ever win him? If so, how? While going with him, he always had his way—most always, anyway. He kissed me almost every time he wanted to, and I always let him pet me as much as he wanted to. I have had my arms around him also when he asked me to. I've tried to be indifferent and cold toward him, but just can't.

I've had dates with boys, but never enjoy myself unless Bill is around. I feel like I'm not welcome when I'm in his car.

When I went with him he told me he loved me, but I knew it was all bosh! But my heart always beat hard and fast when he told me he loved me.

Some people may think it silly, but I've shed more tears over him than I ever have over anything before. When I go to bed, I cry and think of the best side. I picture myself at his side and as his own.

One night coming home from a dance he was with another girl and I was with a boy and a girl in the back seat of the car. We went over an awful bump at a bridge and my head hit the side of the car, but didn't hurt much. I cried and cried, but it was because I was heartbroken. He asked me if he hurt me and I told him "No."

I am jealous of this girl he was with. Her mother doesn't allow her to go with him, but she will slip off every chance she gets and do it, anyway. Does he go with her just for sport? Oh, yes, Mrs. Brown, I've started to ask him a dozen times what grudge he has against me. Shall I? Do you think I should?
JUST BETSY FROM TEXAS.

You might do this, for there is nothing like having a clear understanding. Does your mother approve of this young man and the things you are doing? I would not let him discover that you are jealous if I were you. Accept gracefully any situation that may come to you. Be a smile and a bright spot with those you associate with, instead of a cloud and a teardrop!

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Being two girls of sixteen and seventeen who want help, we have come to you. We are popular among the boys and girls of our set. Yet we have had many a falling out.

There is one case that is bothering me. A very nice-looking, blond young man about

twenty asked me to marry him, and then my friend. We both consented, then he went away to a larger city, where he married a higher-class girl than us. He likes us, for he has often told friends of us and said he did. Please tell us what to do with him.

TWO DISAPPOINTED BLONDES.

I wouldn't call myself disappointed if I were you, when it comes to losing a man of that kind. He, no doubt, was only playing with you. Forget him and spend your time with more substantial friends.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have not been a reader of your department long. Indeed, January 30th was the first time. Let me assure you that I am one of the audience now.

Of course, Mrs. Brown, as Rusty says, we are not all alike, and it takes all kinds of people to make a world. But let me tell you what I think of flapperism.

When a fellow wants a good time he wants a flapper, and if he gets her he will have the time. She drinks, smokes, and tells shady jokes. And doesn't one expect it of her? No, I am no saint. I am always in the crowd and have just as good a time as the rest of them, when that is the kind of time I want. But when I want to marry, I do not want a girl that has permitted her lips to become a "public race track." I do not want a wife that has been pawed over by everything that happened to be good looking and wore trousers. I have often asked girls why they do it. They have no other reason except it is natural for one to act that way. That is the absurd idea they have. After all, where does it end? Where they least expect it. It is inevitable! A girl can be jolly and full of life without petting all the time. It only makes them look cheap. Surely they can't think much of themselves! Don't think I am a reformer—I am not.

Rusty, you say it takes an awful long time to find the old-fashioned girl! I beg to differ with you. One can find her easily enough if one wants to. And a jolly time can be had with her, too! When you do earn one of her kisses, it is worth lots more than the everyday ones. I don't know if this will be printed or not. I could go on writing forever, I guess. But in case it is, let me say this:

Old-fashioned girl, if they may call you that, stay in the buggy. Flappers, wake up, you are the kind of girls that men forget. TOM.

Let us hope there are still enough buggies to hold the old-fashioned girls, Tom! Perhaps tha[illegible] though, for aren't the [illegible] the cars these days? Wh[illegible] have some good old-fashione[illegible] Tom? You know, the kind w[illegible] who still hang on to the higher stan[illegible] ards and yet are not stiffnecks when it comes to having a jolly good time.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Recently I have been reading your department with great interest, so would just like to write a little to tell you about myself.

I am fifteen years old, a high-school sophomore. I am a well-developed, pretty girl, and have brains.

My people aren't terribly prosperous, but my parents are very good to me, and give me the best they can afford.

I have three brothers and a sister, all younger than myself, and our house is jolly and lively.

My parents are both young, and my mother is a good pal and a good mother.

I am a modern youngster and like a good time, but do not care for th[illegible] petting business. I h[illegible] gone around wit[illegible] different boys for over a year now, and there have been three or four whom I have really fallen for. But one was too old for me, and went away to college, so although I went out with him several times I gradually forgot him. Not really forgot him, but now we are just good friends, and I only see him during holidays and in the summer.

Another lived in a neighboring town, and I certainly liked him. But I wouldn't be walked on, and we scrapped, so that wore off.

Now I go out with several different ones, all of whom I like sincerely, but only one of these claims my thoughts to a very great extent. I correspond with several, also, all very nice boys.

Needless to say, I like the boys and they like me. I'm glad of it, and I know that some day the real one's coming along. I don't know what he'll look like, and don't care now, but when he happens along, he'll find a clean, honest girl waiting.

I like those adjectives.

Have I bragged foolishly? I hope not. I dislike conceit.

My life isn't very exciting, but it isn't dull. High-school dances and church suppers and reading stories and novels, and flirting in school are what I look forward to.

I do not paint or smoke, yet I'm alive. I'm young, romantic, and love life.

Here's to you! Thank you. MARY.

be a very nice little ...ncing at your signature ...omes—I wonder how many ...ave in the circle? Wouldn't ...nteresting to have a letter from ...y Mary and some day have a column of just letters from Mary—girls? We'd see, then, some of the different lots that befall the Marys of the world. Suppose we try it!

DEAR MRS. BROWN: My mother died almost ten years ago, leaving five children to be cared for by my father.

Mrs. Brown, we all had as much of everything as any one could have wished for, and never was a thing that was denied us. But now, Mrs. Brown, we are divided. All married, except my brother of twelve and I.

We do not live together, as our house was burned two years ago. Is it because I am apart from my brothers and sisters also my father that I am miserably uncomfortable around them?

Especially so with my father. I love him, yet I fear him. How shall I overcome this?

I am [illegible] years of age, but very large for my age. I am lively, pretty, and a jolly girl. I am popular and go with girls ranging from fourteen to nineteen. Is this unadvisable? If so, what ages would be profitable?

Mrs. Brown, what privileges should a girl at my age have? LILLIAN.

You probably feel a little strange toward your father because you perhaps do not see him often enough for him to seem like a real father, Lillian. But just go on loving him and don't try to analyze your feeling. As you get older that little strained condition will disappear.

As for privileges for a girl of your age—you should be allowed to go about with girls of your own age. But you shouldn't be out evenings and you shouldn't go around with boys.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: When I came in today I saw your publication on the library table, and as I glanced through it I saw your department, which I read.

As I read some of the letters I couldn't help but feel sorry and sympathize with some of the writers! Some of them certainly feel, as their letters imply, that there is no more sunshine in this good, old world.

Ah, brothers and sisters, there are a lot of things in this beautiful land of ours that bring sunshine with them if you will only go after them. They won't come to you.

Now, Mrs. Brown, I am not writing for advice, but to let you know that there are lots of happy people in this fine world of ours!

I sympathize most with fellows and girls who have never had a mother or father or the real home life.

I am a fortunate young fellow, nineteen years old, of French descent, and have a wonderful dad and mother. We have always lived here in the country, where my father, in summer, conducts a summer resort.

Mother and dad like to have us bring our friends into our home and enjoy ourselves. I went to high school, fifty-four miles from here, and every Friday night I would come home. Dad gave me a car, and it was great fun to just settle back in the seat and drive along with the cool breeze blowing in my face. I seldom came home but what I brought two or three fellows home with me. And, Mrs. Brown, they always want to come again as they say that they have such good times here.

The truth is that mother and dad make them feel at home and they are treated as their own. And, Mrs. Brown, we never do anything wrong, because we know mother and dad trust us!

Dad is like one of us boys—he gets out, plays ball, skates, and does everything we boys do, and he is over sixty years old, and not a gray hair in his head! Isn't that wonderful?

Mother has the complete confidence of my sisters and me. I'm the only boy, but I've several sisters, and she always knows where and with whom we are.

We never keep a thing from them—our good, loving parents!

But, Mrs. Brown, one thing that makes our home life so secure and happy is that we have opportunity for initiative, and it is never destroyed—never! Dad always finds time, even in his busy hours, to help us with anything we need his help on, and he is a good listener, too. And mother is the same with the girls. They are truly wonderful pals!

I notice that a good share of your letters are from flappers—and on the question of kissing and petting.

Ah, girls, there is much more to life than promiscuous kissing and letting every Tom, Dick, and Harry pet! Yes, there is! Do you really understand the biological law? Here is what dad once told me: Next after the

grace of God, there is no better earthly influence and source of hopefulness than a pure-minded, noble, and inspiring woman. Association with women who are pure in heart and noble in life is never anything but inspiring and elevating. When a man loves a woman who is pure and noble, and when he sets up for himself the same standard of moral and personal purity which he sets up for her, he has thrown around himself one of the surest and strongest of human safeguards.

I don't mean to infer that the flapper is not pure and noble. No, to me, they typify the healthy, robust, lively girl. Certainly there are some that are contrary to the above. Where isn't there always an exception to any rule? But, girls, what I'm trying to get at is this: you have it within your power to make or break the opposite sex. With intelligence and purity you will eventually reach the heights. As dad told me, there is nothing like the association of a good, pure-minded woman!

When it comes to the emotions man is the weaker and, girls, you are the stronger! It is up to you to impart intelligence to him and he'll respect and cherish you for it.

You, girls, who are afraid you won't be in line to march to the altar if you don't indulge in petting—I say to you: "Yes! You will. There are many, many fellows looking for girls like you. Life won't pass you by. Be pure-minded and noble and help to elevate man, and you certainly will be beautifully rewarded.

Mrs. Brown, I like to dance and indulge in any sports. I often take a girl to a dance or movie, and I always have the second, third, fourth date with any girl I ever go out with and I don't ask or expect a kiss as a reward for the evening.

So you see, this disaffirms the statement that a fellow expects a [illegible] that it is an honor [illegible] girl allows me to take her [illegible] to me to protect her.

Incidentally, I won the Nick [illegible] upon graduating from high, which [illegible] metrical development of a fellow's [illegible] nature—the physical, intellectual, and spiritual.

But all this is due my good mother and dad, who gave me the proper parental counsel.

Mrs. Brown, we are indeed happy! Isn't life beautiful when we are young and in love? I wish you knew my mother and dad, Mrs. Brown. They are truly successes! And I love them dearly.

Life is what you make it. And it's beautiful and good after all. Perhaps it may seem dark and gloomy at times, but just over the hill is sunshine—remember that. I wish every one good health and [illegible]

HAPPY BOY.

Your letter will be helpful to those members of my circle who are just beginning parenthood. You have been fortunate in having such an understanding father and mother and I am glad, indeed.

Life is beautiful when one is young and in love—when one is old and in love, too, Happy Boy. That sounds as if you're in love and you haven't told us a thing about it. You mustn't slight us that way! Tell us about her.

It makes me happy to know that one of my circle has won the Nick Stoner prize. And the best of it is that I know you'll live up to it always. Write again.

Boys are always welcome.

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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