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OCT. 23, 1926

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"Come on and dance, Tommy," Bob urged.

"Well, I really shouldn't, you know. I am a sight."

But, of course, she went with him. Looking after her, Marion noted with a sinking heart that Tommy was wearing her heaviest brown walking slippers.

What an evening! Marion was certain she would never forget it. It shattered all her theories and left her groping about among the pieces, trying to fit them into something which resembled a reasonable whole. For that Tommy Bently, in those terrible clothes, was having a better time than anybody

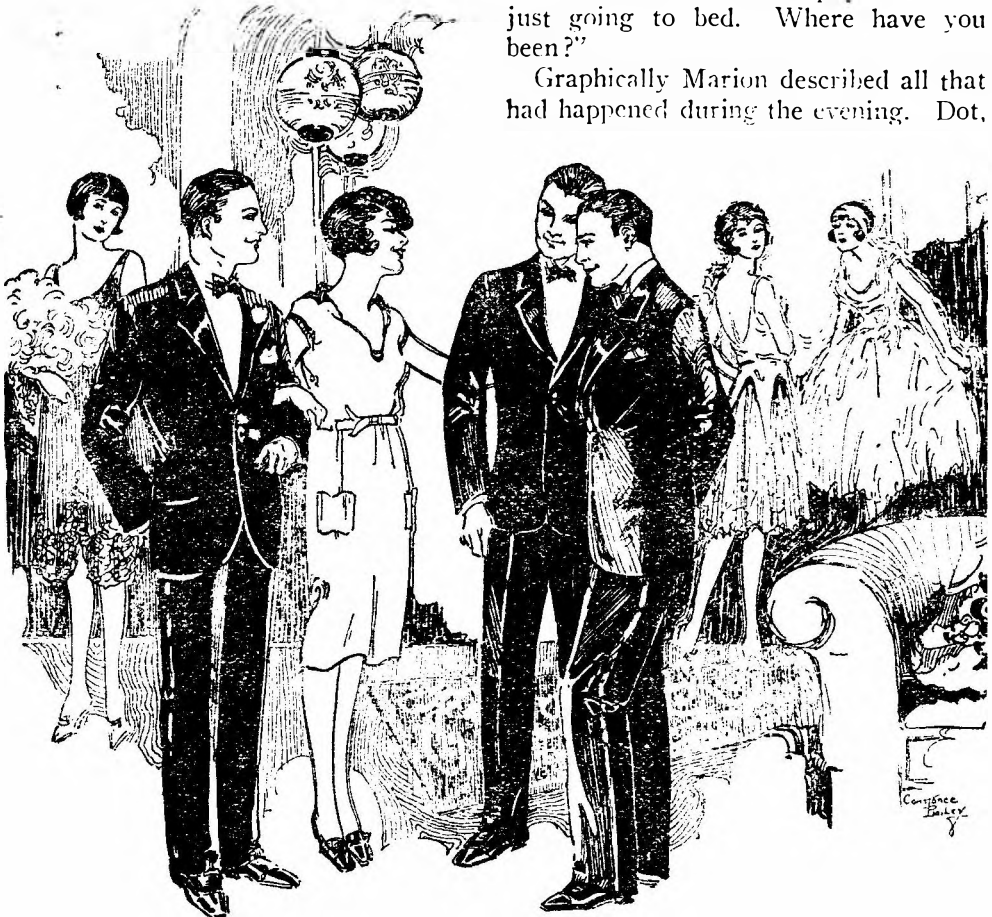
in the room—and she was getting all the men. They crowded about her, coaxing for dances, making valiant efforts to provoke her merry laugh.

And this state of affairs continued until Tommy decided it was time to go home. Then Bob Welling offered to drive the two girls back in his car, a suggestion which met with a storm of disapproval. There were, it appeared, other men present whose cars were just outside. But Bob Welling it was who drove the girls home, said a lingering good night, and promised to call Tommy up in the morning.

Dot Ashton glanced over the top of the chesterfield as her friends entered.

"Hello," she said sleepily. "I was just going to bed. Where have you been?"

Graphically Marion described all that had happened during the evening. Dot,



That Tommy Bently, in those terrible clothes, was having a better time than anybody in the room—and she was getting all the men.

a tiny, blond girl with a round face. listened attentively, her chin cupped in the hollow of a sofa cushion, her eyes thoughtful.

"I know," she agreed, when Marion had paused for breath. "I've seen Tommy get away with almost as much as that. How do you do it, my dear?"

Tommy threw off her coat and sank down on the chesterfield.

"You're both crazy," she announced calmly. "I didn't do anything. Clothes aren't half as important as you people think they are."

"No"—Marion sounded caustic—"they're not important for you, when you can go to a party dressed like that, and have men tell you how gorgeous you look! Can you beat it, Dot?"

Dot's gaze was fixed on Tommy's necktie.

"No," she said earnestly. "I can't beat it. I can't come anywhere near equaling it. I wish I could. It must be marvelous to have men think that anything you wear or say or do is exactly right. For instance, I'm worried to death about to-morrow. An elderly cousin of mine is coming here to call; I've simply got to impress him, somehow, because he's a pal of Uncle William's—but I know I'll do everything wrong."

"Nonsense!" briskly from Tommy. "Just be natural with him. When's he coming?"

"In the afternoon, for tea. And it's so disappointing. I did want to go to Gladys Hume's house party."

"Oh, well," Marion consoled her. "you'll manage somehow. You generally get what you want."

And the next morning it appeared that Dot had no intention of deviating from her usual tactics. She came into the living room about nine o'clock and found Tommy at work on a sketch. Marion had left for the office.

"I have an idea," Dot began, seating herself in a deep-cushioned chair and regarding Tommy with pensive blue

eyes. "You could—well, you could save my life, dear, if you would."

"How?" Tommy glanced up suspiciously. "What do you want me to do now?"

"Why, it's this way: Tom Powell will be at Gladys Hume's week-end party."

"What of that?"

Dot sighed.

"Oh, dear," she mourned, "you're so—so downright, Tommy! One has to be so awfully honest with you."

"Yes, I'm afraid you'll have to be honest enough to make yourself understood. What's the trouble this time?"

"Well, Gladys Hume likes Tom, too. I'm afraid, if she gets him up there, without me, she'll win out."

Tommy considered this.

"I never did like Gladys Hume," she said finally.

"Neither did I," heartily from Dot. "But if you won't help me, she'll have everything her own way this time, because I'll have to stay here and entertain Cousin Wolverton."

"But what do you want me to do?"

"I want you to entertain him for me. You could do it beautifully, if only you would. He's never seen me. He couldn't possibly know the difference."

Tommy swung around in her chair and stared.

"You mean for me to see your cousin and make him think I'm—you?"

"Yes, that's exactly what I mean. Now, wait a minute, Tommy! You could do it as easily as you could walk into that bedroom. Cousin Wolverton will be here only about an hour. He's been traveling through the East, and he's on his way back to California; he's leaving to-night; he told me so in his letter. When it might mean so much to me to go to the Humes' party, because of Tom, I don't see why you couldn't help me."

"But why don't you go, if it's so

important, and leave a note for your cousin, explaining that it was impossible to break your engagement? He'd understand."

"He would not! When Uncle William wrote that Cousin Wolverton was coming, he said, 'He's a great crony of mine, so I shall expect you to be particularly nice to him.' There you are! Now, what would Uncle William say if he learned that I hadn't even stayed at home to receive his 'crony?' And what would happen to me if I offended Uncle William? Good-by, art course! Good-by, allowance and everything else."

Tommy looked thoughtfully out of the window. The matter was not quite so simple as it had at first appeared. Both she and Marion knew that, since the death of Mrs. Austin, an uncle in California had supplied Dot with money. Of course it wouldn't do to offend him. Dot ought to finish her course. Still this plan was absurd.

"Your uncle knows what you look like," she pointed out. "This cousin would go back and describe me. Then what? You're a blonde and about as big as a minute; I'm dark and, I think you'll agree, tall."

"But Uncle William doesn't know what I'm like," Dot protested. "He's never even seen my picture. Mother hadn't heard from him for years before her death. Afterward, he wrote to me. Cousin Helen had told him about mother, I believe. Anyway, he promised to supply me with money until I had fitted myself to earn a living. But Cousin Helen told me he was an awful crab, and that I'd have to be very careful not to offend him."

"It sounds complicated, doesn't it?" Tommy admitted weakly.

"It wouldn't be, if you'd just see Cousin Wolverton and send him away pleased with Uncle William's niece. You could do that. You know it. Men always like you. Look what hap-

pened last night. Why, marveling about that gave me this idea."

"Did it, indeed? Well, I wish Marion wouldn't talk so much!"

"Oh, I'd probably have thought of it, anyway," Dot conceded. "I've frequently seen you get away with just that sort of murder. You know, it would really be better for Cousin Wolverton to see you, instead of me. He'd be tremendously impressed with you, and say all sorts of wonderful things to Uncle William. Really, Tommy, you're the only girl in the world whom I'd trust with this situation."

"Thanks," laconically from Tommy. "I'm immensely flattered, and all that, but I'm grieved to find that I'm the chosen one, just the same."

"Then you'll do it?"

"Oh, I suppose so. You'll probably be sorry. I dare say the man will detest me. But all that's on your own head. Go on to your house party, and make the most of it. Keep before you the slogan of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In other words, 'Get your man.'"

About two hours later, Dot stuck her head through the doorway of Tommy's room.

"I'm going," she announced. "I must make the eleven forty train. Gladys lives way up in Connecticut, you know, just a few miles from Cousin Helen. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if Cousin Helen came to the party. Won't Gladys be sorry to see me! She had to invite me, because she thought everybody would know why she didn't want me. I'm sure she hoped I couldn't come. Well, good-by, you angel. I'll never forget this." She crossed the room and kissed Tommy affectionately.

"Good-by," the latter returned. "Be a good child. What shall I wear while your cousin's here?"

"Oh, are you going to dress up?"

"Yes," said Tommy grimly. "I'm

not taking any chances on that 'wear-anything-and-he'll-like-you' stuff. If I've got to impress this man, I'm going to have weapons."

"Well, then, wear that wine-colored velvet. You look stunning in it."

Accordingly, at four thirty that afternoon Tommy was seated in the living room, clad in the recommended wine velvet. It was an intriguing frock; on Tommy it was fascinating. But inwardly she was deeply perturbed. If only Dot's cousin would come and get the visit over with! For the first time in her life she felt self-conscious and unsure of herself.

Had Dot given the matter any deep thought, she would have realized that Tommy was almost the last girl who might be expected to succeed in an enterprise of this sort. For Tommy's charm could be attributed largely to the fact that she was, at all times, completely natural. Certainly it never occurred to her to consider the effect she was producing. Quite suddenly she found herself catapulted into a situation where the impression she should make was the only thing she could think about. Not unnaturally, then, the Tommy who awaited the coming of Dot's cousin was an entirely different girl from the one who had danced serenely at the Pattersons' in her old pongee frock.

The doorbell pealed sharply. Tommy jumped as though a firecracker had gone off beneath her chair. Oh, dear, there he was!

The maid, who came each morning to the apartment, had been well coached. Tommy heard her say, "Miss Ashton is in the living room, sir." Then a man came through the doorway.

Convinced that no actress had ever suffered keener pangs of stage fright, Tommy forced herself to rise and go forward.

Great heavens, the man wasn't old at all; he was not a day over thirty!

"Why, Cousin Wolverton!" she exclaimed in a voice which none of her friends would have recognized. "How nice to see you!"

She paused, feeling that she had done her share; that, old or young, the next move was up to Cousin Wolverton.

He made it. He came closer to Tommy and—kissed her soundly.

She stood perfectly still, just blinking, trying hard to restrain a gasp of amazement. Why hadn't she realized that cousins were permitted to kiss; that he, therefore, might kiss her? But, of course, she had gathered from Dot's conversation that he was an old man. "Oh," thought Tommy wildly, "help!"

But Cousin Wolverton was speaking.

"It's wonderfully good of you to let me come," he was saying. "I hope I didn't interfere with any arrangements you may have made for this afternoon. Of course, I wanted to see you."

"Oh, no," she assured him, "you—you didn't interfere with anything. I wouldn't have missed seeing you for worlds."

He was tall, she noted swiftly, taller than she was. When he kissed her, he had stooped a little. He had dark-brown eyes, a clear-cut mouth, and a square chin. He looked as though he would be none too easy to manage, but, also, he looked interesting. Yet how awful to stand here staring at him!

"Do sit down," she invited hurriedly. "And tell me all about Uncle William."

Wolverton Dorrimer smiled and drew forward a chair.

"There isn't much to tell," he responded. "Mr. Ashton leads a very quiet life, you know. He is always remarkably well."

"But I thought—when he wrote that you and he were such great friends—that you were about his age."

"Oh, no! My father and he were old pals, and since my father's death Mr. Ashton has taken the kindest sort of interest in me. I'm his third cousin,

once removed, or something like that. But you and I are second cousins."

"Oh," weakly, "are we?"

"Yes, indeed, on your mother's side." He glanced appreciatively around the living room. "You have a delightful little place here, Cousin Dot."

"Cousin Dot!" Oh, it was awful!

"We rather like this room," Tommy admitted, stifling a wild desire to laugh.

"We?"

"Yes, I live with two other girls."

His face brightened.

"Oh, I see."

The maid entered, carrying a tea tray, which she placed on a low table. A few minutes later Tommy glanced up from the amber liquid which she had poured into the cups.

"Lemon or cream. Cousin Wolverton?"

"Neither, please; just a little sugar."

He arose and took the cup, gazing fixedly at the hand which extended it. "You have the Austin wrist, Cousin Dot," he informed her.

"H-have I?" Tommy inquired with pardonable amazement.

"Yes. All the Austin women have beautiful wrists and interesting hands, like yours." When he had returned to his chair he added: "I was just thinking there was no real reason for me to go back to California at once. If I should wait for a day or two, would you play around with me?"

"I'd love to, but——" Tommy paused. The disappointment on the man's face made it difficult to continue.

"Couldn't you endure me for a few days?" he asked quietly.

Instantly Tommy's sense of justice darted to the foreground. Neither she nor Dot had had any right to plan this absurd deception; but, having planned it and carried it out, they had less right to hurt this man's feelings.

"Indeed, I'd love you to stay over," she assured him rashly. "And I'd be glad to go anywhere you liked."

"Great!" He arose and smiled down at her. "How about to-night?"

Tommy swallowed hard. Already the penalty for her generosity was threatening her. If she went out with him she might meet people who knew her—and who would most certainly not address her as "Dot."

Then, like a friendly beacon upon a troubled sea, Marion's face flashed across her vision. Of course! Why hadn't she thought of it before. Marion could go, too. Between them, surely, they could handle the situation.

"I'd like to go out with you to-night, Cousin Wolverton," she explained glibly, "but I've promised Marion Clark, one of the girls who lives with me, to go to the movies."

Wolverton Dorrimer said exactly what was expected of him:

"But couldn't I induce both you and Miss Clark to go to dinner, and later to the theater?"

"That would be nice," said Tommy. "I'm sure Marion would love to go."

But when Marion heard the whole story, later in the afternoon, it appeared that she wouldn't love anything of the sort.

"It's simply ridiculous, the whole situation!" she exclaimed. "Really, Tommy, you do the craziest things!"

"But how could I know he'd stay over?" Tommy demanded. "Dot assured me he was going back to California to-night."

"You should know better than to pay any attention to Dot. She hasn't a brain anywhere about her."

"Well, I can't help all that now," was the impatient rejoinder. "I'm in for it, and you've got to go with me to-night and help me out."

In the end, of course, Marion agreed to accompany them.

"Don't forget to call me 'Dot,'" Tommy whispered, as she moved toward the door to answer the bell. "He calls me 'Cousin Dot!'"

Marion giggled.

"Somehow, the name doesn't exactly suit you."

"No. I'd make a better exclamation mark than a dot, wouldn't I?"

After all, Marion was glad she had decided to come. She liked Wolverton Dorrimer at once. And it was quite plain, when they had reached the restaurant, that he was far from sorry Marion had been added to the party. Certainly he seemed willing enough to be monopolized by her.

Very soon Tommy grew a bit restive. "This cousin business," she thought grimly, "is certainly far from the star part!"

"I'd love to go to California," Marion told their host. "I'm sure I'd adore it."

"Why don't you go?" he asked. "I can promise you that if you'll visit San Francisco you——"

The opening bars of a popular musical-comedy hit broke upon the air. Tommy could not hear what Marion would do, if she went to San Francisco. The idea of such a trip, however, was vaguely displeasing.

She watched Marion's ash-blond head bend nearer to Wolverton's, noted the warmth of his smile as he said something else which she, Tommy, couldn't hear. He had an attractive smile, and his hair grew perfectly about his forehead.

"Well," she decided suddenly, "at least he doesn't think he's her cousin—so he can't kiss her!"

But this thought was startling, frightening. Tommy drew herself erect and frowned. As though it would make the least difference to anybody if he did kiss Marion!

Again she grew restless. A thinking part was distinctly not to her taste.

"Cousin Wolverton," she began, as he glanced toward her. "your name is tremendously long. How would you like me to call you *Cousie Woolly*?"

"Woolly," he repeated blankly.

"Yes, Woolly. It sounds so sort of cozy, don't you think?"

This time his smile was turned full upon Tommy.

"Call me," he urged, "anything you like."

That was better. Still, Tommy couldn't deceive herself, Marion continued to monopolize their host. Even at the theater it was little better. And afterward, when the two girls were alone in the apartment, Tommy had to listen to her friend's complacent repetitions that everything had gone off beautifully.

"I'm so glad I went," Marion remarked for the fifth time. "Isn't he stunning, Tommy? And wouldn't it be awful if he found out that you aren't Dot? Goodness, I'd hate to make him angry! Look at his chin!"

"I can't," Tommy replied; "he's gone home. Anyway, why do you think he'd mind so much? I've been only trying to help Dot."

"That wouldn't make any difference to him. I'll bet he'd be furious. He's just the type of man who'd hate being deceived. I'm glad I'm not to blame for any of it. Do you know, I think possibly I'll take the month of April off and go to California?"

"You'd better be sure he's back there, before you start," Tommy advised her. "By the way he was talking to-night, I thought he was planning to hang around here forever."

"Oh, no, I don't believe he'll stay longer than a week. Don't you like him, Tommy?"

She smiled too sweetly.

"Yes," briefly, "very much. But be careful how you run off to California, if you don't want to lose Jack."

"Oh, Jack! We aren't really engaged, you know. I told him I wouldn't promise anything just yet. I do like him—but I've always thought I'd marry a man with more money, if that were possible."

"And you think Cousin Woolly has money?"

"Tommy! Don't call him that! 'Cousin Woolly!' The idea! Yes, I know he has money. Dot told me, when his letter arrived, that he was frightfully rich."

Tommy made no reply. She studied the toe of her suede slipper with meditative eyes. How queer people were! Here was Marion thinking only about Wolverton Dorrimer's money. Hadn't she noticed his smile and the way his hair grew down into a little peak on his forehead?

She arose, stifling an elaborate yawn. "Good night. I'm going to bed."

"Don't forget," Marion called after her, "that we've promised to take Wolverton to church in the morning."

"That was your suggestion," said Tommy. "I'm afraid I'll be too tired."

"Oh, well, if you are, it will be all right."

But Tommy was not too tired—or, at any rate, she went to church. They heard some glorious music and afterward strolled down the Avenue. Just as they reached Eleventh Street they came face to face with Bob Welling and another man, a friend of Dot's.

"Hello, Tommy," was Bob's cheery greeting, as the two men paused before them. "Corking day for a walk, isn't it?"

"Splendid." Tommy agreed, with a strained smile. Then, because there was no way to avoid it, she added: "This is my cousin, Mr. Dorrimer—Mr. Welling and Mr. Cottle."

After the introductions had been acknowledged she remarked hastily that it was too cold to stand talking, but, even so, she did not avoid the thing she had feared.

"What is Dot doing these days?" Arthur Cottle inquired.

Tommy's breath caught in her throat, but she was not beaten.

"I'm working," she said determinedly.

"I'm working fearfully hard. Now we really must go. I'm simply frozen."

She slipped a determined hand through Wolverton Dorrimer's arm and literally marched him away. Marion hurried after them.

Arthur and Bob remained in the center of the pavement, staring bewilderedly at the backs of their retreating friends.

Although Tommy had slipped out of what had appeared, at the moment, to be the yearning jaws of retribution, her escape left her somewhat limp, totally unfit for polite conversation.

When they reached their apartment she said good-by to Wolverton with considerable firmness. There was no mistaking her meaning. Wolverton, however, made the attempt.

"Aren't you going to let me come in for a few minutes?" he inquired plaintively. "I haven't a thing in the world to do."

"Buy a magazine and read," Tommy advised. "I'm going to be fearfully busy all the afternoon. I have a lot of work to do."

"All right, I'll run along, then. I'll telephone you later."

But Tommy was already entering the hall, marching toward the elevator. Once again, there was nothing for Marion to do but follow.

In their apartment, however, the latter burst forth.

"Well, you nearly lost out! In another minute Arthur Cottle would have explained that he wasn't talking about you, but Dot Ashton, and he would have made it deadly clear that you were not she."

"Don't you suppose I know all that?" Tommy interrupted, a note of desperation in her voice. "And I know, too, that, although it didn't happen this time, it will sooner or later. But don't let's talk about it. I have a frightful headache. I'm going to lie down."

In her own room, she removed her

dress, reached absently in the closet, and drew forth the first garment she touched. It chanced to be the old pongee she had worn so successfully at the Pattersons' dance. She slipped it on, threw herself down on the chaise longue, and drew the silk quilt over her shoulders.

A few seconds later Marion tiptoed into the room, conversationally inclined.

"Are you asleep?" she whispered.

"I am," said Tommy firmly. "And, if I wasn't, I wouldn't want to talk about Wolverton Dorrimer." As the door closed behind Marion, Tommy added to herself: "I don't want to talk about him, and I won't think of him. I haven't had a pleasant minute since he arrived. Just wait until Dot gets home! Just wait!"

Despite her troubled mind, Tommy fell asleep. She awakened late in the afternoon, yawned, and wondered what time it was, and decided to get up and make some tea.

As she opened the door, Marion called to her:

"Come into the living room, Tommy."

Tommy moved leisurely forward, entered the living room, and paused.

There, seated upon the chesterfield, looking as though everybody in the place wanted him there, was Wolverton Dorrimer!

Tommy gave one wild thought to her appearance—hair ruffled from sleep, nose powderless, dress—awful! Sheer will power kept her from dashing out of the room.

"Hello," she said noncommittally.

Wolverton had sprung to his feet. He was looking at Tommy with a disarming smile.

"I thought I'd drop in and see if you had finished your work," he explained. "I want you both to have dinner with me."

Before either could reply, the telephone in the hall rang sharply.

"Let me answer it," Wolverton of-

fered, and strode off in the direction of the bell.

Tommy turned upon Marion.

"Why did you call me in here?" she whispered fiercely. "Just look at me! I'm a sight, a perfect sight!"

Marion opened her eyes until they were as round as saucers.

"Why, Tommy Bently! You went to a dance in that very dress!"

"Well," was the confused response, "I couldn't help that. I didn't know I was going to a dance."

"But you didn't mind very much, after you got there. You never care what you have on. You always say clothes don't matter. What in the world has happened to you?"

Tommy swallowed and remained silent. What was there for her to say? How could she explain that, quite suddenly, her personal appearance loomed before her as a thing of tremendous importance? Or that the visitor she had found seated upon the chesterfield had caused this revolution? There was, she concluded, no use trying.

"Some one wants to speak with you, Miss Clark," Wolverton told Marion as he reentered the living room. Then, when he was left alone with Tommy, he strode toward her, spoke casually but without preface. "Why did that man call you Tommy this morning?"

"Oh," she responded brightly. "Tommy's just a nickname Bob has for me. And occasionally other people use it, too. But Arthur never does. You"—a trifle anxiously—"you noticed that he called me Dot, when he asked how I was getting on these days?"

"Yes," he replied. "I noticed. Well, I'm leaving to-night, so I'll say good-by to you, now, Cousin Dot."

Tommy always swore afterward that she didn't know he was going to kiss her again. But certainly she made no protest, although this time Wolverton caught her tightly in his arms and his lips clung to hers.



Tommy stood rigid. Cousin Helen! Cousin Helen, who knew she wasn't Dot!
And there—there in the doorway—was Dot herself!

For a few brief seconds Tommy was so wildly, so inconceivably happy that she was untroubled by actualities; then a small voice seemed to beat against her brain in a frantic effort to be heard.

"You love him!" the voice cried. "You love him terribly. Now what are you going to do?"

The first thing she did was to tear herself away from him. Whether Tommy did this because she thought she should, or because the doorbell rang, could not be determined. At any rate, there was reason enough for circumspect behavior in the living room. There were voices in the hall, drawing nearer.

A tall woman entered the room first. Wolverton went forward with outstretched hand.

"Cousin Helen!" he exclaimed. "You're easily the last person I expected to see to-day."

Tommy stood rigid. Cousin Helen! Cousin Helen, who knew she wasn't Dot! And there—there in the doorway—was Dot herself!

The latter came quickly to Tommy's side.

She looked worried.

"Oh, my dear," she whispered, "I didn't know he'd still be here! How could I possibly guess? You see, Tom and I are engaged. It happened last night, so there wasn't any use staying longer. The party was rather dull. Tom had to come back this afternoon, so I thought I'd come with him. Then Cousin Helen, who was also staying with Gladys, decided to accompany us.

She wanted to be in New York to-morrow morning."

"Dot," Cousin Helen called, "come here. Doesn't she look like her picture, Wolverton—the one I showed you when you stopped off to see me?"

Tommy waited for no more. She slipped quietly from the room.

In the hallway, she pushed open blindly the first door at hand. It led to the kitchenette. Well, one refuge was as good as another.

She leaned weakly against the wall, her great, dark eyes smarting with tears. How despicable of him! He had seen Dot's picture; he had known all the time that she wasn't Dot! And yet he had dared to kiss her. Twice! He had kissed her twice!

The door of the kitchenette opened.

"Tommy——" a masculine voice began humbly.

She whirled about, faced Wolverton Dorrimer.

"Go right out of this—this kitchenette," she ordered haughtily. "I never want to see you again, never!"

"Oh, please! Won't you listen to me?"

"I will not. You knew all the time that I wasn't your cousin. Why did you kiss me? How did you dare?"

"Because I loved you. I fell in love with you when I walked into that living room yesterday. Was it only yesterday? I feel as though I had known you forever."

His voice was tender.

"Well, you haven't," Tommy informed him, although it must be admit-



"Go right out of this—this kitchenette," Tommy ordered haughtily. "I never want to see you again, never!"

ted that she sounded less pugilistic. "And when you knew I wasn't your cousin you had no right to kiss me."

"Listen to me, Tommy Bently!" He placed both hands on her shoulders and forced her to meet his eyes. "If a man loves a girl, has an opportunity to kiss her, and there isn't any reason why he shouldn't, what sort of man would he be if he didn't grasp his opportunity?"

"Well," said Tommy, lover of truth, "I suppose he'd be—sort of foolish."

"That's exactly the way I felt yesterday, and it's the way I feel this minute."

Once again Tommy was close in his arms, and—also once again—she made no effort to avoid the lips which sought hers.

"I thought you liked Marion," she told him a few minutes later. "You acted, last night, as if you did."

"I was trying not to show too plainly how I felt toward you," he responded. "Remember I was supposed to believe you were my cousin. When you suggested calling me Cousin Woolly, I was wondering just when I would dare to ask you to be Mrs. Woolly Dorrimer. How about it, Tommy? Could you—would you——"

"Well," said Tommy, "it's such a sort of comfy name. I don't see how I can resist it."

There was an interlude of silence—blissful silence—then Tommy lifted her head from Wolverton's shoulder; her eyes were dancing.

"Marion says I always do ridiculous things," she confided. "What will she say when she learns that I was proposed to in a kitchenette and in this dress?"

Dorrimer crushed Tommy closer against his heart.

"If she has any sense," he assured her, "she'll say this is the best little trysting place in New York and, what's more, she'll try it out on the man she likes best. Personally, I feel like having the place done over in gold leaf, with platinum faucets and a marble sink. I owe it the happiest moments of my life, darling! Don't you dare to malign this kitchenette! And what's the matter with your dress?" He surveyed the historic pongee with unfaltering approval, and added: "You look gorgeous; never saw you look better."

Tommy's arm tightened around his neck.

"Now I know you love me," she whispered. "You can't put gold leaf on the kitchenette, darling, but I can keep this dress forever. When I'm very old I'll take it out and look at it and say, 'I was a perfect sight that afternoon—but, just the same, he loved me!'"





TIME IS SO SHORT

by
May Edginton
Part III

THE STORY SO FAR

Having no family ties, Gracia Fair, impetuous, carefree, bubbling over with life, leaves her South Sea home. Her father has been deserted by her mother. He dies suddenly, and Ludlow, a business associate, becomes Gracia's confidante. She accepts a position as a companion to a spinster in England and meets Richard Devon, owner of a once-magnificent estate—Maytower. They fall in love. James Hillmore, millionaire, also falls in love with Gracia. Through Miss Grand, her employer, she meets Lady Party and her daughter, Gloria. Both girls find they love the same man—Richard.

CHAPTER VI.

GLORIA said sublimely: "I would bear anything."

"No," said Gracia, "you would not. You would die like a leaf in a blight if anything hard, or unpleasant ever touched you. It is I who could bear anything."

"This Mr. Hillmore——"

"This Mr. Hillmore will love you, Gloria. You are the girl he will want. He thinks of us differently. The Hillmores only want to protect the women who are already protected, and to play

with the others. Yesterday he fell in love with you as soon as he looked at you."

"As Richard did with you?" Gloria inquired with fine scorn from quivering lips.

"Richard is in love with Maytower."

Gracia's voice was very soft and very even.

"You call him Richard? Already!" Then Gloria knew. "You mean, already you and he—Richard—who never looks at a girl! Richard, the most austere person on earth! You've done what I could never—never——"

Then she wailed: "What are we going to do?"

Gracia sat silent, her elbows on her hunched knees, her chin in her hands. Her eyes roved the primrose banks.

"Those primroses—they're like your life, Gloria Party. You've had flowers—flowers all the way. While I have just about what I stand up in and carry in my pocket. I've nothing to give you. I'm just what I called myself—a waif and a stray, and I fight how I can."

"I'm afraid of you," cried Gloria.

"You have all the advantages; all that I haven't got," answered Gracia.

"I'll use them all," cried Gloria; but as she said it, her heart died within her. "Mother won't let me!"

That seemed to Gracia an epitome of this girl's life. She looked dazzling; she was precious; wrapped in luxury. But when her heart cried, she feared: "Mother won't let me!" She was shackled with money; crushed with care.

"Sometimes," said Gracia, "I'm glad I have no mother; that she went away and forgot me."

A long while the girls sat in the little car, arguing, talking. They fought. The queerest thing was that, in the bitterest moments, they did not hate each other. Among the fierce things in their hearts, hatred had no place. It pushed in, and went wistfully away; it started a fire, and unknown waters quenched it. They parted enemies; and yet—Gracia said to Gloria, forgetting social differences—"Gloria, I could kill you. But I almost love you."

Gloria, struggling to regain the social differences, wept back:

"I—I don't know why I have talked to you so. How could I do it? But —I have. It seemed—natural."

That evening Gracia went up the hill to Richard. She could not hold herself. She had been meaning to keep herself from him for quite a day or two, but as the hours wore on, she could not. She knew that she would go. She murmured to Miss Grand of her usual desire for the evening ramble.

It was too fine for the excuse of the long riding boots. The earth was sundry. Not a shower had fallen during the perfect day. The half hour's joy on Tiger's back must be foregone, unless she rode just as she was in the red frock and the white canvas shoes strapped with brown. But it was not of Tiger she was thinking as she

slipped along the field path which she had discovered, to Maytower. She thought of Gloria.

Gloria and all her softnesses and exquisiteness tormented Gracia all the long warm afternoon; Gloria and her advantages; Gloria and her trained, finished graces. She could not risk leaving Richard again to Gloria. And yet she knew herself a fool for the agonies. He had not looked once from Gracia to Gloria; her coldness left him cold. He neither knew nor cared how real that coldness was.

Hillmore was different. After satiation, the mountain brook enchanted him; the rare air of mountaintops that breathed a message from Gloria gave him the former thrill of headier wines; the white rose was his delight.

Beneath the hedges scented with early May blossom, Gracia ran. She went close under the high hedges, knowing her red frock to be a signal for the countryside. She came, without meeting a soul, to the desert of the old stableyard, and the elms at the gates, where the rooks cawed, restless and greedy. She crept close to Richard's windows and looked in.

He was there!

She had thought he might be out tending the herd of Shorthorns, or pottering round the park with his gun, stalking his dinner; but he sat in the quiet room, working, doing accounts. She could see the furrowing of his brows.

He wore the tattered riding breeches and a shirt open at the neck, as usual. His brown riding boots, of a superlative build, would by now have been disowned by their makers.

She loved him!

She tapped the window. He looked up and saw the vivid face, the most vivid thing in life, colored all over its creamy whiteness by the wind and the sun, by rapture and passion. Her black hair, with all the stars melted in it,

had slipped a little down, low over her brows and neck. She was not just one of the carefully nurtured girls of the best families around; not a trained, conventionalized, polished product of school and ballroom and tennis court; she was Woman! For a minute he stared, trembling, then he sprang up, went to the low sash window and lifted her through it.

She put her arms round him, sighing.

"I had to come."

"I didn't hope——"

"No; I said last night I couldn't. Indeed, I thought it better not. But I just had to."

They kissed. In the midst of the kiss, he was whispering:

"Oh! You'll have to come to stay soon. You must! You must!"

They sat beside the light wood fire, side by side. The April evening was growing sharply cool; the birds twittered very faintly about the gardens, preparing for the oblivion of night. Gracia, sighing, leaned against Richard's breast.*

"Let's have supper together just for once. I'll cook it," Gracia offered. "Eggs and bacon? Coffee—— Plenty for a party!"

She began to cook. They made a game of it. When he had set the table for two, he came and watched her at work near the fire. He drew the ancient curtains across the window and shut night out, and the remaining evening light. He lighted a lamp. They were alone.

She looked into his eyes and saw that he loved her, this austere Richard—Maytower's lover. She wished that she did not love him so much, for she felt weak and happy, glorious and sacrificial. It seemed to her, as it has seemed to so many women, that love was not so much a feast as an offering that one brought to a high altar.

She thought with hatred of the old house.

They sat down at the table together.

All through the meal he looked at her, worshipping her.

It was a revelation to Gracia, this love of Richard's, which she could not mistake for a lesser thing than it was. Men had never loved her like this, suddenly, utterly, consumedly, single-heartedly. But she was jealous all the same; she was jealous of Maytower.

She could hear Hillmore saying in his reflective voice:

"Perhaps one day he will love a woman more than he loves his house."

Suddenly she said: "Richard, we have the world before us, you and I. Such a large world, Richard. Such a gorgeous place!"

He drew his chair close beside hers.

"The world is in our hearts, Gracia. You mean that?"

Again she leaned against him, abandoning herself to the thoughts that came.

"I wish you loved me more. I wish you loved me more!"

He was on fire, ardent, fierce, at that. He was all lover! But while he caressed and kissed her, while he whispered all his adoration, she was withheld, remote, even while she answered. He felt, in some strange, cruel way, a strange, cruel barrier between them. Seeking, he begged her to tell.

"Sweetheart; Gracia; what is it?"

She said in a little dry voice that went to the lover's heart:

"You love Maytower first and best."

A tortured silence descended upon them. He caressed and kissed her and called her darling names. But that strange, cruel barrier of her disbelief and sorrow, pride and jealousy, rose between them. At last he said:

"Don't you understand how I see it? That you, being you, so splendid—more splendid than any woman I have ever known—will love Maytower as I do; that you will work with me, inspire me, help me, until in the end we'll win

through and I'll pour all your rewards into your lap—if love isn't reward enough."

She leaned against him, listening to man's eternal dream.

He repeated: "If love isn't reward enough, Gracia."

For answer she turned, wound her arms about his neck and kissed him. He had never believed before in so great a delirium of joy.

"You know I would give you everything you want."

"I know," she whispered, tears on her long lashes, "that you would not give me the thing I most want."

"Gracia!"

"I would like to have Maytower in my hands; show Maytower that Gracia is the stronger; prove that you love me best!"

She saw him look at her as though his heart had stopped. "And then, what would you do?"

"I should hand back Maytower for you to play with—just a little gift from Gracia—scornfully."

He laughed with delight.

"So jealous? So jealous?"

"So jealous," she sighed.

"Why would that amuse you so?"

"It just would. Any woman would know—any woman who loved a man."

She heard him whisper, "Strange!" and yet she saw that she had delighted him. He was all rapture at her rage. She withdrew herself a little and would not be coaxed back. She saw, in a fierce glance that she gave him, that he began to consider, think, plan how best to reassure her.

He whispered:

"You do love Maytower? You see as I do?"

"I love Maytower," she murmured back, "but I hate it, too."

"If you were a different woman, you would be asking me to sell it. I could, you know! Ah, but you don't know. I've never told you of that. But you

are Gracia—full of courage and faith. You wouldn't ask me to sell."

"You wouldn't sell this house, Richard?"

"I would not."

She cried out:

"You would lose me first."

He was torn for a moment; then nodded. His lips were set.

"You see!" she cried.

"But, Gracia," he begged, "we have not to consider any such thing."

"You would lose me first!"

"Only in this way—that if you were the kind of woman who would ask me to sell Maytower for her sake, I couldn't love you. You would be dead."

"You couldn't love me?"

In the same voice in which he had answered:

"I would not," now he said, "I could not."

Her arms were about his neck again; her face near his.

"I wouldn't ask you. Trust me."

"I do trust you, my dear."

She put her head on his breast, and thought. The simple scheme of Delilah worked in her brain, elemental. She meant to get her way. Women did. Women abused men's trust, broke their hearts, ransacked their pockets; and still were pardoned and loved. Women could dare all! Women had a privilege, a prerogative of immunity denied to men. And leaning there against him, the most crude and simple, and yet successful of Delilahs, she had no fear. For he loved her, and he could not help himself.

She felt her way, by predatory female instinct, among the subtleties, the niceties of this problem. For passion was not quite all; and she knew it. Passion might bait the trap, but deception must lead him to it.

She let her tears fall—real tears—for she wanted it all very passionately. She wanted the lover and the honeymoon yacht, warm waters and white

moons, to get away from this dead place of stone.

When he saw that she really wept bitterly, he was demented. He kept begging her:

"But, dearest, believe, do believe. I love you; I love you. All that I have I lay at your feet. So little to offer—but all that I have."

"I want to feel—to feel—you trust me; put me above Maytower."

"How can I show it to you? How can I explain? Listen! Listen! Gracia."

"I am listening," she sobbed, and tears poured down her face.

"I will give you all that I have——"

"That's Maytower."

"Maytower. For a wedding present. It shall be ours, not mine."

"If you did that—oh, Richard! I'd believe I came first."

"You do come first."

But she saw troubles, indecisions on his face. He was bemused with love, but not so bemused that he was not disturbed, suddenly grave.

Again she laid her face against his. He could feel her tears, and her warm, sobbing breath. But now she was half laughing.

"Richard, this is Gracia in love—so silly, so jealous! But love is not sane, Richard. Give Gracia, Maytower, and she'll threaten it and beat it and hate it and triumph over it for a week, and then—then give it back to you."

"Don't cry any more. Any game you like! If it pleased you!" And he put his mouth hard on hers, murmuring unsteadily: "There's no reason in love. You're right, darling. Love is not sane. But ah! it's so splendid a game!"

"What magnificent presents we two paupers shall be giving each other, darling Richard! darling! darling!"

And they were both laughing, although Gracia had not finished crying yet.

He held her in his arms.

"In less than two weeks we can be married. I have arranged for the license; I shall take you into Exeter; no one will know."

"You have arranged?"

"I did it all after I'd first kissed you. You could but refuse——"

His voice was soft.

"Refuse? I adore you!"

"I knew at once you were for me, Gracia. And I have never cared for a woman before. That's true."

Gracia knew this. She knew it with a little wonder and awe and thankfulness and shame. She murmured:

"I'm happy. I'd never even hoped to be the first love of any man. All the men I've known so far began from their cradles."

"Then, dear, ten days from now, you come to Exeter, and marry me!"

"When will you give me Maytower?"

"As soon as it can be conveyanced—that's a legal word—little Gracia. You shall have it properly—all deeded and signed and everything."

"There'll have to be lawyers?"

"Yes. A lawyer who'll lick through it all quickly and not ask questions. No one shall laugh at our little private foolishness, Gracia. I know such a lawyer. None of our family lawyers for little bits of silliness like this, done to convince little demanding Gracia how she matters."

She looked him steadily in the eyes, her own bright as stars, still swimming with tears.

"Richard!"

"Yes, my dear."

"Believe, Richard. Nothing but this bit of silliness would convince me."

"I know it, you sensitive, proud, romantic, melodramatic thing."

"That is what I am, I know. Melodramatic. It's the South Seas in my blood. Forgive me."

"Darling, I adore it in you—all the madness; everything. You're warm, alive, full of color! You seem like a

woman who could never die. And so many are half dead all through life."

"I shall never be half dead," said Gracia. "It is all, or nothing, with me. Then, Richard, for two or three or four—two or three or four, Richard—whole days, I will take Maytower away from you."

"You will have it in less than a week."

"On the morning we're married, I'll give it back to you."

He nodded: "We'll just tear up the act of conveyance."

His tone was gentle.

She said softly: "Don't you love this little bit of life that no one knows about?"

"I do. Gracia, ten days ago I hadn't met you; didn't know there was anything so divine on earth."

"Things happen very suddenly with me always," answered Gracia. "I tell you, it is all or nothing. Life is so swift, Richard—so swift!" And under her breath she said: "But you don't know that."

"Life is here, Gracia, just as strong as on the other side of the world."

"All the life in the world is just here," vouchsafed Gracia very sweetly, in his arms.

She fumbled at her hair; she drew out great shell pins, shook her head.

"My head aches with crying; I only cry for you, Richard, because I care so." Her hair fell in black waves, that seemed to have the light of a furnace on them, over her shoulders, over Richard's hands, to the floor.

They sat quite silent. She knew the effect of that wondrous hair that had never been cut, nor otherwise maltreated. She felt his hands upon it; felt his face go down among it. She knew that he loved her terribly and passionately; but reverently. She knew that she had him in her two hands. She did not doubt the continuance of her reign nor the security of her throne. She

began to dream of their happiness. She felt ascendancy over Maytower. When the time came he would forgive all, think of nothing but the happiness to come. Men were men. Already he was dazzled, transported to a heaven that he had never guessed.

She looked up through the clouds of hair.

"Richard, forgive me! Let me be silly. Give me what I want. I will make you so happy—so happy. But give me what I want. You must indulge all my madness, darling; all Gracia's madness. Promise?"

"Everything I have—all yours. Don't I tell you? Am I not doing this thing just to please you—to make you content, to make you see that I worship you?"

"But not enough, Richard. Not enough. You are going to love me far, far more. You are going to love me enough for anything, Richard."

He held her to him hard for the last embrace, before some damned clock struck eight. He hated to let her go. He knew that he would live for the minutes that she would spend with him again. He could not bear the parting. He had never known such amazement as that of holding Gracia in his arms.

"Things just happen like this," she sighed as they kissed. "Life is like this. Only cold people—poor people—half-wits—I pity them! They think life is just afternoon tea."

Now they rejoiced together, planning the next meeting.

Gracia let Richard plait her hair, and delight himself by winding it about her head. She looked into the fire, dreaming of their future. She thought of him of all men the most beautiful—the most wonderful.

She thought of how he had come riding into her life over a green meadow on a dun-colored horse. Yes, she could have lost herself youthfully in her great joy, but that Delilah in her—the Deli-



"Richard, forgive me! Let me be silly! Give me what I want, and I will make you happy—so happy!"

lah implanted by the trader Fair, and trained by strange teachings and strange adventures in strange places—*forbade*. Love was not all!

The lover's hands, caressed the hair he had plaited; and Gracia kneeled on the hearth, feeling like all the vampires on all the screens, in all the stories, on all the stages of the world, merged into one.

CHAPTER VII.

It came about, therefore, that, after all, Gracia dined with Hillmore in Exeter, the nearest town of importance that could cater for the needs of a rich man taking a pretty girl to dinner.

It was curiously easy to manage Miss Grand, who vetoed nothing, it seemed, that could add to her employee's enjoyment of such life as Watercombe had to offer. She was, indeed, piteously anxious on the subject of Hillmore; piteously anxious and hopeful.

"It is almost as if you want to make a match for me—I mean a marriage," said Gracia candidly as she dressed in the green frock, jade necklace, and a black hat that the little spinster had given her as a surprise gift that very morning.

The hat had come in a box with other hats, on approval, and Miss Grand sat by while the girl tried them on. Her

flushed delight, her shining eyes, and the clasp and unclasp of the bird-like claws again fascinated and touched Gracia.

"You're so kind to me," she vouchsafed between hats, "so kind to me; I can't think why."

But only demurring twitters came from the high-winged armchair in which the little spinster had submerged herself.

Miss Grand asked Hillmore in, when he drove the red-and-silver car round at six-thirty.

She hovered about him, pressing suave and pertinent little questions, "until," he said later to Gracia, "I quite thought she was going to ask me my intentions regarding you, my dear child."

That was at dinner. They sat opposite each other at a table in the city's best hotel, Gracia drawing all eyes, Hillmore amused and pleased at attaining, thus far, one of the lightest of his desires. He had not expected Gracia to drive out here with him to dine.

"I know your intentions quite well," Gracia replied frankly, "and they are not in the least likely to be fulfilled. But it is amusing here with you; I like good food, cars, and besides, there is really something I want to say to you."

"I thought there was something behind that little note of yours."

"Were you surprised?"

"Very. And delighted."

"I suppose Watercombe is dull for you."

"There are houses here, where I am very hospitably welcomed," said Hillmore, "but the conventional dinner party often leaves something to be desired."

"I have never been to one," said Gracia, "but I should think it likely."

"Anyway, this evening is an oasis," said Hillmore, smiling pleasantly into her eyes.

Gracia liked Hillmore because she

understood him. Her cards and his both lay on the table, and each admired the other's hand. She knew that he thought seriously and deeply of Gloria Party. He had divined her secret about Richard; and his thought of herself was that she was fair game, marvelously attractive, freshly entertaining; and with qualities of heart and courage for which he could only respect her. She knew that he was a man who must amuse himself after the manner of men, and yet who was a good friend, an indulgent, generous, wise friend after his fashion, to all manner of women.

He was inviting her: "Tell me this important thing that you have to say."

"You tell me something of the legalities of giving away, selling and buying land."

"What a long word for the child! 'Legalities!'"

However, he took her seriously, with an eye for her air of purpose, and began to explain. She listened through terms like, "abstract of title," "investigation of claim," "conveyancing," "agreement of sale," "vendor," and so on, until she had the simplified idea of the business.

"It is more complicated than I thought."

"Much depends on your lawyer."

"So he said. At least, so I understood."

"What are we getting at, Gracia?"

"What is it you so much want to buy?"

"You are speaking of Maytower," said Hillmore seriously.

She nodded; and asked:

"When did you last ask him, yourself, to sell?"

"He won't see me since I lost my temper over his change of mind a while back," Hillmore confessed. "He won't open the matter."

"He opens it to me." Gracia could not help announcing magnificently.

Hillmore smiled.

He looked at her—exactly the girl to sweep that hard, ascetic type of man off his feet! She was warm, glowing and radiant, beneath the black hat, the green dress and beads pointing the green in her eyes. It was always the same, Hillmore thought. No man was proof.

"Tell me exactly what you mean, my dear girl."

"It's a secret."

"Very well. A secret. I will keep it."

"Yes; you are a man who can keep secrets."

"I like your judgment of me."

"You are one of those nice bad men with whom one feels so happy and safe," Gracia enlarged carelessly.

"Don't sidetrack, Gracia. Don't hesitate. Trust me now. Tell me."

"In a few days Maytower will be mine."

Hillmore could hardly speak for astonishment. Then he said in a low, quick voice:

"How? What do you mean?"

"We had a talk, you and I, about marriage once. I said I wanted money; but I wanted the supreme man, too. Well," she boasted, "haven't I found one? Can you think of any man who would give a girl a more magnificent wedding gift than his all?"

"A wedding gift, did you say?"

"That's the secret. We are to be married in ten days or so. There's time for this agreement-making before then?"

"Considering I've already made all arrangements—which were repudiated—why, yes. But——"

"But?"

"Is this house and land to be yours unconditionally?"

Gracia replied: "He said it was mine to play with."

"When will it be yours?"

"Richard has gone to London to-day to see to this—what-do-you-call-it business."

"Otherwise you wouldn't dare to be sitting here with me."

"True," Gracia acknowledged.

"But," she added. "It is only to talk business that I am here. You see that."

Hillmore sat silent. He refilled Gracia's glass and his own with red wine, not speaking. He looked over the astounding situation in his mind. It is more than probable that across his vision Gloria flitted—Gloria whose girl-ish, inexperienced affections were centered on Richard. Hillmore felt the glow of relief of a man who sees a dangerous rival out of the way. For he believed readily that Richard Devon was going to marry Gracia.

Again he smiled, a smile of raillery on Gracia, while his brain revolved the formal aspects of her business.

"How did you make him do it, Gracia?"

Over Gracia's face and neck stole one of the heavenliest blushes Hillmore had ever seen. And, quite suddenly, she was a confused, smiling child, unable to meet his eyes. He patted her hand.

"Never mind. I expect I know. You are a divine little girl, dear."

"You are not to ask questions, see Richard, or make any trouble!"

"It is not my intention to make trouble if I can buy what I want."

"In a few days at most I can sell it to you. There will be these formalities to go through?"

"I will see to that."

He could still hardly believe her, though he knew, somehow, that this was true.

"Let me dissect you, Gracia, see your motives. What a little brain it has! You want the true romance and the money, too. In marrying a poor man, you're gaining yourself a rich husband. That's what it comes to. You've made him give you his house, you baby vamp! I can guess the power of your persuasions. You'll sell it—for he never could—and you'll go off together and live,

riotously on the money. Queer! Queer! But then life is queer; and love and lovers are all mad! Only women are seldom mad, Gracia. They always keep a little pin-point of sanity when the man has lost all his."

"The money—how much?"

"I offered him two hundred thousand dollars."

"And to me you said you would add twenty-five per cent to that."

Hillmore remembered.

"Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars," said Gracia. "Keep the secret; it is all to be very quiet. I will sell you Maytower."

CHAPTER VIII.

When Gracia escaped on one of those evening walks nine days later, she was thinking: "To-morrow morning I shall be married to Richard."

It was the end of April. The evenings were light, gracious; the country-

side was clothed in young, pale green. Gracia loved that English spring as she had loved no spring before. She loved the earth! She loved all! Those nine days had been days of young, innocent rapture, in which she had surprised herself. For she had looked upon herself as a woman of the world, and now she knew how innocent she was, how ignorant; and how she walked, a stranger, in new paths, just as Gloria might have done. Never had she realized till now the infinite flowering of the gardens of the soul.

She would be sorry, she knew, to-morrow, to clandestinely leave the little gray spinster who, so strangely, loved her. She would be a little sorry not



"That's the secret! We are to be married in ten days or so," confessed Gracia. "There's time for this agreement-making before then?"

to have been able to lay her head against that inadequate shoulder and tell her a tale of romance to thrill her. But there would have been matters to explain; involving Richard; involving, in devious ways, discovery of her great strategy.

That was how she thought of it. And for herself, she felt at once a wise woman and a naughty child, who had tricked others to get its own way.

But, essentially, that child was a child to be forgiven.

In those nine days she had bound Richard to her; he was her slave; she filled his heart and soul, and ran in his blood. He had put Maytower into her hands with a laugh, impatient for kisses.

"There," he said. "See! You have me and all I am and all I've got in your two hands. Now do you believe? Now you won't cry or be jealous any more, my love?"

Truly, Gracia was not jealous any more. Maytower was Hillmore's. During those days she had played games with Richard about the house. She played entrancingly. She put on airs of owner and mistress; abused it; at last confessed—play acting—how she loved it.

"And, dear," she said, "the evening before we're married I'll give it back to you. Imagine Gracia receiving and giving presents worth hundreds of thousands of dollars—Gracia—with only the meanest rags to her back!"

"We'll tear the deed of conveyance up and watch it burn together, you queer baby," he replied.

But in Gracia's breast that evening, between her frock and her skin, was no stiff, legal-looking document such as she had handed over to Hillmore on that memorable breath-taking day when she became a rich woman. There was something folded into a little silk bag on the end of the jade necklace which she had dropped inside her frock. There was a banker's draft for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

And it was all for Richard. Gracia had no other thought about the money. She did not look upon it as hers. It was his already, although as yet in her gift. Richard would—

What would he do?

Color, stealing over her face and neck, Gracia knew:

"He'll do—just whatever I will."

She had him bound so fast; so deliciously happy.

He was expecting her, standing at the gate of the stableyard. There was no one near to see them. She ran into his arms.

"The last visit of Miss Gracia Fair to Maytower," he said.

And laughing, she cried: "Yes. The very last!"

They went into the room that now she knew so well. She saw that he had tried to prepare a feast. She moved around the table, exclaiming.

He followed her: "Yes, I got that game pie from Exeter this morning. Tiger and I went in. He didn't like the basket on my arm, and I couldn't let him jog it. We were at loggerheads all the way back. And that's the last—the very last—champagne in my cellar. Take off your hat, darling."

He caressed her hair.

They sat in the window seat, looking out upon the main gardens, where April had tried to put some young life into the old wilderness.

"It's warm," he said with a laugh, "but you see I lighted a fire for the burnt offering."

"We'll drink the champagne first," said Gracia, looking at the burning logs on the hearth.

He got up and pulled the cork. The wine foamed over.

"I love it! I love it!" said Gracia.

"Gracia! To to-morrow!"

They drank.

There now came quite suddenly to Gracia, in spite of the champagne that she knew she had drunk to help her,



‘There,’ said Richard. ‘See! You have me and all I am and all I’ve got in your two hands. Now you won’t cry or be jealous any more? Tell me.’

She could not have said why she felt less Delilah tonight; why

a sense of oppression. There was a weight in her breast. And in her heart she knew that it had been heavy on her for days; it had burdened her as she went up the hill to Maytower. She knew all at once that jubilation was perhaps sorrow; success, perhaps, was failure; that life was not of the simplicity she had persuaded herself. She looked at Richard.

She could not have said just at what instant, as she looked at his high head, his weather-burned face, his eyes hot as fire, she became afraid, doubtful, defensive. But she was obliged to put down her goblet so as not to betray the shaking of her hand.

more of an ignorant, pitiful child, who in folly can lay a toy world in ruins. She could not have said why her passionate intuitions, her supposed possessions of Eden-old arts and knowledge, all at once dwindled and seemed that they might fail her. Yet, so it was, as she looked in Richard’s straight, hot eyes.

‘Hungry?’ he smiled.

‘Not for food,’ answered Gracia, going into his arms. And in her brain she was worrying: ‘This—this is all I know—this vamp stuff. Suppose—there are other things—stronger—’

He loved her to be hungry for kisses, for love. The generosity and flame of

her affection were to him the most beautiful things about her. He was whole-hearted, like herself. What he worshiped he worshiped wholly; whom he loved he loved dearly. The half measure was a measure he could never learn.

He murmured to her, sitting again in the window seat where hyacinth-scented air flowed over them:

"We're so alike, you and I; such whole-hoggers, Gracia. Is that why we understand each other so well? You understood how I felt about Maytower. I understood how you felt; both of us right, Gracia, you to be jealous, I to be proud. But now you're happy, aren't you?"

"I am, like this," Gracia breathed.

"It's been fun playing, hasn't it?"

She nodded.

"Only lovers know what fun lovers have," he said. "And now the game's over, and it has satisfied you?"

"I am satisfied," Gracia nodded.

"Wait a minute," she said, and she played with the buttons of his old riding coat, thinking.

It had not seemed to her that there would be so uneasy a moment before the simple, audacious revelation. It had not seemed to her that all difficulty would not be smoothed by her mere contact, in his arms.

The wicked and genial wisdom of trader Fair had seemed to her always pretty good, as a general rule, to follow: "Life between men and women," he had impressed upon his five-year-old daughter, "is only a question of buying and selling. You're the vender, Gracia, and don't you let the goods go cheap!" This stood one in good stead in many places; only—it had a tawdry sound about it here in this dead, disdained house.

"You remember, Richard——" Gracia began.

He was listening, lovingly, watching her face rather than listening to her words.

"You remember how I told you how I longed for lovely things, good times, with—with the man I loved, Richard. I'm made like that. I can't help it. If you and I had money and could go somewhere into the sun—and honeymoon——"

Richard put his hand beneath her chin and lifted her face.

"Gracia?"

"It sounds small, selfish; but it isn't really small or selfish at all. You'd be just as happy as I."

Gracia saw no suspicion in Richard's face; but she saw trouble; a scare. He was wondering if, after all, she were drawing back from their adventure together? She decided to tell him at once, but found her heart beating so madly that it choked the words in her throat.

"How your heart beats!" said Richard, closely; and he laid a hand upon it.

"Hold me, Richard," said Gracia.

"I am holding you, my dear."

"I have brought your wedding gift; as you say, the game is over."

"We were lunatics," said Richard, "but then, as we know—as I've learned for the first time from you, Gracia—love is not sane. A man will do any damn silly thing to please the woman he loves!"

"Weren't you afraid to—to trust me, Richard?"

"Where I love, I must trust! And besides, you think with me, don't you, sweetheart?"

"You are sure you love me very much?"

He affirmed that he did.

Gaining confidence, she said: "I will give you your present."

She fumbled at the jade chain and pulled up the little silk bag.

"I made a little bag to put it in. Isn't it clever, for me—Gracia—who can't sew?"

"It isn't in there?"

"It is.

She opened the mouth of the little

bag, gasping: "You are sure you love me very, very much, Richard?"

"My darling!"

She drew out the draft, unfolded it.

In a voice that she would not allow to break, but made airy, she told him: "Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for you and me. Or, not me; for you, Richard. It is yours!"

Her voice softened.

When Gracia felt her lover's arms relax, she looked up steadily into his face. She made herself steady in the face of danger.

He leaned over her, asking very quietly: "What is that money for, then?"

Gracia was gazing up into those eyes, hot as fire, examining her from his still face.

"For Maytower."

"For Maytower?" He stood up straight, looked around him, at the small room walled with books; at the sweep of land outside the window. For a painfully long while, it seemed to Gracia, there was silence in the room.

His eyes came back to her.

"So you betrayed me! Sold me, after all."

"Oh, understand! understand!" she was crying. "I want us to be happy; I want us to be rich—while we're young! If we lived here, in this corpse of a house, pinching, scraping every penny, we couldn't go on living. Years and years of it! Imagine! With all that great world outside! I did it for you, Richard—because you were stubborn, stupid—wouldn't do it for yourself. It is all yours. Take it!"

She was still holding out the draft to him, and he stood away from her.

"No," he said, "it is all yours—the money you schemed for, and loved for and kissed for. You are a Judas woman. I knew there were women like you; but you blinded me—your childishness, your allure—everything. I believed you. Lord! I was a poor fool.

I am not the first man to be betrayed by a woman; but I should have said I would be the last. Yet, how easily you did it, you damn thief, you!"

"Richard, I love you!"

"I'm done with all that. Take your money and go!"

"Your money, darling. For you."

"How pretty you make it sound!"

"Oh," said Gracia wildly, "don't look at me like that; speak like that. Rage, swear, beat me, anything; but not that, Richard! Not that!"

And she lowered her eyes.

The draft rustled down to the floor and lay at her feet.

"I've heard of men being fools," she heard him saying, "but that I—I should have been robbed and tricked. I'd hardly looked at any woman till you came. I thought I knew better. How a man's senses sell him over and over again."

"You love me," whispered Gracia huskily.

Richard laughed.

The sound of that laughter silenced Gracia, who had begun, unconsciously, to sob. She drew her hands down her face and looked at him over them.

"I could kill you," he said.

"Kill me then," cried Gracia, with childish wildness.

He laughed again: "Oh, you have so much to live for. You'll enjoy life on all that cash." He contemplated the draft on the floor. "You'll have the sables, the frocks, the limousine. The man doesn't count. You can't buy me in along with the dressmaker's stuff, but what matter? I have helped you to your desire."

"Richard, if I—I have to live without you—I—I don't want to live. Can't!"

"You'll have to practice it. After all, you've known me such a short while; I can't have made a serious impression. You made such quick work of it. Tell me," he said, "were all your kisses

false? When you let your hair down that evening, was that planned, too? The siren gesture! Eh? You've been brought up on the best movies, undoubtedly! But tell me, was it all false?"

"No! No—no! All true!"

"You liar!"

She met his eyes, all the fire out of them. They were just slits of granite. She hardly knew his face.

"I wish you were a man," he said, "you would barely get away from here alive. As it is——"

"As it is, you'll understand—forgive me. Richard, let us sit by the fire there, like we always do. I'm cold."

She shivered, but the lover no longer sprang to her side at the faintest sign of discomfort.

"Cold?" he said. "Go home then."

"We haven't arranged——" she breathed.

"Arranged? What more is there?"

"To-morrow."

"To-morrow. What of it?"

"We're to be married."

"Married?" he said so quietly that the words seemed hardly to break the silence. "I wouldn't touch you!"

"You mean—it is over?"

"Don't doubt it. Tell me. How much did Hillmore know?"

"Nothing, except that you gave me Maytower."

"What did he say of that?"

"N-n-nothing. He knows—men have given women houses—fortunes, before. There have been—been—marriage settlements before."

"He did not make it his business. Tell me, how did you negotiate this sale?"

Gaspingly, crying, she informed him of Hillmore's procedure.

"You can ask him," she kept faltering, "ask him."

"I've been fool enough. Do you suppose I'm going about publishing it? No!"

"Richard—but—to-morrow——"

"There is no to-morrow for you and me."

Gracia found herself somehow at Richard's feet; she, who had never implored any man, humbled herself to any man, did so now. For a long while she knelt there, weeping, protesting, trying to make him see her gorgeous plans that had cost him his equally gorgeous plans. But at last he bent, and lifted her to her feet, shaking her.

"Stand up!"

The command, given brutally, straightened Gracia's back and lifted her low head. She dashed the hair from her eyes, and looked at him. She gave him back fiercely look for look.

"Take your money and go!"

"I leave your money and go!"

It was he who picked up the draft, and crammed it into the little bag hanging at the end of the jade string.

"Yours," he said with immeasurable scorn. "You sold us both for it. Keep it. Go! To-night I stay here and to-morrow I have no house, and I shall go also."

"Where?"

"It no longer concerns you."

She faltered, pulling her wits together: "Tiger—the Shorthorns——"

He laughed cynically.

"Oh, ah. I can still raise a few hundred. Want them, too?"

Gracia looked at him, white, wild, and speechless.

He opened the door.

She began to move toward it very slowly. As she went she looked about the small, quiet room, smelling the faint smell of good tobacco, and of leather chairs, and the hyacinth scent coming in from the night outside. She knew that here had she found her first real, deep, sweet raptures; and that if she could not recapture them they would be her last.

She knew dimly now that there must be thoughts, honors, possessions of the soul, which could not be exchanged for warm skies, white

moons, white shoulders with pearls on them, smooth cars and rich living. She knew dimly, troublously, if still ignorantly, that she had outraged these honors of the soul.

She trembled. "I have been happy here for the first time in my life; I know it now. I—I thought it all so gay; but until I came here with you [—]"

"Good-by."

And Gracia passed him blindly.

She did not know if he followed her, in this scornful punctilious fashion that lashed her, to the flagged hall, to speed her departure. All she knew was that the great hall doors stood open wide to the night; she walked through them as blindly as she had walked from the room. And she found herself running like a hare through the gardens. As she ran she sobbed bewilderedly, faintly.

She reached the fence, and dropped over, and ran on through the park.

"I have got nothing in the world now that matters," she kept saying to herself. "Nothing that matters! All I have is two hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

Gracia reached the little house, dry-eyed, before the supper hour of eight thirty. With the terrible and tragic completeness of youth's despair, she had also the uplift of youth's resiliency. Her heart could not but hope. Already it beat to a faint tune of belief in the blank future somewhere. All was lost; but somehow, something must yet be saved.

To-morrow, when he had slept, when he had thought, when he had missed her——

Her heart tried to suggest these hopes, as she stole upstairs. Still white and bewildered, she looked in the glass, and took down her hair to dress it again with careful, trembling hands.

Against her skin the little silk bag crackled dryly.

Hillmore had told her what to do with the draft.

"Put this instantly in the bank in your name," he had said, naming the bank in the nearest town three miles away. "I'll drive you there myself. Or better still, since it's a sensational amount for folks to gossip over, pay it in to a London bank where I shall recommend you." Here he named his own bank.

She had answered so lightly—it was only this morning, so short a while ago: "When I have given it to some one, he will pay it to his own account, you know."

Hillmore washed his hands of it here, merely cautioning careful custody of the draft. Then she had shown him the little bag—"the casket for the greatest wedding gift that ever was," she boasted arrogantly.

She glared at the money with a petulant, fiery hatred! The magnificent gesture of tearing up the draft and scattering the pieces to the winds was not too melodramatic for her. Only, hating the money, she respected it. Money was a god. All over the earth she had seen men worshiping it. It was power. So to-morrow again she would offer it; and if again rejected, she could go to Hillmore, and say: "Show me how to open a banking account that I shall never touch."

Her pride and hurt were fiercer, deeper even than Richard's.

"I am not a thief," she said to herself madly, as she twisted up her hair. Her mental pain was so great that it became almost physical, throbbing all over her body.

She went down slowly to the dining room for supper, barely believing that the conflict was not written on her face. But the face was too smooth, too young, for battle to scar it yet. She could face Miss Grand. Opening the door, she saw that the little spinster already sat at the table, waiting, her hands folded in her lap.

"I'm late?"

"No, my dear. I'm early. I heard you come in, and thought you would be here soon, so I sat down. A pleasant walk?"

"So nice," said Gracia.

And they helped themselves to a little dish in which hot cheese figured. There was not meat for supper in that frugal house every day.

Miss Grand glowed this evening. While Gracia felt as if every bone in her body ached from beating, and was weary, the little lady at the head of the table was imbued with new life. She had become glad, purposeful. When the meal was over, and Elizabeth had cleared the things away, they still sat at the table, by Miss Grand's request, drinking coffee.

"I want to talk to you, Gracia."

"Yes, Miss Grand."

The little spinster began in her sweet, thin voice in which excitement thrilled:

"You have made the acquaintance of Gloria Party, dear, and I have been glad to see how you two young girls take to each other. It looks like a friendship. Are you—fond of her, Gracia?"

And Gracia, touched in spite of her own anguish, by the little woman's trembling sentiment, answered: "I suppose it might be a friendship if it were not for the difference between us socially. But Lady Party is not the woman to overlook that."

She might have added: "And if Gloria Party and I were not already at daggers drawn over a man," only that she did not wish for the complication of question and answer that must follow.

Miss Grand said quietly, with purpose: "You are, no doubt, envying Gloria her chances. Any young girl would envy another who is just going to enjoy her first London season."

"Is Gloria going to London?"

"Next month. You may or may not know, dear, that our social season opens

in May. Do you envy her, Gracia? Think."

Gracia thought. And the thought distracted her for a brief moment from Richard, for she could not help but image to herself her own conceptions of a young girl's triumphant London season. She imaged clothes; dancing; sporting events as described by society papers; men; petting; adulation; admiration.

"I suppose it must be wonderful."

"Would you not like it for yourself, dear?"

Gracia saw tears in the little spinster's eyes, a smile on her lips; a roguish smile, defying the tears.

"You can have it," said Miss Grand simply.

And when she had said this she folded her hands on her lap, and sat very still, as if hardly breathing; as if the prospect were too great to bear.

Gracia's thoughts wrested themselves from Richard to circle around Miss Grand.

She stammered: "What do you mean, please?"

Rapt eyes were turned upon her.

"I want to give you your London season, like Gloria; to give you dresses and pretty things, like Gloria; to let you be seen. To give you a chance in life—a chance of what matters most to a girl——"

Gracia stammered: "But why? Why, please, should you?"

Miss Grand answered: "Don't ask. I could not explain. Treat it as a dear wish of a lone old maid." The roguish smile of a conspirator continued to defy the tears in her eyes. "Treat it as the greatest pleasure life could offer—me. To launch a young girl—to feel all that Lotta Party is feeling about Gloria!"

"You and Lady Party," said Gracia, emboldened by sheer astonishment, "are like two foes walking round and round each other, each waiting for the other to strike."

"Jealousy, dear," said Miss Grand in

a light voice, "just jealousy. I envy her possession of the child. She is afraid of my influence upon Gloria."

"Your influence?" Gracia questioned falteringly.

Serenely Miss Grand confirmed: "My influence. I have an influence with Gloria. I build it up look by look, word by word, step by step. Why shouldn't I?"

Now her voice rang with a passion unfamiliar to Gracia; the passion of a claimant to possession.

"Lady Party frustrates you," Gracia said, pressing on in the sudden interest of all that had been discussed. "She fights you."

"You notice it?"

Her voice was very soft.

"Certainly! I have had to learn to notice things and people."

"Never mind."

Miss Grand sank from the warrior—puny and pale—into the frail lady Gracia knew. "Never mind all that. I want, Gracia, to take you up to London; to buy you clothes; to write about it to my friends; to entertain a little. You might even be presented at court."

"Presented at court! Me? Gracia?"

"I shall make Lotta Party do it," said Miss Grand, speaking from some hidden strength deep locked in her.

Gracia gasped; took a long breath.

"No; you mustn't do this for me. It can't be thought of. I don't need help—pity. I am strong and young and independent. I couldn't take——"

Her glance went around the tiny room. It lighted on the worn rep of the chairs, the faded rep of the window curtains; the careful smallness of the fire that, these spring days, was lighted only in the chill evenings.

Miss Grand's glance followed.

"It is all arranged." Her smile was sly as well as roguish. "I meant to do it months ago."

"Months ago! You didn't know me!"

Miss Grand drank coffee with supreme calm.

"I knew my intentions about getting a young girl as companion; I had a description and photograph of you."

"Ludlow sent my photograph? That Melbourne one?"

"I think it was taken in Melbourne, my dear. Yes. About three years ago. Let us not argue, or discuss the point; let us go on to the future. I have already taken a little furnished house in London, very small, very shabby, the owners confess; not in the very best part; but just off a very fashionable street, on the fringes of an important neighborhood. We shall have Elizabeth and a temporary cook. I thought we would go shopping day after to-morrow, my dear. We shall stay for the one night at a little hotel where my father used to stay."

Hearing the little spinster making her modest plans, Gracia was seized with a very passion of earnestness, of horror.

"I couldn't! I couldn't! I couldn't take from you——"

The bird-claw hands found Gracia's, on the table. They clung, preternaturally thin and yet soft.

"You are not taking! You are giving the dry old maid her heart's desire."

"You cannot afford it."

"I can afford three months. Money, my dear, is for use. I have saved mine against some such day as this. I can raise two thousand dollars without dipping too far into the capital my father left me. Aren't you pleased, child? Happy? Be pleased!"

"I am pleased! happy!" She leaned over and kissed Miss Grand, finding that thin mouth surprisingly generous; surprisingly soft.

But she thought again of Richard. If she found him to-morrow morning, if she melted him, the old maid's dream must go.

Although now, after that kiss, she

opened her lips to confide: "I have something to tell you; there is a man." She closed them again; the confidence unmade. With a heart full of tears, with a soul for the first time full of weariness, suddenly she threw all decisions on to the shoulders of to-morrow.

"I can afford it!" Miss Grand repeated, nodding.

The little silk bag stroked Gracia's breast. She remembered it; became conscious of it. All that money lay on her breast—hers! London seasons, jewels, cars, entertainment, were all hers for the buying.

That pride which she had not known she possessed rose in her, saying: "The damned money is not mine. I refuse it. I will never touch it. He shall take it, for I will make him. I will show him the sort of woman I am."

"How white you are!" Miss Grand cried, her eyes brooding tenderly on the girl. "You walked too far."

"I'll go to bed, please."

"And dream of London."

London, that city of desire, that was now less than Watercombe; less than Maytower!

"I can't thank you," Gracia faltered as she rose. "All I could say, is too little for your lovely intentions. I do not think I could possibly accept. Not possibly——"

"Dream of London," said Miss Grand again, like a prophetess.

Gracia shut herself, weeping, into the maiden room of white dimity, into which a pale moon shone. All night she heard the voice of the sea on the shore in a silence that was, otherwise, profound.

CHAPTER IX.

It was because she slept late, and Miss Grand would not have her awakened, that Gracia did not slip out of the house and hasten toward Maytower before eleven o'clock the next morning. On her arm she carried a basket for

household shopping; but her swift feet took her away from the village and up the hill. The first sight she saw on coming in sight of the big meadow was the herd of Shorthorns being driven through the gate by two drovers, and a cattle dealer on a pony. The beasts went, lowing discontentedly, along the road toward town.

Gracia suffered that affection of terror and despair that is like a blow over the heart. The herd was leaving Maytower! Already a dealer had come to get it. Already the bargain had been concluded. She knew what that meant. But she ran on till she reached the stableyard. The door was locked! She knew even as she rattled at it, that the stable was empty. The great front doors of the house were locked, too! And Richard's own windows shut fast like the rest.

There was no life at Maytower, except the wild birds in the trees.

She went back slowly, exhausted by her despair, into the village, and straight to the inn.

There was no red-and-silver car waiting there, but Hillmore was, as often at that hour, sunning himself on the porch, cigar in mouth and morning paper in hand.

She went straight to him.

"Come in, Gracia," he said quietly, and he led her into a sitting room.

She drew out the silk bag that had lain all night against her breast, at the end of the jade chain.

"I will deposit this in that London bank you spoke of, if you will tell me how."

"Certainly," said Hillmore. "Let us do it now. I don't like a scatterbrain like you carrying it about on a string of beads. Here are pens and paper. Sit here. Do this!" When she had written the letter he dictated, he wrote one of recommendation to the bank manager. "Now," he ordered, "it goes registered; I'll go to the post office with

you and see it sent; and then, that's all."

"That's all," Gracia echoed somberly.

Yes. That was all. It was ended.

"You have other things you want to tell me," Hillmore suggested.

She denied his curiosity steadfastly.

As they came away from the post office, he asked: "Now that you're a rich woman, what will you do?"

"Nothing," she answered in deep despair.

"What a childish child it is," he said softly. "My dear, is it this? That you have the money and not the man?"

She nodded.

"You'd rather, now, have the man without the money?"

She nodded.

"You wanted and worked for both?"

And again she nodded, unable to speak.

"Life is a queer business, isn't it?" said Hillmore tenderly.

"Oh! Queer!"

"Poor child, solace yourself."

He spoke so easily.

"I don't pretend quite to understand the mystery," said Hillmore. "I have only half the story. But Devon left very early this morning, didn't he?"

"He must have."

"You've been up there?"

"I had to try to find him."

"Poor little girl! He sent me a bunch of huge keys an hour ago without a word, by a young boy. I suppose, therefore, I am in possession without further courtesies."

She turned away.

"If there is anything I can do——" he murmured, following.

"There is nothing. I am going up to London."

His eyes smiled.

"I say! Alone?"

"Chaperoned," she flung back between her teeth. "I'm going to do the season. I'm going to be presented at court."

He thought he saw light.

"Right! You're right! What fun! That's the way to get your teeth into life. You have plenty of money now. Little Miss Cræsus!"

"I wouldn't touch a penny of it!"

"Then who——"

"Miss Grand," she choked; and was gone.

She went home; and saw Gloria Party sitting in her little car before the front gate. Lady Party was in the house.

"Stay," said Gloria's tepid voice, "stay, and talk to me, Miss Fair. My mother is discussing some business of Miss Grand's. Isn't it a heavenly morning? A beautiful morning? Doesn't it make one happy?"

Gracia halted beside the car, rested a foot on the running-board, and a hand on the door. She looked around her vaguely and saw that the morning was indeed beautiful, though for her that dawn had come up gray with grief and fear. Gloria, as she said, was happy. There was no doubt of that which could be read in the shining of her blue eyes.

Yet Gracia remembered their talk only yesterday; and those blue eyes drenched like larkspur in rain.

"You look very happy," she said.

"Well," said Gloria, sitting languidly at her wheel, "I shall soon be out of Watercombe for months and months. I am deadly sick of the place. We shall be going to London in a week or so, you know."

"So I heard."

"Have you heard the other news?" asked Gloria, still studiously languid, but with that shining of the eyes, looking straight ahead, past Gracia. "But no, how should you? It is only by merest chance that we know it. Richard Devon has sold Maytower and left this morning."

Gracia could not reply, though she achieved a steady noise.

"As we were driving down, we met

him on that colt of his," Gloria pursued, sweet and placid of voice while Gracia's very soul shook. "He was taking him into town to sell him, he said, to a man who had made a good offer weeks ago. He said good-by to us, or rather au 'voir, since it is likely he will be in London, too, for part of the season."

"Will he?" Gracia breathed, and was suddenly warm all over, thinking how good God was, in the abundant giving of second chances.

"It was then that he told us May-tower had gone."

"He said he sold it?"

"Well, naturally, no one else could sell it. We were surprised. My mother told him he was wise. She had always said a place like that was a hopeless, intolerable burden. She congratulated him."

"What did he say?" Gracia murmured conversationally.

"Oh, nothing—or, nothing much. He was in rather a hurry." Softly Gloria said: "It will be nice to see something of him, perhaps, in town. He used to dance so well before he chose that dreadful life of denial, and buried himself."

"Buried himself, is right," Gracia cried. "The house was a grave of everything!"

Gloria turned her head and looked at her from frosty blue eyes.

"Your news is interesting," Gracia cried, laughing. "But naturally, not so interesting to me as my own. Now it's my turn!"

"Ah! Have you news, too?"

"I also am going to London!" Her eyes flashed.

A small, bleak smile touched Gloria's lips.

"Indeed? You are leaving Miss Grand?"

"She comes, too. In fact, she takes me."

"Miss Grand?"

Gracia nodded: "Miss Grand. It

seems she has been intending to give me a season in London——"

"You—going up for the season!"

Dangerously Gracia inquired: "Why not?"

"Why—— Forgive my surprise."

Gracia confessed: "Your surprise, Miss Party, is nothing to mine. I don't understand; I am bewildered; but she intends it; she wants it, and explained certain reasons to me."

Gracia could not betray the whole soft sentimentality of Miss Grand before the bleak smile transfixed on Gloria's mouth.

"What reasons can she possibly have?"

"They are sentimental, mostly, it seems," admitted Gracia.

"I never heard of such a thing happening," said Gloria, very coldly.

"Nor I. I tell you, I am bewildered amazed."

"But thrilled?" said Gloria.

"Thrilled? heavens, yes! I—Gracia Fair, a nobody—to live, for three months, the life of a girl like you."

"You, too," said Gloria bitterly; "you, too, then, will look forward to meeting Richard Devon in town."

"Why not?" Gracia answered again.

"I was so happy this morning," Gloria whispered in childish anger, "when I heard he was going away, and thought that you would stay here; but now—arrange as one may—you are always present!"

"Fate is between us," Gracia answered equably.

But she was sick at heart, again, all at once. The elation which she had known, when first she heard Gloria say "he will be in London, too," departed.

She was looking at Gloria's proud, cool fairness, thinking: "Compared with me, he will think her an angel from heaven. He will know she could not have done this thing."

Lady Party came down the garden path, side by side with Miss Grand.

Serene, bland, but with her suave face a very map of battle, Lady Party reached the two girls.

It was at Gracia that she gazed.

"Ah, Miss Fair;" she held out a hand, seemingly with difficulty. "How do you do? My friend and I have been talking of you."

"She has told me, mother," Gloria broke in.

"I think it is a charming idea, quite a Cinderella sort of thing, and every one loves the story of Cinderella, do they not?" said Lady Party, examining Gracia with her suave eyes bright as steel. "I am delighted to help, and only hope that it works out in the approved fashion. Lucky young woman!" she said, and she touched Gracia's cheek lightly and graciously.

So light, so gracious it was; and yet it might have been a blow.

"Lady Party has promised to present you with Gloria, my dear," Miss Grand announced with interest.

The little spinster stood slightly aloof, surveying them all. There was an inexplicable power, a soft dominance in her regard. She stood there as one expressing: "I have the key of this door. I have the reins and whip over this situation."

"It is a pleasure I could not have expected," added Lady Party.

Gracia could only murmur thanks, inadequate, stumbling; and repeat: "I do not understand," like a refrain.

"There are so many incomprehensible things in this world, my dear girl," said Lady Party, "but they need be none the less pleasant for remaining unexplained. Lucky, lucky young woman!"

Miss Grand smiled, in the background.

Lady Party moved slowly to the other side of the car, and seated herself beside Gloria. She waved a hand.

"We must talk of all this again," she said. "Quite a Cinderella story! It should amuse people."

Miss Grand gazed at her.

"And people like being amused," said Lady Party, her voice so smooth as to be derisive. "I like it myself. I have known some very entertaining things to happen in my time."

Miss Grand laughed.

For the first time since she came to Watercombe, Gracia realized, she heard the tiny, dry spinster genuinely laugh. And the laugh belied Miss Grand. It had so unquestionably a touch of Lady Party's own derision, but braver, fruitier. In its tiny way it defied a world.

Her soft voice chirped: "Good-by, Lotta; a thousand thanks. And good-by, Gloria, my darling."

Gracia noted Gloria's unsatisfactory elusive smile as she let in the clutch.

"She is a girl one can't catch or hold," she said to herself, as she watched the car out of sight.

"Isn't she pretty, Gracia?" said Miss Grand behind her. "Isn't she lovely? Isn't she perfect? Could any mother"—she sighed raptly—"wish a lovelier child?"

She laid a hand on Gracia's arm and motioned her to the seat under the budding tree that almost filled the patch of front garden.

"Never mind the washing up; never mind the dusting," Miss Grand mused: "Elizabeth can do it all to-day. We have so much to plan." Her eyes of dim ecstasy looked up into the blue, at the white clouds sailing over them. "Was Gloria surprised?"

"Extremely," Gracia answered with a touch of young bitterness.

"But glad?"

"She wasn't glad," said Gracia, and a little laugh, as unconsciously bitter as her voice, broke from her. She knew how she had shattered Gloria's brief feeling of security over Richard, her little triumph over her rival, by this news that she came to London, too.

"I wrote to Lotta Party last night," said Miss Grand, still musing at the

clouds, "that is why she came this morning; I made her consent to present you."

"How could you make her?" Gracia ventured.

Miss Grand smiled a fleeting smile of sad roguishness.

"Never mind; it is done. And—I have a child, too." The tears that were near Gracia's eyes this morning now filled them. "We'll go up to London this afternoon, dear, and get in a long day's shopping to-morrow. I have asked Lotta to give me a personal recommendation to her dressmaker, who makes all Gloria's things."

"No——" said Miss Grand vaguely. "Oh, yes. About Richard Devon's selling Maytower. He is now, Lotta says, a moderately rich man. She says after a few weeks in London, he thinks of going abroad."

"Does he?" Gracia answered, with her heartbeats swelling into her throat.



The little spinster stood slightly aloof, surveying them. She stood there as one expressing: "I have the key to this door. I have the reins and whip over this situation."

"A strange, delightful man. I have met him barely half a dozen times."

"Lady Party," said Gracia, trying to stifle those heartbeats, "may now think him rich enough for her daughter."

"I doubt that, my dear. Lotta is a very ambitious woman indeed."

Gracia burst out, after a silence: "If only I knew why you are doing all this for me!"

"Isn't my sentimental explanation enough, dear?"

"She will give it?"

"Certainly," said Miss Grand.

"Has she told you some news of— of the neighborhood?" Gracia faltered.

"If you say so, of course." Gracia took up the birdlike claw and kissed it.

"Oh, my dear! My dear!" Miss Grand was murmuring over and over again. "Gracia, you want to go to London? Last night and this morning I couldn't quite understand why you weren't as delighted as I thought you would be."

"I am delighted now. I must go!"

The small spinster beamed, gazing at the girl's frantic earnestness.

"You will enjoy spending"—that roguish smile of the conspirator—"five hundred dollars on clothes?"

"Five hundred dollars! You mustn't."

"I must." The roguish smile.

Gracia of the big bank account was appalled, ashamed.

"I would like to spend five thousand on you!"

"And you would, dear, I'm sure, if you had it to spend. But you haven't. I have five hundred for your frocks, and one hundred for mine, and we shall do well."

Gracia's heart tried again to offer a slice out of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars and could not. The money—blood money, conscience money—and all the price of love besides, was not hers. She could not, now, have touched it. It was the dust and ashes of all that she had ever desired. It was Richard's.

"For," Miss Grand was saying, "a girl may be lovely, but she should also dress with charm. She wants what you have called a background. A woman cast on her own resources, the prey of inexperience and her emotions, can come to rest in very strange places; very strange places indeed. I want it all very differently for you."

"What are you thinking of?" Gracia cried.

Miss Grand's eyes mused among the white clouds.

She answered surprisingly: "Men."

Gracia found herself confiding humbly, sorrowfully in the dried-lavender spinster.

"Men. I thought I understood men; I thought I'd learned all about them."

"I don't believe any woman can ever quite say that. I don't, indeed."

"I expect," said Gracia, bewildered by discoveries, "that you have had great experiences after all, if I only knew."

"You are right in supposing so."

She turned her face to Gracia, and it was hardly dried lavender, but more like the last blooming of a rose, whose leaf is weary, but that still lifts its head to the sun of Indian summer.

"I have had a wonderful life, my dear, I have learned wonderful things. Gracia, I have seen the hot blue seas that you know; I have seen the flowers and the birds and the coral gardens. When I wake now and hear the sea lapping on the shore, I lie and think it is the surf breaking on the reefs around far-off islands. You know how the white surf dashes all day against the coral reefs, Gracia?"

Gracia said simply: "I did not know that you had traveled."

"Oh, I have traveled in many countries, dear; not only countries made up of plains and mountains, but in countries of the heart and the mind, Gracia. There is so much to explore."

"You sound—wonderful. I expect you can help me."

"You need help?"

"I am bewildered. That is all."

"By what? By things past, or present, or things to come? All the finest things, for you, are to come," said Miss Grand proudly.

All the finest things were to come. Gracia laughed, in the sun, suddenly happy. And kissing the thin hand again, despite protests, she cried: "God bless London!"

"I Never Minded Being Homely Until -"



by

Emma S.
Forster

IDA ANN GILBERT loved to help other people. She must have been born with the instincts of the good Samaritan, for she had not been trained in this kindly service or taught by reciprocity.

Left an orphan at thirteen by a railroad accident, she was an overgrown, thin, shambling creature, freckled, stringy haired and apparently awkward and stupid because of her modesty, reticence and silence. She hadn't had much chance at anything except—dancing.

And dancing was where she created a big surprise.

In fact, as Flo Bailey of the celebrated Bailey "Vanities" said, when she had seen the child in street clothes for the first time after she had closed a contract with her, having been attracted by the girl's dancing numbers in the big hotel dining room:

"If I'd seen that 'string bean' as is, she couldn't have paid me to sign on her 'dotted line.'"

Starved for beauty, for pleasure, for excitement, for even a stimulating interest of some joyous sort, Ida Ann's

mother had by a dint of thrift and self-denial saved and spared enough from their meager income to take her unprepossessing daughter to the best dancing teachers their small city afforded. Mrs. Gilbert usually had to convince them her "ugly duckling" could dance by submitting her evidence in one trial lesson before they could be coerced into accepting her as a pupil. They all ended by fighting for her solo work at the big charity events that topped the city's social activity during the winter seasons.

It was strange how the stooped shoulders of the child straightened, how her pigeon toes took fifth position, her ugly hands sprayed like lilies at the sound of the music for even the tedious exacting bar work that all the other children hated. It was queer how her dumb face grew in beauty as the rabbit foot brushed lightly over freckles left a delicate apple-blossom pink accented here and there to make up for Nature's deficiencies which wouldn't have carried beyond the glare of the footlights had they been present in vivid hues. Her dull eyes lit up gorgeously, a picture of

beauty, framed by curling, blowing wisps of bronze-brown hair, softly waving, lavish shadows about the neck and ears.

Gone was the "ugly duckling" and a beautiful fairy stepped out to the bubbling music and sent that mysterious spark to the jaded audience that catches and holds them in enchantment, which finally breaks into a tumultuous exuberance of applause.

Ida Ann had it—that magic, gay freshness that sprang from her kindly heart. She wanted to, and she did, help everybody. Her dancing carried its own message of youth and goodness.

Her helping had started with the first letter she had mailed back to the sour old aunt who was now her entire connection with a home. It was a sweet if unnecessary consideration, this meager scrawl of a letter. It read:

DEAR AUNT SOPHIA: Miss Flo Bailey and the rest of the company are so kind to me. They say I'm learning fast. I know a lot of new steps and they give me ice cream every night. Your happy niece,

IDA ANN.

If the aunt had been keen, she would have discovered the teardrops on the letter and realized with a sinking heart that the same teardrops were soaking the nightly pillows in some far-away place.

But happily unconscious and insulated by her native inhibitions, she sniffed disdainfully as she retailed the latest news with her neighbors. She was most averse to dancing, the stage in particular, but it was the only thing the child knew, and she had to make her living some way. She often thought it was a good thing that Ida Ann was as homely as she was. Being so would keep her practically safe from the temptations which a pretty girl would face. Anyway, the matter was now completely out of her hands and she could only watch and pray.

Her comments drew the emphatic agreement from her listeners: "You sure have the right ideas."

Ida Ann transferred from a dull, drab, uneventful existence into the glitter of clothes and curtains, the sudden blare of music, the eternal shift of places, the constant change of stage life was stunned into a near apathy from which her big brown eyes looked forth in consternation and bewilderment. But she still found plenty of opportunities to help other people.

She was perched on a trunk that was strapped and ready for its next flight, munching a sandwich contentedly before the afternoon show, the day that Car-tinet, the magician, fell in a faint as he came up the street stairs to the theater. She called a stage hand and between them they dragged him into his dressing room where his only assistant, a huge trained crow, quarreled with them vociferously during their administrations. Through his three days of illness, Ida Ann fed the crow and brought the sick man his food at the theatrical boarding house which adjoined the playhouse.

Before the first day had passed, in spite of her "three-a-day" appearances, Ida Ann had won the crow's abject devotion and he would fly to meet her entrance, shrieking hoarsely and riotously.

When Pedro's monkey developed pneumonia, it was Ida Ann that watched the intelligent little beast between acts as he lay in the improvised cradle in the hall between the dressing rooms, moaning and grumbling in pain. Sometimes he held out his paws and begged to be carried "just like a baby." Ida Ann told Flo Bailey, who snorted derisively.

Time flew apace and her enchanted feet continued to thrill the public from coast to coast. Her body never grew plump, but it developed soft curves that enhanced the grace that even her scrawny, stringy youth possessed.

She received many offers from bigger companies, but Miss Flo always cried and told her, "That's the way I can expect you to treat me—leave me flat—now that I've taught you, advertised you, given you this chance at 'Big Time!'"

What Miss Flo Bailey didn't do was to tell her or show her a copy of their last contract and allow her protégé to see what she was charging for her dancing, while the girl was getting very nearly the same salary with which she had started four years before.

Ida Ann never complained. She was fairly comfortable, if very lonely. She had never been happy since her mother's death and for a brief forty-five minutes, and when they played continuous vaudeville sometimes longer, she was in a wonderful world of dreams each day.

Transfigured, exalted, she whirled and stepped into a world of light and perfume and applause. People liked her; she made them happy by her dancing. She was never too tired or breathless to take encores, numerous as they might be, and never too tired to hurry back stage, slip into a gingham apron and play lady's maid to Miss Flo, whom she rather idealized.

Her slavish devotion to this tyrant was appealing, thought Neille Fay when he joined the Bailey "Vanities" to add his original songs and dances, if it wasn't so darned pathetic.

That was before he, too, fell a victim to the interesting, versatile, sophisticated Flo. Flo dwarfed all the others he had met—by her intelligence, dimmed them by the luster of her maturing perfect beauty and she was as demanding as all of these attributes rolled into one.

It was true she had discovered Ida Ann, given her an opportunity when she would have remained in obscurity, but she was quite unscrupulous in rewarding her either with affection—or money.

Life had made Flo hard. Constantly fighting for recognition had made her

callous. If she had a vulnerable spot, no one knew it and, as one of the chorus girls said to Ida Ann, "I wouldn't put anything past her when it comes to the money question. Watch her, kid." Ida Ann, speechless at this disloyalty, only looked her reply. She knew this ungrateful minx was drawing down three times her salary in spite of this irreverent opinion of their manager. Booking an act looked to Ida Ann no less an achievement than conquering the world. So Miss Flo Bailey remained seated on her rainbow.

Soon every one noticed that Miss Flo had a new admirer. He revolved around her shrine more persistently than even the admiring Ida Ann and they all conceded that he was just as enormously gifted. His name was Neille Fay.

Born of a long line of theatrical ancestors, trained from childhood with an exceptional family of stars, just now adrift because of his objection to a parent's marriage, he had joined up with the Bailey "Revue" in time to add the glory of his name to her contingent and his catchy original songs and dances to her classy repertoire.

Not that Flo Bailey didn't help Neille Fay with his compositions. There was nothing about people, the audience, stage tricks that any one could teach Flo. Experience had done that with the lash of criticism and she was one of the wise people who didn't need the second lesson in anything. There was no denying she made his songs. Her spontaneity, her infectious gayety and personality created a demand that made Neille Fay's melodies famous at once.

Soon the dollars came rolling in from royalties to the young composer, who daily grew more enamored with Flo. She accepted his costly gifts and prodigal devotion with smiles and thanks, just about as she treated the messenger boys and expressmen. But many times Ida Ann slipped in to find her in thoughtful moods when she began to

powder and hook up the star. She would remain in that reverie while the girl straightened up the messy dressing room with its litter of cigarette ends, boxes of candy, wilting flowers, jars of cream, pencil liners, half finished bottles of coca-cola or coffee cups, all strewn over the wide shelf under the big make-up mirror.

She never rubbed her satin-clad feet in the rosin box in the wings before her entrance that she didn't think of that messy dressing room and sigh for the time when she'd have one alone, neat, clean and rather empty. She hated so to be crowded either by people or things. Some day——

Then came her cue, and sorrows and desires were forgotten. On a single note of music she was swept into another country where all was golden love, and happiness. For Ida Ann was always the character she danced, whether she was a maiden loved and elusively retreating or just a clown.

Other children had read their fairy stories. Ida Ann had always danced hers, one by one, as they came by necessity or choice. It hadn't been so hard but it had been such an empty existence without love. There was Neille Fay showering priceless affection upon the unresponsive but accepting Miss Flo. Ida Ann loved to watch his Irish-Italian eyes glow and smolder with exultation when the house rocked with applause as his songs finished in Miss Flo's inimitable way reached them in the wings.

"Isn't Miss Flo just wonderful?" Ida Ann had ventured to him on one of these occasions.

"I'll say she is. Only woman of her kind in this delicious world. She has looks, class and sense."

If he paused over that last word it was because he knew it was the big obstacle to his successful courtship of this highly desired prize.

He adored her with the unbridled passion and extravagance of twenty-

five. She would have been quite content to have bridged the ten years' difference in their ages, for as she reflected, he was promising. But a rival stood in the offing, a rival whose bank roll was made and carefully conserved, a stockholder of the biggest vaudeville circuit in the country.

No doubt this boy would make good, he had already, with her shrewd assistance. With her behind him and his name, he would climb—she didn't stop to imagine where. The heights that Neille might attain were quite obscured by the suave Mr. Bruce, secure on his present eminence. If he would only speak, only ask her to marry him! Meanwhile Ida Ann watched the hapless Neille worship and dream as she knew, entirely unrequited but, luckily for the present and Miss Flo's indefinite plans, undisturbed in his present trance.

Winter followed a hectic summer and found the company in a gay metropolis for the holidays. Love had spurred Neille Fay on to splendid labor. Unconscious love had inspired Ida Ann to eclipse all her previous efforts and ambition. It had pepped up Miss Flo and the rest of their group until their act was headlined—electric lighted—advertised to the last word in stage publicity, and it deserved all that was said of it by press and posters.

Then, in the midst of this, Neille Fay went to bed with influenza. Miss Flo was most upset. It meant a rearrangement of the whole act on short notice. Ida Ann was frantic, but not about the act. The only nice thing about it was that they would be stationary for over six weeks. Ida Ann was in her glory. She danced harder to fill in the vacancy caused by Neille's absence. She was more careful to please Miss Flo with her services. Then she rushed away to Neille at the hospital to comfort and try to entertain him in his tedious convalescence.

She grew almost beautiful in that month of strenuous exertion, a glowing, shining radiance that even Neille observed and remarked as she came in one snappy, frosty evening when he had been home from the hospital about a week.

"Ida Ann, you're growing up into a very lovely young lady."

He was very much puzzled at the way she nervously started and asked:

"Do you really and truly think so, Neille?"

What Ida Ann was trying to forget was what he said the first time he saw her:

"That kid dance? She's too homely to put it over, even if she has it in her feet."

Her face sparkled as she pushed the past aside and answered, "Well, it's time I grew up; I'm tired of being the only kid in our act. Anyway, you aren't but seven years older than I am." And she turned away to hide her confusion and happiness at his first compliment.

How could Miss Flo hold him off as she did? He was so handsome, lying back there weak and wan in his dark-silk dressing gown. His dependence appealed to her now more than his cheerful, graceful presence when he was well. But what was the use? He had only noticed her once; he probably never would again.

"Doctor says I can go back to work at the end of this week, if I cut my dancing number. I have developed a bad heart." At her exclamation of anxiety he continued, "Be all right with rest. Angina pectoris, or something like that, he called it. I can sing my songs, be languid and take my curtains if any." He finished with a wry laugh, for his clever bit of dancing was one of their biggest hits.

"That will be fine," encouraged Ida Ann. "Try to eat a lot and build up your strength."

"You'll attend to that, you little rascal. I'd wreck my figure if I ate all you sent in. I know, too, who fixed my hot drinks in the thermos jug every night, since I've been home. The maid told me."

"Oh, that's nothing," blushed poor Ida Ann, transported to a new heaven by his praise and thanks. "I love to do things for people. It's the only pleasure I have; it keeps me from getting so lonesome. I'd have done the same for——"

"Pedro's monkey or the Japanese twins with whooping cough," he teasingly interrupted. "I know. I'm to understand that I need not flatter myself or get puffed up; that you did the same thing for the clown who had a toothache and the dog with a sore ear. Be assured, Ida Ann,"—this last very gravely—"I shall not become conceited."

"Well, you needed care," she said very primly, "and people are all very kind to me."

Neille Fay, looking into those earnest brown eyes, saw something that puzzled him very much. It was something he couldn't quite get and something he just couldn't find it possible to ask Ida Ann.

As he released the strong, warm hand he had caught as she swung by his couch on her way to the door, she said, "See you later, Neille."

Miss Flo was glad to have him back, if not in the way Neille most desired then it didn't show and because youth is hopeful and love is blind, he didn't see. So all were almost serene.

Ida Ann, still watching, was miserable. A few weeks can witness many changes. Ida Ann was not without perception and observation. She had dreaded Neille's return and this trial he must face before he had entirely recovered. She knew his mad impetuous disposition and she feared his reaction to this dreadful disappointment which awaited him.

Flo Bailey smiled a welcome, such as only Flo could smile, flattering, scintillating, which excluded all the rest of the world save the recipient, and congratulated him upon his recovery. He was looking so handsome, Ida Ann could have cried tears of admiration.

Then Flo delivered her bit of news to all the members of the company that had trooped into the low-ceilinged dressing room to greet Neille's appearance.

"I know you will be surprised. I hope it will be a glad surprise. I'm going to be married to James Bruce one month from to-day. As he is one of the owners of this circuit he has promised to take care of this act under an agreeable contract which I propose Neille Fay shall direct. There is no reason why the rest of you should not continue in this revue for the balance of the season. Neille has initiative and training, plus experience."—this with a proud, cold smile at the boy who confronted her, white as a sheet, lips drawn in pain. Smilingly she continued, "It will pay all of you handsomely. I have seen to that."

Neille's silence was covered by the clamor of delighted thanks over her thoughtful arrangement from all the other players. "It was so kind, so considerate of her to remember us in the midst of her own happiness—good old Flo!" They eddied out in fine spirits—all but Ida Ann and Neille Fay. Ida Ann, who was on her knees buttoning Miss Flo's slippers, didn't count. She never had counted. She realized it now with a deeper pang than ever before.

She saw Neille's furious set face as he walked over to Miss Flo and made her turn from the mirror to face him.

"You've had this up your sleeve all the time and still you kept me dangling, like a fool!" he accused, low, grimly.

His face was contorted by pain, his voice quivered.

"Well, suppose I had," she hedged.

"One has to do the best one can." This with a bright laugh that made Ida Ann long to slap her lovely face. "You have no reason to complain. I helped you. I put your songs across, you young fool. Now don't go and create a scene and make yourself ridiculous."

"Be assured," he said very slowly as he sought control, "that I'll never forget what you have done to me."

"That's the trouble with kids," said Miss Flo, as he passed outside and down the hall, "they always take too much for granted."

It was Ida Ann who rushed back later and cried in alarm to Miss Flo:

"Stop Neille, Miss Flo, stop Neille! He sent word to the orchestra leader to play his dance after the song. The doctor forbid him to dance on account of his heart. It will kill him."

Flo Bailey, watching the agony of the incoherent girl, shrugged her way into a silk kimono and flew to the wings. But she was too late. Neille Fay was soft shoeing his way rapidly into another country with all the abandon, artistry and skill of his celebrated ancestors. He stopped in a storm of applause and staggered off the stage to fall into the waiting arms of his companions, blood frothing from his lips.

They laid him in his dressing room and left him to Ida Ann, while some one rang for a doctor and an ambulance. She loosened his collar and bathed his lips and face. But still the blood oozed steadily.

Upstairs she could hear Flo's golden voice in his songs. Down here alone with her he was dying, and she loved him. She had loved him for many, many months. In a few minutes they'd be there to take him away from her, forever. No one would ever love him as she had—and did. She'd have this precious memory to cheer her through endless days and it wouldn't distress him nor disturb him, for he wouldn't know it. She pulled his limp shoulders



"Here, girl, meet Mr. Bruce and sign this contract. Get a move on and pack for Chicago. You've made the hit of your life," Flo Bailey's assertive voice rang out.

on the stage in a mad saraband of hysteria that strangely enough caught the rhythm of the music.

Even Neille's death could not stem the torrent of her awakening, her girlhood expiring in the dawn of womanhood. Love swept her with a mighty wand and the house went mad. Limpling in a chair behind the door of the dressing room where she had hid like some wounded animal seeking to hide the tears that were washing the mask of beauty from her kind face, Flo Bailey dragged her forth.

"Here, girl. Meet Mr. Bruce and sign this contract. Get a move on you and pack for Chicago. You have got just forty-five minutes to make the train. You have made the hit of your life,"—trying to shake the sagged body into animation—"You are booking for

up into her lap and arms and cuddled and kissed him and cried over him, an odd little figure in her abbreviated dancing dress, beautiful in her grief and glorification that is born of great love. She was tremendously happy in spite of her sorrow. She seemed, now, not to have been cheated by life. She would have a memory. She held his cold, bloodstained lips to her warm face and crooned words, before unknown to her. Even if this was but the last kiss of death, it was a priceless treasure to her, one that would endure.

Through a maze of suffering she heard them calling her and she dashed

two thousand a week. Can you get that through your slow head? All my work, don't forget that."

"And her feet, don't forget her feet, my dear," interposed Mr. Bruce softly. "She's homely, I'll admit, but this kid can surely dance."

Ida Ann packed and signed in a stupor, and it wasn't until they had hustled her in a sleeper and wired Chicago to meet her, awed as they were at her numbness and silence, that she softly whispered to Miss Flo. "What did they do with Neille?"

"Goodness, kid, ask me something easy. All I know is I heard them say he passed clear out before the ambulance picked him up."

And the train screeched its way into the night.

A week later Ida Ann opened her dressing-room door and saw the spirit of a loved one. She closed the door behind her quickly lest it evaporate into space and as rapidly advanced to meet the arms that it extended and sink within them. She knew she had mourned so deeply, loved so patiently that she had succeeded in bringing him to her at last.

But the kisses that were rained upon her and the grip of arms that took her

breath convinced her that this spirit still retained an earthly body and the look in those Irish-Italian eyes shone as they had never shone on Miss Flo.

"Ida Ann, Ida Ann, my darling, can you ever forgive me for overlooking you so long? I had loved a woman I thought to be Miss Flo and I found the woman I had carried in my heart to be you. It was not until you kissed me and cried over me that I knew what love could be like."

Neille held her close against his heart.

"But I thought you were dead," choked Ida Ann, shamed and humiliated. "You shouldn't have let me, it wasn't fair."

"Anything is fair in love, and your kiss of death meant the kiss of life to me. It is the only thing that kept me alive and we'll never be parted again. Ida Ann, you are beautiful."

This compliment was the crowning event of Ida Ann's life. She buried her head on Neille's shoulder as she answered:

"I never minded being homely until I met you."

"You aren't homely, dear," whispered Neille, crushing her to him. "You're the most beautiful girl I've ever seen and your soul is as sweet and beautiful as your face."



THE FLOWER OF LOVE

LET not the rose of love disperse
 Her petals to the vagrant wind;
 Nor dream that when they scattered are
 The fragrance will remain behind.

Roses may blossom year by year
 In gardens wooed by sun and rain;
 The rose we watered with our tears,
 When dead, will never bloom again.

R. R. GREENWOOD.

What Love Can Do

BY

May Wynne



IT is not only in the spring that a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love. As a matter of fact Horace had been considering matrimony for six months. His parents were dead, and the relatives with whom he lived were somewhat domineering in their ways.

Horace craved for liberty and the right to consider his own comfort rather than the welfare of the carpet and furniture.

Aunt Mary was house-proud and Uncle James was old-fashioned. The latter gave Horace plenty of sound advice, but when he talked of girls he became excited. It upset his digestion, too. As he had no children, he knew all about the shortcomings of modern youth.

"If you marry one of those audacious flappers with short skirts and cropped hair, smoking cigarettes and rubbing paint all over her face I've done with you, Horace," he said.

Aunt Mary agreed. The modern girl was becoming quite an old topic at Sunnyside.

So Horace had never dared bring Lucretia to see them. The name alone would have condemned her—while it was true that her skirts did not reach

much below her knees; her nose was not innocent of powder, and she actually indulged in an after-lunch cigarette. For the rest, she was one of the firm's best typists and had never been known to get out of temper.

"Lu" was a favorite everywhere and Horace had begun to place her in that dream cottage of his, in a quiet romantic place, where he would be lord of all he surveyed—and free!

But the dream only became definite after the day when he saved Lucretia from being knocked down by a taxi in Madison Square. As she clung to him, breathless and helpless, he suddenly realized that it was time he did his accounts and went house-hunting, if the margin in his bank book allowed matrimony.

Being a cautious lad, however, he did not ask Lucretia to marry him right away. Instead, he invited her to come and spend the week-end at Sunnyside. He dared not give the hint about flesh-colored stockings and cigarettes—nor did Lucretia seem to realize that such modern trifles were out of place in his uncle's house.

On the Monday evening when Horace returned home alone, his relatives were waiting for him.

They didn't beat about the bush. The picture they drew of the dream cottage with Lucretia was lurid. Horace had a hideous nightmare that night and came down to breakfast resigned to single blessedness and discipline.

But Aunt Mary had more sympathy than he had supposed. On Saturday afternoon she produced Elizabeth.

Now Elizabeth was the minister's eldest daughter, and not a beauty. Her hands were work-hardened, her eyes dull, her clothes were the cast-offs of wealthier patrons of her parents—and did not fit her angular young frame. She drank her tea as if she had not had lunch, and looked at Horace as though she were afraid.

Horace returned the look anxiously. He knew this was Lucretia's understudy for the dream cottage, but somehow she did not fit. Still, he was prepared to listen to what Aunt Mary had to say.

Aunt Mary's song of praise lasted for one solid hour. Never was there such a household angel as Elizabeth. Up early, to bed late, doing the combined work of general slavey and her father's secretary. Of course, she would be the ideal wife—and Horace could not say that his relatives had not done their best for his happiness.

Horace tried to be grateful. He also tried to realize his good fortune in having such a chance. Next day he called at the minister's home.

Elizabeth was cutting up onions for a stew, her eyes were red and watering, her hair untidy.

Horace wondered why she had not had her hair cut. He hated seeing hairpins sticking out from a loosened coil of hair.

"Come into the garden," invited Elizabeth, "the stew can go on now, and I've nothing to do for half an hour."

So Horace came into the garden. It was not a place of romantic vision, since the minister kept goats. That ought to

explain why no one ever tried to grow flowers on the patch.

"I hate goats, don't you?" said Elizabeth. "Do come out down the path. I want peace for half an hour."

And Horace walked down the path wondering whether this indeed were peace.

Elizabeth did not actually complain of her lot, but she gave him a glimpse which filled him with pity.

Poor little girl! And what a worker she was.

He accepted the invitation of Elizabeth's mother to stay to lunch, and he ate some of that stew with appetite.

Elizabeth was an excellent cook. Her mother explained that she was also a wonderful needlewoman.

Horace, looking around at the seven children attired in their elder sister's handiwork, felt she must be truly wonderful.

He returned home and wrote to the secretary of the Garden City Building Company. After all, his relatives were perfectly right. With an Elizabeth at the helm there was no need to study the margin of his banking account.

Pending the secretary's reply he went to see Elizabeth and took her flowers. She accepted them mournfully.

"They'll be dead in a couple of days," she said. "I'd rather have had chocolates."

Lucretia had been a flower lover.

Lucretia was as healthy as ever; and if at times her hazel eyes were haunted by a wistful regret; it was only seen when Lucretia was taken unawares.

Horace had not seen that wistful regret. He supposed Lucretia to be as joyous as ever—and wondered vaguely who took her out to theaters, and the movies now. As a matter of fact Lucretia did not go to theaters or the pictures any more, though she had plenty of invitations from the boys who told each other that Horace ought to be boiled.

Horace, aware that the atmosphere in the office was frigid, thought the more of his dream cottage. Elizabeth had actually been shingled, and some one had sent her quite a pretty dress.

Horace had finally decided to make the plunge, as he walked up a flower-scented path and met Elizabeth. He had never seen her so nearly pretty, and she held a bunch of roses in her hand.

She smiled at Horace.

"Aren't they lovely?" she said, holding them up to be viewed.

Horace considered.

"I thought you did not care for flowers," he hinted.

Elizabeth blushed.

"These came from Blandon Farm," she replied. "I shall press the petals. I love red roses. If ever I marry I shall have a garden full of them."

"You'll know all the ropes, won't you?" said Horace, beginning to grow nervous. "What a splendid little wife you will make."

"Shall I?" asked Elizabeth. "I wonder. All I know is I shall marry a man who can afford to keep servants! No more cooking and washing, or darning and sewing, when I'm married. It will be time to enjoy myself."

And she laughed softly.

"Do you ever make dream castles?" she asked. "I do! That's the sort I make. But each has its secret. I wonder if yours has its secret, too? I hope so, because you've been ever so kind, and the chocolates were lovely. Now I shall have to run home to make the rhubarb pudding. Mrs. Haye gave us the rhubarb, it's getting rather tough now."

Horace allowed her to depart. He felt as if some one had pushed him off his path of life into a ditch.

By the time he had climbed back to his right place he was congratulating himself that he had not blurted out his proposal.

"A nice sort of hole I should have been in," he muttered, "with a wife on strike against work. Servants, indeed! And who would pay for them? Lucky for me she gave herself away."

He did not tell Aunt Mary or Uncle James the result of his intended proposal, and when he reached home there was a letter from the secretary of the Garden City Building Company, saying that one of the ideal homes was for sale but he must have a definite answer within twenty-four hours.

Horace put the letter in his pocket and went straight up to town.

Lucretia was across in a girl friend's room, helping her out with some typing. She looked surprised to see Horace. The girl friend melted into thin air—while Horace laid the secretary's letter on the table under Lucretia's eyes.

"I shall have to telephone in the morning," he said. "Shall it be yes or no, Lucretia? For I don't want a house if I don't have you for my wife."

Lucretia drew a deep breath.

"But why do you want me?" she asked. "Your aunt explained so nicely about the wife you need. A good cook, needlewoman, housewife, et cetera, and I didn't fit one bit. So why have you asked me?"

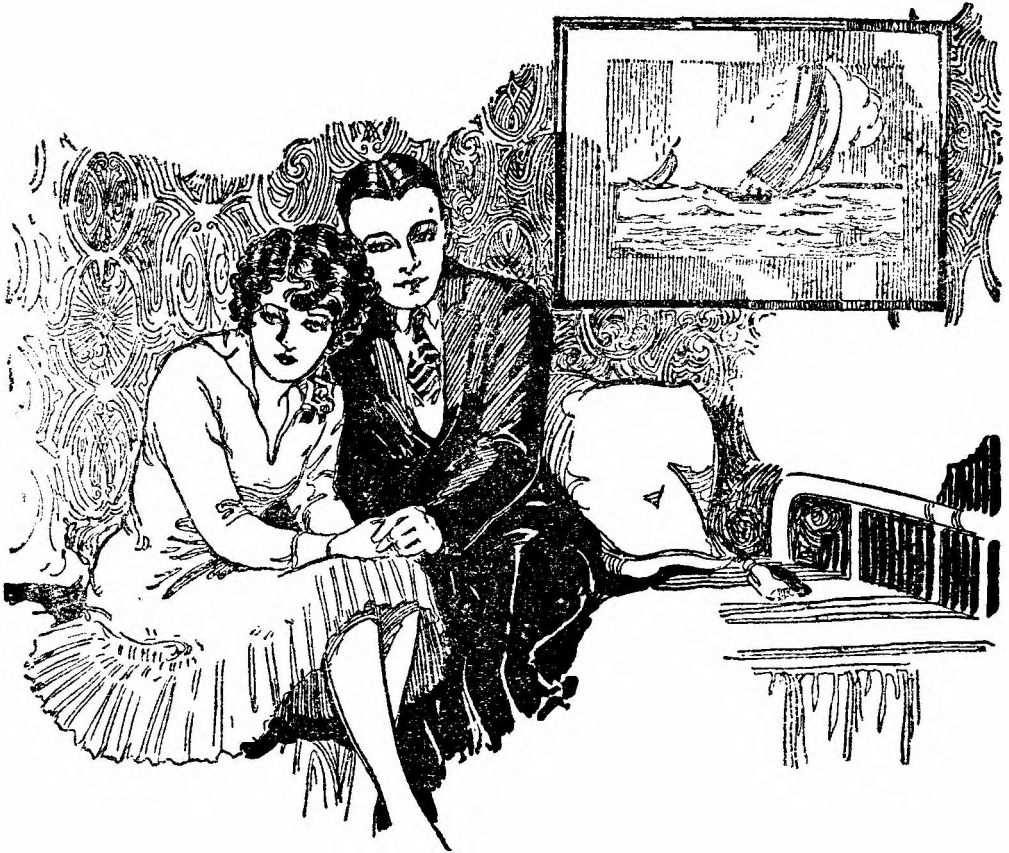
Horace beamed.

"I want the woman I love," he said. "No matter whether you can cook or not, you're the woman I love and you must marry me, won't you, Lucretia?"

"Yes," answered Lucretia softly.

Horace took her in his arms and kissed her. "You have made me so happy, my dear," he said.

In the morning Horace telephoned to the secretary of the Garden City Building Company, and returned to his relatives walking on air. He would soon be master of his own home. To-morrow, he and Lucretia were going down together to measure the rooms and discuss furniture. Lucretia had six hun-



"You see," Lucretia told Horace, "the girl or man may be the commonest clay, but it is love which changes them to the right ideal for happiness."

dred dollars saved from her salary and then—

Uncle James and Aunt Mary were thoroughly disappointed with their nephew. Formally, they washed their hands of him, while incidentally they referred to Elizabeth as a blighted flower—a deserted maiden, and so on until Horace rushed around to the minister's home to see if he could not put matters straight somehow.

He met a radiant Elizabeth.

"I am going to marry Jim Briscoll who owns Blandon Farm," she told him, "and never, never cook or clean again unless I want to. I am going to be a royal princess and happy as the day is long. As a first start Jim is

buying me six pairs of real silk stockings. He understands how I have always hated my clothes."

And Horace was so relieved that he almost kissed her.

Horace had a pleasant little surprise awaiting him, for Lucretia proved to be the ideal wife, the soul of economy, and not only the hardest little worker in the home, but the best comrade a man could wish for.

Her conduct inspired an even deeper and finer love in the youth.

"You see," she told Horace—when they were talking secrets by twilight in their own cozy sitting room, "Uncle James and Aunt Mary forgot one item.

The girl or the man may be the commonest clay, but it is love which changes them to the right ideal for happiness. That's why Elizabeth is no longer a drudge and why I am so contented."

She had slipped onto the stool at Horace's feet.

"It's extraordinary," she whispered,

"how I adore cooking and sewing and the housework."

He took her hands.

"It's no more extraordinary than how happy I am," said Horace, kissing her tenderly. "You are the ideal wife and I shall be thankful all my life that I was lucky enough to win you."



TO ONE I LOVE

THE wind has a message to give you—
A message I whispered low,
When it stole from the rivers and meadows,
Where lilies and irises grow.
It asked me how it would know you,
And I told it not to despair,
Because of ten millions of maidens
You were fairest, indeed, of the fair.

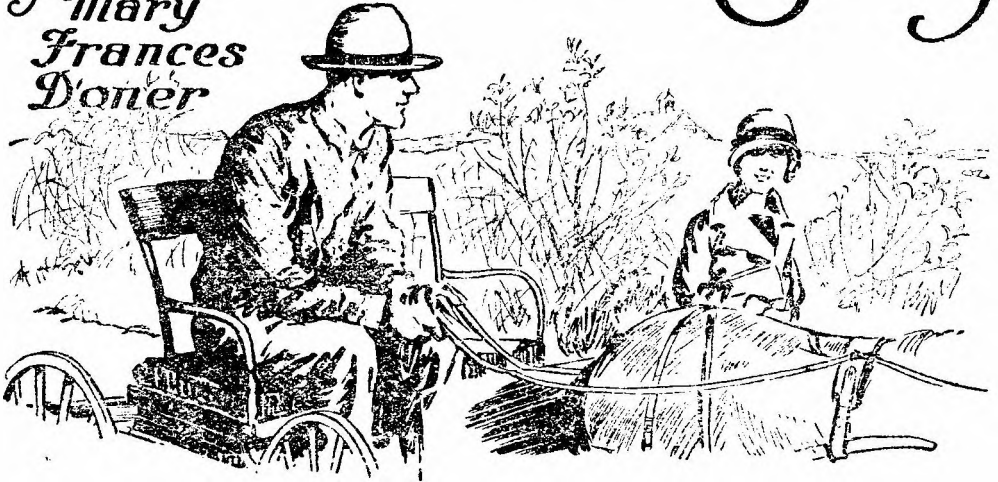
The sun has a story to tell you—
A story of beauty and light,
With love as its brightest treasure,
And never a care or blight.
It will follow the wind of the morning,
And you with its happiness greet,
Because among flowers of summer
You are sweetest, indeed, of the sweet.

The moon has a greeting for you—
A beautiful greeting I spoke,
When its crescent of lambent silver
From the clasp of the sunset broke;
And I wished you much good fortune
Through a lifetime to endure,
Because I love you and hold you
The purest, indeed, of the pure.

FRANKLIN PIERCE CARRIGAN.

The Divine Legacy

by
Mary
Frances
Doner



CHAPTER I.

HE sat beside Luke's bed, pencil poised in his trembling hand, his stricken eyes riveted on the bandaged head of his idolized older brother.

"I'm ready, Luke," he jerked out.

"All right," said Luke slowly, as though just remembering the task at hand, the bitter, heart-breaking task of saying good-by to Gay. "Tell her——" Another pause.

"Maybe it would be better if you just dictated it," came the anxious suggestion.

"All right, 'Dodo.'" Dodo, the endearing diminutive he had given that younger Creighton when, at their mother's death the baby, Joseph, had been left as a charge to the fifteen-year-old Luke—a baby to raise and a farm to care for. "Course it would be hard for you to write to a girl you never met," went on Luke. "But if you had met her, Dodo, it wouldn't be hard. Her eyes are kind, and her smile, and the way she looks at things. Kindness shining right out of her. Even picking flowers, Dodo, she'd wait a minute as if she was sorry to snap off the stems.

May flowers, we picked them in the woods—together! The sunlight used to fall through the trees on her hair——" Another pause; a kind of muffled, stricken sob. Dodo sat there, almost breathless with pain.

"You know how it is for teachers that board up at the Wilkins place, don't you, Dodo?" Luke's voice droned on.

"Yes, indeed." Dodo tried to make his voice sound casual!

"Well, old Lizzie Wilkins ain't changed a bit. She doesn't like pretty girls. And old Addie Wilkins—say, sometimes it was all I could do to keep in when I'd hear her snapping at Gay."

"She was pretty young to be teaching school, wasn't she?" Dodo asked to carry on the force of a natural conversation.

"Well, yes. If you could have seen her, Dodo, trying to whip some sense into that brain of Taggart's Dave. The big fellow, twice her size, and toward the last he brought her violets in the springtime. He even wrote her a love letter once. And she didn't laugh at it, either. She just said: 'See, Luke, I won. I conquered him with kindness.'

Dodo fought against tears.

"I didn't tell you how I met her, did I?" Luke went on. "It was raining one afternoon in October, and she had to stay after school with some of her scholars, and she was trudging along the side of the road when I came by. And I stopped and said, 'If you ain't going far, I can take you home, miss.' You know, I kind of thought it was Bessie Alders; she comes and visits old Watt sometimes! And then——" Luke's voice was low. It shook with pain. "And then I saw her face when she turned around. Dodo, it seemed as if I was looking into the face of an angel. There was a brightness about her and a gleam to her eyes. And her cheeks were damp and pink like a rose when it's just opening. You'll see a

face like that some day, when you love, Dodo. And your breath will stop and your heart will sneak up in your throat!"

"Yes," said Dodo, trying to keep the tears from his voice, trying to keep Luke from knowing how all this tore at his heart.

"And here I was, Dodo, a great, big, clumsy farmer, and her like a little fairy. We kept riding along and old Jenny never seemed to trot so fast in her life. And after she told me she was the new school-teacher, I kept thinking, 'Lord, she'll get off at Wilkins', then, and it ain't half a mile farther on.' Wasn't I wishing then for some of your gab! The way you can talk to strangers, as if you had always known them; I don't ever remember



"All right," said Luke slowly, as though just remembering the task at hand—the bitter, heart-breaking task of saying good-by to Gay. "Tell her——"

envying you before. I kept wishing I knew some smart things to say, so she'd not think I was a dunce, too. But she kept talking of this and that, and all I could do was to nod and to say 'Yes' and 'No.' And then just before we got to Wilkins', I remembered the church supper that they were going to give the next week, and I asked her, Dodo!" The smile that crept across the dry, cracked lips made Dodo bend forward with a gesture of pain that seemed almost unbearable.

"And what did she say?" asked Dodo, straightening again and swallowing hard.

"She said 'Yes,' right off!" The old joy still flooded his words. "Can you imagine that, Dodo?"

"Why shouldn't she?" demanded Dodo, flaring. "There isn't a fellow around here as good as you!"

"Oh, listen, boy! I ain't blind to what I am. A big, rough fellow that has had no schooling and never known anything but work. Not that I'm complaining, Dodo. But it just seemed so wonderful that she'd bother with a fellow like me. Why, all the boys went crazy over her. Every word she says is like music. Her voice, it's kind of husky and sadlike. It's Gay—that's all. And I loved her——"

Dodo stretched forth a shaking hand and grasped his brother's. "If she's the right sort, she'll stand by you now, Luke. If she's on the level she'll want to stand between you and the rest of the world."

"I can't let her——"

Dodo continued, speaking gently:

"If she'll listen to you now, she doesn't deserve you, Luke. If I'd been home here where I belonged, instead of away at college, selfishly looking out for my own interests, this accident would never have happened. You were trying to do too much. You couldn't do it all alone. I'd give my life if you had your two legs back again!"

"Stop!" shouted Luke. "Don't go blaming yourself! Didn't I ship you off to college myself? Didn't you almost fight me with your fists for selling off the lower ten acres so you could go? Didn't you argue against going and leaving me, when all the time your heart was breaking to go? Didn't you darn near ruin your eyes sitting up nights reading and studying after hard, grinding days in the fields, helping me? Would it have stopped that fool automobile from scaring the horses at the crossing, and throwing me on the tracks to be run down by that train, if you had been here? You're talking nonsense, Dodo. It's not your fault, this misfortune of mine. It's not your fault that I have got to give up Gay." A powerful hand crawled weakly to his face; a powerful, bloodless hand, without strength now.

"Did she promise to marry you, Luke?" Dodo made himself ask.

Luke laughed aloud. "Yes, sure!"

Old Mrs. Wetherbee, the housekeeper, put her head in at the door. "Is there anything I can do, Dodo?" she begged anxiously.

Dodo waved her away with a negative gesture. "Never mind, old boy," he tried to say cheerfully to Luke. "I'm back now. Would have made it sooner, only the exams were pretty stiff, and there's always extra things going on the last year. I got my sheepskin, Luke, but I'd gladly give up everything if I could—if I could——"

"That's all right, boy. Come on, now, let's get that letter off our chests. You see, Gay was planning to come down and stay a week with the Wilkinses this August, so we could take in some parties at Antler's Island. She's kind of a lonely little kid at home. Her folks are all dead and she lives with a cousin that has a lot of children, so she has to work all summer, too. We both thought maybe the week in August would do us a lot of good."

Dodo watched the gray face beside him, the game smile on the twisted lips.

"You can begin, 'Dear Gay.'" His voice broke on that word. He cleared his throat, hesitated, and went on bravely. "It's only right that you should know what's happened, seeing that you've promised to marry me. I guess that's all over now." The words died away and it was several minutes before he went on. "I—you can't go tying yourself up for life to a fellow who won't be able to earn a living for you any more. You're young, and there's other fellows who'll want you. Anyhow, you could do better than being a farmer's wife. It's a lonesome life, and, besides, marriage is not for me now. But I'm wishing you luck and happiness. Good-by!" He turned his face away, coughed violently. But it did not smother the broken sobs of despair that shook him.

"Is that all, Luke?" asked Dodo miserably.

"Yes. Maybe I'll sleep a little now before the doctor comes. You go and mail that. I'm all right alone."

That was the way with Luke. He shed your sympathy. Both legs had been severed at the knee, in that accident at the crossing. But he was game. He came through smiling, as always.

Dodo went to his own room and threw himself in a chair before his desk. The letter must be copied and sent. What would this girl's answer be? Until now Dodo Creighton had never known just how cruel life can be. Luke had stood between him and realities.

He sat back, staring through the whispering branches of the apple tree just outside his window; the tree that had been his secret ladder on nights when Luke had forbidden him to go places, and he had disobeyed. They were boyish pranks, of course, but Luke had never scolded. He might say: "See here, youngster, I don't want you running around with Jackie Dane. He's

got a way that's not just right. He'll get you into trouble." Or: "Listen, Dodo, better steer clear of that Archer kid. Mobins was telling me he's light-fingered. I don't want none of us classed with him, see?"

Invariably Dodo had come to find the wisdom of Luke's advice. Luke had been father and mother to him. It had been Luke's rough, toil-worn hands that had ministered to Dodo's childhood bruises. It had been Luke who kept vigil through that long siege of typhoid when Dodo had grown so terrifyingly thin and pale; when even the doctors had shrugged doubtfully and avoided the older brother's stricken eyes. But Luke had laughed at them. Dodo would live; he must live! And when the small boy did creep back to life, every one said: "Luke did it. Luke wouldn't let him go. He fought death back and won Dodo!"

Dodo thought of it as he sat there with June's gentle breath stealing through the window; June's breath laden with the scent of early summer flowers, of mildly fragrant grasses and the intangible, earthy odor that meant the farm and home!

Other fellows always had fathers and mothers; sisters teasing them and going to parties with them and bringing their chums home; cousins coming to visit; uncles and aunts, but Dodo had never envied them. All the whole wide world had been rolled into one human being that a gracious God had given to Dodo in place of these others—Luke. A fellow could talk to Luke. Luke understood.

Of course, to a certain extent, Dodo had worked his way through college. But not a week passed that Luke hadn't managed to send a few dollars from his own meager purse. "You're down there where a dollar comes in handy, boy," he would write. "Things ain't stirring much around here, and I don't need much spending money. I got the

last cent paid off on the mortgage, and next fall when you're starting out in the advertising business you're so crazy about, I'll be able to keep up pretty well with you."

Agony swept over Dodo in waves. It was horrible, this thing that had happened to Luke. Two weeks ago life had seemed almost too beautiful. With four good, hard years of college work accomplished, he had a chance to enter the big advertising firm of Duane & Collets in New York. Duane had been decidedly interested in the sketches and ideas that Dodo had submitted. "You've got a new slant, Creighton," Duane had written. "I'll be able to place you in September. In the meantime, work out some new ideas on the following objects." And he had inclosed a list.

Dodo had pictured a summer here with Luke. He and Luke sitting here in the summer evenings, talking over things; Luke proudly remarking on Dodo's ability. Days in the fields, haying, plowing. And always Luke here, too; big, homely, awkward Luke, with his love for Dodo shining in his eyes, and making him a kind of god.

He hadn't told Luke about Marcella; in all his life it was the only thing he had kept from Luke. But that was over now. Was it over? A sinuous, persistent voice whispered through him. Had he seen the last of Marcella? Strange that Luke had not divined this attachment that had grown in Dodo's heart. He had fought against it, but it was no use.

He had met Marcella Dupree one night at the Applebys'. You were made, socially, in that Eastern college town, if the Applebys recognized you. And Len Appleby took a fancy to Dodo. It had started with golf one day when Dodo was going around the college course with a borrowed mashie.

"Lord, you've got a powerful drive," Len Appleby had said, coming up to him. Len Appleby was a golf enthusi-

ast and Dodo's clever technique at the game had won his admiration. After that, the road to social heights was simple to climb. But Dodo rather preferred quieter sets than the one in which Len Appleby moved. He liked Len, however, and a friendship sprang up between them. It wasn't long before Dodo was one of the smart crowd, but he made no bones of his financial limitations, and refused to join in parties that were over his head.

Sometimes he found himself becoming vaguely discontented with his own circumstances. One couldn't frequent the Appleby home and go away thoroughly satisfied with life. That was one reason he fought against going there. It was so easy to become accustomed to beauty and luxury; so hard to tumble back to earth and reality. The girls that came to Appleby's were beautiful young things, exquisitely gowned, sophisticated and spoiled. Dodo wasn't particularly susceptible to girls. These girls were out of his sphere, anyway, and why start something that was bound to make one miserable sooner or later?

And then one night he met Marcella. The moment he saw her that first evening, it was as though the inner Marcella stepped out of the visible one and came across to where he stood and laid her hand on his shoulder. He was conscious of her every moment that evening. He was introduced to her presently. She said: "This is not the first time I have seen you. Last year, in Florence, we danced the old pavane together under Italian stars, and once again in Spain, you strummed your guitar beneath my window."

He remembered now the sudden thrill her words had given him, those foolish, ridiculous words, without meaning.

"Then you remember?" he had answered with a kind of shamefaced, boyish smile. He could play this new and charming game, too! He only hoped that his smile hid his self-consciousness.



Marcella smiled at him once in passing, and her eyes made promises—vague, disturbing promises.

"I do remember," she had said, slipping quite easily into his arms, and drawing him into the dance. And in a moment they were lost with the others.

And after that first dance his senses had been drugged. Some one took Marcella away. He stood off and watched her. It had seemed incredible that he had only then met her. It had seemed that all his life he must have known her. She smiled at him once in passing, and her eyes made promises—vague, disturbing promises. Her

smooth, dark hair had been drawn back severely from the marble whiteness of her forehead, like that of a Madonna. But there the parallel ended; Marcella's face was of the earth. Her eyes had sadness in them, and laughter, and cruelty. Even the boy, Dodo, saw that. Her young, fresh lips were heavily carmined, and her slim, cool hands moved restlessly, ceaselessly. Against her dark-velvet gown her arms were very white.

"I take it you never saw Marcella Dupree before," said one of his colleagues, coming up just then. "Stop and think before you fail, Creighton!" the other had warned. "The Applebys have her here only when they have to. For peace, that's all."

"Who is she?" Dodo heard himself ask.

"She is Mrs. Appleby's youngest sister. Been divorced several times; she's almost forty, Creighton, so don't get serious."

"She's beautiful," stammered Dodo.

"And so was Lucrezia Borgia," said his friend with a laugh. "She's got her eye on you. You're too darn hand-

some, Creighton, for your own good. All I've got to say is, be on the safe side; grab some young dumb-bell here to-night, and dance with her the rest of the evening. There's Sally Roamer, for instance. She's keen on you, too. Go on, take a tip, and beat it for Sally right now!"

But Dodo could not hear his friend. The new, whispering voice drowned out the other's words. And soon he was dancing again with Marcella.

And that had been the beginning. The rest of the term at college had been a tremendous struggle against his longing to be with Marcella and his determination to make good and graduate with honors. But Marcella Dupree came more often to the Applebys'. Notes were brought to Dodo's room, written in her queer, curving hand:

You said you would have to study to-night, Dodo. Was moonlight meant to shine unseen, while your aching eyes follow the narrow black line of musty old books? Were stars meant to drip their silver into the wrinkled sea, while I sit behind curtained windows and dream of you? Dodo, you are young, and life is beautiful! A year from now there will be books and problems still, but to-night will never come again. Dodo, I'll be waiting for you in my car near Falconer's.

MARCELLA.

And he had gone. Each time she had won. And for those hours with her beneath the stars, he had paid in early morning vigils over books whose lines danced crazily, whose words were a jumbled mass of tantalizing devils. But with it all, somehow, he had come through on top. He had won his sheepskin and Luke could believe in him still. But never once had he dreamed of telling Luke about Marcella. Instinctively he knew that Luke would disapprove of this love affair with a divorced woman, a woman many years his senior.

At times he had felt that he must write of her to Luke, that he must tell Luke of her beauty, her loveliness, her charm. People whispered vague, in-

definite things of Marcella Dupree. But he had found her everything he admired and respected in womanhood. He wanted the world to know how deeply she was misunderstood. Of course, she had been divorced, but what law of heaven or earth would chain a beautiful, lovely creature like Marcella to men who could not appreciate her? Could there be a sin in wanting to be free of chains that were unbearable? She had told him all. He understood, but the thought of Luke had come like a shadow. Well, why couldn't he dream of marriage with Marcella? It was his life to live, not Luke's. Luke was old-fashioned about everything.

And yet as Dodo sat here now, crushed beyond belief at the tragedy that had befallen his brother, he knew that the instinct that had prevented him from writing Luke of his infatuation for Marcella had been right. Here in the wholesome atmosphere of this home life, here where Luke's fineness was evident on every side, Dodo knew that Marcella Dupree would never belong. He was glad he had not told Luke. And as he set about rewriting the letter to Gay, he said to himself: "I will devote the rest of my life to Luke. I will be his staff. If this Gay, whom he loves, turns coward, I will fill his life with love and sacrifice. I will make it up to him," he whispered through broken, little-boy tears.

The letter was written and mailed. Night came, and as Dodo sat beside his brother's bed, over and over again he whispered that vow he had made, and prayed silently.

But when the moonlight crept across the white counterpane and the faint shadows of branches danced there lazily, then it was Marcella Dupree that Dodo saw; her white face like a lotus blossom, cool and still; her white arms beckoning—

The air seemed suddenly thick, as when a strong, heavy fragrance appalls



Luke had braved the terrors of the licking flames and had gone in and lad Betty out, laughing at his own burns and the danger.

the senses. Uncertainly he crossed over to the window, and threw it open wide, breathing in the deep, cool wholesomeness of the country night air.

The letter to Gay had been too much for Luke. His fever rose that night, and before morning the crippled giant was in delirium, lashing frenzied arms about, cursing at the pain that made him a madman, crying for Gay, always Gay. For the first time, Dodo knew jealousy. Never before had any one been important in Luke's life but Dodo.

As Dodo kept watch with the doctor and the nurse, he was distracted with the realization of this tragedy that had descended on their house.

Never again would Luke walk through the fields, singing carelessly in his hoarse, strident voice. Dodo could remember the time Luke had broken Betty, the colt; the magnificent triumph of man over beast, when Betty had mustered her terrific young strength in an effort to defeat her master—in vain. And Luke had come in, howling with delight.

And then there was the night when lightning had struck the barn, and Betty had been imprisoned in a flaming stall. Luke had braved the terrors of licking flames, and had gone in and led her out, and had laughed at his own burns and at the danger. And the time that the ice had broken, and Janey Parsons would have drowned. One could think on and on of the fearlessness and courage of Luke! Dodo sank on his knees beside the bed, too torn with agony to pray, too crushed with the hopelessness to fight longer against this appalling fact. The rock on which Dodo had built his life had crumbled to this pitiful heap here!

It was three days later that Gay came. It was toward evening and Luke was resting quietly. Dodo stood at the gate looking down the road as it wound along a neighboring hill and lost itself in the last faint sunset cloud. Once that road had been the beckoning hand of life. Once it had said to him: "Follow me, little friend. Along my path you will travel to riches and fame and fortune." But now it said: "Ah, I was only a dream path, my boy. Where your eyes lose me at the top of the hill, that is the end of the road for you."

And then, suddenly, Dodo realized that some one was coming along slowly, quite a small person. It was a girl, carrying a bag. Her steps were weary. On a lonely country road, even a small, weary person is something to break the monotony, something to look at besides eternal sky and grassy hills and a drowsing farmhouse in the distance. And so Dodo watched her curiously. She came up to the gate.

"Good evening," he said, with mild interest. He thought perhaps it was the fading dusk that made her face seem so very pale and her eyes so very large and dark and piteous. Apparently she had not seen him until then.

"Oh!" she said, stopping abruptly and setting down the bag. And then,

with a sudden, knowing smile, just the faint shadow of a smile, "You're Dodo, aren't you?"

"Yes," he answered. "And you're Gay."

She nodded, drew off her hat with a weary gesture, and smoothed back her damp, brown hair. "It's a long walk," she said by way of apology. "I'm tired. Tell me," she went on with a catch in her voice, "how is Luke?"

He could not answer her. For at that moment the appalling facts seemed more than ever to weigh on his consciousness. This was Gay, and Luke loved her. She was to have married Luke. And now——

"The letter came yesterday," she said bravely. "I couldn't believe it, at first. I hadn't heard of the accident. Right after the letter came, my cousin read it in the paper. What are we ever going to do about Luke?"

Dodo shrugged brokenly. He couldn't trust his voice. Do! What could any one do? How could the world go on with Luke crushed and crippled like this?

She caught his hand in hers and pressed it with a swift gesture of sympathy and understanding. "Dodo," she said, with blind determination, "we've got to see him through."

"Oh, God!" burst from him, "I can't bear it! I can't!" And he dropped his face in his arms that were folded across the gate. He was conscious, after a moment, of her hand on his head—the same gesture Luke had used when he was just a little boy and Luke had soothed his hurts.

"I often wondered," she said slowly, "if you knew how he loved you, and if you cared as much for him. You do, don't you? Dodo, we've got to make up to him for what he's lost. He loves us both."

He threw up his head. "You wondered if I loved him?" Brushing his hand blindly across a wet cheek, he

gave a hollow laugh. "Why, he's my life! There isn't a thing in the world I wouldn't do to make him well and whole again. I'd give up anything, everything; even my life. That's how I love him!"

"Dodo! Dodo!" begged Gay helplessly.

"I wonder if you know what it cost him to write that letter to you?" he went on, after a moment.

"Yes, I know."

Her soft voice trembled slightly as she spoke.

"He never loved a girl before. Even in his delirium, you were the only one he called for."

"I know," she said slowly. "I never met any one like him before. He's so good. I felt safe and sheltered with him. I felt the world couldn't get at me and hurt me any more. And I have been hurt so much. There's something in the way that he looks at me that drives away fear."

A stab of anxiety went through Dodo at her words. They were not the words of a girl who loved without reserve. In her spoken sentiments he found a semblance of his own attitude toward Luke. She had analyzed for him his own emotions. He loved Luke that way, too. But brotherly love is not the love of a woman for her mate. And yet she had come to Luke now, knowing. She had come to be the comforter, to help, to shield, to see him through.

"Maybe you'd let me see him, if he's able," she began, after a little pause. "I want him to know I've come."

"He's sleeping now," Dodo told her. "The doctor has to give him powerful drugs to deaden the pain. He suffers more than any one knows. And at night there's no chance of sleep without strong medicine. It's so deadly that an overdose might mean death, but it's the only thing that helps. Come in." He picked up her bag and swung open the gate for her. "You're probably pretty

tired. We'll get some kind of a meal together."

CHAPTER II.

The porch of the Creighton farmhouse was homely and unattractive by day. Mrs. Wetherbec, the housekeeper, arranged cans and broken pots of geraniums along the window sills. There was a broken cane-backed rocker and a low swing chair, and a few old discards that had once graced the dim parlor inside. But by night the porch was a magic place. For at one end honeysuckle vines made a fragrant screen through which the moonlight filtered into dainty arabesques across the rough pine floor; and at the other end, sleeping clematis blossoms trembled in the faint evening breeze. From across the hills echoed the soft lowing of cattle. Crickets chirped their sprightly symphony to the stars.

Gay and Dodo sat here talking of Luke. Dodo huskily recounted boyhood days, Luke's kindness, the wonder of Luke, the gloriousness of his love and sacrifice. Luke had made college possible. Because of Luke, there had come Dodo's chance with the big advertising concern in New York, one of the biggest in the country.

"But you'll have to go on anyway, Dodo," urged Gay. "It would kill him if you didn't."

"But the farm," said Dodo miserably, "who'll take care of it? Luke's just got it on a paying basis. This place is his life. Can I desert him? I've never told him, Gay, but I always hated farming."

"You didn't need to tell him that. He knew," she said quietly. "He knows you better than you know yourself."

Dodo buried his face in his hands.

She came over to where he sat and stood beside him, her hand gently resting on his hair. "Dodo, it seems like the end of the world, doesn't it? The one who stood between you and life is

going to change places with you now. I know; I understand. A year ago, I didn't have a care in the world. There was just dad and I. He died. We'd never had much, always lived a rather careless life, letting to-morrow take care of itself. After he was gone, to-morrow didn't take care of itself. I managed to get a country school to teach. That was when I came here. Seemed terrible at first. I didn't see how I was going to live through it. But I did."

He reached up involuntarily and grasped her hand. "Gay, I'm grateful to you to-night. Since Luke's——" He broke off, unable to voice the tragic fact.

"I know," she said softly. "Oh, Dodo, I know so well. It was Luke's understanding and sympathy that pulled me through. I hadn't a soul in the world except a cousin and her family, and they didn't need me."

Again it flashed through Dodo that Gay's attitude toward Luke was like deep, encompassing, sisterly love. Curiously he found himself wondering if some day Gay should be awakened to a swift, consuming love, where would Luke figure then? But he drove the thought from his mind. One could trust Gay to follow the right course through life. Gay would never be swerved from the path of fairness and justice. Gay was the maternal type, self-sacrificing and generous. It had surprised Dodo tremendously at first to know that Luke was in love. He was not surprised now.

Toward midnight, the nurse came down to tell Dodo that Luke was awake, and calling for him. He went upstairs slowly, wondering how to break the news of Gay's arrival. Luke's drawn, white face smiled back gamely at him from the pillows.

"Haven't you gone to bed yet, boy?" demanded Luke. "And the clock says twelve and after. Got to get your sleep.

I know the work that's on your hands now, and you just coming back from college, soft and easy from using your brains instead of your muscles. Dodo, there's lots depending on you now, and don't go sitting up worrying about me. Out there on the porch all alone, thinking, I'll bet." His voice was husky. "Don't be blue, boy. Things ain't never so bad they couldn't be worse. Don't go getting discouraged about September and that big job that's waiting for you in New York. You'll go, don't worry. Luke'll see to that. Luke'll come through somehow. Sitting out on the porch alone in the moonlight ain't good for you."

"But I haven't been sitting out there alone, Luke," Dodo blurted out huskily.

"Company, huh?" smiled Luke faintly. "Who's there? Old Watt?"

"No. It's Gay."

For a moment the white mask of face was still, while incredulous, unspeakable joy lighted the dull, shadowed eyes. "Gay?"—thickly. "She—she came?"

Dodo nodded. "Want to see her, Luke?"

He smiled, a quick, frenzied smile. "Want to——" he began with a kind of breathless ecstasy. "But it's pity," he cried in agony. "She's sorry for me. Send her away, Dodo; send her back. I told you about her; her eyes, and the kindness in them. I don't want her pity, I want her love——"

"And you have it, Luke," came Gay's voice from the doorway, as she came across the room with soft, noiseless tread and threw herself on her knees beside him. "Luke! Luke, oh, my dear!"

Luke closed his eyes, lips trembling with pain that she should see him like this; with ecstasy at her nearness. And one great, white hand reached out slowly toward the soft, brown hair. "Gay!" burst from him. "Why did you come? Tell me the truth; I can bear it. Was it pity, Gay?" he begged.

"I loved you and you needed me," she told him through swift tears, "so I came, Luke." She pressed her cheek against that helpless hand.

He laughed, the old, careless laugh. What if pain had torn the edges? What if agony had made that laugh a thing without volume or vibrancy? "I don't need feet to climb to heaven now!" cried Luke. "For heaven has come to me."

Dodo went downstairs alone, strangely alone. Luke had his beloved Gay now.

Outside the moonlight still crept through the honeysuckle. A star leaped across the sky. A night bird called, hauntingly. And through Dodo's mind drifted the seductive, unforgettable memory of Marcella, and he began in his loneliness to dream again of her. To-night the road was a silver ribbon, enchanting him, calling him. "Follow me," it whispered. "Beyond my curve at the top of the hill is life and beauty and Marcella!"

The hay fields were hot that week. And the long trail down the broad sweep of waving green seemed endless to Dodo as he sat in the unprotected seat on the mowing machine. There had been a day when, with Luke busy raking in a near-by field, Dodo could have whistled away his dislike of the farm and farm tasks. But not to-day; back in that darkened room lay the beloved, crushed giant!

It was probably ten o'clock when, with the field half mowed, Dodo drew up under the little line of silver birches at the west boundary to rest a while in the shade. He sat with his head in his hands, yielding to depression, when a gay, girlish voice roused him.

"Would you be interested in some cold lemonade, Mr. Dodo Creighton?" And laughingly she tinkled the ice in a small pitcher and held it temptingly before him.

He raised his head, glancing down at her where she stood, so fresh and young and lovely in her trim, yellow gingham.

"Would I?" he shouted, and almost snatched the glass from her hand before she had finished pouring.

"Frightful manners," she deplored, with a teasing smile.

"Wonderful lemonade," he gasped after the last shameless gulp, and holding out the glass for more. "How's Luke?"

She shook her head with that little, pitying smile. "Like a great, big, happy boy. I didn't know I could ever make any one so happy, Dodo. It makes me afraid, almost."

"Afraid of what?" he demanded, eying her curiously.

"Of the power I've been given. When some one loves us so very much, it's dangerous. I could never live up to the ideal he has of me, Dodo. There isn't an angel in heaven with wings so bright and shining as those he's pinned on me."

"You're a wonderful girl, Gay," Dodo told her thoughtfully, as he lighted a cigarette. "I don't think Luke is so far out of the way. I knew if he loved you, you must be the right sort. I wasn't surprised when you came back to see him, and to show him you cared."

She turned her eyes away, stared over the fragrant field, hazy now with the hot summer sun. "I've come to stay," she said slowly. "We're going to be married."

"Married?" echoed Dodo, the cigarette dropping unheeded to the ground.

She nodded. "I can't stand by any other way. You know, people would talk. Besides, we had planned it for next year."

There was something in her tone that caught at Dodo's heart. His hand shot out swiftly and rested with significant pressure on her shoulder. "Gay, you must love him a lot, to do that. I could



"Would you be interested in some cold lemonade, Mr. Dodo Creighton?" asked a girlish voice, laughing, Gay tinkled the ice in a small pitcher and held it temptingly before him.

get right down on my knees this minute and thank God for the kind of a girl you are. You'll pull him out of this despair. That's what I call seeing him through. You're wonderful, Gay."

She smiled up at him softly. "It was his kindness that pulled me through one time, Dodo. He needs kindness now." And she turned quickly and made her way back to the house.

"That you, Dodo?" came Luke's voice, as the younger brother reached

the top stair. Luke's voice, trembling with happiness, thin from days of pain. But pain was forgotten now. "Come in, boy, and sit beside me. I've been waiting all day for you. Dodo"—and he stretched out a shaking hand—"has Gay told you about our marrying?"

Dodo nodded, smiling. He was tired and warm, unable to shake off the depression that the long, difficult day had settled on him.

"Seems like it must be a dream," Luke rumbled on. "Seems like the

good Lord's trying to make up to me for my legs and the pain and everything! Dodo, there's not an angel in heaven like Gay."

"She sure is a square little kid," Dodo assured him, sitting back and trying to accustom himself to that short mound under the white spread. Luke, whose giant length once forced itself through the white iron rungs of that bed. Luke would never walk again. Luke would never run. Dodo sat trying to imagine the Luke that would some day be taken from his bed. Would he have crutches or a wheel chair? Dodo felt the blood drain from his face. Luke, helpless, always. It was incredible to think of. Yet Luke lay here now talking of his marriage with Gay.

"Square!" Luke threw his head back in scorn at the inadequacy of that word. "Dodo, you don't know. If you'd sat here to-day and listened to her plans. Why, a king couldn't be having such ease planned for him. Gay says she's always wanted to putter around with chickens. She thinks it's a shame we have only a few. So now, the plan is to buy a lot more. There's money in them, you know that, Dodo. And it's more of a woman's work. Why, that's how old Garton put Lucy through college. Only I've never been hankering for a chicken farm; it's more of a woman's work. But Gay has got it all figured out. Why, I can sit here at first," he put in hurriedly, "and do all the tricks that she don't understand. And then after you go on to New York to that job of yours in the fall, we'll get Joe Merson to come and do the chores. Why, Dodo, a week ago I couldn't see my way clear at all. Couldn't see nothing ahead but misery and suffering. Gay's changed all that, I didn't want to live then. I didn't care. And now, I never want to die as long as——"

His voice broke.

"As what?" urged Dodo anxiously.

"As long as she loves me," he said with slow emphasis. "As long as she cares."

"And what of me?" asked Dodo, a little lost at this new attitude, afraid of what love was doing to their old companionship.

"You, Dodo?" Luke said softly. "You've got wings to fly with now. You won't be needing Luke any more. You're a man, in a man's world. And I'm a prisoner for the rest of my life. But it won't be prison, now that Gay has come to me. Dodo"—the weak, white hand reached out uncertainly—"I can stand the pain. I can stand being a cripple. I've got—her." He was silent a moment, his eyes closed, his lips trembling. A paroxysm of pain crossed his drawn features. He drew his arms close to his sides as if to shut out the hideous physical suffering. "One of those little white pills, Dodo," he breathed in agony. "Just one, quick——"

And when Dodo had given the deadly pellet to him, in those moments before it took effect, he lay trembling with anguish, his hands touching the broken, crushed thighs in a gesture at once pleading and agonized, as though that pain were too terrible for even the old, fearless Luke to endure. Slowly he relaxed, as the drug took effect. At last he opened his eyes and smiled wanly at Dodo. "It's all right," he said in a whisper. "That's only once in a while. It's—it's all right, Dodo." And he swallowed hard, his clenched fingers slowly straightening.

"That chicken farm," Dodo made himself say through pale, tight lips, "that's a darn good idea. Luke."

"I thought so," returned Luke, his voice becoming more normal again. "Cline tells me the railroad will pay me several thousand, and that'll give Gay and me our start. Besides, it isn't as if we didn't have nothing at all. Those chicken houses you helped me make last

year are pretty good. A few incubators, of course, and there's always some chickens dying off from one thing and another, but——"

"It's a sure-fire thing," Dodo put in encouragingly. "We've got all summer to plan it, anyway. And I'll look around and find some one to help me build an incubator cellar. and——"

"Dodo!" put in Luke sharply. It was as if he forced himself to ask this question. "Tell me—don't beat around the bush. Do you think I'm doing the right thing, marrying Gay? Is it fair to her?"

"She loves you, doesn't she?" Dodo sat forward anxiously. "She came here and told you so, didn't she? She knows what's happened. She's not a child, either. She can see into the future as well as anybody, and if she didn't want to stand by you, Luke, she could have taken your letter and abided by your unselfish decision. But she loves you, and that's her business, and yours, Luke. It's nothing you can measure or figure out according to what's right and wrong. That's when a fellow knows that a girl really cares, when she doesn't let a thing like this interfere."

"But she's young," brooded Luke miserably. "She's a happy little thing, Dodo. She'll be tied up to me for the rest of her life. No dancing, or tramping through the woods! No strolling along the road in the evening, with the moon creeping over the hill. Dodo, is it right to let her do this? I'm older than she is, a lot older."

"She says she loves you, doesn't she?" put in Dodo quickly. "And you want her, don't you? Well, that's all that counts." He got up and went to the window, and looked out through the sleeping garden where the moon played on whispering leaves, on roses drowsing languidly beneath that silver kiss. Down there in the garden, standing beside the gate, stood Gay. She was singing softly to herself. The

moon played on her hair, on her white, upraised face.

"Love her?" Luke's words came to him vaguely, hushed with reverence, breathless with the wonder of Gay. "Dodo, some one up in heaven left the golden gate unlocked—and Gay flew down to earth here, and me!"

What a queer wedding it was! With the groom a pale giant, smiling out from a dozen pillows, his pain-dimmed eyes fixed on Gay as she stood beside the bed, her hand in his, repeating the words of the clergyman in a brave, clear voice. Gay, in some kind of soft pink, silky stuff, with a cluster of wild roses pinned on one shoulder. She smiled down at poor, broken Luke, as a Madonna in a painting smiles down at the Babe in her arms. It was that kind of smile that Gay gave Luke, and Dodo saw it, and wondered.

Luke repeated the clergyman's words in a voice that made one gasp at its hope and defiant, rebellious determination. Dodo was best man, and Mrs. Wetherbee, the housekeeper, was Gay's bridesmaid. And a lark in the tree out beyond sang the wedding song.

And when it was over, Mrs. Wetherbee discreetly went downstairs, murmuring something about serving a lunch up there in Luke's room. And Dodo went out, remarking that it was time to feed the chickens. He found his way blindly down the stairs from his brother's wedding and plunged out through the garden to the barn where he could sob out the anguish of that hour; where he could try to forget the look of heaven in Luke's eyes! He tried to banish from his memory the sight of Gay sinking to her knees beside her bridegroom's bed, burying her face in the white pillow beside him, making for that broken man a heaven out of earth with her unselfishness. Such a wedding for Luke, who deserved the

finest! Dodo pounded his fists against the wall in futile agony.

CHAPTER III.

"Careful, there, Watt; to the left a little! Don't jar him! Now, down one more. Come on!" It was July, and they were bringing Luke down to the porch for the first time. In the cool of early morning, Gay, fresh and crisp in lavender linen, had improvised a startling chaise longue out of a shabby old stool and a big, overstuffed chair. There was a table beside it on which stood roses in an old glass vase, and a pitcher of ice-water, and a fan. Gay stood holding her breath as old Watt and Dodo made their slow progress.

"Aw, Dodo!" Luke laughed weakly. "A fellow'd think you were carrying down a bunch of dishes. Listen to him, Gay," he called over amusedly.

She nodded and smiled at him, as a mother smiles at her child. "He is silly, isn't he, Luke? But then, it's a precious burden they're carrying."

And though Luke did not answer, his eyes said: "Precious! What is there so precious in the world as you, my beautiful?"

And then he was lying back, after a moment, in the homely chaise longue, eyes closed, breathing a bit heavily, but smiling still. "Just a few minutes——" And Gay flew up the stairs after the little white pills, and gave him one.

"That's two since last night," she whispered anxiously over her shoulder to Dodo. "It's dangerous!"

"But the pain," said Dodo under his breath. "God, how he's suffering now! We must have jarred him."

"No, sir," denied Luke bravely, though his face was suddenly drawn. "Just a little weak, that's all." And in a few minutes he was himself again. But Gay went back upstairs slowly with the little box of pills, shaking her head. "Lord!" exclaimed Luke gratefully. "Seems good to get back here on the

old porch. Where's Tige, and what's happened to Rusty? Get them both, Dodo. I want to see my old friends." And soon a cat and dog raced in from the barn and threw themselves frantically at their master, while Dodo fought with them to save Luke from the jar of their advances.

"And it's darn good to have you downstairs again," declared old Watt, settling himself on the steps and wiping his damp forehead. Just then a rickety old Ford raced by with a crowd of boys and girls bulging from its sides.

"Must be a party somewhere, though it's pretty early, isn't it?" asked Luke, his eyes following the speeding car eagerly.

"Yeh." And old Watt fanned himself vigorously. "But it's to-night. Over at Antler's Island. There's a dance. I heard Lucy Garton talking about it in the store this morning—and them young folks is going over now to decorate the place. Kind of a big blow-out, I guess. Such goin's on in this town, and dancing over at Antler's, it sure keeps things humming."

Luke looked at Gay, but she seemed busy shelling peas, apparently not even conscious of what was being said. Gay was a little thinner than when she came, a bit pale. "Gay," began Luke uncertainly, glancing at Dodo who sat smoking a cigarette on the topmost step, and staring off at the horizon, "Gay, how'd you like to go to that dance at the island to-night?"

She raised startled eyes, flushed, and smiled uncertainly. "Luke, I'm not worrying about dances. You're downstairs now, and we're going to have an awfully nice summer, aren't we, Dodo?" But there was a flush of guilt on Gay's suddenly red cheeks, and her hand trembled as she went on shelling peas.

"Sure!" Dodo kept looking off at the horizon, nodding.

"I mean it, Gay," Luke went on

easily. "Dodo here hasn't got much to do. He's a great dancer, so they tell me. He'll take you over to the island to-night, won't you, Dodo?"

Dodo turned, suddenly. He met the frank, honest gaze of his brother. "Why——"

"Course he'll take you, Gay. And old Watt will come and set with me till bedtime, and he can help me to bed in the room off the parlor. Maybe you don't know how much good it would be doing me to have him take you there, just to know that you were dancing to that nice music, you and Dodo."

Dodo's eyes met Gay's. In the past month he had learned to look at Luke's wife casually. At least, he had hoped those looks were casual, for something in his heart seemed to leap up madly when Gay was near, when she smiled or when her hand touched his in passing.

And so that night, just at dusk, Dodo and Gay set off down the road in the little old flivver. Dodo was in white flannels, that he had worn at the Appleby garden parties. Gay wore a dress of blue that matched her eyes, and some pansies on her shoulder.

There was a slim young moon cradling a star in the sky. There was the hush of the country night and the fragrance of country fields. There was the mystery of dusk breathing its spell over a world that swooned in beauty.

The casino at Antler's Island hung high above the water. Music floated out through the night; music and the

laughter of youth. And Gay and Dodo danced together in the magic of that night. Dodo did not quite dare to look down on the girl in his arms, as they danced; he did not quite dare to let himself fall under the spell of her innocent charm.



Gay raised startled eyes, flushed, and smiled uncertainly. "Luke, I'm not worrying about dances! You're downstairs now, and we're going to have an awfully nice summer."

Then, going home again, along the country road, Gay sang bits of the tunes they had heard to-night. She peered out of the side of the car, and counted stars, or recited foolish, adorable poetry about nothing at all but nonsense. She was a Gay that poor Luke had never seen; a Gay that it seemed one must gather up and hold close, tightly, for fear the faint night wind might blow away a thing so frail and lovely.

Luke was still up when they returned. "But, Luke," cried Gay, conscience-

stricken, "you shouldn't have stayed up so long! You promised—remember! And now to-morrow; oh, I shall never forgive myself!"

"Gay, darling!" Luke reached out and drew her close, and she sank to her knees beside his chair. "I wasn't sleepy or tired. I sent old Watt away. He would have stayed with me as he promised. Besides, Dodo can wheel me into the bedroom off the parlor alone, now that I'm downstairs. I just sat here having the nicest time, thinking about you both over there dancing and being happy. That's all I want in the world, is your happiness, Gay." Her head was against his shoulder. She did not raise her eyes.

Dodo had thrown himself on the top step, and sat puffing silently at a cigarette, looking out beyond.

"Besides," Luke went on, "I had company."

"Who?" demanded Gay at once.

"A friend of Dodo's," he said slowly, "and some of her friends. Her name was Miss Dupree." He said it with deliberate emphasis, and one could read his vague disapproval. "She was on her way through to the Belton Hotel over at the lake; said she heard it was the nearest one to here. She's planning to stay a few days there."

Gay got to her feet and stood with one hand at her lips, with an uncertain gesture. "I'll see that your room is ready, Luke," she said and went inside.

Dodo turned. "She came here?" he asked in a low, incredulous voice. "Marcella?"

"Yes," said Luke quietly. "Boy, what is she to you?"

Dodo shrugged. His heart was pounding unpleasantly. "A—oh, a girl I met at college, that's all."

Luke sat forward suddenly. "Not a girl, a woman. And that's not all, Dodo: Tell me the rest."

"Nothing to tell," maintained Dodo stoutly. "I stepped out quite a lot with

her the last year. But it's all over." He avoided Luke's eyes.

"I don't think so." Luke's words were deliberate. "She talked as if she owned you; and, Dodo, she'd been drinking!"

Dodo got to his feet. It was worse than he had feared. "Oh, listen, Luke," he tried to explain, "she just seems——"

"No, she don't just seem. She is! I've seen girls and girls and I know. And when she spoke about you to-night, I knew you'd been having friends that weren't doing you good. Anyway, you never told me about her. You're such a dog-gone honest kid, and when you keep something under your hat, there's a reason. Her friends were drinking, too, Dodo. And one of them had an awful lot to say. He came over and talked to me, and he says she's been divorced. He told me she's crazy about you and she's going to marry you. Is that the truth, Dodo?"

Dodo was silent. Had Marcella proclaimed this to the world? For a short, mad time he had planned marriage with her. And, unconsciously, only one thing had prevented it. That was Luke. But Marcella had not forgotten him! She had come back. Marcella and her dark hair and her face like a lotus blossom in moonlight. Her white arms were beckoning. Over him he felt again the magic of her charm stealing. Why had he almost forgotten her? Was it Gay?

"She's been divorced, yes," Dodo admitted. "But she's beautiful, Luke. She's so beautiful it makes everything seem possible."

"And poison ivy is beautiful, too," said Luke slowly.

"I knew how you'd feel!" cried Dodo. "That's why I didn't tell you about her."

"And—you're figuring on marrying her, Dodo?"

Silence fell. Through Dodo's mind

drifted the memory of fragrant hours with Marcella. There was no need for him here any longer. Luke had Gay, now. Gay was not an elusive perfume through his senses. Gay was a live-throbbing reality. It came to him with a blinding flash that never had Marcella counted so deeply as Gay! Marcella had not counted in the way that Gay did. He stalked across the porch, flung his cigarette out through the flowers.

"You can't!" burst from Luke. "You can't, boy, do you hear? She'd ruin your life, the life I've struggled to keep in that body of yours! She can't have you. I sat here to-night, and saw the kind of woman you might marry—and God! The pain I've suffered can't be compared to the way that would hurt me! Don't I know what women like them can do to an honest, trusting lad like you? She's got lots of money and she'd break that will of yours with her beauty. She'd kill the ideals that you've got in that young heart of yours. She'd make you see the day when you'd wish yourself dead, because you wouldn't have any self-respect left. Dodo, come here!" he cried, his voice trembling with pain. "Dodo, promise me you'll never see her again! Promise!"

And Dodo threw himself on his knees beside Luke's chair, burying his head against his brother's shoulder. And his heart cried, "It would be a thousand times better to marry Marcella." But his lips said, "I promise, Luke."

CHAPTER IV.

Breakfast on the Creighton farm was early, and Luke, who for years had sat at the old pine table in the kitchen, while the first rays of the sun crept through the dewy garden, lay now in the bedroom off the parlor while Gay hurried about, setting the table and preparing the meal.

Dodo came down and took his place

silently. A sleepless night had left his eyes heavy. He did not look at Gay as he mumbled an incoherent "Good morning." The sunshine had a way of playing on her hair, of kissing the rosiness of her cheeks. Other mornings had been a bit difficult. This morning was an ordeal. For last night he had held her in his arms as they danced and drunk the liquid beauty of her eyes. He was afraid of Gay now, and of what she had done to him.

But he found himself following the swift line of curved white arm above the stove; of trim, fleet foot and ankle across the room. That dress was simple enough—just a kind of pink thing with a little ruffle at the elbow and a little pocket with a bit of white spilling out. Last night her handkerchief had smelled of roses. She was like a rose herself. Savagely he gulped down his coffee.

"Oh, Dodo!"—impatiently. "There, now I've broken an egg, and I know you don't like poached eggs broken." She held the plate out before him with the square of toast and egg.

"It's all right!" He tried to look at the plate, but couldn't. It wasn't fair for Gay to stand there like this, with her big eyes meeting his, and that smile written across her red lips, and her hair tumbling in wavy chaos about her lovely face.

Then she served the rest of his breakfast and took her place opposite him at the table. With rigid determination he kept his eyes on the plate.

"It was such a lovely party, wasn't it, Dodo?" she said dreamily, gazing out through the window where a robin perched daringly on the slender branch of a rose bush.

"Yes."

Gay sat there with her hands locked under her chin. No, he didn't dare look up. He knew, without looking, just how adorable Gay was—Luke's wife.

She sighed, softly, unconsciously. "Going to mend the south fences today?" she asked presently.

"I think so." She'd spend the rest of her life like this, asking about fences and talking about eggs, when she was meant to trail through life on a rosy, romantic cloud.

"Too bad," she began in a different voice, a voice that was a bit forced and conscious, "that you were out last night when your friends came."

"Doesn't matter," he said shortly. Marcella had never mattered so little as she did now.

"Perhaps she—they'll come back," ventured Gay.

Did he imagine that trace of breathlessness in her voice?

"Perhaps." He got to his feet and drew back his chair. "Luke—he's all right this morning?"

"Yes. He was sleeping when I looked into his room."

It was a long walk to the south fence where Dodo went that morning. Toward ten o'clock Gay came out to him there, an old shade hat pulled down over her eyes to shield her from the blinding sun. She carried a thermos bottle of iced tea.

"You shouldn't have done this, Gay," he chided her, though aching with joy at her thought of him.

"I had to come, Dodo, so I brought the tea because it's so terribly hot."

"Why did you have to come?" he demanded.

"Well, this note came for you from the Belton Hotel over at the lake, sent by special messenger. So I thought you ought to have it right away."

Crimsoning, Dodo took the envelope and tore it open. And Gay stood back while he straightened the sheet, his eyes swiftly following the lines written there in that queer, curving hand.

DODO LOVE! Had you forgotten Marcella? Had you forgotten those sweet days we once knew? You went away in June,

and you said you would remember. You haven't written me, Dodo, and I missed you, and longed for you, and so I've come. I am here at this lonely spot because I want to see you again. Do you think out of all the world I would choose so desolate a place, except that you were near? I will be waiting for you this evening, and we will dine here above the water while the stars shine through a silence that is deeper than any I have ever known—though not so deep as my love for you.

MARCELLA.

He hesitated a moment, plunged the note into his pocket, bit his lip thoughtfully.

"Want some tea, Dodo?" Gay was asking.

He nodded, took it from her, gulped it down swiftly. She seated herself on the stump of a tree near by as he threw himself on the ground moodily.

"I got enough cherries off the littlest tree this morning for a pie," she announced proudly.

"Yes?" He shrugged carelessly.

"What's the matter, Dodo?" she asked with sudden anxiety. "Did that note bring you bad news?"

He laughed. "Bad news! I guess not. It's from the most beautiful woman in the world, asking me to dine with her to-night. And I'm going, Gay! Call that bad news?" He dug his knife into the ground, avoiding her eyes. She wouldn't care anyway. And why should she? She hadn't the right to care, in the first place. And then—there was Luke.

"Oh, isn't that nice?" Her voice fluttered, like a bird that has been winged and drops, dying, to earth. "I'm so glad it isn't bad news." She slid down to the ground and brushed off her dress. "Want any more tea? Or maybe I'd better cork the bottle? Well, I'll run along now. Luke thought he'd like baked ham, and it's in the oven, and that stove is the funniest old thing. Don't work too hard." She was gone, trailing along the shady, wooded path, humming in a forced, trembling voice

But the humming stopped suddenly, and as he watched her it seemed that her steps grew slower. And he sat there until she disappeared slowly over the little knoll near the old elm tree.

He came up from the fields earlier than usual that afternoon. Luke looked up curiously.

"Too hot?"

Dodo shook his head. "I've got a date. Going into town for the evening."

"Oh." Luke nodded, and said no more.

Dodo was still upstairs dressing when Luke called out: "Coming down, boy? Supper's ready and Gay's got some fresh maple cake."

"Don't wait for me," Dodo answered. "I'm not eating at home to-night."

"Where, then?" demanded Luke with a friendly smile as Dodo came downstairs. "Where's the big spread?"

"Over at the lake, at the Belton Hotel."

"Oh." Luke nodded, gave his brother a slow, thoughtful glance.

"So long," said Dodo, hesitating on the lower step. He was perfect in white flannels and a gay blue tie, and a kind of mad excitement in his eyes. "So long, Gay!" he called back.

"By, Dodo." Just two friendly words. He wanted to crawl back and throw himself at her feet and cry out his need of her. But instead, with a jaunty, mysterious smile, he went on out to the little flivver at the gate, and started down the road—to Marcella.

Long after midnight, Dodo stopped the little car far up the road at the big gate that led into the pasture. Luke might waken, and it wasn't fair to disturb the sleep that meant so much to that tortured body. And so Dodo walked along the road toward home. Always before, the memory of Marcella had lingered with him sweetly, like the exotic fragrance of an Oriental flower. To-night she had lost her

charm for him. All through the evening he had been conscious of a certain scorn in his heart for Marcella and all she represented—sham, shallowness and deceit. Once she had fascinated him. To-night he knew that women like Marcella could never mean anything to him again. For he had seen the glory of true womanhood in Gay, and the memory of her wholesomeness possessed his mind. Marcella's vanity and her cheap, theatrical pose sickened him. Yet never before had he needed Marcella so badly as he did now that Gay had come to matter so terribly. He plunged along the road, Luke's white, drawn face before him; Luke's eyes as they lighted with ecstasy at the sight of Gay.

"I'll get out of here," he muttered. "I'll get away somewhere—somewhere else."

"But the farm," whispered an inner voice. "Desert Luke and the farm because you're not man enough to put behind you this sudden, mad love for your brother's wife? You are a coward!"

He came up to the gate and saw the candle flickering on the parlor table where, of course, it had been left for him. A candle, that Gay's fingers had lighted and placed there, like the candle in his heart she had lighted, too, and it would burn on forever.

He saw the shadow of Luke's wheel chair there against the honeysuckle. He heard Luke's heavy, even breathing. Luke was asleep then.

Faintly he heard a sob somewhere in the garden, somewhere there in the damp, sweet fragrance of the still summer night.

He found Gay under the apple tree just around the porch. She was on her knees beside the hickory bench, a crumpled, sobbing heap, her face crushed against something which she held in her clenched hands. And his arms went around her with shielding gentleness, with reverence and with adoration. "Gay!"

She jerked her head back sharply, drew away from him in terror and tried to dash one hand behind her with the thing she was holding. But a stray moonbeam fell through the branches of the old apple tree, and he saw what she was trying to conceal, his old tweed cap.

Slowly he drew her to her feet, his eyes searching hers. "You care, Gay?" he was whispering hoarsely. "You care, too?"

She did not answer him. Her head dropped back against his arm. Her eyes met his, her great, dark, piteous eyes, staring out of that white face, beseeching him, it seemed, not to see what was written there; not to make her betray herself.

"Gay! Oh, my God! I'm holding you here so close; your lips are drawing mine as the dew draws the sun! Your eyes are whispering things you dare not say! Your heart is crying out to mine, and I can't answer you! No, Gay! I mustn't say I love you! I can't voice the mad torrent that's sweeping through me now. Never, Gay; never!" His words were hoarse and broken. "You understand? There's Luke. And he loves you. You're his. I said one time I would give up everything in this world to make him happy. Do you remember? That's why to-morrow I'm going away with her!"

"Marcella?" whispered Gay. "You'll go away with her, Dodo?"

"Yes."

"You'll marry her?" Gay's words were like drops of blood torn from her heart.

"Yes."

Gay's head dropped lower. "There's no other way, Dodo?"—faintly, as when agony snatches our strength.

"No!"—hoarsely. "I can't be near you, Gay, nor free, without——" He broke off, bent suddenly toward the still, white face so close, then threw back his head. "You're his—Luke's!

I've got to keep saying that over in my mind. You're Luke's wife. Gay, if I didn't keep saying it, and thinking it, we'd be lost, do you hear? Gay, help me to help myself. Until I can break away decently, help me—help me fight it! Gay, help me!"

They did not see the figure in the wheel chair; they did not hear Luke stir. For the honeysuckle whispered fragrantly in the faint night wind, and shielded him from the moonlight. They did not see his pale, thin hands grip the arms of that chair with desperate contraction. They did not see the twisted, haggard face, tortured with an agony greater even than that which he had suffered physically in the long, terrible weeks just past. And when they tiptoed quietly up the steps, Luke stirred and grunted as though that faint sound had just disturbed him from a deep sleep.

"Huh, back again, boy?"—weakly.

"He wouldn't let me wheel him in and get him to bed until you came." Gay's voice, a thin, unnatural note.

"Shouldn't sit up so late," mumbled Dodo. "Gee! Luke. You need every bit of sleep you can get. I feel guilty. If I'd known, I wouldn't have stayed."

"Nonsense, Dodo. I'm all right. Been sleeping like a top right here, and I can snooze away all day to-morrow. It's you that has to get up early and get busy. Suppose you danced your feet off, eh?" And he laughed weakly.

Another morning and Gay sat across the table from Dodo. Her hand trembled as she poured the coffee.

"How's Luke?" Dodo tried to keep his voice even.

"Sleeping now. Must have been restless all night. He doesn't look as well."

"He shouldn't have waited up for me," complained Dodo. "It was late, and——" Gay raised her eyes then and met his. For one brief moment that glance held, and then, savagely,

Dodo got to his feet and scraped back his chair and went into Luke's bedroom. The shades were drawn. It was cool and peaceful in there. Dodo stood a moment studying the pale face of his brother, and then with a muffled sob sank to his knees beside the bed and buried his face in his arms. "Luke! Luke!" cried his heart. "You always used to tell me what to do. You always helped me before. And now——"

Luke stirred, opened his eyes, and glanced around the room. "Oh, you here, boy?" He reached out tenderly to stroke Dodo's hair. "Nice day, too, isn't it? Suppose you'll soon have the south fences mended?"

Dodo nodded, unable to speak. All the love and pity and the shame that swept through him now made the room seem to whirl.

"That's good," went on Luke evenly. Then after a moment, "You went last night to see that Dupree woman, didn't you, boy?"

Dodo nodded again.

"You aren't figuring on seeing much of her, are you?"

"I don't know," returned Dodo in a low voice. "It's pretty over where she's staying and a fellow gets kind of lonesome around here nights. You see, you and Gay have each other. You don't need me and I'll take care of myself all right, Luke. Don't worry." Dodo was looking away through the window, out at the shaded garden; at the apple tree. He could see again Gay as she knelt there in the moonlight, her face buried in an old cap, his cap. And so, he did not see his brother's anguished gaze as it rested on him.

"You mustn't go to her," begged Luke hoarsely. "Dodo, I can't have that. You promised me—remember?" His hand crept over his brother's; his weak, thin fingers closing protectingly.

"Perhaps I did," burst from Dodo, "but I didn't realize then——" He stopped.

"Realize what, boy?" urged Luke gently.

"Why, how hard it would be to keep that promise!" went on Dodo blindly. "You don't know the charm of Marcella. She's put a spell over me, Luke." He got to his feet, swaying. He could hear Gay's quick, light tread in the kitchen beyond.

Slowly Luke turned his head away, mumbling uncertainly. "The little white pills, Dodo. Quick! This pain——"

And Dodo fled to the dresser and was back with the little box, fumbling clumsily.

"Here. Give them to me, boy!" Luke tore at the box. His voice had taken on a queer hoarseness. He swallowed a pill swiftly and furtively slipped the box under his pillow. "Come closer, Dodo. Let me tell you something. This pain, it's getting me. Do you hear? If it wasn't for Gay and you, I'd pray to be out of this misery. Pain, night and day, tearing at me like a million red-hot swords!"

Dodo sank to his knees again, weakly. "Luke, you're suffering, and I've made you suffer more, talking of Marcella. I won't go to her; I won't, Luke, I promise!" And he buried his head in the pillow beside his brother's, as he saw the white hands clench slowly against Luke's lips, to hold back a shout of agony.

"There, boy"—weakly. After a moment, Luke's fingers relaxed. "It's gone. Dodo, I'm getting to be a coward. It's the pain. You'd be a coward, too, ten thousand devils stabbing at you night and day. Do you wonder that I want to die, Dodo?" he whispered, breathing hard. "Do you wonder, now? I haven't told you before. I've been trying to see it through. But it's getting too much for me, this pain——"

Dodo pressed his face against Luke's head in an agony of self-abasement. But Luke's eyes were raised, and he

tried vainly to peer through the door where Gay hurried about her morning work. And he lowered his gaze to that dear head so close, and smiled, and in that smile was the immortal ecstasy of renunciation.

"It's all right, Dodo. I'm a big coward, talking about it to you. Boy, you've been an awful comfort to me, do you know that? You've come through square and clean. You'll give up that Dupree woman. I know. She's not your kind!"

Dodo groveled mentally, loathing himself, despising himself. How could he know that Luke's eyes now were picturing again that last scene in the moonlight? That Luke was hearing again those words of wretchedness and despair and sacrifice? "I said one time I would give up everything in this world to make him happy. That's why to-morrow I'm going away with her."

The long, hot morning dragged on. Around ten Dodo tried not to remember the yesterdays when Gay had come singing down to him with iced lemonade to cool his thirst; with that cheery, friendly smile to make his heart ring with joy. But there was no Gay today. Noon came, and he trudged up the lane to the midday meal, dreading that hour there with Gay and Luke; dreading the farce that must be carried on, the torture of Gay's smile.

Luke seemed unusually cheery. "Right on the minute, boy," he called from the wheel chair on the porch. "Smell that cherry pie and the chicken? Get a move on you now and wash up so you won't keep us waiting. We'll be losing our cook!" He winked and jerked a thumb over his shoulder toward the kitchen. "Even got flowers on the table," he said in a loud whisper. "I'll bet Gay picked seven thousand nasturtiums and made me peel the potatoes while she did it."

Dodo smiled and waved and went on through the back door. Gay stood at

the stove forking fricassee chicken out of a big granite pan.

"Hello," he said gruffly.

"Hello, Dodo." She lowered her eyes with a swift gesture, and he went on through to the next room without glancing back, whistling.

"Old Watt stopped by this morning," said Luke, as they were finishing their meal. "He says there's another dance over at Antler's Island to-night." As he spoke, he busied himself with his pie.

Dodo's glance flew to Gay; begged, pleaded. "No, we can't," it told her, "we mustn't go; never again, Gay!"

And she met his eyes helplessly.

"It's going to be a grand night," went on Luke easily. "Dodo, would you mind taking Gay over? She works hard around here all way, and don't have no pleasure."

"Why——" stammered Dodo uncomfortably. "I——"

"You haven't got any dates that can't keep, boy," Luke continued, with mild reproach in his tone. "It's not fair to Gay to keep her housed up here all the time. And I can't very well——"

Dodo flashed him a look of such anguish that Luke turned away and studied the road.

"Really, Luke, I don't care about going," put in Gay tremulously. "My head has been aching and——"

"Nonsense!" interrupted Luke. "You know you're crazy about dancing. And there's not a fellow around here that can match up to Dodo. Don't you think I know how kids like you enjoy dancing? I get a heap of joy knowing you're both enjoying yourselves once in a while."

"No, we'd better not," mumbled Dodo. "We can't get back till late, because the ferry doesn't come back till it's over. And you sit up here alone, waiting and losing your sleep."

"No such thing," put in Luke. "I told old Watt to come up and spend the evening with me. He'll leave

around ten, and he'll help me to bed before he goes. That's straight. I mean it; I won't stay up for you. Go on, boy, and take Gay and give her a nice evening, won't you?"

A moment of agonized silence followed. "All right. Sure, that's nice of you, Luke. But I hate to leave you." Dodo rose and drew back his chair, without looking at Gay.

"Fine! Don't go worrying about me so much. I'll just sit here picturing the two of you and the music. That makes me happy, Dodo," he said slowly. "Knowing you both are happy."

And so, late in the dusk, Gay came downstairs in her pretty, blue dress, and went over to Luke's chair in the fragrant corner of the porch, and bent to kiss him good-by. He slid an arm around her and drew her down to the arm of his chair, and cradled her head against his shoulder, his lips against her hair. "Beautiful; you look beautiful," he whispered. "My Gay! See those silver stars out there? Like your eyes, my sweet——" He broke off, holding her close. A whippoorwill called across a meadow sleepily, sadly. Slowly the moon crept over the neighboring hill. "Good-by, little Gay," said Luke, in a voice that was careless and easy. "Run along, and dance with Dodo and be happy, my beautiful!"

Gently, maternally, she kissed his cold cheek, his eyes and the tuft of hair against his forehead. "Luke, you're sure you'll be all right?"

"Sure. Old Watt'll be here any minute now."

"Good-by." She caught his hand to her lips impulsively, and ran down the steps. There was a broken sob in that last word.

"By, Luke," called Dodo. "Don't stay up, now."

Luke wheeled his chair over to the open space and stared out through the dusk at the little car. "'By, boy! 'By, Dodo and Gay!"

The moon shone on the pavilion at Antler's Island. Gay and Dodo were in each other's arms, dancing.

It was over at last, the agony and the ecstasy of it. Gay was weak and faint against the seat in the flivver as they drove home. Dodo held the wheel firmly, his eyes straight ahead, and the line of chin and jaw taut, tense.

"I'll go to New York in September," Dodo was saying. "I'll put every minute on my work. I'll send lots of books to you, Gay, and maybe I'll have some extra money to send, too, so that you can take trips here and there. Then maybe you can get it off your mind a little. Do you think you could, Gay?"

"Maybe. Could you?"

His laughter answered her; desperate, mad laughter.

"There'll be other girls, Dodo"—softly, hopefully, and yet with terror. "Maybe you'll care for them——"

He stopped the car, turned and swept her into his arms, his eyes holding her completely. "Gay, get this straight. You're Luke's, now and forever. But until I die, there'll be only you. I can't have you; I can't love you; I can't even think of you and stay sane, but you're going to be there, down deep in my heart. Forget me, Gay. Put me out of your thoughts, too, if you can. But if you must remember me, remember what I've tried to be—not what I am."

They left the flivver at the meadow gate farther up the road, and walked slowly, silently, down to the house that stood in the waning moonlight. There was no candle to-night. Gay went up the steps first. The wheel chair was not on the porch. They went inside, on into Luke's bedroom.

The wheel chair was beside the window and the faint moonlight fell across the figure slumped in it.

"He's asleep," whispered Gay, crossing the room quickly. Then there was a cry: "Dodo! There's something wrong! His head——"

Dodo was beside her at a bound. Something was wrong. Luke's hands lay folded in his lap, folded over a small, white box, and the box was empty! There was a note on the table, which read:

DEAR ONES: Only a coward would do what I have just done. But the pain was too much. I'm no good to myself or any one else. It's selfish of me to go and leave you, Gay, after you cared enough to marry me. But I couldn't stand the pain it cost to live. You're young, Gay, and you'll find some one else to love you, I hope. Dodo, I want you to watch over her till she does find some one else. Don't go off and marry that Dupree woman, now that I'm leaving you. Take care of Gay. I'm leaving her in your care, and I'm trusting you, Dodo, to watch over her. She's little and young, and folks sometimes take advantage of girls like that. It's not that I don't love you both—but I haven't got the courage to face a lifetime of this pain. Good-by.
LUKE.

"Luke! Luke!" burst from Dodo. "You can't leave me; you can't! Oh,

my God!" And he was on his knees beside that still, drooping figure. When his first spasm of grief was spent, he groped for Gay, who also knelt there.

She drew his head to her shoulder, comforting him. "You gave him loyalty and love while he lived," she whispered. "He never guessed about you and me——" What a comfort Gay was!

"Guessed!" cried Dodo. "No, he went to his death in the fear that I might marry Marcella Dupree! If I could have told him how little he needed to fear that! Oh, Gay! If he could only know now how I love you; if he could know how I worship you!"

"He does know, Dodo—now," she whispered softly, her lips against the dear head so close.

And the moonlight fell across the lovers as they knelt there, and across the calm, white face of Luke Creighton, with its divine, godly smile.



NOVEMBER AND BITTERSWEET

ELEVEN o'clock of the year has struck,
But ah, it's a shining morning!
The white frost melted an hour ago
To pearls for the day's adorning.

Some two score tasks with dusty frown
Fill all the indoors with glooming—
A starling whistles, as though 'twere March,
And spreads his satins for grooming.

Small blame to the starling—the sky is blue,
And a breeze from the south low sighing,
I'm off to the leafless high hill woods
For bittersweet gay though dying.

MARIA OWENS FARRELL.

Love—So Blind

By Vivian Grey



PART IV.

SYNOPSIS.

The story opens in New York with a stolen meeting between Mark Leighton and Isobel Hewett. The girl declares that she returns the young man's passionate love, but that it is impossible for her to marry any man unless he has both wealth and position. Mark has decided to devote himself to politics, and, being chosen as a candidate in an election, is invited by Edward Skelton to stay at his residence, The Larches, during the contest. Skelton, a wealthy ironmaster, is a widower whose wife died five years after their marriage, leaving a girl—Felicity—to become the pivot of Skelton's existence. At a dinner party given by Isobel's married sister, Beryl Palireman, Mark and Isobel are detected by their hostess in a loverlike attitude. Beryl tells Mrs. Hewett, and the mother gives a guarded warning to Isobel, who answers easily that she can dis-

miss Mark when she wishes. Felicity disregards her delicate health and insists on canvassing for him. Mark has occasion to return to New York. He meets Isobel, who declares that she will remain unmarried two years for his sake. Then if he is not rich and famous their engagement shall be ended. Mark discovers that Skelton is subject to heart attacks, and gives the ironmaster his promise to act as guardian to Felicity in case of his death. On the day of Mark's election Skelton dies suddenly from heart failure. He comforts Felicity and in his capacity of guardian places her as paying guest with Mrs. Hewett, thus obtaining access to Isobel. Felicity, ignorant of any attachment between Isobel and Mark, worships her guardian, and believes he returns her love. Illness induces her to consult Doctor Mackarness, from whom Isobel learns in confidence that the heiress

has only six months to live. Isobel urges Mark to marry Felicity because her death will leave him a very wealthy man, and she, Isobel, would then be ready to become his wife. After considerable resistance Mark succumbs to her tempting and asks Felicity to marry him. Her happiness in consenting makes him ashamed of his duplicity. The marriage of Felicity Skelton to Mark Leighton takes place, and the latter is delighted with his bride. As they are about to start for the honeymoon Isobel arrives. Mark guesses that she wishes to tantalize him with the contrast of her splendor and Felicity's lack of beauty, and, hurrying away, he deprives her of her expected triumph. While on her honeymoon Felicity has a narrow escape from drowning, and Mark realizes that he loves her and that his infatuation for Isobel is dead. He dare not risk a confession, and, when he is recalled to the House, leaves Felicity in Italy ignorant of his deceit. Mark determines to tell Isobel what has happened and to rely on her generosity to release him from their compact, while Isobel, confident of his great love for her, awaits his coming in joyful expectation. She learns from Mark that he loves his wife, and vows she will tell Felicity the whole truth. Felicity returns from Italy, and is very happy with her husband until Mark is summoned away.

CHAPTER XX.

ISOBEL'S interview with Mark, his declaration and explanation—so different from the meeting she had anticipated—had shaken her terribly, and she became really ill.

For some time she had dreaded that Doctor Mackarness had made a mistake and that Felicity's life might be prolonged beyond the time allotted, and it had also occurred to her that Mark might be more moved by Felicity's death than she would like him to be.

But the notion of Mark falling in love with Felicity had never entered her mind, so that his avowal had cut deeply, pride as well as love suffering.

She decided not to remain in town. Edwin Grant was at his place in the country and Isobel's friends, the Pinsents, would be only too glad to receive her.

Isobel made up her mind that she and

Edwin must come to an understanding. After that—let Felicity beware!

Before Mark left, Isobel had consented to become Mrs. Grant.

Edwin, rich and plain as he might be, possessed a practical common sense that seldom allowed itself to be affected by romantic impulses.

He had admired Isobel for a long time, and had made it apparent to her—and indeed to every one—that he wished her to become his wife.

He did not at all resent the fact that she had not "jumped at him." On the contrary, it raised her in his estimation, for he had never conceived the idea that she might be playing him for her own ends.

When the Pinsents made it known to him that she was about to stay with them, he came to the conclusion that Isobel had resolved to reward him for his long and patient waiting.

On Isobel's intimating that she was ready to become his wife, he responded in terms which to him were beautifully befitting. To Isobel, however, his words and manner sounded prosaic. Her great beauty, she thought, should have aroused her elderly suitor to more vehement delight; the remembrance of Mark's passionate wooing came back to her while she listened.

Notwithstanding that she had refused him often, he seemed to take it for granted that sooner or later she would accept him, and this irritated her.

The magnificent diamond ring that he slipped on her finger that very evening he probably bought months ago, and had actually kept it in his pocket until the expected moment came.

Her heart hardened at the thought. Mark would have been different.

What a wooing, what a proposal, what an acceptance! None of the joys inseparable from a stolen interview, none of the tremulous wonder whether such and such a person would discover their whereabouts! Everything had been

hideously cut and dried, everything intensely matter of fact.

The circumstances leading up to her engagement jarred on her; the kiss, Edwin's seal of betrothal, was the crowning injury. And then Edwin was not one of those who are content to adore their beloved; he was of those who expected and demanded a great deal of consideration and attention.

Isobel had learned that Mark was leaving, and suddenly there came to her the desire of witnessing his departure.

Perhaps she might catch one glimpse of him—the last while she was still unmarried, seeing that Edwin had suggested that six weeks only should elapse before he became the happiest of men.

"My places are all ready for you," he had said in his pompous way. "Any little alteration you may wish to make can be done at our leisure after the wedding. Do you not think we might send out the invitations?"

Isobel acquiesced; it was the only thing to do if she wanted to be Mrs. Grant, mistress of vast estates, a magnificent town house, everything a woman could desire. Now that they were in her grasp, Isobel felt no desire for wealth and position.

She made a pretext of a letter from her mother, and Edwin permitted her to go, promising that he would soon follow her.

He saw her off to the station, and remained quite ignorant of the fact that she got out of the train at the next station and reached New York before the boat sailed.

By the time it had arrived she was feverishly excited. Her passionate love for Mark had never been more intense. She must see him and have speech with him just this once!

Her heart ached for the right to rush into his arms.

At length she descried his tall figure, and she could have cried aloud when she saw him turn and tenderly help

Felicity from the car. He seemed to have but one thought—the pale girl into whose eyes he looked so often.

All desire to speak to Mark vanished.

Her heart was heavy within her; her lips were set in a hard, vindictive line. She could scarcely restrain herself, was scarcely able to choke down the cry that would rise to her lips.

She had come all this way for nothing! Felicity's husband would go out of her life.

But she would be revenged. She would let Felicity know the truth.

"And that to-day," she said to herself. "She shall know that the man whom she loves, married her in the belief that she was dying, that he would inherit her wealth and enjoy life with the woman of his choice! Perhaps she will not look at him with such adoring eyes!"

She entered the taxi with rage and despair gnawing at her heart as she pictured the loving farewells of husband and wife.

She soon arrived at her destination.

"Isobel," exclaimed Mrs. Leighton, "I thought you were away!"

"I was," Isobel said disdainfully, "but naturally I came down this morning!"

The challenge in her voice and the emphasis on the "naturally" left Felicity no other alternative but to ask, "Why naturally?"

Once more Isobel looked at her companion with an expression of contempt.

"Well, it seems to me that you might have guessed that I should not let Mark leave the country without giving him the chance of bidding me good-by—a chance which, by the way, your presence prevented him from seizing!"

Felicity became very pale. She made no rejoinder.

"Is it possible," Isobel went on, assuming an air of intense astonishment, "that Mark should have been silent regarding the matter?"

"Mark?" repeated Felicity coldly. It

affronted her to hear her husband spoken of with such familiarity.

"Yes," said Isobel, with emphasis—"Mark!"

Felicity remained silent, and Isobel wondered whether the young wife's pride would prevent her asking any more questions.

This would not have suited Isobel, who was eager to make her disclosures.

Felicity, however, was so far from guessing the truth that, recovering her composure, she was determined to discover why it was that Isobel referred to her husband so familiarly.

"Since when," she asked quietly, "have you been in the habit of calling Mr. Leighton by his Christian name?"

"Since when?" repeated Isobel, with a slow drawl that made her words distinctly impertinent. "Let me see—it wants some consideration. I think it is over eighteen months, now, since Mark and I became engaged to each other."

Felicity was provoked into an exclamation of surprise.

"I had never understood there was an engagement!"

"You ought to have been told!" said Isobel.

Felicity looked at her helplessly.

Isobel left the seat she occupied to sit beside Felicity.

"I have no cause to love you," she said, "but if you have been kept in ignorance of the past, I have the greatest pity for you!"

"I want no one's pity," responded Felicity quietly. The thought of Mark and his strength and his manliness had come back to her and had momentarily given her courage. "I love my husband and he loves me. If he was engaged to you, I pity you for having lost him!"

She did not speak maliciously. If it were true that at some remote period Isobel had loved Mark, her position must indeed be painful.

"I have not lost him," said Isobel very quietly.

Felicity started.

"What do you mean?" she exclaimed passionately.

"Do you want to hear the truth?" asked Isobel. "I can tell you the truth if you like, or, if you prefer it, a gilded lie; to me it makes no difference whatever. I am now engaged to Edwin Grant, and shall be his wife in six weeks' time. Perhaps you know that?"

"No," said Felicity faintly. She was not thinking of Isobel or her engagement, but only of the evening when she came home and Mark had spoken of Isobel in so curious a manner.

"You seem to know remarkably little," said Isobel, resuming the seat which she had vacated. She leaned back and shut her eyes as if weary of the subject.

"What do you mean by asking me whether I want to hear the truth or only a gilded lie?" asked Felicity.

"I asked you because the truth will be decidedly unpleasant."

"I must hear the truth!" said Felicity, looking at her enemy with steady eyes. "I do not say that I shall believe your statements, which may be born of malice. You have not liked me for some time past."

Isobel looked at her and then gave way to her passion.

"It would be more correct if you said that I never liked you!" she said. "When we first met I was jealous of your wealth, but your girlish admiration amused me, and I made use of you."

"You are not telling me anything that comes as a surprise. I have felt for a long time that you did not care for me!"

"And I suppose that did not break your heart?" said Isobel, smiling ironically. "But what about my relations with Mark?"

"You say you were engaged to him. What if I should refuse to credit this?"

"His letters to me will corroborate my words," said Isobel. "I have at

least forty of them. Our engagement lasted over a long period. What exquisite letters he always wrote!"

Felicity winced.

There came to her a memory of the first letter which she had received from Mark, and which left with it a bitter sense of disappointment.

Her heart chilled.

"I can let you see those letters, of course," added Isobel. "To me they have always seemed so beautiful that I have wondered whether any woman on this earth ever derived such joy from written words!"

Felicity's face was turned to the window.

"I do not want to see them," she said at length in a low voice. Somehow she knew that it was true. Mark had been engaged to Isobel, and he had never said a word of it to her. Her thoughts went back to the time when she first saw Mark, and she remembered that he had spoken of Isobel—had spoken of her beauty, of her charm, but not as a man speaks of the woman to whom he is engaged.

Surely that engagement must have been broken off almost as soon as it was made.

She remembered quite distinctly what Mark had said about Isobel; she remembered that Isobel had always given her the impression that she did not care for Mark.

That would have been quite natural if there had been a broken engagement.

Mark, chivalrous always, would not have cared to say anything that might have hurt Isobel; and Isobel could not perhaps quite hide her chagrin.

"I thought you would not care to see them," said Isobel, "but I have kept them all. Now that I have promised to be the wife of another man, I suppose I must destroy them, but it will cost me some bitter pangs—they are the only things I have kept to remind me of the man I love, of the man who loves me!"

Felicity looked up quickly, pain in her eyes.

"Surely you—what you say cannot be true—now? Can a man love two women? My husband loves me, has always loved me from the beginning!"

"What do you mean by the beginning?"

"I mean from the beginning of the time he came to my home," replied Felicity sturdily. "It was not my fancy alone. Our love dates from the moment we saw each other!"

"You poor, deluded little fool!" said Isobel, giving way to her hate with a kind of savage exultation. "You deluded little fool! When Mark went to your home it was with my kisses on his lips and with a promise wrung from me that I would give him two years in which to become famous and gain a fortune fit to offer me!"

A sudden faintness overcame Felicity. She closed her eyes, and when she opened them she saw as through a mist the beautiful mocking eyes of her enemy gazing relentlessly at her.

"I am not saying anything that I cannot prove," said Isobel quietly. "I can give you proof of what I say if you would care to have it!"

"Do you—want—to kill me?" cried Felicity. "Is there any more for me to hear?"

"There is a great deal more," said Isobel. "You understand now that, although you fell in love with him at first sight, he had no love for you!"

"If there is proof, I must believe it," said Felicity, struggling with her faintness.

It seemed to her as if misery and shame were stifling her. Had she shown her love so plainly that he had thought fit to give up Isobel?

"If Mark loved you, why did he not marry you?" she asked.

"Mark did not marry me because I would not marry a poor man," said Isobel quietly. "But he was engaged

to me up to the eve of your wedding day."

"It is a lie!" cried Felicity. She had shaken off her faintness. "Mark is not a man to deceive two women! Why should he marry me if he loved you?"

"Oh, most innocent of women!" cried Isobel. "Why should a man who was ambitious marry an heiress?"

"You—you mean me to understand—that Mark, whom I have always looked upon as an honorable man, jilted you in order to marry me for my money? Am I right? Is that your meaning?"

"Oh, no!" cried Isobel. "Mark did not jilt me—we had come to an agreement!"

"An agreement?" Felicity's strength seemed to be ebbing from her.

"Yes. You had better listen, although it is disagreeable information. It does not reflect much credit on either of us. When your father died and Mark brought you down to us we all knew you were in love with him."

Felicity knew that this was true.

"Go on!" she said dully.

"Well, you came to us, and, as I said, we all knew how the land lay. Afterward it was incumbent on us, as a polite necessity, to ignore the fact that the love was on your part only; toleration, kindness, affection, if you will, belonged to Mark. A man of his kindly nature could not but be affectionate toward an orphaned girl." Again she paused, looking straight at her victim. "Do you wish me to go on?" she asked politely.

Felicity looked up. The hunted, desperate look in her eyes would have moved most women to compassion, but Isobel was inexorable.

"Yes," she said, "go on!"

"Of course I know it cannot be pleasant; the truth very seldom is."

"Go on!" said Felicity.

"Well, you came to us very much in love, but very ill. You remember

you asked me to go to a doctor with you?"

"Come to the point!" cried Felicity. "My going to a doctor with you can have nothing to do with Mark's feeling toward me!"

"Excuse me!" said Isobel, again cruelly polite. "Our going to the doctor together is the incident which is the basis of the whole thing! You remember you were so pleased with his verdict. The doctor forbade you nothing, prescribed you nothing, only advised you to make the most of life. Do you remember that when we went back to the waiting room I left with the ostensible purpose of going to look for the car? Well, what I did really was to reënter the doctor's room. He, thinking that in my anxiety I had come for more definite news about you, told me that you would not live more than six months!"

Felicity looked at her in bewilderment.

"But I am well now," she said. "I am better than I have ever been!"

"Mackarness may have made a mistake," said Isobel. "I believe now that he may have made a mistake, although the six months are not yet up, but he gave you six months' life. You remember we saw Mark in the Park as we drove through?"

Felicity gave a low cry.

"For Heaven's sake, go on!" she said. "Why did Mark give you up?"

"It was at my own suggestion!" answered Isobel calmly. "I pointed out that, as you were so much in love with him and could not possibly live for more than six months, he should marry you; then, when you were no more, the way would be clear for us. The usual period of mourning over, our union could take place, and we should have a delightful future with the wealth which, in your infatuation, you would have made over to Mark. That was the plan. I will do Mark the justice to say that he was

for some time opposed to it, but at length yielded."

Felicity sprang to her feet.

"I don't believe it!" she cried fiercely. "I can't believe it! It is too monstrous!"

"As I have said, he was at first very unwilling to play his part. He did not want to marry you, for he was desperately in love with me!"

Felicity buried her head in her hands; then she raised her grief-stricken eyes and looked at Isobel.

"I can't believe it of him," she said. "He—he might have married me for my money, but not to gain—the love of another woman!"

Isobel took a purse out of her pocket and from it produced a piece of folded paper.

"It will be best if you were to read this," she said, "and then perhaps you will credit me with speaking the truth—the whole truth!"

She handed the paper to Felicity, who after some hesitation stretched out her hand and took it.

Even Isobel, cruel and revengeful as she was, was a little afraid when she saw the look on Felicity's face as she read the note.

I will do what you ask of me. I believe that Felicity loves me. But, although I may be her husband, remember, darling, that I shall always be your lover. MARK.

When Felicity gave back the paper to Isobel her face was devoid of all color, but she controlled her feelings.

"Yes, that has made everything plain to me," she said calmly. "I understand why he married me!"

"And you also understand why I went down to the pier to-day. I thought you would be too ill, that he would not let you come. It has been a bitter disappointment for both of us!"

There was a brief pause, until Felicity's voice, no longer steady, broke the silence.

"Will you tell me one thing more?"

Have you seen—him—since our marriage?"

She could not bring herself to mention his name.

"Of course I have! He called on me the day after he came home."

Felicity closed her eyes. Her voice was low and tense.

"Will you tell me what passed between you?"

"What passed between us?" Isobel's voice grew hard. "Ah, you may well ask that! He came to me in great despair, for he had found out by that time that you might live for years. His purpose was to induce me to consent to——"

"He wanted to leave me?"

"He laid it all before me, but I could not agree. We had made a plot and it had failed. My practical answer was to engage myself to Edwin Grant, who had long wanted me to marry him. But to-day—well, I was weak and gave way, and you frustrated us by accompanying him. Now I suppose it will be an everlasting good-by, because once I am Edwin's wife Mark to me must be as one dead!"

Felicity clenched her hands.

"He is false!" she said. "A traitor! I will have nothing more to do with him! Let him have the money he wanted—the wife he did not want will trouble him no more!"

She sank back with her lips closed and with a look of despair and anger in her eyes. Then Isobel rose.

"Good-by, Felicity!" she said sweetly. "Remember that you would have the whole truth. If I were you I would make it up with Mark. What is done cannot be undone. Your secret is quite safe with me, and no one shall ever know how and why he married you. Neither he nor I play a very reputable part in the affair, but our great love must be our excuse!"

Felicity looked up vacantly, and it occurred to Isobel that it might be well

to look about for her maid, but she put the thought aside.

"If I do not want Edwin to know that I went to the pier, I must not concern myself further with Felicity," she said to herself.



Felicity clenched her hands. "Mark false!" she said. "A traitor! I will have nothing more to do with him!"

She had craved for revenge and she had obtained it. She was satisfied.

CHAPTER XXI.

Felicity's maid saw Isobel and made a note of her presence.

"So she has been to the pier, too," she said to herself. "It is not right of the master!"

She was shocked at the change in Felicity, and tried to infuse some life into her.

"Madam should endeavor to bear up," she said. "I am sure Mr. Leighton would not like to see her so down-hearted. Miss Hewett looks quite as

usual. I suppose she went down to the pier too!"

"Marie," said her mistress, and the maid was a little frightened at her tone, "what do you mean by that?"

"I meant nothing, madam," answered the maid, stammering a little. Felicity looked at her fixedly, but said no more.

So the very servants knew! What a humiliation! Now that she could look back upon the past, Felicity had the key to many little details all bearing witness to Mark's duplicity.

She remembered the difficulty he had had in writing her a love letter, his many silences, his avoidance of talking of what would happen in the future.

Yes, every word Isobel had said was undoubtedly true.

In the immensity of her despair she forgot that Mark had been increasingly loving to her.

The one thought that possessed her was

that her husband, who had always seemed to her the incarnation of what a chivalrous gentleman ought to be, had lent himself to a vile plot.

It almost maddened her. That he had behaved so dishonorably for love of Isobel made him seem more heartless.

On the way to her own room she passed the study, so haunting with its associations. It seemed to her that there must be two Marks—the one who had married her looking forward to her death; and the other, the tender, loving Mark, who had told her that it was almost like the bitterness of death to have had to part from her!

And it was the second Mark whose absence pained her.

She felt so ill that she thought there was a prospect of her fulfilling the specialist's prediction. Then Mark would have his wish. Yet she rebelled against it.

"I will not die!" she said to herself. "He and Isobel shall not work their wicked will on me—they shall not make merry over their credulous little victim!"

She rang for her maid and dressed for dinner, determined to keep up her strength.

"I will get some one from home to come and stay with me," she said to herself. "We will go out and—and enjoy ourselves. It will prevent me from thinking, from dwelling on my misery. I will live!"

But it was dreary work, and the night that followed was drearier still. Toward morning, quite exhausted, she slept. The next day she lacked the energy to get up.

On the first day she received a note from Mark, who had written it on board the *Morcella*.

The sight of his handwriting roused her. She opened it hastily, her old love for Mark being uppermost. It seemed as though ages had passed since she had last seen him. She felt his kisses still on her lips—those kisses that meant nothing!

And when she read the letter the tears ran down her cheeks. It was a pure love letter—the letter a man writes to a wife who means everything to him, a letter full of tenderness, and yet it was written by the man who had signed that note to Isobel—"Always be your lover. —Mark."

She rose and dressed. Then she went downstairs and busied herself about the house. The letter spurred her to action. Her reflection in the glass told her that she was looking wretchedly ill, but she was certainly not dying.

She decided to write a last letter to Mark.

"I will just tell him in a few lines that I have seen Isobel and shall prefer not to hear from him again. When he returns we shall meet face to face. In the meantime I must try to think of something to do with my wretched life!"

She wrote:

I will not trouble you with a long letter. I have seen Isobel and she has told me everything. I need not tell you that she gave me proofs of what she said and that I was forced to believe her. The conclusion I have come to is to wait until I can let you know my intentions regarding the future. You might have had a little pity on a girl who was left alone in your charge. I do not write to complain, but I shall never live with you again as your wife. You, who know quite well what you have been to me, will realize what it costs me to write this.

FELICITY.

For a long time she hesitated to send the letter, ultimately mailing it herself while on her way to her old home, where she thought of spending a few weeks. But when she reached her house she could not settle down, and at the end of two days she was back in New York in search of the peace she could not find.

It seemed ages since she had parted from Mark, and he was probably in mid-ocean. She tried not to think of him. Finding it impossible to face the evening alone in her lonely house, she made up her mind to order the car and go to a theater.

"If I can only forget my wretched griefs for one evening," she said to herself, "it will be some gain." So she dined and went to the theater where she saw several persons whom she knew. They asked if she had had news from Mark.

"Just one note brought by a home-ward-bound vessel," she replied. She was surprised to find herself answering quite naturally. "After all, it is easy to deceive people," she said to herself. "No wonder Mark could deceive me!"

In a box opposite to her sat Isobel, the cynosure of all eyes, and a man no longer in his first youth whom she guessed must be Edwin Grant. Felicity, looking at the woman who had done her so great an injury, saw that her face had no expression of happiness, and realized that the magnificent jewels with which she was bedecked must seem like so many heavy weights.

She felt a reluctant admiration of this woman's beauty. Of course Mark must love her!

Felicity, who had intended to watch the play with interest, thought of nothing but Isobel. Mrs. Hewett was also in the box, and both she and Edwin looked very pleased with themselves.

When the curtain had fallen after the first act, Felicity knew that Isobel had caught a glimpse of her. She did not, however, point her out to either her mother or Edwin.

She had to wait some little time for her car, and it was then that Mrs. Hewett saw her and nodded to her pleasantly.

Isobel's progress was like a triumphal march, people pressing round to see her as she passed.

Felicity sank into her car exhausted. She hated these drives home alone. On the way home she observed that there was some excitement on foot, that the newspaper venders were very busy.

She decided that something important had occurred in the House, and thought no more of the matter.

A cheerful fire gave an air of comfort to her beautiful room.

She sank into an armchair and rang the bell for her maid to bring her some chocolate. She had scarcely put it to her lips when the door was violently opened and Isobel Hewett stood before her!

The woman's beautiful face was white and drawn.

"The *Morolla* has gone down and every one on board is lost!" she cried,

her voice trembling and her face working with the weight of her emotion.

Felicity would have spoken, but no words came from her white lips.

"Felicity"—Isobel dropped on her knees at the feet of the pale girl—"forgive me. I lied. I deliberately lied. Mark loved you. He came to me and told me so. He was playing fairly with you. Oh, God in heaven, be merciful for the sin I have committed against you."

Felicity put out her slim white hand and touched the other woman.

"Rise," she said softly, and when the other failed to move: "Please don't stay on your knees, so."

Isobel rose and looked at the girl wonderingly.

"It was I who was wrong. Mark's love and his expression of it during our days together made me so happy that I should not have let anything overshadow it. I see now where I have been wrong. I should have understood that you were laboring under the weight of a great disappointment"—she paused a moment—"and I am sorry."

Isobel broke down and wept openly. "I loved him," she sobbed.

"I'm sorry for you," said Felicity in low-voiced calm.

But later, when Isobel had gone, Felicity's heart ached with the knowledge that her husband must have gone to his death with her cruel letter the last word from home.

The next morning she was awakened by a cablegram.

Safe, darling. Meet me in Philippines.

And Felicity's maid spent the remainder of the morning packing for a radiant mistress.

It was a long journey, but it would not have been half so long if anticipation had not continuously kept beckoning to Felicity as she sat there in her steamer chair. Her mind was at peace.

The bitter mental struggle and agony that had claimed her; the doubt that Mark loved her—all the hateful things Isobel had said were fast disappearing.

Other thoughts—ringing with the hope of seeing her husband-lover and a firm confidence that in spite of all, he still loved her were pounding through her brain. This lent color to her pallid cheeks and a smile to her lips. The maid even commented on the change, and Felicity, herself, admitted that she felt stronger. A few more days of changed mentality and the bracing sea breezes and a new Felicity would meet her husband!

She would be anxious to hear all about the reported disaster. She hoped he was all right! Of course he was safe—and there was joy in that—but that didn't necessarily mean that he was entirely free from injuries or physical handicaps he might have received at the time of the disaster. She thought it a bit strange that he had cabled her as he did, after they had decided that she would not go. But Isobel's confession that he loved her still, pounded through her brain and stilled her fears. She was happy in spite of herself—she was going to the man she loved—to the only man she could ever love!

It was the day before landing that Felicity was downcast. Would the boat never land? She grew so impatient that the maid was called upon to act as a nurse to calm her agitation and spirit of unrest which had developed into a case of nervous hysteria. The next morning, however, the cloud lifted, for in the excitement of preparing to land she quite forgot all about herself.

Mark was there to meet her. She caught a glimpse of him before she reached the gangplank—the same smiling, adorable Mark he always was—whole and sound. She could scarcely wait until she was in his arms again. Some way forgiveness crept into her

veins—she just couldn't help herself—even though the distasteful story Isobel had told her and the thought that they had expected her to die flashed through her brain to distract her one climaxing thought that Mark had made a confession of his love for her to Isobel.

She knew, too, just as she had told Isobel—their love had started the moment they had seen each other! Felicity was confident that this love was sincere; she knew that Mark had not used this sacred tie between them in vain; he had been her real lover.

Safe in his arms again—Isobel; the hideous story and all her own fears relative to his condition of health faded into the mirage of shadowless nothings. Love, the talisman of Heaven, itself, held them spellbound. His greeting kiss was rapturous, full of eager anticipation, as if some premonition had been standing in the way of their ever meeting again.

"My darling," he murmured, "my love! Words can't express how glad I am to see you again!"

"Mark!" was all that Felicity could say. Her brain was whirling madly, reaching dizzy heights of happiness.

They stood there joyfully exultant in each other's presence, until a call of "Gangway!" started them on their way to the hotel. Felicity was full of questions regarding the disaster, which Mark assured her amounted to little. It had not been half so bad as it was painted.

It was after Felicity had unpacked and rested that she broached the subject of Isobel.

"Was it true," she asked simply, "that—that you loved her?"

Mark was silent for a moment and then answered:

"Not after I saw you, sweetheart! Isobel did have a terrible grip on me, somehow, and without realizing what the effect of the plot I was entering in on would be on another, and how hide-

ous it all was, I succumbed to one of the inventions of her mad fury—because—because I thought I loved her. Yes, Felicity, I thought I loved her, but I found it wasn't love. It was you who gave me love! Oh, sweetheart, my precious love, can you forgive me?" He drew her to him and kissed her gently, with tenderness of feeling.

"I am the one to be forgiven, for doubting your love, Mark, and writing you the letter I did. I was so sorry after I had sent it."

"But, sweetheart, let's pretend that you never sent it. I couldn't blame you in the least after what Isobel had disclosed to you. But, believe me, darling, when I say with all my heart, that I love you! That it is true I have loved you all this time and the love I had for Isobel did not stand in the way. For, sweetheart—it was not your kind of love—the love that existed between us from the start."

"I do not doubt the truth of what you say, Mark, and I shall never be so foolish again, for I know our love stands secure!" She offered her lips to him and after a lingering kiss, he murmured softly:

"It is wonderful to find the one

woman, Felicity—the one who understands you! It is this sympathetic understanding, this mutual regard for one another which makes us want to love and be loved by the other. From now on we shall always be lovers, shan't we, Felicity?"

"Always!" she whispered, smiling into his love-lit eyes.

It was after Mark had finished his business and had taken his beautiful wife home that they next saw Isobel.

They were at the theater. Mark and Felicity occupied a box. Opposite them, in another box, was Isobel with her elderly husband. Isobel had changed—become strangely older and somehow glazed and hardened.

Mark wondered how he could ever have imagined Isobel the lovelier of the two.

After they reached home, Felicity looked up at her husband.

"She is beautiful," she said softly.

"But her beauty—if she still has it—is soulless," Mark answered, taking Felicity in his arms. "I love you, dear, and really, I've never loved any one but you."



Cast Aside

By
Louisa Carter Lee



IT has come at last, Daisy! I am to have my raise. That means we can get married, little girl. I am going to look at once for a snug flat."

It was an early spring evening, and Donald Cooper was taking his sweetheart for a long country walk, away from the noise and crowd of the big manufacturing town where they both lived.

Daisy Brent was in the showroom at Bates & Barker's, a large ladies' outfitters.

Her lover was a bank clerk earning fifteen hundred dollars a year, which was to be increased very soon.

They had been engaged six months. Daisy's blue eyes and jet-black hair were so fascinating that Donald had lost his heart to her before he remembered prudence, and the repeated counsel of his ambitious mother to "look for a girl with a little bit of money when he went courting."

Daisy had no money, for her mother was a poor widow, who earned a small weekly sum, and was allowed three rooms rent free, by acting as caretaker of a lawyer's offices.

Donald's people took the news of his engagement badly, but they gave Daisy a grudging welcome, though they ignored her mother.

"It will be lovely," she said softly. "Don. I hope the flat won't be too far out of town because of mother."

"I thought we'd try for one near us," said Donald, rather awkwardly, "because then my mother and the girls

could show you the ropes. You know, everything will be quite different, Daisy. They'll introduce you to a lot of smart people. You'll want some smart frocks, dear, for I shall expect my wife to do me credit." He spoke gently.

Daisy sighed. She had very few frocks, and none of them were smart.

"Perhaps you'd better leave Bates & Barker in a week or two," suggested Donald. "Then you'd have time to look round the shops and pick up some things."

Daisy made no objection to his plan, but in her heart she hated the idea of having to do things to please her lover's people, knowing they looked down upon her and her mother because of their poverty.

"I'll never give her up," the girl told herself. "She's just the best and dearest mother that a girl ever had, and if Don thinks I'll forsake her just to please his folks, he is making a mistake."

Daisy ran lightly up the flights of stairs to the top floor of the house which meant home to her.

No one but the Brents actually lived in the house; the six rooms below—two on each floor—were all used as offices.

Daisy paused for breath when she reached the top landing. A minute later she was in the cheerful sitting room. The curtains were drawn and the lamp lit.

Mrs. Brent sat near it darning Daisy's stockings.

"Well, dear," she smiled, "did you have a nice walk? You were so late I thought perhaps you'd gone to the pictures."

"We neither of us noticed the time! Oh, mother, Don has got his raise, and he wants us to get married at once!"

"At once!" The words cut Mrs. Brent like a knife, but, motherlike, she kept back her own pain lest it should spoil her girl's joy. "That is great news, dear."

Then she sighed.

"Daisy, I am afraid I can't give you much money for your clothes," she faltered. "I've twenty-five dollars put away for a rainy day, dear, and you shall have that, but it's all I can do."

"Mammie," said the girl coaxingly, "haven't we any relatives? Don't you think if father had a brother or sister tolerably well off they'd send us some money now if you wrote and explained? The Coopers think so much of dress, and they have such fashionable friends, they'll look down on me dreadfully if I have no pretty frocks."

"You should have them by the dozen, dear, if only I could give them to you," her mother answered.

"Mother, can't you ask some one to help us?" pleaded Daisy again. "I do so want to be a credit to Donald."

"My dear child! I have not a friend in the world I could ask for help."

"There is Mr. Forest," said Daisy very

slowly, for she rather dreaded the effect of that name on her mother. "Don't you remember you pointed him out to me once in the street when I was quite a kiddie? You told me then that he had robbed father of ever so much money. He must be nearly the richest man in Barton. Don't you think if you went to him and told him how much we wanted help he would pay back a little of what he owed father?"

Unless Daisy had been very anxious to get money for her wedding, she would never have mentioned Mark Forest's name, for she knew that her mother hated him.

Daisy had never heard the exact nature of the wrong done her father by Mark Forest, but she always thought that the two men must have been partners in some business undertaking, and when Lionel Brent died the survivor had kept his share of the profits instead of handing them over to the widow.

"Mother," she whispered tenderly, just before she went to bed, "if it hurts you too much to write to Mr. Forest will you let me go and see him? I shouldn't mind asking him for money. It wouldn't be like begging, because, of course, he has had a great deal more money than that from father."

Suddenly Mrs. Brent's faded eyes seemed to regain their youthful spirit; they flashed fire.

She turned to Daisy.

"I'd rather see you lying in your coffin, Daisy, than have you so much as speak to Mark Forest. He is your enemy and mine—a bad, heartless man!"

Mark Forest was one of the richest men in Barton, though no one quite knew the origin of his fortune.

He did an enormous trade in stocks and shares. He bought in the lowest market, his ventures seemed to succeed like miracles.

He had never been known to make a mistake in investments, and, though a very sharp man of business, he had yet managed to keep within the letter of the law.

He was not much over forty, a bachelor, with, as far as people could discover, not a relative in the world.

He was very popular in Barton, but to his immediate dependents he was mean. His clerks were underpaid, and so were the domestic staff at his sumptuous house.

Just two days after Daisy Brent's appeal to her mother one of his clerks came into his private room with a troubled face.

"There's a person asking to see you, sir, who won't give her name. I've tried hard to get rid of her, but she won't go."

It was past closing time, but Mark Forest often stayed late in his private room. On these occasions one of the staff stayed to lock up after the chief had gone.

A night watchman came on duty later, because so many valuable securities were kept on the premises, and Mark Forest had a great fear of thieves.

He happened to be in a good temper, so he answered the clerk's appeal quite cheerfully.

"You may as well show her in, Carter. I'll get rid of her, if you can't."

There entered a tall, slender woman, her black hair sprinkled with silver, her face aged before its time.

At the sight of his visitor Mark Forest grew white to his very lips.

"How dare you come here?" he demanded.

Mrs. Brent was generally a nervous woman, but she seemed possessed with new courage.

"Yes," she said fearlessly, "it is I. Heaven knows, after the wrong you have done me I would never come here for my own sake, but my child—is different. Daisy has a claim on you sur-

passing mine. I want five hundred dollars for her wedding outfit, and I mean you to give it me."

"You must be a fool to expect such a thing," said Forest bitterly. "Give your child money for a wedding dress! Not if I know it. Now you've had your answer. Go."

He pointed to the door, but Margaret Brent did not attempt to move. She stood perfectly still, facing him, her eyes shining like jewels. Both Forest and his visitor had spoken in low, subdued tones, but after his scathing refusal Mrs. Brent's voice rose almost to a shriek as she said:

"May Heaven's curse rest on you, Mark Forest! You have robbed the innocent and wronged your own flesh and blood. But vengeance will fall on you. I have waited for it to come all these years, but now I feel it is at hand."

She walked toward the door, but as she reached it, she turned her head and addressed him once again.

"Thief, liar, extortioner! Judgment will fall on you soon, and my wrong will be avenged."

The clerk in the next room heard her words and wondered if the speaker were mad or drunk. He felt thankful that she passed out of the outer office quickly.

He waited irresolutely, not knowing whether to go in to Mr. Forest or not, when his employer called him.

"You need not stay any longer, Carter. I'll lock up myself. Just remember this, boy. That woman is never to be let into the office again. If she calls and won't go peacefully, you must just send for the police to turn her out."

"Very good, sir."

"And, Carter," the chief produced a crisp bill equal to the young man's salary for a week, "take this. And remember, I don't want any one to know about my late visitor."

Mrs. Brent never told Daisy of the effort she had made or its failure. Mother and child were not quite so happy together as usual, for the girl's mind was full of her coming wedding and of the great difficulty of getting clothes fine enough to please Donald and his relatives.

Daisy, in her heart, knew that a man who loved her would not mind her not having a wedding dress of snowy silk, but Daisy never blamed Donald.

"His people are so very smart, he himself so set on getting on, so of course he has to be particular," she said.

She would have been surprised and bitterly indignant if any one



had told her there was another name for Don's anxiety. But some one might have told her it was snob-bishness.

But Daisy's mother knew of the girl's anxiety. One night after her appeal to Mark Forest had failed, she sat for a long time with her face buried in her hands.

At last she seemed to come to a decision, for she suddenly got up.

She took a little box from her desk, put on her hat and coat, and went out.

She went straight to a jeweler's shop, and tried to sell the ring she had taken from her desk.

It was old-fashioned, but the gold setting was thick, and the stone a good

one, so she hoped to get as much as forty dollars for it.

That ring had been taken from her dead husband's finger, and the woman had treasured it all these years. She loved it for the dead man's sake, but

"May Heaven's curse rest on you, Mark Forest! You have robbed the innocent and wronged your own flesh and blood!" Mrs. Brent's voice rose to a shriek as she spoke.

she loved his child more, and was determined to sell it to buy his daughter's wedding finery.

Three shops refused to buy the ring, a fourth offered her twenty dollars for it, so, disappointed, she slipped it back into her pocket.

"It must be the other then," she told herself sadly. "He will not refuse to buy it because he will think when I have lost it I shall have one weapon less with which to fight him."

Six had chimed from the clock on the town hall, shops and offices were closing, but still Mrs. Brent did not think of going home.

She walked on and found herself at

last in the narrow court where Mark Forest's offices stood.

She moved so slowly, she paused so often that by this time it was nearly seven, and the place looked absolutely deserted.

The court was a blind alley, and the six old-fashioned houses in it were only used for business purposes, so that—clerks and principals having left—a strange hush rested over everything.

"I have come too late," thought the woman.

But, being there, she tried the door of the outer office almost mechanically, and, to her surprise, it was unlocked.

She turned the handle and walked through the clerk's room to the private sanctum, where she had had the interview with Mark Forest only a week before.

She did not stay long. In a moment she made her way back. Her face wore a horrified, numbed expression.

Once out in the narrow court the evening breeze seemed to restore her, the awful numbness left her brain, and she could think, could remember Daisy waiting for her at home, and imagine the girl's dismay at her strange absence.

At the entrance to the court she brushed against a workingman. He was Mark Forest's night watchman, and he was just starting on his twelve hours' vigil.

He looked keenly at the woman in the shabby coat and passed on his way.

Mrs. Brent, feeling a strange faintness creeping over her, hailed the bus which stopped opposite the court, and was borne swiftly homeward.

She ascended the stairs to their rooms with lagging footsteps.

"Mother, what is the matter?" cried Daisy as she caught sight of her mother's face. "There, sit down in this comfy chair, and I'll make you some tea. You mustn't ever try to talk till you are better."

Mrs. Brent drank the tea with feverish haste, and as she held the cup to her lips she noticed a deep, red stain on the cuff of her ulster.

Daisy saw it, too.

"Have you hurt yourself, mother?" she asked. "Surely that is blood? Have you cut your finger?"

Her mother did not answer, and Daisy thought that she must have rubbed against some one carrying a parcel of meat not sufficiently wrapped up.

She tried to talk as usual, but Mrs. Brent seemed hardly to hear her. At last the girl persuaded her mother to go to bed.

All next day she appeared to be ill, although she would not acknowledge it. It was at night when they were sitting talking, that a knock came at the door and two officers entered.

One of them walked straight to the chair where Mrs. Brent sat, and laid his hand on her arm.

"Margaret Brent. I arrest you for the murder of Mark Forest," he said.

Those words roused Mrs. Brent. She turned to Daisy with an imploring gesture.

"I did not do it, darling. Forest was a bad man who did not deserve to live, but I never killed him, I swear it."

Daisy put her arms round her mother. "Of course you didn't murder Mr. Forest, dear," she answered.

But she could not prevent the police taking her mother away. Margaret Brent was placed in a prison cell, and her daughter was left alone.

The papers next morning were full of Mark Forest's murder. The account stated that a woman named Margaret Brent had been arrested.

Daisy sat at home, feeling as though her heart had been turned to stone. Her only hope was Don. Surely when he read in the paper of what had happened he would come to her. He

would help her to prove her mother's innocence.

But the hours dragged on and no sign came from Donald.

Daisy cried herself to sleep that night. Her mother's peril and her lover's silence together seemed more than she could bear.

"Dor will be here this morning," thought Daisy, as she got up early to do her mother's office work.

A letter arrived from her lover by the morning mail.

Donald had read the evening papers, and, on the strength of their reports, without even waiting to see whether Mrs. Brent was acquitted, he wrote to break off his engagement.

DEAR LITTLE GIRL: My heart aches for you in your trouble, but your mother was always a strange, eccentric woman, and I fear the case is only too clear against her.

Even if she is acquitted the scandal of her arrest will always rest on her name, so, Daisy, there is nothing for us but to part.

I am dreadfully sorry, but I owe a duty to my position and to my family. My mother and sisters could never hold up their heads again if I married the daughter of a murderess. I am quite sure you will realize this and give me my freedom.

I shall always be your friend and well wisher.
DONALD COOPER.

P. S. You are quite at liberty to keep the ring and the other presents I have given you, but I should like my letters destroyed.

Scorn and humiliation filled Daisy Brent's heart as she read her lover's selfish farewell.

"And to think I loved Donald so well that I worried mother to death to get money for my wedding things," she cried. "Well, I am glad he's shown his hand. Now he's gone out of my life, and I've nothing to think of but mother."

Daisy took the pearl ring from her left hand, collected the few trifles that Donald had given her, and made them into a little parcel which she went out

to mail. Then she bought a newspaper, and going home, sat down to study its contents.

She wanted to know why people suspected her mother of the murder.

The police had come back the day before, after taking away their prisoner, and had searched the little home, had ransacked all Mrs. Brent's boxes, her desk, and every cupboard in the place, but they had only carried off two things, the shabby ulster, with its blood-stained sleeve, and a man's ring, which Daisy had never seen before.

So far as Daisy could understand from the newspaper account, the night watchman at Forest's had seen Mrs. Brent leaving the court just about seven the night before, and had thought she looked scared and half dazed.

He was surprised to find the office unlocked. The door was standing ajar, while the keys were hanging as usual on a nail just inside. He was so alarmed that he made a careful search of the premises, and found Forest lying dead on the floor in his private room.

Nothing had been disarranged. Robbery was not the motive of the crime.

A doctor, hastily summoned, said that Forest had been stabbed by a sharp dagger, which was missing, and death must have been instantaneous.

Inquiry proved that exactly a week before a woman had called, and used the most threatening words to Forest, telling him he was not fit to live, and that her wrongs would soon be avenged.

After she had left, Forest spoke to John Carter, the only one of his staff in the office at the time, and ordered him never again to admit the woman on any pretext whatever.

Carter's description of her agreed with that given by the night watchman of the woman he met leaving the court just before he discovered the body of the dead man.

Reading the account, Daisy almost screamed with agony. Her faith in her

mother never faltered, but she saw how black the case was against her.

"I couldn't prove an alibi," thought the distracted girl, "for I don't know where she was that evening. She did not get home till nearly eight, and then she seemed in a state of terror,

had kept back flowed at the sound of her darling's voice.

"You should not have come, dear; it will be too much for you," she said.

"I could not have stayed away. Oh, mother, I know that you are innocent, but how am I to prove it? Oh, isn't there anything I can do to make people see that you couldn't have killed Mr. Foster?"

Mrs. Brent sighed.

"I am innocent of Mark Foster's murder and yet I did threaten

him last week," she said. "I told him he was not fit to live, and that all the wrongs he had done

and worst of all, the sleeve of her ulster was stained with blood."

She longed to see her mother, so later in the morning she made her way to the prison. As she went there she imagined every one pointed at her the finger of suspicion.

The wardress unlocked a door and allowed Daisy to go into her mother's cell alone.

"You must only stay half an hour," the wardress said gravely, and then the girl heard the key turn in the lock, and knew that she and the prisoner were alone.

"Mother! Oh, mother!"

The next moment they were in each other's arms, and the tears Mrs. Brent

would be avenged."

"Mother," Daisy's voice was full of passionate pleading, "what were those wrongs? Tell me why you hated Mark Foster. Ever since I can remember I have known that you looked

Two officers entered. "Margaret Brent, I arrest you for the murder of Mark Forest," one said curtly.

on him as a bitter enemy."

"I cannot." The words seemed wrung from Mrs. Brent. "I have kept the secret from you all these years. I



must go on keeping it till the end. Mark Forest was a bad man. He blighted my life, and he would have done his best to blight yours." Her voice trembled.

The wardress unlocked the door. It was the signal for Daisy's departure.

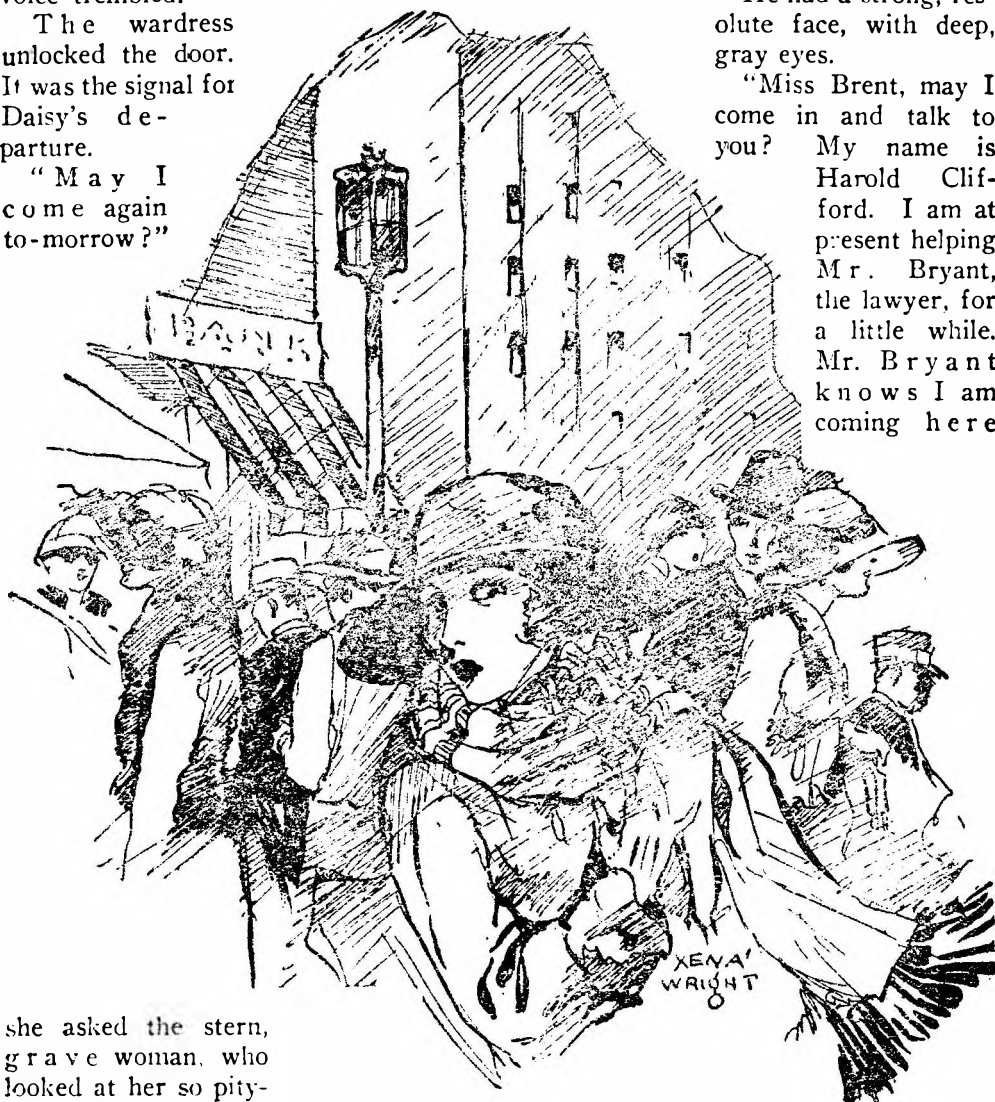
"May I come again to-morrow?"

some young man who looked about twenty-six, and whom she was certain she had never seen before.

It was not six o'clock yet.

He had a strong, resolute face, with deep, gray eyes.

"Miss Brent, may I come in and talk to you? My name is Harold Clifford. I am at present helping Mr. Bryant, the lawyer, for a little while. Mr. Bryant knows I am coming here



she asked the stern, grave woman, who looked at her so pityingly.

"Yes; you'd better get a lawyer. Believe me, it's her only chance," she said.

Back in their rooms in Cherry Street, Daisy sat in miserable thought, when there came a knock at the door and, going to open it, she found herself face to face with a stranger—a hand-

As Daisy made her way to the prison, she imagined every one pointed a finger of scorn at her.

to-night to see if I can be of any use to you in your trouble."

He followed Daisy into the big, cheerful room, and sat down opposite her.

Harold Clifford thought this lonely girl had the loveliest face he had ever

seen. Her dark-blue eyes and masses of silky jet-black hair reminded him of an Irish colleen.

He had heard of her love for her mother, and when he had read the papers he had felt such a thrill of sympathy for her that he had gladly agreed to Mr. Bryant's wish, that he should call and see her.

"I don't believe Mrs. Brent is guilty," said the old lawyer. "She's a quiet, home-loving woman, just wrapped up in her child. Anyway, she has served me faithfully as my caretaker for years, so I want to see if we can do something for her."

Daisy looked up into the stranger's face with shy eyes.

"You believe in my mother's innocence?" she asked.

"I'll do my utmost to prove your mother's innocence," he answered. "But I had better tell you that I attended the inquest on Mark Forest to-day."

"What was the verdict?"

"Willful murder, against Margaret Brent. Your mother was remanded for a week, after that there may be three or four more adjournments, and she will probably be tried in the middle of July."

"Mr. Clifford! Mother is all I have in the world, my very all. Oh, do please save her for me!"

"I'll do my best. I'll go and see Mrs. Brent early to-morrow."

"Oh, Mr. Clifford, you have given me the first ray of hope I have known since they took mother away! Oh, please, go and see her! Perhaps you can persuade her to tell you what she keeps back from me—the wrong that Mr. Forest did her years ago."

"I will do my best, Miss Brent. May I come again to-morrow?"

Harold Clifford's heart went out in sympathy to this sad, lonely girl.

He longed to put his arms around her and hold her clasped to his breast,

while he told her only to trust to him and he would do all that mortal man could to prove her mother's innocence.

The moment he talked with Mrs. Brent, Harold Clifford felt sure that she was innocent, and yet every word she said made him realize more painfully the strength of the evidence against her.

"I will tell you why I hated Mark Forest on one condition," she began. "You must keep the truth from my child."

"Mark Forest was my husband's half brother; the girl whom he robbed is his own niece, my daughter, Daisy."

"I married Lionel Brent—Mark Forest's half brother—when I was eighteen. It was a runaway marriage, and our wedding was at Cornwall."

"After that my husband took me to New York, and we lived there for a year, only coming home so that Daisy might be born in the country. We went back later, because Lionel did not care to live in the country as he was not on good terms with his half brother. My husband was a rich man, Mark Forest was dreadfully poor, and this made him bitterly jealous of Lionel."

"When Daisy was two years old her father left me one day on business. He was killed in a railway accident and I never saw him again."

"Lionel had made a will leaving me all he had in the world, but after his death that will could not be found, and Mark Forest took possession of everything as his next of kin."

"But a wife and child stand before a half brother," objected Clifford. "Even if there was no will your claim came first."

Mrs. Brent's thin face flushed as she confessed her secret.

"Mark Forest denied that I was his brother's wife. While we were away the courthouse was burned down, and all of the registers destroyed. The only

witnesses of our marriage had gone and could not be traced, the clergyman who married us was dead. My certificate had disappeared.

"Oh, don't you see—won't you understand? That villain denied that I was ever married at all. He declared that Daisy was nameless. When I saw him he jeered at me. 'You were never my brother's wife,' he sneered. 'And your daughter is nameless!'

"I had no proof of my story. This is why I have kept the truth from Daisy. I had to see Mark Forest seize my child's fortune; I had to listen to his taunts and insults."

"Mrs. Brent," cried Harold Clifford, "you have been grossly deceived! Why in the world didn't you take your case to a lawyer?"

"No lawyer could have brought back the marriage registers."

"No; but by the law every clergyman has to send to the courthouse a list of marriages solemnized in his church. Forest traded on your ignorance of this. He knew perfectly well that you could have obtained a certificate of your marriage at any time by sending for it to the clerk."

"Is it really true? Do you mean it?"

"It is perfectly true. Even now you can reclaim the property that Mark Forest stole from you."

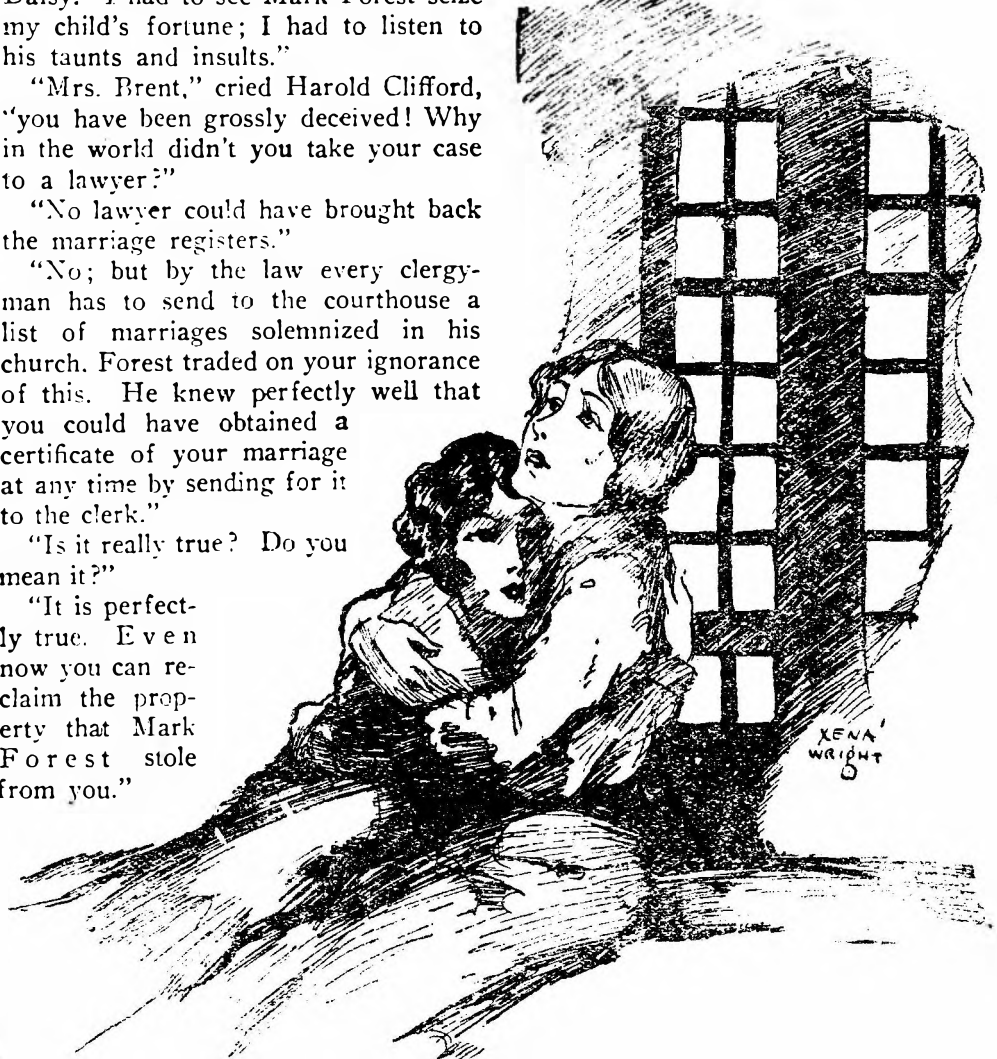
"And Daisy is not nameless? Oh, Mr. Clifford, thank God for that!"

"She is not nameless," Harold Clifford assured her. "Mrs. Brent, what made you come to settle in Barton when you knew your enemy, Mark Forest, lived here?"

"I always hoped he would repent before he died and acknowledge Daisy as his brother's child. I wanted to be within reach in case his heart softened."

The tears flowed down her cheeks.

"Life is cruel," she murmured.



"I could not stay away! Oh, mother, I know that you are innocent, but how am I to prove it?" Mrs. Brent could not keep back the tears at the sound of her darling's voice.

"Daisy and I have been pressed down by poverty all these years while Forest has flourished like a green bay tree, and now that he is dead, people are trying to prove I killed him."

"They shall not prove it," said Harold Clifford. "I will save you yet."

Mrs. Brent told her version of that fatal Wednesday evening. In her desperate need of money for Daisy's trousseau she had resolved to sell the only valuable she possessed, her husband's ring.

She took it from one jeweler to another, but all refused to buy it, so at last she decided to offer it to Mark Forest.

She thought he would jump at the chance of wresting her treasure from her, since with the ring gone there was one less proof of her story that she had been Lionel's wife.

When she reached Forest's private room he was lying on the floor. Bending over him to see if she could assist him her sleeve got stained with blood.

Had he been still alive, Mrs. Brent declared, she would have gone for help, but seeing that he was dead her one thought was to get away.

Harold Clifford had promised to let Daisy know his opinion after he had seen her mother, so he called at Cherry Street that afternoon.

The girl came to meet him with a great terror in her eyes. She looked so dreadfully ill that Harold feared some fresh trouble had befallen her.

It had. A policeman had called half an hour before with a formal notice that she was to appear to give evidence before the magistrate on Thursday when her mother was brought up for the second time.

Clifford's heart ached for her.

"Mr. Clifford," said the poor girl. "It is too awful! They will ask me questions, and I shall be so frightened I shan't know how to answer. I may

be in the witness stand to swear away my mother's life."

It was perfectly true and Clifford knew it. If questioned about her mother's hatred of Mark Forest, her doings on Wednesday night, above all the blood-stained ulster, every word that Daisy uttered would tell against the prisoner.

"Can't I stay away from the court?" pleaded Daisy. "My head feels on fire and yet I shiver all over. Can't I go to bed and send word I am too ill to get up?"

"The magistrate would only adjourn the examination until you recovered. My poor child, it's the worst ordeal I have ever heard of, but you'll have to go through with it."

Tears stood in Daisy's lovely Irish eyes.

"If they send mother for trial I am sure it will kill her. The shame, the anxiety will be too much for her."

"I am afraid it may come to a trial," said Harold Clifford sadly, "but Miss Brent, try and keep up your courage. Think of your mother and how it would grieve her to see you despair."

Thursday came all too soon. The court was crowded. Donald's mother and sisters were among the spectators. It was just as though they had come to gloat over Daisy's misery!

She was the last witness called. She trembled as she took the stand, but her voice was quite clear and distinct. She flashed one glance of tender love at the prisoner, and then she braced herself to answer the questions put to her.

"We lived alone, together, mother and I," she said simply. "She was the best and kindest mother in the world, and she *couldn't* have killed Mr. Forest."

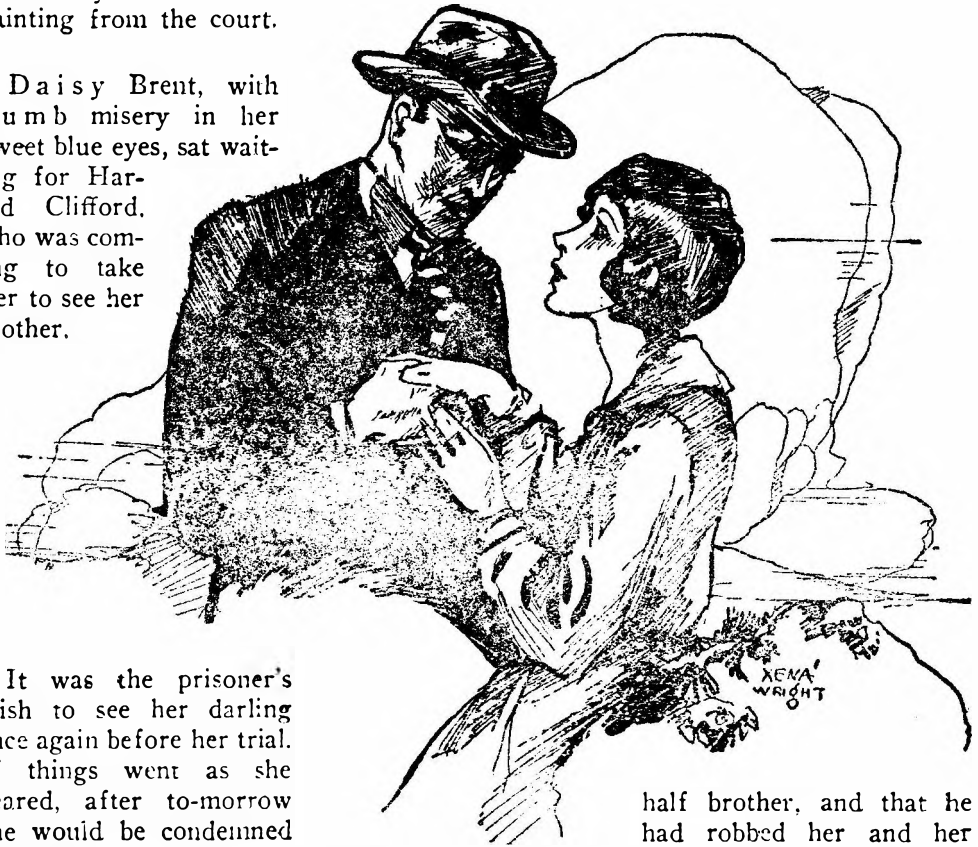
But the pitiless questions had to be answered. Daisy had to confess that her mother had always disliked the murdered man, that she had hoped vengeance would fall on him.

She had to own that her mother was out till nearly eight on the night of the murder, and that when she came home she seemed agitated and upset.

At last her ordeal was over and Mrs. Brent was committed for trial.

Daisy was carried fainting from the court.

Daisy Brent, with dumb misery in her sweet blue eyes, sat waiting for Harold Clifford, who was coming to take her to see her mother.



It was the prisoner's wish to see her darling once again before her trial. If things went as she feared, after to-morrow she would be condemned to death.

Harold Clifford had flung himself heart and soul into the case, at first because he pitied Margaret Brent as a deeply injured woman, later because he had come to love her daughter with every fiber of his heart.

He had made inquiries into Mark Forest's private life, past and present, but discovered little.

The murdered man seemed to have had heaps of acquaintances but no real friends; he was of a strange, secretive nature, and though he made frequent

journeys to New York, staying there two or three nights or even longer at a time, there was no clew to what he did there, or whom he went to see.

Harold had kept back the facts that Mrs. Brent was the widow of Forest's

"My poor child, it's the worst ordeal I have ever heard of, but you'll have to go through with it," answered Harold solemnly.

half brother, and that he had robbed her and her child of a fortune, because he felt it would only do harm to let people know how the murdered man had wronged her.

"For the life of me," Clifford told the famous lawyer he had engaged for Mrs. Brent's defense, "I can't solve the mystery. I've had a detective searching out Forest's secrets—if he had any—but to no avail. It really seems as though there was not a single creature who owed the man a grudge, or who troubled enough about him to take his life."

Harold had arranged to get Daisy and

drive the whole of the way to the prison.

"Are you sure you can go through with it?" he asked Daisy gently as he saw her. "You look terribly ill."

"I could not stay away from mother. Why, Mr. Clifford, if—if the worst happens I may lose her forever soon."

He placed Daisy in the taxi and got in beside her. She leaned back in her corner and Harold knew that she was crying.

"Daisy, I hadn't meant to tell you, because it is such a tiny hope, and even that may be false, but I can't see you like this without trying to comfort you. I had the strangest letter this morning."

"About mother?"

"Yes. The letter had no beginning and no end. It only said that the writer advised Mrs. Brent's friends to keep up their courage for in a very short time her name would be cleared.

"At first I meant not to say a word about this because I despise all anonymous letters, but when I had read the note a second time, I couldn't help being struck by its confidence. The writer did not think or hope that Mrs. Brent would be acquitted, he or she seemed positive of it."

Daisy went in to see her mother alone. Clifford waited outside the cell.

Thinner and sadder than she had been in Cherry Street, there was yet the strangest peace on Margaret Brent's face, and all through that sad meeting it was she who acted as comforter.

"Mother, oh, mother!" Daisy cried. "I can't bear it. If things go wrong to-morrow it will kill me."

"Dear! Don't speak so wildly! Remember, Daisy, my fate is in God's hands."

But Daisy only sobbed.

"It's having to give evidence against you that hurts me most, mother. I feel as though I were swearing away your life," she cried.

"Don't say that, don't think it," urged her mother. "Daisy, there's one thing that makes me happy. You'll never have to go back to Bates & Barker's. There is money coming to you from your father and Mr. Clifford will help you to get it."

"I don't care for money, mother, I'd rather be a poor working girl all my days, if only I could keep you."

"Perhaps I may be acquitted after all," said Margaret wistfully. "Daisy, if I am, I shall owe it to Mr. Clifford. He has been the kindest friend we've ever had."

A faint, pink color came to Daisy's thin cheeks. She was thinking of how Donald Cooper had forsaken her at the very beginning of her troubles, while Harold Clifford, an utter stranger, had devoted himself to helping her.

"Daisy," said the prisoner very gently, "there's just one thing I have to say. If things go wrong to-morrow you must not grieve too much, and, my darling, a girl's greatest happiness is love. If love is offered you, my dearest, don't let the thought of me prevent your taking it. I am positive the truth about Mark Forest's murder will be discovered one day; it may be too late for me, but it may smooth my girl's future, so that she has not to be ashamed of her mother."

"Mammie, if you are thinking of Donald Cooper, I wouldn't listen to him again. I think he killed my love when he forsook me. Nothing would ever make me trust him again."

"I wasn't thinking of Donald, dear. A mother's eyes are very keen. I feel that love is coming to you. When it does, don't let the thought of me make you refuse it."

One long, lingering embrace, and then Daisy left the bare, whitewashed cell, her heart aching for the mother she loved so well.

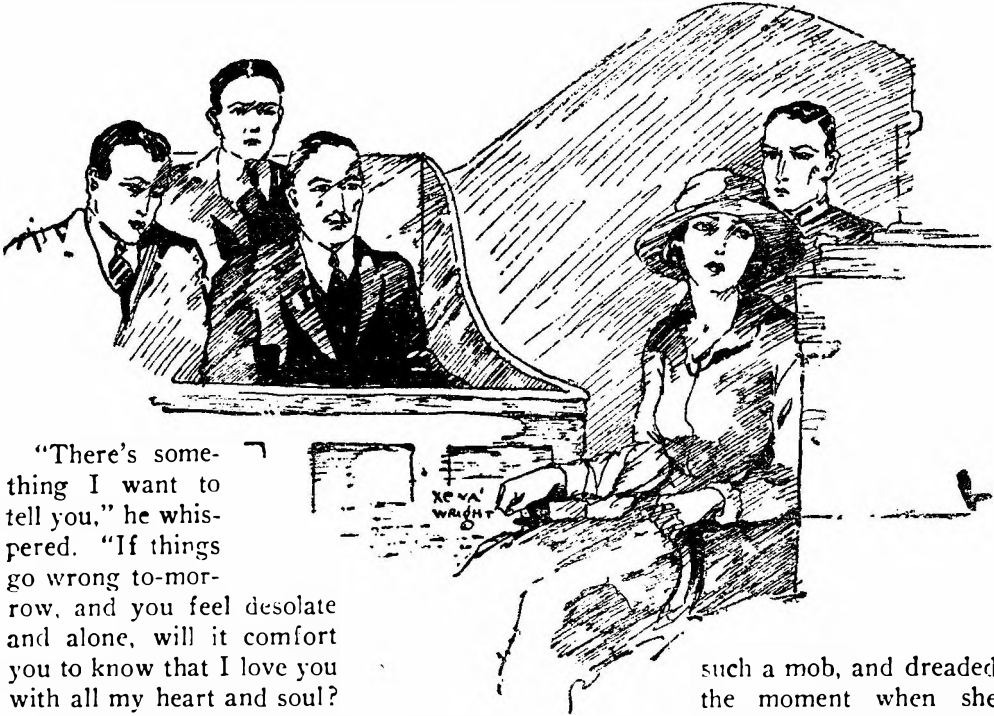
Harold Clifford did not speak on the drive back to Cherry Street. Arrived

there, he went up the long flight of stairs with Daisy, and followed her into the cheery room.

He knew how sad this return alone to the home she had shared with her mother must be to her. Her face was very weary as she sat down. He knelt down and put his arms around her.

night, and Daisy's aching heart felt a little soothed. The future did not look so utterly dark now that she knew that Harold Clifford loved her.

Looking round at the sea of faces at Mrs. Brent's trial, Daisy wondered how her mother would stand the scrutiny of



"There's something I want to tell you," he whispered. "If things go wrong to-morrow, and you feel desolate and alone, will it comfort you to know that I love you with all my heart and soul? I may not be able to save your mother, though I'll not give up hope till I hear the jury's verdict, but I can at least take care of you. I know everything, dear little Daisy girl, and how you gave your first love to a snob unworthy even of your thoughts, but I couldn't be jealous of a cur like Cooper. I'm not pressing you for an answer now, but I want you to know that if only you will come to me, I will guard and cherish you with all my heart. I will fight your battles against the world and protect you from all trouble, if only you will be my wife."

He went out into the silence of the

Daisy flashed one glance of tender love at the prisoner, and then braced herself to answer the questions put to her.

such a mob, and dreaded the moment when she herself would have to repeat the evidence she had already given before the magistrate.

Her mother was brought in between two wardresses. As she stepped to the stand Daisy flashed her a glance of such tender sympathy that tears came to many eyes.

"She can't be such a bad woman, after all," one man whispered to his wife, "for it's plain the girl worships her."

And then the trial began.

Daisy Brent listened like a creature in a dream to the prosecuting attorney as he opened the case, then the terrible

evidence was given. She was the last witness called by the prosecution. The counsel for the prosecution was a hard, shrewd man, whose questions made the sensitive girl wince with pain.

Then came the adjournment for lunch, which brought a brief respite.

It was when the trial was resumed that Daisy noticed that Harold Clifford's face wore a strange, triumphant expression.

The counsel for the defense spoke briefly.

He began by saying he would not trouble the jury with a long review of the evidence they had already heard, but would call on a new witness to enter the box, and he felt certain that when they had heard his testimony there would be but one result, his client would be acquitted.

There entered the witness box an old man, dressed as a clergyman, with clear-cut, expressive features, snow-white hair, and a face stamped with Heaven's own peace.

"My name is John Fairthorne," he began, "and I am a clergyman. I have come here straight from the deathbed of one of my flock, a woman called Rosalie Saint John. She confessed to me shortly after Mark Forest's murder that she was guilty.

"I waited, hoping that I could persuade the poor woman to sign a written confession of her crime, which could be used in evidence. I only obtained this written statement on promising my penitent not to publish it till after her death.

"She passed away early this morning, and I started at once for here, in the hope of arriving before Margaret Brent's trial had ended."

The confession was duly signed by Rosalie Saint John and countersigned by a magistrate, who had taken it from her dying lips. It was short.

"My name is Rosalie Saint John, and two years ago I became engaged to

Mark Forest. Our engagement was a secret, because I was a professional singer, and I could not break my contract with my manager without paying a heavy fine.

"Six months ago my contract was over, and I expected Forest to marry me at once. Before the wedding day was fixed I was in a railway accident, and was so terribly injured that the doctors despaired of saving my life.

"In the end I recovered, but my beauty was gone. I, who had been one of the loveliest women in New York, was so disfigured no one would have believed I had ever been even pretty.

"If Mark Forest had broken our engagement then I would have forgiven him, but he declared he was quite willing to keep his promise, only the wedding could not be just yet.

"I had never saved; the little I had put by went in paying doctors and nurses. I could not go back to the stage, but I did not trouble, because, fool that I was, I trusted Mark.

"And then I got a letter from him saying he could not marry me because he wanted a beautiful wife who would do him credit, but for the sake of what had been he would allow me five dollars a week for the rest of my life. Five dollars a week, when I had earned thousands a year! I had refused richer men for his sake, and now that I had lost my beauty he forsook me.

"I have hot blood in my veins. I could not stand the insult, and I came down to Barton resolved to make Mark keep his promise.

"I waited till his clerks had left the office, and then I went into his private room. He would not listen to my entreaties; he taunted me with my poor, scarred face, and then, beside myself with rage and misery, I took a small dagger, which I have always carried, from my pocket and stabbed him to the heart.

"If further proof is wanted, in my

bureau will be found a bundle of Mark's letters and the engagement ring he gave me with our two names inscribed inside and the dagger still wrapped in the handkerchief I folded round it when I left.

"I met not a single creature in the narrow court where Mark's office stood, and as the railway station is nearly opposite, and a train was just starting, I left Barton before my



"You care for me a little, then?" asked Harold, tenderly. "I care for you more than the whole world," answered Daisy.

crime was discovered. That is the whole story."

The clergyman had brought with him Rosalie's engagement ring, and the last letter Mark Forest ever wrote her, the one in which he had offered her five dollars a week for life in compensation for her broken heart. It was the minister who had written anonymously to Harold Clifford.

There could be but one verdict after

this. Margaret Brent was triumphantly acquitted.

Back in their rooms in Cherry Street, Daisy and her mother were gloriously happy. They were both of one mind. They would not touch a penny of Mark Forest's gains. Mrs. Brent said she should be perfectly satisfied if her marriage was acknowledged and the twenty thousand which her husband had left,

and which Mark Forest had taken, restored to her and Daisy.

Legal proceedings took time, but in the end this was arranged and Daisy became an heiress.

"Now that you are so rich, now that you have your mother restored, you won't want me." said Harold Clifford a little sadly, but Daisy's answer was prompt and decided.

"I want you more than ever. I owe you mother's life and everything I have in the world. If you take your love away from me, Harold, just because I have a little money, I shall wish myself back as an assistant in Bates & Barker's showroom."

"You care for me a little, then?"

"I care for you more than the whole world," she answered.

Clifford took her in his arms.

And as Mrs. Brent was eager and willing to give her child to the man who had helped her so generously in her darkest hour, Daisy Brent and Harold Clifford were made man and wife.

Donald Cooper and his people were furious.

The moment he heard of Daisy's fortune Donald pleaded hard that she would renew their engagement, but it was of no avail. Daisy's love for him had been killed when he deserted her at the first news of her mother's peril.



LOVE

YOU ask me what is love,
 And since you would be taught,
 It is two kindred souls,
 Who are alike in thought,
 Or else two constant hearts,
 That melt and beat as one;
 If this is not true love,
 The answer is unknown.

You ask me whence comes love—
 Whence comes the light of morn,
 Or else the mystic birth
 Of rose above the thorn?
 The wind is eloquent
 In every language known,
 But falters tremblingly,
 "Your heart must teach alone!"

You ask me how dies love,
 As if a thing could die,
 Eternal as the sun,
 And just as vast and high.
 The seasons change from bloom
 To blight when shadows fall;
 But light of heaven and earth,
 Love never dies at all!

FRANKLIN PIERCE CARRIGAN.



MISS VANCE drew up the shabby yellow blind, with its torn edge of coarse lace, and looked out upon the rumbling, hissing world very wistfully.

The top of a white lilac bush, just coming into languid bloom, intercepted her view, and the roar of the traffic reached her through the interstices of its dusty leaves.

White lilac! Stunted and unlovely as the specimen before her was, it provoked memories. Miss Vance's thoughts strayed back to the great fragrant bunch which somebody had laid on her birthday breakfast table twenty-five years ago. The faint delicious perfume rose to her nostrils and conveyed her in spirit far away from the dingy metropolis to the one bright spot in her very gray life—the sweet swiftly-closed Eden into which so many women step but where few stay.

Miss Vance would have married Gerald Shawbourne, the doctor's son, and perhaps have carried white lilac at her wedding if the exacting maiden aunt who had brought her up, and who looked upon a woman marrying a man with an income of less than five figures as a preposterous idiot, had not ruled otherwise. That maiden aunt was a lady of iron will, and Miss Vance had meekly given in to her ruling be-

cause she was afraid to assert herself. So one morning Gerald Shawbourne had walked out of her life in a rage and betaken himself to the other end of the world; and Miss Vance had been left to lament afresh, at each recurrence of spring, the constitutional timidity which had wrecked his life and her own.

In due course the aunt had died and bequeathed her fortune to a nephew with pleasant manners and a black heart; and poor Miss Vance had struggled through her monotonous days, earning what she could by teaching small children.

Even in this pursuit her timidity had kept her in the background. Other less competent governesses had elbowed her out of the way and placed themselves in front of her, and she awoke one morning to find her small hoard of savings had dwindled to twenty-five dollars. And there was nothing whatever in prospect to augment them.

So she sat and gazed at the dusty lilac tree and tried in her tired brain to frame a future in which the poor-house should play no part; but that future refused to be framed. Miss Vance was conscious that she could not—small as was her appetite—subsist on air, that landladies expected punctual

payment even for one room, that shoes must be mended and clothes bought occasionally; and she twisted her hands together in her lap as these facts grew clearer and more menacing. Church charity, the poorhouse, or——

At that "or" Miss Vance stopped so long that the untidy little servant brought in a breakfast tray and dumped it down on the table without disturbing her.

Miss Vance was a coward, and always had been a coward; and even now the "or," though it demanded a mighty effort, was undoubtedly the cowardly course.

For in Miss Vance's weary mind the alternative she could not name was a certain deep lonely piece of water which glimmered in the heart of the sweet country just beyond the garden where she had lived out her youth.

As a young girl she had taken her work and dreamed her timid dreams amid the ferns on its bank. By a great oak tree, whose overhanging branches were reflected in its mirrorlike bosom, Gerald Shawbourne had first told her that she would make the sweetest wife on earth. Ah, yes, and she had gone to the Prior's Pool with her broken heart when Gerald had been driven away! And now—now it was more attractive than the poorhouse; at any rate, it promised peace.

The railway journey, even in a day coach, would cost more than twelve dollars. But Miss Vance felt reckless. She had twenty-five dollars; she would have a Pullman. For once in her life she would indulge in luxury.

She put on her Sunday dress of delicate mauve, with a neat hat to match, and laid the week's rent—directed to her landlady—on the dressing table, and walked slowly out into the sunshiny world.

"A ticket and Pullman seat to Venton, please," she said to the ticket agent.

She tried not to feel apologetic as she entered the Pullman. She had the car to herself, but a vast army of thoughts kept her company. Little scenes from her early life were acted before her mental vision, and Gerald Shawbourne always took the chief part. She saw the level, thick eyebrows and the curiously deep cleft in his chin with a distinctness that was almost uncanny.

Then he receded into the background, and little humdrum events in the career of a poor governess took his place.

In every connection Miss Vance saw herself shrinking back defeated, always afraid to assert herself.

"Oh," she said quite aloud and suddenly, "if only I could do something, one brave action before I go—something that would wipe out all the years of cowardice—then I could face the end triumphantly!"

The train ran into Venton at midday, and Miss Vance alighted at the old-fashioned, familiar station, and set out along the well-remembered road which led to the fir wood and eventually the clearing where the Prior's Pool lay.

Every step of that wide dusty highway seemed to hold its own memories. Here was a gap in the hedge, never filled up, where Gerald had jumped through one sweet spring morning and taken her by surprise as she came back from visiting a sick cottager. Yonder, a gray, sturdy pile, lapped in green, stood the village church, where their wedding would have taken place if all had gone smoothly.

It was when she had turned into the level stretch which led directly to the fir wood that the faint buzz of a car smote her ears. She moved mechanically aside—the instinct of self-preservation still alive in her, though self-preservation was very far from the mission of her strange outing. In doing so she almost ran into a little boy

in a sailor suit, who appeared to be seven or eight years old, and was darting a way from his nurse with shouts of roguish glee.

The sedate nurse panted in the rear.

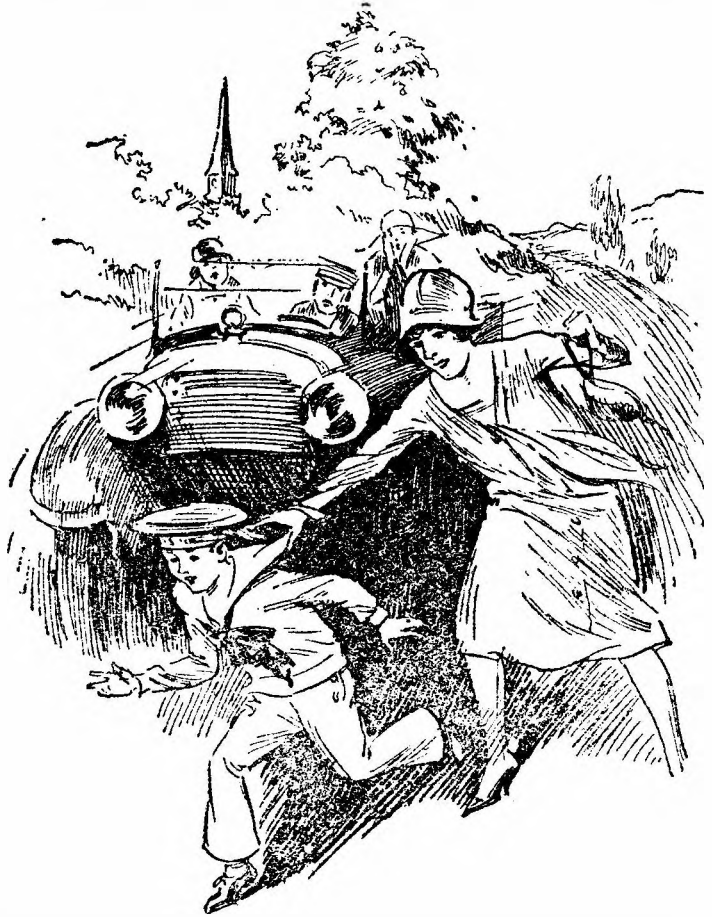
"Master Arnold," she called out, "you look where you're going!" And then suddenly she uttered a scream, and her hands went up before her eyes. "Master Arnold!" she shrieked.

Miss Vance saw a vision of a white sailor suit in the middle of the dusty road and not five yards from it a rushing, buzzing car. The occupants of it were on their feet, screaming loudly.

Miss Vance—gentle Miss Vance—at that moment vanished, and a very firm, alert, fearless woman who bore the physical likeness of Miss Vance took her place. She made a dash forward and dragged the little boy into safety. Then Miss Vance spun sideways, hit by something, and fell motionless in the dusty road.

As Miss Vance opened her eyes they lighted on a middle-aged woman in a hospital nurse's cap who was knitting tranquilly beside her.

"Nurse," whispered Miss Vance, her natural dislike for giving trouble asserting itself, "please don't bother to wait; I'm—I'm quite well now! It was just a little faintness this morning from seeing that poor child so nearly killed. I don't think the car touched me."



Miss Vance made a dash forward and dragged the little boy to safety. Then, spun sideways, hit by something, she fell motionless in the dusty road.

The elderly nurse rose with a smile. "That's fine!" she said. "I prophesied you'd be yourself before Sunday. You've been ill a week. I shall crow over the doctor now! He didn't think you were any better. Now, please, don't sit up. I'll call him."

"A week!" cried Miss Vance; and her face was almost ludicrous in her surprise.

A firm hand pushed her back on the pillow, and she was lying in a kind of dreamy bewilderment when the door opened again, and a gray-haired man came in.

"Better?" he said. "Splendid! No, you mustn't try to talk too much."

He laid his fingers on her pulse.

"Am I in a doctor's house?" Miss Vance asked.

The gray-haired man nodded, and said:

"You saved the life of the doctor's only son, you see."

"Did I?"

Miss Vance was still struggling with mental mist, but that mist was disappearing steadily. In the clearer light which took its place a sudden realization seized her that the doctor's eyebrows were very thick and the doctor's chin was divided by a deep cleft.

She raised herself in bed, utterly disregarding orders, her cheeks flushed.

"Now, no exertion, please!"

"Oh, but I must! I—you so remind me of some one I used to know—a medical student. His name was Shawbourne."

"My name is Shawbourne," said the doctor. "I took my father's practice here after I came back from Australia." And then his expression changed. "It can't be! You aren't—it's not possible—Annie Vance?"

"But I am!"

"Good heavens! No, I mustn't excite you. There was something about you which puzzled us from the first, but your linen was only marked with 'A. V.,' and that told us nothing. Annie, my dear, what were you doing in the familiar haunts after all these years?"

He had taken both her hands in his.

Miss Vance's head dropped back and a little sob broke from her lips.

"I—I had come to see an old friend!" she whispered.

How could she tell this kindly man, whose eyes had suddenly become young

beneath his white hair, that the old friend was the Prior's Pool, on whose banks they had once sat hand in hand?

"Can't I send for the old friend?"

"No, not just now! I should like to see your wife, Gerald—to apologize for upsetting her house."

A shadow passed over his face.

"My wife died when the boy was born," he said, "the boy you saved, Annie. What splendid heroism it was! And I remember you as such a little shrinking thing—almost afraid of a shadow!"

Miss Vance smiled.

"I am afraid I am not really brave even now," she said. "That was just a flash in the pan. But, oh, Gerald, I am thankful it happened to be your child! Now may I get up? I can't impose on your kindness any longer."

Doctor Shawbourne's kind face set suddenly in very firm lines.

"You'll get up when I tell you, Annie—not a day before! I'm in command here. It will be another week before we let you out of bed, and after that——"

"Yes, after that?" Miss Vance's eyes were very wistful.

"After that, my dear, you're going to marry me. I let you get away once, but I don't intend to again. I've got you here and I won't let you get up until you promise to marry me. Will you, Annie, dear?"

"Yes," murmured Annie, her face all aglow.

And the doctor, forgetful of his own orders that she must have no exertion, took her in his arms and kissed her. "My own, brave Annie," he said, "it is wonderful to find you again."





*Margaret
Gibbons
MacGill*

Behind the Glitter

AND that is the longest that you say I have to live, doctor—six months?"

The voice of the talented actress who spoke the words vibrated with just the right amount of emotion.

A faint murmur of approval passed through the audience of New York playgoers; they were undoubtedly enjoying the play.

The woman had been so brave and fine, in spite of all that she had borne, and in spite of the ingratitude of the man for whom she had sacrificed herself.

But it was left to New York's latest theatrical idol, handsome, aloof, earnest-eyed Philip Graham, who provoked his legion of women admirers almost to madness by his seeming indifference, to "bring down the house" with applause when he spoke the lines which formed the "curtain" of the last act.

L⁸_D "Love is not getting, but giving. It is putting the good of others before self-gratification, for not what we take

up, but what we give up, makes us rich at the end of life."

Again and yet again the curtain was raised to show Philip Graham standing in the middle of the empty stage, bowing his acknowledgments to the almost hysterically applauding women. Twice during the exhibition of excitement an attendant handed up packages which obviously contained gifts for the young actor, who had all feminine playgoing New York at his feet.

But a keen observer might have noticed a shade of impatience on the dark, handsome face when the curtain rose for the sixth time, a slight curling of the lip as a magnificently dressed woman in a box threw him a kiss from her rouged fingertips.

He put out a protesting hand when the smiling attendant started to raise the curtain once more.

"That'll do. I've got to get away, if they have not," he said shortly.

Tall, splendidly built and well pro-

portioned, with a noble head held high, as if defying everything and everybody who might seek to deter him from his purpose in life, Philip Graham was distinctly a man who stood head and shoulders out of the usual rut.

"Oh, he's above the average handsome type that women go mad over on the stage. He's to be reckoned with, all right. But what does he do with himself when he's not acting? He doesn't belong to clubs, doesn't play golf, is never seen socially anywhere. He's sort of a mystery, isn't he?"

Remarks such as these were constantly being made about Philip Graham, both in his hearing and out of it; but they left him quite unperturbed. Although he was uniformly cheery and courteous to everybody, not even the agent who transacted all his theatrical business knew anything about Philip Graham's private life.

He was hurrying down the long stone passage which led to his dressing room when his dresser, who had evidently been looking for him, met him with a very woe-begone face.

"Sorry, Mr. Graham, but I couldn't keep her out—the lady, I mean—waiting since the beginning of the last act. Came in when I wasn't looking, she did."

There was so much genuine concern in the man's voice that Philip Graham laughed—a ringing, hearty laugh that did one good to hear.

"All right, never mind. But give a knock in five minutes and say I'm wanted by somebody else, will you?"

The tall figure passed into the dressing room which seemed so absurdly small for so big a man.

"Ah, at last!"

A waft of expensive perfume floated toward Philip Graham as Miss Muriel Wreuter breathed, rather than spoke her greeting. She held out both slim, exquisitely manicured hands.

"It has seemed centuries waiting for

you," she went on, in the plaintive, little-girl voice that men usually found irresistible.

"I'm sorry that you waited so long, Miss Muriel." The actor's voice was so noncommittal that he might just as well have added, "Why did you?"

Miss Muriel Wreuter's passion for the handsome young actor was a standing joke among her crowd of friends.

"Imagine our lovely Muriel crazy over an actor! What'll she do if she can't get him, one wonders? She's really gone mad about him."

Those were the kind of remarks passed behind the back of the only daughter of one of New York's richest men.

Muriel, who never had to deny herself a single wish or whim since she was old enough to be self-conscious, was frankly amazed that any man could resist her. What did she lack? She asked herself a hundred times in the course of a day.

Her hair was beautifully shingled and dark as night; her white skin had the soft bloom of a camellia, and her black eyes did not need the penciled shadows which invariably surrounded them in order to set off their beauty; neither did her sensuously full red lips need the smear of carmine to still further enhance their coloring.

Always dressed in the very height of fashion, the wealthy society girl, who seldom set foot outside her father's house without her doings being recorded in all the papers, might well ask herself what she lacked in order to win Philip Graham's love.

"Philip—you said last time that I could call you that, didn't you?—I've waited nearly an hour in order to ask you a very, very special favor."

Muriel laughed, and her laugh was an ageless seduction—the seduction of a woman who loves and desires her love to be returned.

Philip Graham reddened a trifle un-

comfortably, and did not at once reply to her.

"It's only the tiniest little supper party. My brother and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Crosswell and myself," she said, as earnestly as if she had been pleading for her very life.

The uncomfortable flush deepened on the young actor's face, but his voice was firm as he said, regretfully:

"I'm really very sorry, Miss Muriel, but it's impossible to-night." Philip Graham darted a swift look at his wrist-watch as he spoke.

"But just this once, to please me, you might break your rule of never attending parties!"

There were few men in New York who could have resisted the softly persuasive voice of Muriel at that particular moment.

The tension of a situation that was becoming acutely embarrassing was suddenly relieved by a knock at the door—not the loud, careless thump of the dresser, but a couple of somewhat timid, tentative taps, as if the person seeking admittance were nervous.

"Come in," said Philip Graham, and a look of surprise showed on his face when his invitation was accepted.

A young girl, so vividly beautiful that Muriel's face instantly darkened, came into the room, and, when she saw that Philip Graham was not alone, muttered a hasty apology and would have turned away, but there was something so urgent in the big, pleading blue eyes that the actor called her back. He knew who she was, although he had never spoken to her, except to say "Good evening."

She was June Marley, the girl who played the tiny, insignificant part of his surgery maid in the play. She had nothing to do, except to show in and announce the heroine, and, beyond thinking how charming she looked in her uniform, he had hardly given her a thought.

"Don't run away, Miss Marley," smiled the young actor. He turned to

Muriel, who was still taking stock rather rudely of June's fresh young face, marveling jealously at the clear pink and white of her complexion, her own knowledge of cosmetics telling her that it owed nothing to the make-up box.

"May I introduce Miss June Marley? This is Miss Muriel Wreuter," he said, including both girls in a glance.

June smiled, but the society girl contented herself with the merest nod.

"I won't trouble you to-night, Mr. Graham," said June, once more turning in the direction of the door.

"If it's anything private——" said the society girl, with the somewhat insolent inflection in her voice that some women keep exclusively for their own sex.

"Oh, dear! I've sent the car away until quarter past, and it's only eleven now," looking vexedly at the tiny diamond watch on her wrist. "Never mind. I'll wait outside in the passage," she announced, with another sour glance at the exquisitely appealing young girl who stood so uncertainly by the door, wishing hard that she had never come!

"Oh, no, please don't do that. You can wait in here and be much more comfortable," said Philip Graham, hastily drawing aside a silk curtain which revealed a door leading to another unoccupied dressing room.

The society girl closed the communicating door with a tiny slam, but as soon as the conversation started, she descended to a trick that would have disgraced the humblest servant in her father's household.

Removing the key with such care that it made no sound, she knelt down and applied her ear to the keyhole, and thus heard every word!

It was quite clear that June was laboring under the stress of very strong feeling. Emotion illumined, transformed her; she was the living flame sought after by men from the beginning of things.

"It seems so difficult to tell you what I've come for now that I'm here, Mr. Graham. And yet I've been saying it to myself all day," added June, with a fleeting, nervous smile.

She looked so charming sitting in the only armchair that the room contained, that Philip Graham's dark eyes, looking down into hers, held an answering smile that was almost tender.

"Surely I'm not such an ogre as all that, Miss Marley?" he said, and his voice was very kind.

The thought at the

back of his mind was that probably she wanted him to put in a good word for her with the management regarding a part which was presently falling vacant, and it struck him for the first time that June, with her fresh, unspoiled beauty, looked singularly unsuited for the rough and tumble of a theatrical career.

He started, and his mobile face grew alert and keenly interested as June shyly disclosed the reason of her visit.

The society girl, listening behind the door with white, tense face, grew rigid with the fury of a premonition that was later to resolve itself into an obsession akin to madness.

"It's about leaving the theater—the stage, altogether—that I want to speak, Mr. Graham. It's partly through your wonderful acting—those things that you say at the end about love and about putting the good of others before one's desires."

June tumbled her words out, pell-mell in her nervousness, but there could be no shadow of doubt that the girl was in earnest, the actor told himself, even after he had made due allowances for the romantic temperament of an actress. But what exactly did she mean?

June read perplexity in the dark, penetrating eyes, and she hastened to further explain herself.

"Mr. Graham, it isn't a sudden whim or flight of emotional fancy on my part, this



Removing the key with such care that it made no sound, Muriel knelt down and applied her ear to the keyhole. She heard every word.

resolve to quit the stage and train for a nurse. I've always been torn between the two professions from a child."

"Miss Marley, if it isn't too personal a question, how did you get on the stage?" asked Philip Graham. His quick eyes had taken in the neat but quite ordinary blue serge costume, the unassuming hat beneath which June's curls flared redly, and the serviceable little one-strap slippers—all of which denoted the fact that June depended entirely on her salary. It could have been no easy matter for this girl of obviously modest means to have pushed her own way to the getting of even a small part in a New York production.

"I was in a business girls' play at the Frivolity last January," said June. "I was in a stockbroker's office before that, but, although I had played star parts in an amateur dramatic society for three years, I dared not risk becoming a professional, because of mother; she was a widow, and largely dependent upon me."

"I see." The sympathy in Philip Graham's voice was very sincere.

"But when I was left alone, I took the plunge, and was chosen with five others for cabaret work."

"Did you like it?" asked Philip Graham, rather brusquely, and his keen eyes searched June's as she replied.

"No, I didn't. It was too stupidly monotonous, and I got run down with the late hours. It was a piece of sheer good luck, getting taken on here, but I've seen enough of the stage, and its disappointing surface glitter, and I'd like to take up nursing while I'm still young enough to train."

"How old are you?" asked Philip Graham. He thought that June looked seventeen at the most, but knew that she must be more, according to her own account of herself.

"Twenty," replied June simply, and the listening girl, knowing that she spoke the truth, bit her lower lip sav-

agely. She was twenty-seven, seven years older! Of course, she had received offers of marriage, but she had waited for what she called the "grand thrill," and, now that it had come, the man was indifferent, and a fresher, younger girl was interesting him in herself!

"I can get plenty of people to speak for me. I know that all hospitals are particular about references. But I don't think that I had better prejudice my application by speaking of my stage experience; they might think me flighty, and I don't want to start with a handicap of that sort." said June, earnestly.

"No, of course not. But I have a friend at St. Botolph's, the big hospital for women and children. Would you like to start there? It's as good a place for training as any in New York. I'll give you a letter of introduction to the matron, if you like," said the young actor, warmly.

"Thank you so much, Mr. Graham. I had no idea that you were interested in hospitals," said June, her eyes bright with happiness.

"I am greatly interested in them," was Philip Graham's reply, as he opened a drawer in his dressing table, and took out a sheet of paper and an envelope.

To what extent Philip Graham was interested in hospitals, Muriel Wrenner was not to know until she had suffered such anguish of soul that the voice of death would have been as the voice of a friend in her ears.

A woman desperately in love has no thought but for gaining her heart's desire, and as the society girl visualized the smile that would light up Philip Graham's eyes as he said "Good-by, and good luck. We shall meet sometimes, I hope. Miss Marley," there sprang up within her brain the germ of a plot so fiendish in its cunning, so deadly in its results that those concerned found difficulty in believing it to be the work of a woman.

"Thank you very much for your information, Miss Wrenter."

The matron of St. Botolph's Hospital had a very direct eye, and it held something of contempt as she looked the society girl straight in the face while she spoke coldly, courteously, and in so detached a fashion that Muriel was conscious of a furious wave of anger.

"You are quite sure that you understand me? Nurse Marley has been a cabaret dancer and an actress on the stage, matron. My father's best friend is Mr. Cresswell, the governor of the hospital. I am quite sure that he will not approve of Nurse Marley being employed here, when he knows."

But the matron remained quite calm.

"He knows, and agrees with me that Nurse Marley is an exceptionally suitable girl for the profession she has chosen. We are all very pleased with her work." Then, breaking the short, embarrassing silence, and speaking with a disarmingly sweet smile, "I am quite sure that, like myself, you have a great deal to do this morning, Miss Wrenter. Isn't it lovely that the spring is really here, at last?"

Feeling herself not only snubbed, but baffled, more deeply than ever enmeshed in the toils of unrequited love, the society girl leaned back in a corner of her luxurious car, and allowed black hatred to take possession of her heart.

"I'll hound her out of that hospital, out of New York, out of Philip's life! Then, perhaps, he'll come to his senses and realize what love means—the flaming, passionate love of a woman who understands life, who would allow herself to be torn to bits for his sake!"

In the midst of the mental maelstrom, the car was held up. They were in one of the busiest parts of the city. At first Muriel did not notice the cessation of motion, but presently, glancing drearily out of the silk-curtained window, a sign-board hanging over an art dealer's shop caught and held her eye.

"Are you in trouble?" was painted in bold, white letters on a black background. "Are you being blackmailed? Is there anybody you want shadowed?"

Then followed the name of "James Prentiss, New York's cleverest, most discreet detective."

The traffic cop lowered his restraining hand, and Muriel's chauffeur started his engine, but, acting on a sudden impulse, she wrenched open the door and jumped out.

"Come back for me in half an hour. I am going in here," she said, indicating the art dealer's.

"Very good, madam."

The car drove slowly away, and, with her heart beating a trifle faster, Muriel mounted the narrow staircase at the side of the shop which led to the office rooms overhead.

"Mr. Prentiss?" she asked inquiringly of a keen-eyed little man who, from his knowledge of society, was aware of her identity the moment he saw her.

"Yes, madam?" he said, suavely, keeping his knowledge to himself.

"Can I engage you to do some work for me?" was Muriel's next question.

James Prentiss bowed.

In his first report, two days later, he mentioned that Philip Graham, the famous actor, spent several hours of the night three times a week at St. Botolph's Hospital.

"She is on night duty, and he spends the time with her," was the thought that fanned into fury the flame of Muriel's jealousy of June.

It might have eased her mind a little to have known that though he was seldom out of her thoughts when she had time to think, June had not set eyes upon Philip Graham since the night when she had acquainted him with her decision to leave the stage.

But, though she was unaware of the fact, the famous actor saw her very often, and the keen admiration that Doctor Lawrence—as he was known at St.

Botolph's—felt for the bright, hard-working little probationer passed into something deeper, warmer and more exquisite. It was not, however, before he had received the greatest shock of his dual career.

That neither the nurses nor the general public guessed that Philip Graham and Doctor Jim Lawrence were one and the same person was easily explained by the fact that in order to prevent his secret leaking out, Doctor Jim Lawrence wore slightly tinted glasses and a false mustache, both of which could be removed with perfect safety when the

linen mask for the operating room had to be donned.

June had been at St. Botolph's nearly three months when she was assigned to watch a sleeping patient—a young woman, pretty in a coarse, flamboyant fashion who was paying for a private room—with instructions to give her a tablet when she awoke, and to call the nurse in charge if she gave any trouble.

It was the first time that June had been intrusted with responsibility, and she thrilled to the thought as she seated herself quietly by the bedside of the sleeping girl.



Muriel felt herself not only snubbed but dismissed, conscious of being hopelessly baffled, and more deeply than ever enmeshed in the toils of unrequited love.

June's eyes presently wandered to the chart above the bed, and she learned that the girl's name was Maisie Dugmore.

Somehow, the vapid little face with the dyed black eyelashes seemed familiar to June, and she fell to wondering where she had met or seen the girl.

Suddenly, recollection dawned upon her. She was one of the "Dear Delights," as the cabaret show in which June had sung and danced for a short time had been called.

The light of recognition was still in June's lovely eyes when the girl on the bed opened her own, and fixed them with such a mournful intensity upon June that she instinctively took her hand, held it in a warm, friendly clasp, and asked: "What is it? Can I help you?"

Then, remembering her instructions, June gave the girl the tablet in a glass of water, and settled her more comfortably among the pillows.

"There, that's better," she said, smiling, taking up her sewing, and seating herself once more at the bedside.

But June dropped her needlework in amazement when, suddenly sitting up and leaning over, the sick girl caught hold of her hand, and, with tears in her eyes, begged her to listen and not go for the head nurse.

"It was God who sent you to me this afternoon—the only girl in all New York who can save my job for me," she said, in a husky, beseeching voice.

"I?"

June's blue eyes grew wide with wonderment, and, deciding that the girl must be a little delirious, she tried to gently disengage the fingers which clung so fiercely to her hand.

"Listen, dear."

Maisie Dugmore's eyes burned like lighted tapers in her mean, greedy little face—she was not a bad actress by any means—and the dastardly daring of the scheme that she proposed was artfully designed to appeal both to June's love

of the drama and her boundless generosity toward a fellow creature in distress.

"You know what a job a cabaret girl has to keep her place if she falls ill or has to have an operation, don't you, dear?" the sick girl asked mournfully of June.

The little, white-capped head nodded gravely. "I do, only too well," June assured her, earnestly.

"I've got to go up to-night to have mine—Doctor Lawrence is performing the operation—and when I recognized you as June Marley, the girl who used to work with me in cabaret, I thought of a plan which will enable me to keep my job and have work to go back to when I come out. Think what it'll mean, June, not to have to walk the streets, half-starving, when I leave hospital and not to have agents shutting their doors in my face."

The sick girl gave a splendidly simulated shudder, which wrung June's heart with pity.

"Don't try your strength too far, dear. You'll need it all for to-night. Tell me what I can do to help you," said June, gently.

Maisie Dugmore took a deep breath, and had she given utterance to the thought in her mind, it would have been, "Now for it!"

"I got a promise from Tom Day—he's the manager of the show, you know—that if I could get a girl to take my place for a month, he'd keep it open, and take me back when I come out of hospital."

"But——" The sick girl cut across June's puzzled question before it had time to leave her lips.

"Don't interrupt me, June, dear. You don't know what it is costing me to ask you to do what I want."

The pale, common little city-bred face contracted with a spasm of very real pain.

"I'll do anything for you, you poor

little soul," cried June, her own tears very near the surface.

"I got a promise from a girl who's out of work, and I taught her the business, and then, just as the ambulance came to take me to the hospital, this came."

Maisie Dugmore fumbled in a bag which lay beside her and took out a telegram.

"Read it," she said, placing it in June's hand.

June's eyes scanned the brief message, which ran: "Sorry cannot open until Tuesday, have had to go home and cannot get back to-night, best of luck, Myra."

"If Tom Day has to work the act a girl short, he'll fire me for certain, and however hard a girl tried she couldn't learn the songs and dances between now and half-past eleven to-night, even if one could be got at such short notice. You see the fix I'm in, don't you, June, dear? You know the songs and dances—at least with a little touching up you'd soon recall them—and if you could take my place, just to fill in for this one night, till Myra Collins comes back to-morrow, everything would be fine!"

Maisie Dugmore's voice broke; the tears made rivulets down her cheeks.

"But, Maisie, it's quite impossible! I'm a nurse now, not an actress! The hospital authorities would dismiss me instantly if I did such a thing!"

Poor June was deeply distressed. Knowing, as she did, what lay behind the glitter of a theatrical life, she would have given anything to have been able to help. But, to sacrifice the career in which she had made so good a start, which she already loved with the devotion of one born for nursing!

"June, for God's sake, say you will do it! I'll die under the operation if you don't! You can slip out quietly and nobody will know. You can't be on night duty if you are on duty now, in

the afternoon," pleaded the sick girl, in an anguished voice.

June did not answer. She got up and left the bedside for a moment, and went and stood by the window, which looked out on the busy street.

People were passing and repassing, but June did not see them; she was too busy thinking. Already her brain was busy making an effort to remember the puerile songs and showy, but easy steps of the dances which accompanied them. Although she did not know it, even though her subconscious self refused to reveal her decision to her more active mentality, June had already yielded.

It was the sight of a tawdry, flashily dressed girl, about the same age as Maisie, who kept walking up and down the street, that made June suddenly aware of her decision. She believed that it was an impulse due to the desire to save Maisie Dugmore from looking as hungry and unhappy as the girl down in the street below. As a matter of fact, however, as soon as the sick girl had stated her urgent need, June's impulsive, warm little heart had responded.

"I could get a late theater pass and obtain permission to be out late, and then it would be a matter of getting around old Jenkins, the timekeeper, to let me in an hour later without reporting me."

She turned to the tensely eager girl sitting up so stiffly in the bed.

"Where are you performing, and when does the show end?"

June's voice sounded far away, even to her own ears, like a thin reed piping into the silence.

She was too appalled at the enormity of what she had agreed to do to notice a triumphant light leap into the other girl's eyes as she asked her the questions.

"At the 'Golden Calf' on Broadway, near Fiftieth Street. It's a swell new night club, and the show only lasts an

hour. You could get away punctually at twelve, and if you had a taxi you could be back here at twenty past, allowing ten minutes for changing. Oh, June, you are an angel! I don't know how I'm ever going to repay you."

June interrupted the voluble thanks by saying, in a low, distressed voice, for already her conscience was pricking her: "Oh, I haven't promised yet. I shall have to see if I can arrange it first. Supposing that I can, where are your cabaret clothes?"

"In the dressing room at the 'Golden Calf.' The other girls will show you which ones."

"Hush!" said June, cutting short more voluble thanks. "I can hear the head nurse coming."

She bent her head low over her needlework as the calm-faced woman entered.

June could not meet her eyes, for already in her heart she felt ashamed.

She was surprised that she did not feel the faintest thrill, nor experience any sensation of enjoyment, as she "made up" her charming face in the place that had once been her great ambition to enter—a theatrical dressing room.

She tried to quell a faint feeling of distaste as she listened quietly to the ceaseless chatter, often embellished with slang. June reminded herself that it took all sorts to make a world, but she could not help feeling that, so far as she herself was concerned, she had chosen something better, something which ultimately gave more lasting satisfaction—the world of the hospital, where pain and suffering were solaced and broken humanity made whole once more.

"I thought Maisie was sending Myra Collins along to take her place. What show are you in now, June? I say, lend me your wet white a minute, will you, dear?"

June was saved the necessity of a re-

ply, for at that moment, after a perfunctory tap, the door of the dressing room opened, and Tom Day, the manager of the "Dear Delights," heaved his huge bulk through the opening.

"Good evening, girls," he said, tonelessly, glancing around at the dozen beautiful, made-up young faces with the casual air of the man whose sensibilities had long since been blunted. "We're cutting out the last song to-night, and finishing up with a novelty instead. After the donkey race, all you girls have got to sit down at tables corresponding with the number on the card around your donkey's neck. That is, if you have number four on your card, say, you've got to look out for number four table."

"What's the idea, Tom?" asked a lovely brunette.

"Wait and see, my dear."

The reply was accompanied by so meaning a wink that, as he took himself off, the members of the "Dear Delights" broke out into excited chirpings, like a flock of birds intoxicated with spring sunshine.

June's face grew a little white beneath the mask of her make-up; she hoped that this departure from custom did not entail a lengthening of the usual program.

But there was no time for further thought. An electric buzzer shrilled a warning, the distant beat of the orchestra in the dance room of the "Golden Calf" came throbbing to her ears, and she fell into line with the other girls and marched toward the velvet-hung entrance where two pages in golden livery stood ready to draw the curtain and begin the supper show.

Tom Day was waiting for the file, no longer indifferent, but keenly on the alert and critical of faults.

"Now, girls, mind your spacing, don't crowd each other, and count your steps. Come on!"

The orchestra struck up the jazz tune



"Good evening, girls," said Tom Day, the manager, glancing around at the dozen beautiful, made-up faces. "We're cutting out the last song to-night."

that had got on June's nerves so badly with its constant repetition; spotlights came through the darkness, throwing showers of color across the dusky gloom. A loud sound of clapping greeted the "Dear Delights" as the pages parted the curtains in the middle and the bevy of lovely girls streamed through.

"Hello, my honey.
We don't want your money,
But we do want you—yes, we do.
We're so glad to hear you,
Glad to be near you——"

June's lips sang the inane words of the opening lyric with mechanical precision; she went through all the well-remembered actions and counted her steps as she had been told. Somehow, however, her eyes did not see the huge golden calf suspended on chains from the middle of the gilded ceiling from

which the club took its name. She saw instead a row of white beds in the hospital that now claimed her; faces, no less white, turned lovingly and trustfully toward the nurses who were doing their best for them. Quercly enough, she seemed to hear Philip Graham's voice in the last act of "Renunciation," saying: "Not what we take up, but what we give up, makes us rich at the end of life."

"Here, catch hold, and look alive. This is a cabaret show, not a funeral service."

It was Tom Day's sharp, reproving voice that brought June back with a jerk to the reality of her surroundings. He was holding out a card with the number one painted on it in gilt. Everything was gilded at the "Golden Calf."

"You'll go to the first table on your left at the end of the race."

Before June could ask how long she

would be expected to remain at the table, he was off down the line distributing cards to the rest of the girls.

Seated on the mechanical donkey, June took stock of the numbered tables, and easily found her own, for it was the one nearest to the door leading to the dressing room, a fact for which she registered thanks.

It was her only cause for thankfulness, however, for she immediately disliked the look of the man who sat alone at the table which was hers, smirking in her direction all the time she was singing. June judged him to be about fifty; his evening clothes were expensive, diamonds shone in his shirt-front, and glittered on the hand which held aloft the goblet with which he appeared to want to toast her.

"This is luck, indeed, for an old fellow," he chuckled, when, the donkey race over, June seated herself at his table in accordance with instructions.

"Have something to drink, my dear. Here, waiter, another hottle," he said, ignoring June's protest that she did not wish anything.

But her host would not be gainsaid, and insisted filling a glass which June had not even raised to her lips when the orchestra struck up, and she saw the eleven other "Dear Delights" being led out to dance by the men at whose tables they had been sitting.

Giving her no chance to decline, Bob Sanderson jerked June to her feet with a proprietary lift under her elbow which brought an indignant flush to her cheek. With a muttered, "Let's dance, shall we?" he swung her into the circle of dancing figures.

To give him his due, June's unwanted companion was an easy, accomplished dancer, and it was impossible for her buoyant, healthy youth to refrain from enjoyment of a perfect partner, a perfect orchestra, and a perfect floor.

"What is the time?" she asked, before consenting to dance the encore.

For answer her partner pulled out his watch and let her look at it. It was a quarter to twelve, according to its time, but, as a matter of fact, it was already well past the hour, for the show had lasted fifteen minutes longer owing to the extra novelty of the donkey race.

"I really must go now. No, thank you. I don't care for anything to eat."

June was about to leave her companion and slip out to the dressing room, when she became aware of a certain commotion, and, terror-stricken, she shrank back, her face chalk white, for her passage was barred by two tall, military looking men in evening dress who said one word.

"Police!"

The word carried along the double line of tables and through the crowd of dancing men and women.

Every table held liquor, and representatives of the law seemed to spring up all over the room, successfully preventing the waiters from removing the tell-tale bottles, or the patrons from emptying the incriminating glasses.

"You must let me go! Oh, please—please! I've got a taxi waiting outside. I'm not one of the regular cabaret girls, and it will ruin me if I am mixed up in anything to do with a night club. I haven't touched a thing to drink, although my glass is full. Mr. Sanderson will tell you that I am speaking the truth."

The tall, keen-eyed young police officer looked down at June, who was still in her short cabaret dress of gilded feathers, and his tone was genuinely regretful as he said: "I'm sorry, miss, and if it rested with me, I wouldn't mind letting you slip through my fingers, but there are a dozen more officers outside, and you'd only get caught leaving. Much better come quietly without a fuss. It's nothing much to be fined for having a drink when you shouldn't. Plenty take it as a joke. Look at them."



"You must let me go! Oh, please! Please! I am not one of the regular cabaret girls. It will ruin me if I am mixed up in anything to do with a night club!" pleaded June frantically.

The young police officer spoke truly. The members of the "Golden Cali" were turning the raid into a frolic. The men taking the names and addresses smiled good-humoredly when a few of those whom they were escorting to the door began to sing "It ain't gonna rain no more!"

Shrieks of laughter greeted the appearance of the patrol wagon outside the club, and beautifully gowned women

sat on the knees of strange young men in order to make more room as more and more of the members were packed inside until they were packed like sardines in a tin.

But June, sitting stony-eyed and dreadfully still in her dark corner, did not join in the hectic merriment. Her world—the orderly, calm, soul-satisfying world that she had learned to love—had crashed in pieces about her.

She had refused to give her name and address, for to do so would have involved the hospital in a scandalous story which the newspapers would take particular delight in publishing.

She could see the headlines in her mind's eye: "Hospital Probationer in Night Club Raid," if she told the true reason for her presence at the "Golden Calf."

When she was missed from her place, it would be hardly likely that Maisie Dugmore would volunteer information, and in any case she would be too ill after her operation to make inquiries.

Long before the wagon with its hysterically cheering crowd had arrived at the police station, June had decided to refuse all information about herself, and to suffer whatever punishment might be attached to her refusal.

She had a vague idea that her offense would be called contempt of court, and, for the first time since she had placed a wreath of white roses on her mother's grave, June was thankful that her loved one was not alive, for the disgrace of having her only child appear in a police-court case would have broken her heart.

"Come along, miss, and don't give any more trouble than you can help. It will only be a matter of making a few inquiries as to your identity. Why, here, matron, the girl's fainted!" called out the inspector, dropping his pen just in time to prevent June from falling across his desk.

"It's time, and everything's all ready. You needn't be in the least afraid. Doctor Lawrence is our finest surgeon."

The nurse's voice was very kind. She had entered Maisie Dugmore's room as a neighboring church clock struck twelve slow, solemn strokes.

The sick girl was sitting up in bed, her eyes feverishly bright, and in them was something more than the quite understandable fear of the patient about to be chloroformed for a major opera-

tion. There was the dread of the craven coward who was about to face danger with a troubled conscience, a knowledge of evil knowingly wrought upon an innocent, unsuspecting fellow creature.

"There is no danger, and it will soon be over," repeated the nurse reassuringly as she went about her preparations quietly and efficiently.

But Maisie was not to be comforted.

"People often die under chloroform, nurse. I've read about dozens of cases in the papers, and I can't face death. I can't, I won't, I tell you! I'm not fit to die!"

The naturally shrill voice ended in a piercing shriek which resounded through the room, and must have carried far beyond the walls into the sleep-hushed wards.

"Sh! You will wake the other patients. Instead of thinking of death, which will certainly come in a year or two if you don't have the operation, think of the renewed life and health which it will bring. Why, we had a little girl of eight to operate upon this morning, an amputation, and she smiled and kissed us all before she took the chloroform."

"Yes, but little children are sinless! They can be brave in their very innocence. But I'm a bad, wicked girl, nurse—a bad——"

The door opened and Jim Lawrence came in. He had been kept waiting ten minutes for his patient in the operating room—an almost unheard of thing—and at last, knowing the matron to be busy, he had come down to investigate.

He had thoughtfully removed his white surgeon's coat, but he wore his glasses.

"She's very nervous, doctor; won't go through with it, she says," whispered the worried nurse.

"Leave her to me for a few minutes," said Jim Lawrence, with the infinitely kind, soothing note in his voice which, in his rôle of actor, drew all feminine

hearts toward him when he was on the stage.

"Believe me, you will feel nothing, and I may tell you that I have performed exactly the same operation over eighty times," he said, sitting down by the bed and taking one of the cabaret girl's thin little wrists in his cool, firm fingers.

As always, Jim Lawrence's voice and touch worked magic. Gradually he felt the racing pulse subside, and when, beneath the closed eyes with their poor, dyed lashes, the hot tears presently fell down the white cheeks, he let them fall unchecked.

Maisie's eyes were still swimming with tears five minutes later when she opened them, and said, in a shaky whisper: "Doctor, there's something fine and big, and—good about you! I feel with you the same as religious women feel about priests and ministers, I suppose."

"Would you like to see a priest or minister before I operate? I'll willingly send for one," offered Jim Lawrence, who was strangely stirred by the pitifully frightened little creature.

"No!" Maisie shook her head vehemently. "I'd rather tell you what I have to say. Would you mind handing me my bag? It's on the first shelf," she requested.

Jim Lawrence patiently did as he was bid, and handed the cabaret girl her cheap imitation of a very expensive bag.

"Here, look at this, doctor. It's what's worrying the life out of me, and making me dread things so."

She flourished a slip of pink paper before Jim Lawrence's eyes.

Suddenly, the sick girl, the bed on which she lay, and the whole contents of the room seemed to merge into one, his brain felt so dizzy with the shock of surprise.

The pink slip was a check for a thousand dollars signed by Muriel Wrenner!

Only too well he knew the signature,

for he had received at least one letter a day from the infatuated society girl ever since they had met.

Maisie had plunged headlong into her confession before he had quite recovered.

"For that money—and it's a fortune to a girl like me, doctor—I played a nice girl the dirtiest trick one girl could play another. I don't know what June had done to her, but I'll bet every penny of her rotten check that there's a man in it, and she wants her disgraced and out of her way."

"June?"

Somehow, he was not surprised only horrified that brave, earnestly striving little June should indeed be the victim of so vile a plot.

"I was in Jim Prentiss' office one day—he's a private detective, and a pal of mine—and Miss Muriel had offered him three thousand for himself and another couple of hundred for expenses if he could get June Marley into some sort of disgrace so that she'd have to give up working here at the hospital and disappear from New York."

Maisie was so intent upon her confession that she did not notice the dark red blood rush into the young doctor's handsome face, nor the veins swell upon his temples until their throbbing could be plainly discerned through the skin.

"I'd gone to Jim Prentiss to see if I could borrow some money, and suddenly he hit the desk as if he'd got a fine idea, and said, 'Say, kid, didn't a girl called June Marley use to work with your show before she took to the legitimate stage?' I remembered June quite well, of course—she was far too good a girl for cabaret work—and then he tempted me with money—first three hundred, then seven, and finally a thousand, till I couldn't hold out any longer—to tell her a yarn about not being able to hold down my job if I couldn't find a substitute for to-night."

The blood receded from Jim Law-

rence's face, leaving it white and startled.

"To-night, did you say? But how could Miss Marley possibly take your place in a cabaret to-night? She's working here as a probationer."

"I know. But I got around her to risk going out, and of course she knew the work."

Maisie Dugmore's ridiculous wisp of a handkerchief was soaked, and she commenced mopping her eyes with the corner of the sheet.

For the moment, Jim Lawrence had forgotten the troubles of the miserable girl at whose side he sat.

June, and the stupendous, if foolish sacrifice that she had made, were the only things that mattered. Little, loving, great-hearted June! She seemed to be reaching out invisible hands, imploring his help. Sitting there by the sick bed of the poor, weak, world-soiled creature who had consented to harm June for the sake of money, it came to him in a blinding flash of self-revelation that he loved June, loved her madly, loved her with the intense, passionate, all-absorbing love of the man whose life had held none of the lighter form of love-making known as flirting.

A line of a poem that he had once read ran with a sudden but delightful inconsequence through his mind.

Thy holy delicate white hands
Shall girdle me with steel.

For a brief, ecstatic moment the love flame blinded him to everything save its own glory. He felt transfigured, uplifted with the joy of his love.

The whining, hopeless voice of the frightened cabaret girl cut across his thoughts.

"She'll be caught in the raid for sure. Bob Sanderson, who'd sell his own mother for money had heard that 'The Golden Calf' was to be raided to-night, and his part of the job was to see that June got caught."

"Got caught? How do you mean? Arrested?"

Jim Lawrence jumped to his feet, every sense alert with fear now that he knew the worst.

"That's it. Miss Muriel knew June well enough to be quite sure she'd rather die than drag her hospital into a scandal, and I suppose she thought she'd slip away quietly without any fuss, and leave the road free for her."

Jim Lawrence got up and went and stood by the open window, and for a few seconds let the cool air blow upon his face while he rapidly outlined his plan of action.

Suddenly a pathway through the stones seemed to point out his own road.

He went back to the cabaret girl, and his voice was just as kind, just as soothing as when he had first come into the room.

"You have done an innocent girl a terrible wrong, but it isn't too late to undo it. I'm going straight away to put matters right, if you'll let me have that check. I'm going to give you something to send you off to sleep until tomorrow. The operation can safely be postponed until ten o'clock, and by then you'll be able to have it with a mind at rest, I hope."

Maisie Dugmore choked back the tears which made speech all but impossible, and, seizing Jim Lawrence's hand, covered it with feverish, hysterical kisses.

"I didn't think men like you ever really lived—except in books," she said, brokenly.

"I don't care what hour of the morning it is. My business with Miss Muriel is urgent, and cannot wait. Call up her maid, and if she is in bed, she must be awakened. Say that Mr. Philip Graham must see her, and is waiting downstairs."

The butler, aroused from sleep,

grunted out something unintelligible, and led the way to the sitting room.

It was only fifteen minutes before Muriel, her face ghastly white, her eyes dark with vague fears which she dared not define, came downstairs.

"Philip, they told me that it was you, and I hardly dared to believe it true!"

Almost ill with fear though she felt, the wretched girl could not keep her passion in check at sight of him.

Jim Lawrence turned; he had not sat down since his entry into the room. In his outstretched hand was her own check.

The society girl's pale face assumed a faint greenish tint which made it look ghastly even beneath the kindly light cast by the pink shaded lamps in the sumptuous room.

"Miss Muriel, your face tells me that you have an idea why I am here. I may say that, although you know me as an actor by the name of Philip Graham, it is not my name, neither is acting my real profession. My name is James Lawrence, and I am a doctor, very much interested in the diseases of children, and it was to get money to carry out this special line of research that I became an actor for a time."

Then followed a sickening, humiliating exhibition.

The society girl flung herself on her knees in front of Jim Lawrence, and, clutching at him with fingers that gripped like steel in their passionate intensity, she cried, in little, sobbing gasps: "Actor or doctor, if you were a laborer breaking stones on the road, I should love you just the same! Don't—don't despise me for loving you too well! I can see that you know something of what I have done in order to give myself a chance to win your love. June Marley——"

She got no further. Even the mention of June's name from her lips moved the newly-awakened lover to frenzy.

"Get up!"

Jim Lawrence addressed her with all the contempt which he felt surging into his voice, making no attempt at concealment.

"What does a woman of your type know of love, or of any emotion save that of self-interest?" he asked.

Then he added, in a brisk, business-like voice, as if no avowal of a woman's passion had fallen upon his ears: "You'd better get dressed and come along to the station house to see if you can undo the harm you've done June Marley. If the inspector won't listen to you, then the whole vile plot must be exposed in public—it's a crime, you know, to plot against the character of an innocent person."

"I can't! I won't! How can I possibly tell a police official everything? Won't a check get her out?"

Jim Lawrence laughed—an ugly laugh that fell unpleasantly on the ear. There was a sneer in his fine voice as he replied: "You people with money think that you can buy the earth and everything that lives on it! In this case, your money won't help you one little bit. What might help is your father's influence. If I were in your place, I should tell him how matters stand and get him to come along. You'll probably have to call on him for help eventually, anyway."

It took Jim Lawrence exactly five minutes to reduce the abject, miserably frightened girl to absolute obedience to his orders, and when Mr. Wrenter, dazed and horrified at the whole business, accompanied them to the police station, Jim Lawrence felt nothing but pity for the bitterly ashamed old millionaire.

"I'll explain everything to the matron. Thanks to Mr. Wrenter's influence, your part in the whole unfortunate business will never be known. It's given Miss Muriel the worst fright her spoiled, pampered life has ever known.

"I made her take back poor Maisie Dugmore's check." Jim Lawrence broke off to tell the taxi driver to take them around the park.

It was a strange situation—to be in a taxi alone with the man her whole soul adored—in the pearly dawn of a beautiful summer morning. But the thrill of his nearness, the joy of the knowledge that he had gone to so much trouble to help and save her from the consequences of her foolishness, all this contributed to June's joy, and made her forget the sordid misery of the situation from which she had just been released.

"It was wonderful of you, Doctor Lawrence." By now June knew the secret of Philip Graham, the matinée idol. "My whole career would have been ruined but for you, and I do so want to be a good nurse some day," she added.



"What does a woman of your type know of love, or of any emotion save that of self-interest?" asked Jim Lawrence scornfully.

Suddenly, June felt herself clasped so tightly that the breath seemed to leave her slender young body.

"June, dear, I'm giving up the stage—I've got the amount I set out to raise—and I'm going to ask you to make me your career instead of nursing. Oh, June, we'll be so happy together, working and loving each other. I want you, sweetheart. Tell me, do you want me—will you have me?"

"Yes," said June as he kissed her. "It's so wonderful, I can hardly believe it—that you love me."

"Love you?" repeated the man, his voice trembling with emotion. "I worship you, dear little heart."

The waning stars in the sky sang together for joy, and Heaven seemed to open and receive the little probationer as she entered into her woman's kingdom of joy.

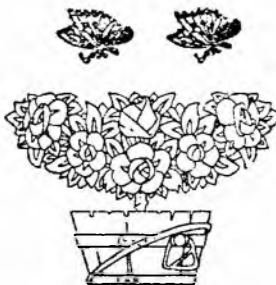


PETUNIAS AND BLACK BUTTERFLIES

DOISED, they sip
Honey drip
From the gay petunia—
Butterflies with tall black wings.

Flit, and sip
Honey drip
From the glad petunia—
Butterflies with wings of night.

MARIA OWENS FARRELL.





THOSE HASTY LOVE AFFAIRS

By Helen Roberts

"CAN I talk to you?" Mary Lister looked around the half-open door of my study. Her usual smile was missing.

"Sit down," I said, pointing to my big armchair, "and talk."

"There was a boy," she began quietly, "at the seaside, and we became great friends."

"That often happens." I spoke quite seriously, wishing to help her.

"And after a week he asked me to marry him."

"And the moon was on the water and the band was playing 'I want to be happy,' and you thought only of the moment, and you said 'Yes.'"

"How did you guess?" she asked, glancing up quickly, her cheeks aflame.

"It often happens—at the seaside after a week," I murmured.

"And now I feel I've been a fool."

"Does he live here?" I asked.

"No."

"Then," I said, "you will take pen and paper and you will write to him, telling him you have made a mistake and that he must let you alone."

"But isn't that dishonorable?" There was a look of unspeakable relief in her face all the same.

"Certainly not," I said. "There is no need for you to spoil your life because you've been silly for a week at the seaside. I think seaside places ought to be placarded in the summer with notices 'No engagements binding.' Don't worry. Ninety-nine out of a hundred holiday engagements fail to last. The moment a girl begins to regret, it is the best thing for her and for him that she should cut the knot as soon as possible."

"But it may spoil his life and shake his faith in women."

"My dear," I said, "young men who get engaged after a week at the seaside to a girl they have never seen before are not likely to break their hearts. They may get a shock to their vanity. That is about the worst that will happen to them. I'll go further than that. I think it is very probable the young man has also waked up to the folly of what he has done and would be devoutly thankful if you were the first to say so."

The smile came back to her face.



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. Wynne 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, October 24th

The prevailing influences are excellent for the entire day. It is a time for expansiveness of thought and action. The morning was made for religious and philosophical interests, while the afternoon and evening are suitable for sociability, for artistic pursuits, for music, lectures, and affairs that will give you pleasure in a sane, substantial way. Those born between June 4th and 18th, or October 16th and 17th will feel the aspects more strongly than others. Therefore it is their good pleasure to accomplish more and find keener enjoyment in the things they do. Affairs of the heart will have prominence during the day.

Monday, October 25th

The morning hours hold a tendency for hastiness and quarreling. From noon until 3.30 p. m., you will find it an advantageous time for dealing with high officials and bank

executives. It is also favorable for those born between June 18th and July 2d to deal with the opposite sex. The aspects for the rest of the day are unimportant, and your own individual influences will be in effect. Take matters slowly and know that whatever is worth doing, is worth doing well. It is a most fortunate afternoon and evening for those who celebrate their birthdays on October 17th or 18th.

Tuesday, October 26th

Very energetic forces will be in the air until 2 p. m. These are very favorable and should be used to accomplish important undertakings. They should be utilized particularly by those who entered the world between July 2d and 15th of any year. There are no further important aspects until after the dinner hour. The evening will hold amusement and pleasure galore. Love affairs, artistic interests, higher spiritual thoughts and social affairs will play an important part. It is most favorable for those born on October 18th or 19th.

Wednesday, October 27th

If there is anything important on deck, make all your plans in the morning and then work fast to execute them. From 11 a. m. until 3 p. m., there are several aspects in force that are favorable for clearing away obstinate obstacles. It is especially favorable for those who celebrate their birthdays between July 15th and 28th. Do not attempt anything after 3 p. m., however, until between 6 and 7 p. m. This hour is excellent for making constructive plans, talking over old matters in order to materialize results and dealing with older people. It will be a happy, care-free day for those born near October 20th.

Thursday, October 28th

Watch out for deception. This day is filled with misrepresentation. Those born near the middle of August and on the 19th will not meet with it to such a degree as others. Those born between July 28th and August 9th should be particularly cautious. Happiness will be enjoyed by those born on October 21st or 22d.

Friday, October 29th

The morning will be favorable for those born between August 9th and 22d until 11.30. Do not start anything unless you are willing for it to drag along for many weeks. Those fortunate individuals born on February 6th, or on the 24th and 25th of October, will find the day very satisfactory.

Saturday, October 30th

This is a good day for the culmination of affairs. Cinch that contract you started to get a few days ago! If you were born between August 22d and September 3d, or on October 24th and 25th, you will reap astonishing returns.

THE WHOLE WEEK

This will prove to be a fortunate period for a number of people. Those who have birthdays between the 23d and the 31st will profit somewhat. If you are one of these, be sure to take advantage of any opportunities that come your way, for it is a good time to go after new fields to conquer.

Another group which should be reaping the golden harvest this week are those born around February 6th. If you have been impatient and have not been putting forth your best efforts, do so now! Any business offer made at this time will be shadowed with success. Do not doubt your own abilities! You are under Jupiter's excellent influences—the best there are. Act, in the living present!

Every one enjoying prosperity would make this old world a wonderful place, but we must have the bad along with the good in order to make life interesting as well as to make us worth-while individuals. A cloudy state of affairs is existing for those born November 18th, 19th, or 20th. After this week you have reached the climax of slow progress and will go through a reconstruction period beginning January, 1927. Protect your health by careful living. Postpone business transactions until a week from now, anyway.

If you were born March 17th, and things seem to be at sixes and sevens, put it down to the influence of Uranus. This planet has been trying to knock you off your balance all summer. Do not give in to all your impulses! Use your will power to build a better record for yourself. Increased respect spells prosperity.

The coming week will find deception and misrepresentation in the lives of those born around August 19th. Do not enter into colossal schemes this week. You will get fooled. Deceit is all around you! Be careful!

Answers to Questions

Will you give me some information about my little girl's operation? Born October 3, 1913. Mrs. G.

It is quite impossible to predict accurately concerning an operation without the hour of birth. I can see from a brief glance at your little girl's chart, however, that there is health difficulty there. Without knowing the full facts and all data concerned in the case, I cannot say whether this would be necessary. Frankly, I don't see why it is essential with a child so young. Her vitality has been low, of course, but if she could pull through until December, she would not have any more trouble. I would advise against the operation if it can possibly be prevented.

What should I plan to do? Born February 7, 1912. V. H.

There is keen mentality shown here, V. H., and you should get every little piece of education you can cram into your brain. I would advise that you plan to write and that you keep your eyes open for every opportunity that would put you in touch with a periodical or publication. If you care for teaching, you would also make a wonderful teacher. If you

are interested in business, welfare work, or personal work in a big organization, you would find it congenial work also. The first essential for real success is to get the education and be-awake and ready for all opportunities.

Have I met my future husband? Born April 12, 1908. FRANCIS.

I hardly think you have, Frances. You will marry, but you are one of those fortunate girls who will attract so many men between the ages of twenty and twenty-five that you won't know who to marry, and so won't marry young. That is wisdom for you, anyway.

Tell me about my future? Born February 2, 1893. EDNA.

You have never made the most of the gifts you have. You are a very good mixer and could do very well in any work which would bring you in contact with the public. I should think club work would be ideal for you, since you are married.

What are my financial prospects? Born November 29, 1882. K. M. G.

The ten years just ahead of you will be the best of your life! You will do better financially than you have and you will meet persons and go places that you have always wanted to. Your social contacts of the future will give you much pleasure.

Will things get brighter for us soon? Wife, born July 8, 1895, noon; husband, born July 27, 1890. MRS. W. W.

It is no pleasure to have to tell you, Mrs. W., that things will not improve for you at once. The year 1927 will be much better than 1926, however, but not before you put forth good effort. Around 1929 and 1930 things will be quite prosperous for you. Do not get discouraged. Conditions are not going along smoothly for any one at this particular time. The year 1927 is much better in many respects, and the summer will prove quite favorable. All troubles are given us as testers and lessons, and the sooner you cross the bridge, the better.

Please tell me what vocation I should follow. Born February 27, 1910, midnight.

BEATRICE.

Thank you for such a nice letter, Beatrice. With your chart in front of me I can see so well just what would suit you best. You would be eminently successful in optometrist work while you could likewise make a success of teaching. I would not try to capitalize

my artistic talents if I were you, but would keep them for my own pleasure and entertainment. During the next couple years you will feel as if you are not accomplishing very much, but I seriously advise you to harmoniously follow what will seem like delaying and depressing influences. In reality, it will be an inclination toward studiousness, which will bring you good results. After that you will come under very excellent aspects, and you should come in for a share of the public's homage and success.

What about my future? Born May 22, 1912. FRANCIS.

You're a bit inclined to be impulsive, starting a lot of things and then getting tired of them before you drive them on to a finish. Conquer that, and you can conquer any world you wish to.

When will I marry? Born October 7, 1910. M. C.

Why the rush? You'll be so popular four years from now that you won't be anxious to marry. But you will have a good opportunity when you are twenty-four. Don't overlook it while you are having your good times.

Tell me about my future. (Date omitted by request.) LENA.

You have a very interesting future, Lena. You will have an opportunity to marry within the next three years, and after marriage you will begin to develop mentally and socially. You will come in contact with new and interesting persons and will travel.

What does the future hold for me? Born April 5, 1901, noon, Chicago. EDITH.

You have a very interesting chart, Edith, but I am afraid you have got in a rut mentally. Now is a very good time to cheer right up and feel encouraged regarding the future. You do have a difficult health combination, which can be quite annoying if not understood. It is of a more or less nervous character and can be cured through electrical treatments and mental healing. No doctor will ever be able to diagnose an illness of yours correctly, and you should always take advanced methods of cure. Much of your past difficulty has been caused through a transit of Saturn which has depleted your vitality, but you will improve greatly during 1927. You will be on easy street after your thirtieth year. Both 1930 and 1931 will be fortunate years for you and if you learn to think philosophically, your benefits will be twofold. Cheer up!

What is in store for us? Man, born March 30, 1892; woman, born April 2, 1908. M. F.

Next summer there will be an unexpected and favorable change in your lives. This will not be acceptable to you at first, but later on you will realize that it was for the best. If you continue with your idea in mind of going on the stage and keep up your lessons, you should be able to realize your ambitions next year.

What have I to look forward to in the future? Born December 6, 1888, 1 a. m.

Miss A. G.

You will encounter a somewhat depressing period during 1927. At that time Saturn will be affecting your life. It will be similar to what you went through during your thirtieth year. You are naturally philosophical, and Saturn's influence with you can be converted into a powerfully constructive channel, if you will let it. See that your health and vitality are not below par at that time. Do not risk anything in the hopes of making money. It will probably affect some man very close to you at the time.

Do the stars hold anything for me regarding marriage? Born February 25, 1907, 6 a. m.

Miss M. F.

I have looked into your birth data quite closely and have come to the conclusion that there is some deception on the part of the young man, but that your marriage possibilities will come out according to your dreams later. There seems to be something about this attraction in which you have not been frank with me. Nevertheless, you will marry in 1932, but will go through some emotional and business difficulties before that time. You will marry a wealthy man.

Will we be able to marry as planned? Man, born December 18, 1904; woman, born June 3, 1901, 4 a. m.

L.

Yes, after some delay, you will probably marry. I want you to understand in advance that there are two serious attractions in your life. It is quite possible that this present attraction will be broken off without you ever going through the marriage ceremony. Both you and the young man about whom you speak are going to have a great deal of emotional distress in 1928 and 1929. I do not see how you can possibly form a union at this time, and have it last even throughout your thirtieth year. I am sorry to tell you these things, for they will probably not make you very happy, but remember our trials are given

us for the forming of better characters. The easiest and happiest way to meet these lessons is to take life as it comes; live each day at a time and let no outside affair or occurrence affect us deeply. Your worrying isn't going to help matters any.

Answering the questions of J. R. C. Born October 9, 1908.

It so happens, Miss J. R. C., that beginning very soon your entire life is going to be changed and you will be whirled into a set of circumstances that will leave your head swimming. Next year will indeed be fortunate for you. Your particular set of qualities are very conducive to beauty work. It looks like you might go to England, but that trip may not materialize as soon as you think. There are a great many changes coming your way, though, and you can do nothing to hasten or retard them, because when Uranus comes your way it picks you right up and moves you. Without knowing your time of birth, I can tell you nothing about marriage. Sorry!

Will "He" come back? Girl, born April 16, 1903.

WISTFUL.

This man will probably come back into your life, but never permanently. I firmly believe that you can carry out your desire to go on the stage if you plug away at it. However, you are of the temperament that likes to pioneer a great deal, but you should learn to concentrate more. Decide on what you want to do, and stick to it! I would not advise your doing anything else if you want to make the stage your career, as youth is an asset on theatrical work. Try to get any kind of a job, even with a stock company, and start from the ground up. You will be successful some day, I know.

Will I make a success as a song-and-dance man? Born April 14, 1901.

M. F.

You certainly have the ability, Mr. F., but, of course, the perseverance depends upon you. This present year things should be going well for you. There should have been opportunities in October that I hope you took advantage of. Next February is also a good period for you. You know, of course, that you must have training along this line as well as in any other. You may have had this training for all I know, but keep up the good work and you will get there. The summer of 1927 is very fortunate for you.



The Friend in Need

Department conducted by
Laura Alston Brown

IS it wise for a girl to marry and continue working? Who has the happier life, the wife who works outside of the home and helps or the wife who depends upon her husband for support and devotes her energies to being truly feminine?

Hearbroken doesn't know.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been going with a boy for about eighteen months, and about six months ago he proposed. I accepted, as I love him dearly.

Both of us are working, and he doesn't make but a few dollars more than I—not enough to take care of us both, and he is in debt.

We have talked all of this over, and he tells me that he thinks it best for us to wait until he is out of debt, which will be about two years.

I don't want to wait, for I know we could work together, and he would get out of debt much quicker a married man than single. And, too, after he does get out of debt, he will still not be making enough to take care of both of us.

So I think if I am going to have to work anyway in the long run, that I had rather do it now, while I am two years younger.

I am twenty-one years of age, and he is twenty-five.

I wouldn't be so anxious to get married, but he is less attentive toward me than he used to be before he found out that I cared so much about him.

He knows that I am foolish about him, and show it awfully much. Do you think I have done wrong? How can I win his attentions as I used to hold them? The last few times he has treated me awful cold. HEARTBROKEN.

If he is changing now, my dear, he'll change just so much more after marriage. Better give him time to become just as disinterested as he ever will.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I need some advice, and I wonder if you can at least console me, if you cannot help me?

I am twenty-one years old; have brown, curly hair, and brown eyes. I am five feet seven inches tall, and weigh one hundred and eighty-five pounds. Now that is my trouble, dear Mrs. Brown, I'm fat! If you only knew how hard I've tried to get thin! But, I guess it is impossible in my case. I have never had a boy friend, and I never go any place. The only pleasure I have is reading. Do you think I will ever meet a man who could fall in love with a fat girl? I don't think so. Boys do like me as a friend, but when it comes to making dates, I guess they are ashamed to be seen with a fat girl, and I don't blame them!

Is there any hope for me, I wonder? Do you think I will have to be an old maid? I hope not, but there is a saying that "Nobody loves a fat man," and I guess that the same applies to women.

Please publish this and let me have your verdict.

FATTY.

Do not be such a fatalist! Certainly, plenty of fat girls get married. Try to reduce if you can by walking and exercising. They do say, "Nobody loves a fat man."

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a girl of seventeen; a real honest-to-goodness flapper, and when I read Paula's letter, it simply made my blood boil. The very idea of saying a girl can't be a flapper, and yet be straight! Paula probably doesn't realize that her statement is a decided insult, and will be taken as such by hundreds of girls.

What harm is there in a girl being a flapper? In my estimation, and I'm sure many will agree with me, the people who are forever condemning a flapper don't know just what a flapper is. Many girls aren't straight, it's true, but that is no sign that all flappers are not.

As for there not being such a thing as love

—well, evidently Paula has never been in love. Why, love is the most wonderful thing in the world! Of course, infatuation is mistaken for love in many cases, but you can't make me believe there isn't such a thing as love. I know better.

Any one who can read between the lines can readily see why Paula takes this attitude.

Several of my girl friends read Paula's letter, and, believe me, they all agree with me. We are all flappers, and are probably silly at times, as all girls are, but we have certainly kept our so-called self-respect, and also the respect of all fellows we have come in contact with. We all work, and are among men and boys constantly, but we can, each and every one, say that they all treat us with the utmost respect.

Please, Paula, try some of your own advice, and don't look on the gloomy side of everything.

THE FLAMING FLAPPERS.

To some, it is true, flappers are like love—they are a hard thing to understand! I guess they are the 1926 puzzles! Yet underneath it all, flappers are far better than credit is often given them, as you will note what these flappers say about self-respect.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: We have been reading your department for a long time, and now we would like to express the opinion of two semiflappers on the letters that we have read.

We hardly agree with any of the letters we read so far. It seems that these girls are either the "eight-o'clock-stay-at-home" type or the "two-a.-m.-stay-out-late" kind.

To Just a Girl, we would like to say that the world changes as time goes on, and it might be a good idea for her to crawl out of her shell and learn some modern ideas.

Our sympathy goes out to Paula. She must have "loved too well." Still we don't think she looks on the bright side of things. Might she not give the men a fair chance? All men are not the same.

We believe that the smoking, drinking, petting done by the flappers has been highly exaggerated; however, there are always those few who will carry things to extremes.

PEGGY 'N' PATTY.

Let us hope some of these things said about the flappers have been exaggerated! You might tell us why you don't agree with most of the letters. Too extreme? Is that it?

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN: Dangerous Dagger Eyes: I heartily agree with dear Mrs. Brown in suggesting that you forget your beauty, which seems such a great misfortune to you. You state that all you have to do is to go out and wink at a fellow and he will cat out of your hands.

I don't think that it takes beauty like yours to make them do that, as I am not so pretty, but I find all you have to do is give them a second glance, and they are so flattered that they come running, so don't pat yourself on the back too many times, Dangerous Dagger Eyes, as it's being done all over.

You state that you are in love with two fellows. You're not in love, my dear girl, with any one but yourself.

I know, because I will admit that I am in love myself, and, believe me, I'm not interested enough to look at another fellow, much less fall in love with him.

Mrs. Brown, don't you think it queer when young folks tell you they see nothing wrong in going out with other girls and fellows after you are engaged? I have been engaged almost a year, but I have not the slightest desire for any one's company but my fiancé's, and I find he thinks the same.

BETTY.

I think you're right. "If Love Be Love" there is little desire for any one but the beloved.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I was very much attracted by Happy Boy's letter, and think he must be very nice.

I admire him particularly for his respect and appreciation for his mother and father, who must be wonderful. So many of our young people have just such mothers and fathers, but do not appreciate them.

My mother died when I was four, and dad and I have always been separated—unfortunately. Therefore I envy boys and girls who are blessed with a home and parents.

Another thing about Happy Boy's letter, which appealed to me greatly, was the paragraph he wrote about "pure-minded, noble, inspiring women." That paragraph was an inspiration to me.

I was left alone in a large city, to use my own judgment for seeking companionship and environment.

I had always striven to be just such a girl as he described, pure of heart and mind. For several years I managed to be fairly popular in spells. A time or two I chanced to overhear remarks about my being sort of a sweet little thing—but a flat tire. Of course, I should have known that real, worth-while

men wouldn't have made such remarks—but foolishly, I thought I was missing something, and I made up my mind that no one would ever again have grounds for calling me a flat tire.

Then, I proceeded to transform myself into a regular flapper. I wore extreme styles, applied the lipstick freely, smoked, and indulged in petting, as a result became very much in demand.

This, I kept up for two years, and thought I was having a good time. Then one day a group of girls gathered at the apartment I shared with a girl friend. We were all smoking and inhaling freely—and some of the girls were telling suggestive jokes, not at all humorous. They went just a little bit too far with their stories, something seemed to snap within me and I rebelled.

I awakened to the fact that the last two years of my life had been wasted—I had only been shamming. And I thought I knew so much.

I came away, as far as my limited savings would take me—I came to a smaller city to try to transform myself into the pure, high-minded, and idealistic girl I once was.

My mind had been in the gutter too long, and I had been through mud and mire, and now I am trying to come through clean, and wash the stain from my soul.

I have been here a year now, and haven't made many friends as yet, and I am lonely and a wee bit discouraged at times. But am clean and conscience free again, and have found consolation.

I am twenty-one and a business girl. I meet many men, but few girls.

The men I go out with all try to pet, but I am firm and don't let them. Some of them ask for an occasional date again—but more often they don't. Some one will come along some day who will like me for myself and not just as some one to pet, won't they, Mrs. Brown?

I ride horseback, swim and hike, and enjoy all sorts of outdoor sports, and can do anything any one else can, so I can be interesting, and it isn't necessary to fill up the time with petting.

HIGHER STRIVING.

Thanks for a good letter. Write again.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: It seems like some one is forever and eternally questioning the traits and peculiarities of our boys of to-day.

Boys like to have a good time, although each have their own idea as to their mode of pleasure. The same applies to the girls.

We boys and girls seem to take great delight

in doing a whole lot of wild things at parties or when out riding, but it is just for the sake of having a good time. I believe there is no harm in a little petting or a little kissing, but do not think it should be overdone.

When you indulge too freely in petting, kissing, drinking, smoking, and what not, you are lowering yourself in your boy-friend's sight. This applies especially when the boy that likes or loves you happens to be there.

Don't take me as a woman-hater, for I like the girls in general, and one in particular. I have just stated the facts as they have been proven, many, many times.

Why do the boys linger at their date's door after taking her home from a dance or show? Really that question is unanswerable, for I have done that very same thing many a time, and still can offer no explanation for same.

The boys and girls of to-day are all right. They are no different from their mothers and fathers when they were in our places.

Mrs. Brown, yours is a very wonderful department, your advice to the lovelorn is unequalled. I hope the girls do not give me the merry ha-ha. AL FROM ALABAMA.

Why should they, Al?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: "To be or not to be." That is my question! To be married to an adoring husband, really have a home of my own, and dear little kiddies—or to remain single and continue working in order to have a college education and a career. Frankly, I'm perplexed! Won't you and your readers tell me what you think is best for me to do?

My life has been the normal life of the average American girl.

I've worked, played, traveled some, studied hard; and yet I'm not contented.

I enjoy life most when engaged in active sports. I love to swim and dive especially well. Dancing, too, is a favorite pastime. However, my life has not been all play by any means.

Since I'm one of seven girls in a family of moderate circumstances I've found that in order to have the things I want I must work to get them.

I've always had lots of ambition and energy, too, so when I want a thing I make every possible effort to attain it.

My parents have given me a sort of home, but otherwise I'm totally self-supporting, and I have put myself through high school and business college.

Now I have a very good position, and by working faithfully for a few more years I could go to college, as I've always wanted to do.

This has been an earnest ambition of mine, and I thought nothing could shake my ideas, but now I find that something has.

That something is a man—and I've fallen in love with him.

It couldn't be helped—in fact, I didn't want it to be helped. I'm glad that I do love him—for to me he seems the most wonderful man on earth. Funny, too, for he is so different than any other I've ever known.

I've always had a goodly share of admirers—some serious—some not. They were the kind who danced, drank, and were thinking of nothing but a good time. Of course, I've fallen in and out of love before, but marriage never entered my head.

Now I'm doing some serious thinking. This man of mine is a typical Western heman—the outdoor type—big and broad-shouldered. Doesn't care a bit about dancing, or social affairs of any kind. I not only admire him tremendously, but I love him deeply. He loves me and has asked me to marry him. I know he would make a wonderful husband, but would I make a good wife? Having spent all my time in offices—I can't cook very well and I can't sew at all. Would I be wiser to go on to school for several years—or to marry now and share the home that this man wants to make for me?

After all, I'm beginning to think that maybe wifehood and motherhood are a woman's greatest career. Our love for children is mutual—so I'm sure we would find happiness in marriage.

Please tell me what you think. Maybe some of the readers have had similar experiences and know how to advise me.

SARA JANE OF OREGON.

Marry the man, by all means, Sara Jane. If you wait those few years you'll miss the sweetest part of your love life. And who is to prevent you from having your career—if you still want it—after you've had your family? But you can't turn it around the other way always. Any woman can learn to cook and sew if she wants to.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Last winter I became acquainted with a fellow whom I was very much interested in and still am. I went with him for about three months. Gradually we drifted apart, and now he doesn't come to see me at all.

I have a girl friend who is a typical blonde. One day while she and I were walking down the street he stopped and asked us to take a ride. We accepted.

He was going to take me to my destination first, but my girl friend insisted he take her home first. When we got there he asked her address and telephone number and said he would call her up some time and make a date.

I have learned since from this girl friend that he never gave her a ring. The other night he stopped us again and we went for a ride. This was early in the evening about seven and he said he would take us where we were going. He never mentioned to my girl friend that he would call her.

Afterward my girl friend told me he focused most of his attention upon me when I was looking elsewhere.

I don't believe I am in love with this fellow, but he is about the only fellow in this town I care to go with.

Do you think he is trying to make me jealous? We girls dress very modern and stylish. Do you think he picks us girls up just to pass away the time being, more plainly spoken just showing us off to the pedestrians? I hardly think that of him, because, if I remember right, he did not take us down the main street of town. WEARY WINIFRED.

I can't believe it was just to show you off, Weary Winnie! Guess again!

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I met a boy, Mrs. Brown, and he told me the things that Miss San Diego says all boys tell to foolish girls who are sentimental enough to believe them.

I am not a haughty nor fast little flapper, for sometimes I am rather quiet and bashful, but I have recently assured myself that I have grown out of the latter, so I truly know that he has not been attracted to an aimless little flapper.

He has made me believe that he has respected and cared.

I am very lonesome at present. I have not heard from him in three months. I have learned to care, and I miss him dreadfully. I find no pleasure in other boys' company, and I only find myself thinking, always thinking of him. But I believe he will come back to me, and yet at times I grow discouraged. I want to go out and have good times like other girls. Yes, and get and drink and smoke! Why not? Have I not cuddled by the fire long enough, dreaming of the impossible? I'm tired of being a goody and I am miserable.

You see, I have lived with the vague hope that he is thinking of me, too—that he will come to me. And now my hopes are crumbling, falling, dying. LAUREL.

Don't take it so to heart, Laurel. There are other boys.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am eighteen years old and a stenographer in one of the largest factories in this city.

One night last September I met a boy two years my senior at a dance. Although this boy works near where I live and I see him quite often I never had been introduced to him.

He asked me for a dance and then wanted to see me home. After we got to my house he made an appointment to come to see me the following week, which he did, and since that night he has called to see me sometimes four nights a week. But, Mrs. Brown, about two months ago I heard that he was taking a girl out that lives two blocks away from my house, and when I asked him about it he told me that he had, but he wouldn't go out with her any more if I didn't want him to, so everything went along all right for about a month, when one night I saw the other girl and him out together.

He came to see me the following Wednesday night, and I told him that I didn't care to see him any more as long as he went out with her for, Mrs. Brown, don't think I personally have anything against the girl, but I did not think it looked right for him to come to see me one night and her the next, when we were almost neighbors.

That is a month ago. Now he calls me up quite often, but I haven't been out with him since—or with any other fellow. He still goes out with her, for I see them quite often together. But, Mrs. Brown, I love him, and can't help to think of him always. Do you think I am foolish? LONESOME.

Yes, Lonesome, you are. Find some other boy.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a mother of seven kiddies and am just about tired of everything, for when my kiddies were small, my husband, who never wanted them, would take no notice of them. Never gave me any money extra for them.

As the result of his treatment I lost two of my babies through not having proper care before they came. And the other kiddies went very poorly dressed.

My husband in the meantime used his money fooling around with other women.

Now that the children have become older—the oldest one now being able to work—he has started to take an interest in them, but in a way that looks as if he is trying to win their affection away from me.

He insults me whenever any one is around. He makes the kiddies do everything in opposition to my wishes.

He takes my sixteen-year-old girl out to shows and treats her to suppers afterward. He will take our neighbors and friends out in the big car, and yet he never asks me to go, and when I just try to ignore his ways and go along with my neighbors he will pass insulting remarks to me and of me to my friends.

He will tell me absolutely nothing of his business. Yet I hear most of his business dealings from said friends and neighbors.

Just a few weeks ago he became angry over some trifling thing, and has not spoken to me since the last week of July.

Now, Mrs. Brown, my mother and friends try to tell me that he worships the ground I walk on. Is that possible? Or is the reason of his actions due to insanity, for there is insanity in his family, as he has three or four cousins in the asylum as well as a sister a few years younger than himself.

I have also heard talk of an aunt that would get those fits of not talking for weeks at a time.

Please advise me, for this is wearing on my nerves, so that I feel I cannot stand it much longer, and please believe that I have always made my home and kiddies first in my heart and life. DISCOURAGED.

Try making your husband first for a while. Many wives make the mistake of making their home and children first. Be glad that he takes your daughter out and not some other woman's daughter. Smile a little more and analyze a little less and you'll be happier. Few men are interested in children while they are babies.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am sixteen years old. I am considered good looking by my boy and girl friends. I have blue eyes, light-brown, natural curly hair, which looks like a halo on my head. I am a junior in high school.

If I have many boy friends they never ask me for a date. I do not drink, smoke, or go on wild parties because my mother has taught me better than that. But I have begun to think that you are out of the game, as some of the girls have said, if you don't smoke, pet, and drink.

But I'll never do that, because I want to be clean when my prince does come along.

I am somewhat bashful around boys. But I dress very stylish and I don't think that could be it. LA RUE.

You're all right, La Rue.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am writing this letter for One Who Knows. I married when I was nineteen a man seventeen years my senior.

Unlike the one you wed, One Who Knows, my husband gives me all the clothes and money he can afford and the use of our car all the time.

We have a baby two years old, and her daddy romps with her every evening.

We were both raised on Western cattle ranches. My husband was later an instructor in riding in an Eastern boys' school. My husband takes me to the movies or cold-drink parlors, also to a café for lunch—occasionally. Just as before we married.

He has never ceased to be my lover, and I am still his sweetheart. We both love horse-back riding and swimming. I am a pretty good hand at the round-up and my husband is a top hand.

We neither drink, smoke, nor use bad language. I quit dancing when I married, but can still do acrobatic stunts and dancing for our friends.

I am a good cook and housekeeper, and get ample praise from my husband. I am five feet five inches, dark-brown hair and eyes. Yes, I use a bit of paint and have my hair bobbed.

My husband is six feet one inch, brown hair and eyes, and a kind face. We have lots of friends.

I am studying to be an artist.

I have won several prizes on my pictures and love my work. So, you see, One Who Knows, you don't know it all!

Our friends call us the ideal couple.

OLDER MAN'S HAPPY WIFE.

Thanks for your very fine letter.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Hello! May I join this circle? Mrs. Brown, you certainly are a lovely person. Indeed, I share your questions many times and usually agree with you as to your decision and advice.

This is a queer old world, isn't it? But I love it. I do not bring any problems to be solved, but I would like to tell some of the people my views of a young person's life as I see it.

Next week I will be twenty years old. And I have had one date.

I go to college—take an active part in debates—plays and orations. Sometimes I wish I had "beaus." Other times I do not care. Mamma and I go to shows several times a week. I read a great deal. And, of course, I read the LOVE STORY every week. May I

say here that no cleaner, sweeter stories can be found, and any young person, or old, may read them and feel a sweeter, higher purpose. I do.

A girl that will lower herself to smoke, drink, or pet is a disgrace to the name woman. A boy who would ask a girl to do these things so he may "try her out" and see what she is is not fit to be called a gentleman.

No harm in giving a good-night kiss? Very well, then do it, but you certainly do not gain the respect of any one nor does God look down on one of that type and smile and say, "Oh, youth must sow their wild oats."

Don't do it, comrades! It isn't worth the profit. Be clean and to thine ownself be true. Can you read the stories in this magazine and then say it's all right to do the little low things we are in favor of? Is that a thrill? Not for me!

The boy I ever love will have to be a clean honest-to-goodness man. Maybe I am better off with my one date in my twenty years. Good luck, Mrs. Brown, in your good, wise work.

JOSEPHINE.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: May I look in at your corner for a minute? I think it's perfectly wonderful.

I am a high-school girl of seventeen and live with my aunt and uncle. I get most anything I want as well as my way.

I am considered good looking by the opposite sex. I am a flapper. I dress in fashion short skirts, but not to my knees, for the simple reason I do not think it becoming to me.

I use cosmetics and make up. I don't consider it any one's business. My guardians buy it. If they don't object, why should others? As for indulging in petting, smoking, and drinking—I don't. I don't like the taste of whisky. I light my uncle's cigarettes for him sometimes. I swim, golf, and dance. I dearly love dancing. I am not bragging, but I'm a prize dancer in waltzing and fox trotting.

I love the independence of the "Modern American Girl."

I am popular with both girls and boys—but I'm tired of the same faces.

GEORGIA.

Write again some time.

I'm going to give you something pleasant to think about to-day. I hope every one of you will read this letter two or three times as I did.

It's worth it.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Isn't happiness or unhappiness more a matter of our own attitude than of external circumstances?

I do not say you can be happy under any circumstances, but I do believe any one, anywhere can win some measure of contentment.

It would easily be possible for me to tell about my own life and win pity and sympathy, or again by simply smiling and passing rough places over lightly make any one believe I had been an unusually fortunate girl.

All of us like to talk about ourselves, and perhaps a few words of personal history might give a firmer foundation on which to build general observations.

The oldest of seven in a comparatively poor family, I was yet shielded from the harsh, ugly things of life. Always a dreamer with a passionate love for reading, the real things around me were scarcely noticed.

I like people and had plenty of friends, but not until I was seventeen did I awake to the fact that the lives of my friends and acquaintances were interesting.

It was then, too, that I awoke to the fact that living cost money, and it was sometimes bitterly hard for my mother and father to make ends meet and give their other children the advantages they had given me.

I was just an average girl with the nicest parents ever.

They never forbade my doing anything I wanted to do. I could go with any one, anywhere, but it was taken for granted that I would always bring any stranger to meet my folks and spend an evening in our home first.

After that if a boy wasn't the right kind I knew it as well as any one.

I neither danced, drank, smoked, nor petted, but I'd have dates for every night in the week, and the same boys would come whenever I'd let them week after week. Most of them are my friends yet.

Physically I was rather frail, and occasionally my father would ask me to make a date with him, and we'd spend a quiet evening at home.

Lots of other times when some young man called we'd spend the evening playing some game, such as rook or dominoes, singing and playing the piano. I had as good times as any girl, even if my pleasures were simple ones and my memories are wholly sweet and clean.

Since I did not work, it was only natural that I should marry young. I was not very desperately in love, but was quite fond of the young man, and we seemed well suited. I soon learned that my husband was not all I thought him when I married him, and I

had plenty of opportunities to learn what real poverty meant.

Things weren't easy, and nothing but my horror of divorce kept us together, but we did stay together, and I have my reward now. We both loved children, and now have two fine boys of our own.

I cannot help but feel pity for people who have no children, even when I know they do not desire them.

All that is best in my husband and myself is brought out by our babies.

I am twenty-three now. I still have an abiding faith that when things are dark, if we'll just do what we can and be a little patient things will come right.

I have never in my life been afraid either of people or things. I like people and believe in them. Naturally there have been quite a few things that might tend to weaken my faith in folks, but above all things I believe in the Bible verse which bids me "Judge not."

Truly, how can any man be another man's judge, for unless we could ourselves stand in a guilty man's place and know for ourselves the influences that governed his action, how can we say what we would do under the same circumstances? Such understanding is, of course, impossible, so I always pick out the things I like in the people I meet and ignore the rest. I do not mean to boast when I say that the people I consider really my friends number well into the hundreds.

Never having had money or anything else to attract friends to me I think they are my friends just because I like them, and they know it.

This letter wanders around terrifically, and I am afraid it is entirely too long, but I could not possibly close without a word about the younger generation. Whole-heartedly and without reservation I believe in them. If some of these cynical, pitiful folks who think this world is going so rapidly from bad to worse would walk with me into a group of flappers from fifteen to twenty years old and watch the dash they will make for a baby—they'll hold a baby and frankly adore it not for a few seconds, but for an hour. Many, many times I've had to take one of my babies away almost by force when the time came for me to go home.

I go wherever I like, and I never stay long enough to satisfy those who want to hold a baby for a few minutes. Perhaps it's hard on the child, but I have two of the happiest, healthiest children in the world.

The three things that keep me happy and contented are faith in God, faith in my fellow-man, and lastly faith in myself; all other

things are merely incidental, and people who haven't those three things to make them happy simply have never learned to make sympathetic allowance for their own and other folks' mistakes.

A YOUNG MOTHER.

Could any one read that letter and not be better and finer for it?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am eighteen years old, have coal-black hair, large gray eyes, am five feet two inches tall, and weigh one hundred pounds.

My mother died when I was five years old, leaving three small children—two girls and a boy. I am the baby.

After mother was dead four months dad married a woman he went with before he married mother.

She had a daughter older than either of us at home. We could not get along. My stepmother is a selfish woman. She fussed all the time and beat me because I was the baby. Dad made my sister and I go to live with our aunt, my mother's sister, in a distant town. She was not good to us.

My sister went to work in a telephone office and met a boy that she did not know, and they were married. I came to the city with them.

They did not get along. He stayed in a pool parlor all the time, and would make my sister and I work and give him the money to gamble on. He would treat me terrible and would beat my sister. I left their place.

Now I am working. Dad is old and he came to me for help. I told him I would help him by taking a house and keeping them with me. After all those years I have taken him and his wife in, but to save my life I cannot get along with my stepmother.

I pay all expenses and treat them as I would if they had been always good to me, but they

don't seem to care for that. My sister has married again, and she does not speak to me.

ALL ALONE.

Even though you are not appreciated, you will find much happiness in doing your duty.

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am twenty years old. I was married six months ago to the dearest boy, but without his parents' consent. They thought he was too young, and so came to California from the East to annul our marriage, six weeks later. He wasn't of age yet, you see.

I was heartbroken. He went back with his folks. I hear from him twice a week.

Since he has gone I have only been out with one boy, whom I have known for years. I know his folks, and they are lovely.

Now my problem is which one do I care for most?

I know the latter one loves me, for he wants me to marry him, but I thought the other loved me, too. I can't see how he really could love me and still not put up a protest when his mother came out here with her purpose.

There have been rumors around that he sent for her. I can hardly believe that, because he was always straightforward and never sneaky.

What shall I do, Mrs. Brown, marry this other boy, who I know loves me, or wait for two or three years and see whether or no these rumors are true? UNDECIDED.

Why rush into marriage again? Do something to make yourself self-supporting and give yourself time to think before making another unwise move.

Make haste slowly.

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.



60 Days Ago They Called Me "BALDY"

Now my friends are amazed. They all ask me how I was able to grow new hair in such a short time.

BOB MILLER and I had both been getting bald for years. We had tried almost every hair restorer on the market. But we might as well have used brass polish. One day Bob left town—a business trip. Weeks passed. I began to wonder if I'd ever see him again.

One afternoon at the office I heard a familiar voice—"Hello, Baldy," it said. I glanced up, annoyed. There stood Bob.

"For Pete's sake!" I exclaimed, "where have you been keeping yourself?"

We shook hands. "Take off your hat," I suggested sarcastically. "Let me gaze on that 'luxuriant hair' of yours. I haven't seen it for weeks."

"Luxuriant hair is right," he retorted. "I've got the finest growth of hair you ever saw!"

I laughed out loud! "Know any more jokes?" I said.

Bob stepped back and swept off his hat. I couldn't believe my eyes. The top of his head, once almost bare, was covered with a brand new growth of real, honest to goodness hair!

A New Way to Grow Hair

That night I went to Bob's house to try his new hair-growing treatment. He sat me in a chair and placed a strange apparatus on my head and turned on the electricity. The treatment lasted 15 minutes. At the end of the treatment I rubbed the top of my head. "Well, Bob," I chuckled, "I don't feel any new hair."

"Of course you don't," Bob came back. "But just you wait a while."

On my way home I read a booklet which Bob had given me. It described a new method of growing hair—discovered by Alois Merke, founder of the Merke Institute, Fifth Avenue, New York. It was the only treatment I ever heard of that got right down to the roots of the hair and awakened them to new activity. Bob was proof. I decided to send for the treatment immediately.

I Get the Surprise of My Life

Every night I spent 15 minutes taking the treatment. The first two or three days nothing happened. But I could feel my scalp beginning to tingle with new life—new vigor. Then one day when I looked in the mirror I got the thrill of a lifetime. All over my head a fine, downy fuzz was beginning to appear. At the end of a month you could hardly see a bald spot on my head. And after 60 days my worries about baldness were ended. I had gained an entirely new growth of healthy hair.

Here's the Secret

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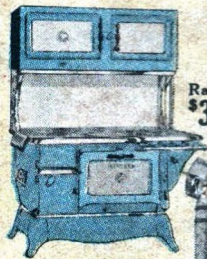
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Love Story Magazine

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY

Vol. XLI

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Get Love Story Magazine next week and begin this wonderful new serial of Mrs. MacGill's.

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The next LOVE STORY MAGAZINE will be on all news stands October 30th

LOVE AND ROSES

WHERE there are roses, you will also find love! So says Margaret Gibbons MacGill and we are inclined to agree with her. She has written a charming new serial in which she tells you all about one Rose. It will begin in next week's issue of **LOVE STORY MAGAZINE**. You can't miss it, for it is called "Rose of the West."

* * *

MAY EDGINTON, the well-known and popular writer, will give you another installment of "Time Is So Short" next week. Don't miss this powerful story of love, as every girl meets it at some time in her life.

* * *

HAVE you ever felt that you didn't know the dictates of your own heart? Philippa didn't; she was a stranger to her own heart. She didn't want Peter while he kept asking her to marry him, but the minute she thought another girl was going to get him, she changed her mind. But try as she would, she couldn't make him propose again. What do you think she finally did about it? The answer is in "A Stranger to Her Own Heart," a quaint little love story, by Kate Morris. It will be in **LOVE STORY MAGAZINE** next week.

* * *

DON'T miss "The Price of Her Silence," the dramatic story of a girl who kept her promise at all costs. It will appear next week.

* * *

DON'T fail to read Mrs. Brown's department at the back of the magazine. You may find there a solution to the very problem which has been puzzling you for weeks. And have you had our Mr. Wynn tell you anything about yourself? Better let him.

WHAT would you do if your sister borrowed your dresses—and your beaux? For years Janice was ruled by her pretty sister, Adela, and then she decided to put up a line of defense. Read about her plan and how it worked, "A Landslide of Love," by John Mitchell, coming in this magazine next week.

* * *

IF you loaned some man ten thousand dollars to complete his invention, wouldn't you expect something nice from him? What did Muriel Barson get when she loaned money to Richard Kennedy? "Her Rich Rival" will be in next week's magazine. It's a good little story. Read it.

* * *

THE people in her home town didn't think well of her—but why? It is an interesting story—"Love Money," by Mary Spain Vigus. Read it next week in **LOVE STORY MAGAZINE**. It is

Mary Spain Vigus at her best.

* * *

AND perhaps there is no better time to tell you that we have secured some of Ethel M. Dell's work for you. It will appear in the pages of **LOVE STORY MAGAZINE** soon. Watch for it and tell your friends it is coming. Vivian Grey has a new serial, "The Woman Who Lied," on the way, too.

* * *

AND watch for the poems which you'll find at the bottom of the pages. Franklin Pierce Carrigan—who sings of love with such a beautifully delicate touch—will have "To One I Love." R. R. Greenwood will give you "The Flower of Love," and Maria Owens Farrell, "Petanias and Black Butterflies."

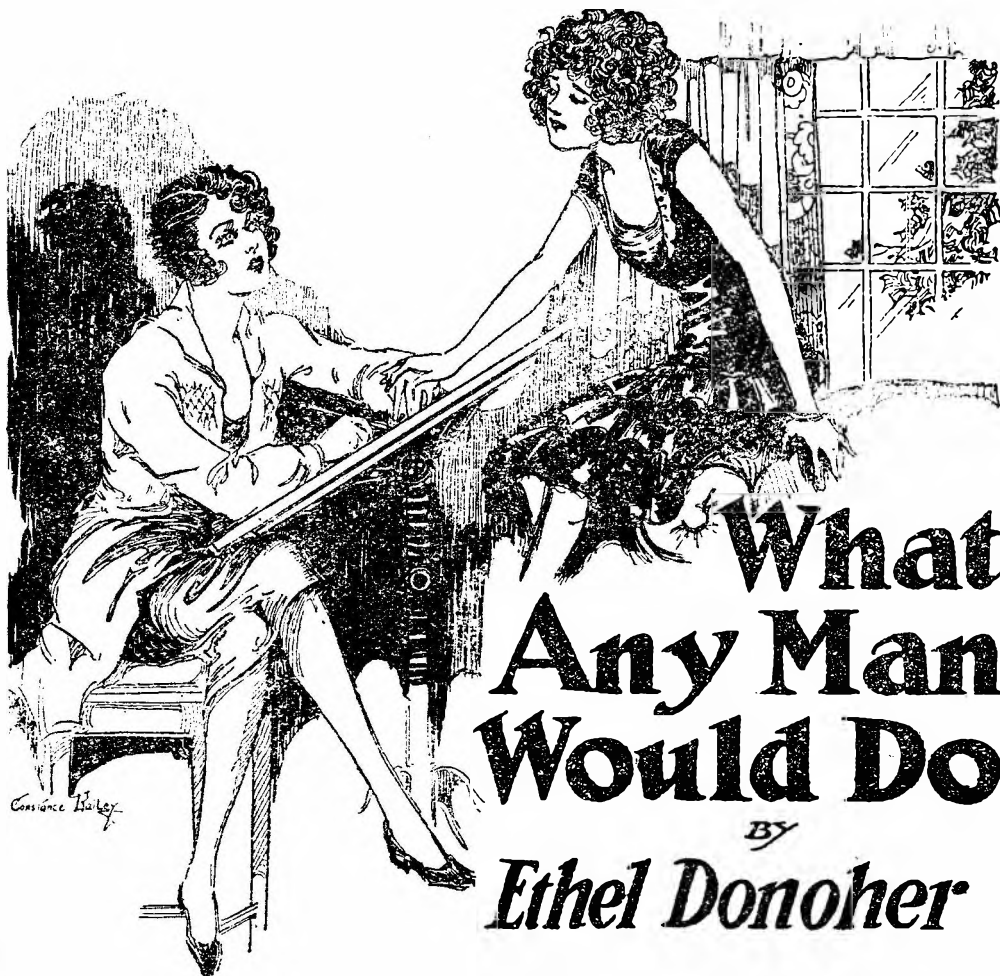
LOVE STORY MAGAZINE

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What Any Man Would Do

By

Ethel Donoher

SHE was christened Thomasina Clarice Bently, but she acquired, in her extreme youth, the name of Tommy. It evolved from her distaste for paper dolls and her propensity for tree climbing.

At twenty-six she was Tommy to all her friends and to her legion of admirers. But, despite that "legion of admirers," Tommy was not a beauty.

Still, she had no reason to regret that such was the case. Tommy was attractive—strikingly so.

But her own attraction was one of the things she could never be made to see. She believed, quite sincerely, that she was hopelessly plain. How she figured out the fact that she had more attention than almost any girl she knew, cannot be explained. Perhaps she

vaguely believed that most other girls were equally fortunate, or perhaps she didn't try to reason it out at all.

At any rate, Tommy was no poser. On the contrary, she was singularly honest and straightforward. All her friends knew just how she had labeled herself.

She thought she was too tall. Perhaps she was—but it never occurred to any one else to wish she was smaller. She carried herself beautifully, and she was as slim as a young birch tree. She had a great quantity of tawny-colored hair—which even she admitted to be not so bad, now that it was short and less trouble—and her eyes were really beautiful. They were dark gray, heavy lashed, with finely arched brows. But her nose! Oh, how Tommy hated her nose! She changed the subject hurriedly whenever it was mentioned. And for this particular hate she had no reason at all. Most people considered her impudent little nose adorable. Her mouth was a trifle too large—but she had dazzling white teeth and a brilliant, heart-warming smile.

Also, she had excellent taste and quantities of exquisite clothes—although these last might, if the fancy struck her, remain hanging in their closet for days together, while she donned some easy-to-slip-into frocks.

"Tommy!" Marion Clark exclaimed one evening, when the two girls were preparing to go to the movies. "You aren't going to wear that old thing?"

"Why not?" Tommy inquired defensively. "What's the matter with this dress? We won't see anybody."

"How do you know we won't?" Marion adjusted the belt of her gray georgette and surveyed the effect in the mirror. "You can never tell whom we'll meet. Besides, we must stop at the Pattersons'."

"What of it? We won't go in."

Both Tommy and Marion were artists. The latter designed wall paper

for one of the fashionable shops on Fifth Avenue; Tommy was an illustrator of considerable promise. Each had lived in New York City for several years, for the last two of which they had rented an apartment together on East Eleventh Street. At present there was another girl living with them, Dot Ashton, who was taking a course in commercial art.

The apartment consisted of two bedrooms, finished in cream enamel and hung with draperies of flowered linen, a charming living room—where Dot Ashton slept at night on the chesterfield—a kitchenette, and bath. Tonight, Marion had finished dressing, and had wandered into Tommy's bedroom.

"Oh, dear," murmured the latter, "I can't find anything to wear around my neck. Oh"—visibly she brightened—"this will do!"

"This" was something which Marion eyed with some uncertainty. It looked, she concluded, like a long, blue shoe string.

"What is it?" she asked.

Tommy glanced up indignantly.

"It's a necktie. What do you think it is?"

"Well," was the dry retort, "I hadn't the least idea. It looked like a shoe string, but I knew it couldn't be."

Tommy grinned, adjusting the blue tie about the neck of her pongee dress. The latter had spent a goodly portion of its time in the washtub.

"There!" She was still patting the neckpiece into shape. "Why isn't that perfectly all right?"

"Because it isn't. It looks terrible, simply terrible. Why you will wear such rags when you have so many lovely clothes——"

"But this dress is comfortable. That's why I like it."

"Comfortable! Who ever heard of such nonsense? I'd like to take you over my knee."

"I'd hang way down on each side," Tommy warned her, as she slipped into a luxurious, fur-trimmed sports coat. "Come on. Let's go."

They took a Fifth Avenue bus up to Forty-second Street, and from there walked over to Madison Avenue, where the Pattersons lived. Carol Patterson had borrowed a book on designing from Marion some weeks ago. Now Marion needed it.

"We won't go in," she remarked, as they left the elevator and walked quickly down the long hallway. "They'd just keep us talking. We'd never get to the theater in time for the second performance."

"All right," Tommy agreed. "Here, this is their apartment. Just tell the maid what you want."

But when Marion acted upon this suggestion, Carol Patterson herself came hurrying to the door.

"Janette says you want that book by Copley," she began regretfully. "I'm so ashamed of myself for not returning it before, Marion. Come in, both of you. Hello, Tommy! I haven't seen you for ages."

"It's quite all right about the book," Marion interjected. "I haven't needed it before. But we can't come in. I'm awfully sorry."

"Why, of course you're coming in! Bob Welling's here. He just got back from Mexico. He'd never forgive me, if I let Tommy get away."

And, somehow, still protesting, they found themselves preceding their hostess through a mauve-toned reception room.

"Whatever you do," Marion whispered fiercely. "don't take off your coat!"

"Why not?" Tommy inquired. "It's as warm as anything in here."

From which it may be observed that the despised pongee frock was not weighing upon her mind.

A few minutes later, in the draw-

ing-room, Tommy slipped from her coat as nonchalantly as though she was garbed in the best gown her wardrobe afforded. She gave her coat and hat to the maid and glanced about indifferently. There were a great many people present; most of them were strangers to her.

It was not until Bob Welling had caught sight of her, and was hurrying forward, that Tommy awakened to the unpleasant truth. Every woman in the room was wearing evening clothes—trailing velvet, shimmering satin, or diaphanous chiffon—and there she stood in her old pongee with her shoestring necktie!

She turned frantically to Marion.

"Just look at me! What will I do?"

"I'm sure I don't know! I told you not to take off your coat. Why did you have to do it?"

"I forgot," Tommy admitted. "I forgot all about what I had on! Oh, well"—she straightened her shoulders with a gesture familiar to Marion—"it can't be helped now. What's the difference, anyway?"

"Hello, there, Tommy Bently!" Bob Welling stood before her, his eyes bright, his lips smiling. "By Jove, this is wonderful! I've been trying all day to reach you on the telephone."

"I wasn't home," said Tommy, and for once in her life she sounded a little subdued. "When did you get back?"

"Early this morning. Why, there's Marion! More blessings! I can see I'm going to like this party."

"But we aren't going to stay," Marion assured him. "We couldn't possibly. We aren't dressed."

"Rubbish! You look gorgeous, both of you." He was looking directly at Tommy.

"What's the use?" Marion reflected hopelessly. "How can I ever make her bother to dress properly, if men tell her she looks gorgeous in a thing like that?"