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A
NEW SENSATION



ALBERT ROSS

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A NEW SENSATION,

BY ALBERT ROSS.

AUTHOR OF

"THOU SHALT NOT," "HIS PRIVATE CHARACTER,"

"SPEAKING OF ELLEN," "IN STELLA'S SHADOW,"

"THEIR MARRIAGE BOND," ETC.



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TO MY READERS.

It is a common question of my correspondents, "Are your novels ever founded on fact?" Sometimes; not often. This one is.

A year ago I had an attack of neurasthenia, as did "Donald Camran." I did not die, nor go to an insane asylum, both of which items of "news" appeared in the daily papers from one end of the country to the other; but I wasn't exactly well for awhile. In January of this year I made my second trip to the Caribbean Islands and wrote this novel among the scenes I have described.

Before going I advertised in the New York Herald "Personal" column for a typewriter to accompany me as private secretary. I received more than a hundred letters from women who desired the situation and interviewed quite a number of them. I decided, however, to go alone. (If the reader doesn't believe me I refer him to the passenger lists of the "Madiana" and "Pretoria.") The basis of this story, however, grew out of the advertisement and answers.

"Marjorie" and "Statia" have a genuine existence, and so have many of the other characters in this tale. I have used real people as an artist does his models, taking a little from one, a little from another, and a great deal from the vivid imagination with which nature has endowed me. I hope the result will be satisfactory to my friends, who have waited double the usual time for this novel.

My health seems wholly recovered and unless something unforeseen occurs my stories will continue to appear each July and January, as they have for the past ten years. This is the nineteenth volume of the "Albatross Series." I again send a too indulgent public my warmest thanks for their appreciation.

Very Truly,

ALBERT ROSS.

Cambridge, Mass., May, 1898.

A NEW SENSATION.

CHAPTER I.

LADY TYPEWRITER WANTED.

"A New Sensation—that is what you need," said Dr. Chambers, wisely.

"Yes, that is what you want, above all things," assented Harvey Hume.

"A New Sensation—it would be the making of you!" cried Tom Barton, with enthusiasm.

I agreed with them all. My brain was exhausted with my long illness and responded feebly to the new strength that was returning to my body. It was much easier, however, for people to discover the remedy I needed than to find the right way to apply it. They would never have united in prescribing the same kind of "sensation." What one would suggest would be opposed by the others; and had they come to a united decision in the matter their ideas might not have suited me at all. I was in a condition when it is not easy to make up the mind to anything.

After long reflection, I decided to go and propose marriage to Statia. I had never offered my hand to any woman and it seemed as if that ought to give me at least a diversion, which was something. Not that I intended to make the offer lightly. I had as lief get married as anything else. I was sick to death of idleness—nothing could well be worse than doing nothing, day after day.

But when I had carried out my plan, I left Statia in greater despondency than ever. For she refused me pointblank—something that had not entered into my calculations. She did it, too, in anything but an agreeable manner, as it then seemed to me.

If the reader of these lines has ever gone through a period of insomnia in its most acute form, he will understand the condition in which it leaves a fellow. When Tom's sister laughed me out of court, as one might say, even though she did it with the highest expressions of good will, I was ready for anything desperate.

"You are a silly fellow," she said, as if I were a five years' old child and she my governess. "What kind of a husband do you think you would make? Look back over the last five years of your life and see how much of it does you credit. You think I don't know what you have been up to, and perhaps it is best for me that I don't know all of it; but I am sure, at least, that you have undertaken nothing serious, and that every hour has been practically wasted. A girl has got to have something different in a partner on whom she is to rely for life. And that tale of your physician's advice is worse than all. I am not going to let myself for a hospital. Your health is broken on account of your persistent violation of all hygienic rules. You have no right to quarter yourself on a strong, well girl like me until you can bring something better than you now have to offer."

I was too provoked at her manner, even more than at her words, to reply with much patience. I said, ill-manneredly, I must now admit, that if I did not have my old physique, it was only a question of time when it would return, and that I certainly had something else that many a young man would gladly take in exchange for beef and brawn.

"Oh, *that* for your fortune!" she said, snapping her fingers disdainfully. "I am not talking of marrying your grandfather, who gathered the dollars you think of such moment. Wealth is a good thing only when harnessed to the right horses. The man that marries me must have a better recommendation. I would give

more for a character of sterling merit, a disposition to conquer the difficulties of life, than for all your cash. If the will of Aleck Camran had not tied up his savings, you would have made ducks and drakes of the whole of it before this time."

I was angry at myself for arguing with her. She had a great deal of assurance to address me in that manner, I thought.

"Will or no will, I have a certainty of five thousand dollars a year till I am thirty," I retorted. "How many of the brave young chaps you talk about can gain as much as that? And when I am thirty I get possession of the entire estate, a quarter of a million now, and more when that time comes. But I am not going to debate the matter with you. You are a coquette, Statia Barton, and have had your amusement with me. Some day, when you hear I have gone to the devil, a little remorse may touch your heart. I don't care a rap now whether I live or die."

She paled at the concluding sentence.

"Don't add crime to your follies," she said, in a low tone. "Existence does not end with this brief life on earth. When you have time to reflect, you will be ashamed of your present state of mind. If there is anything I can do for you, short of sacrificing my whole future—"

"I know," I responded, sarcastically. "You are willing to be 'a sister' to me!"

"I am, indeed!" she answered, fervently. "It's what you need much more than a wife. You accuse me of coquetry, because I have tried to treat you as—well—as the closest friend of my brother Tom. I fear your experience with women has not fitted you to be a good judge of their actions."

"They are pretty much alike," I snarled. "Selfish to the core, when you get at their true natures. All this talk amounts to nothing. So, I'll say good-bye, for as soon as I can get my things packed I'm going to get out of the country."

She seemed genuinely distressed, and like the soft fellow I always was where her sex is concerned I found myself relenting.

"Dr. Chambers advises travel," I explained, in a gentler tone. "His exact prescription was, 'Marry the nicest girl you know, then take a journey to some place where you can forget the troubles through which you have passed.' If I can't carry out the first part, I can the last."

Statia's face lit up.

"And am I—really—the 'nicest girl you know,' that you came so straight to me with your proposal?" she asked.

"I thought so an hour ago," I responded, growing gloomy again. "I've intended for two years to ask you sometime, though I didn't think it would be so soon. I supposed you knew what was on my mind, and it never occurred to me that, instead of accepting my offer, you would play the schoolma'am with me. But let it go now. I believe I shall live through it, after all. That cursed insomnia leaves a man ready for the blues on the slightest provocation. The sooner I get out of this part of the world the better."

She asked if I had decided where to go, and I told her I had not. I thought the best thing was to get on the sea as soon as I could and keep out of sight of land for awhile.

"I don't think you ought to go alone," she said, thoughtfully.

"Perhaps you would undertake to chaperone me," I suggested, mischievously.

"No. It would be too great a responsibility. But, seriously, you should have some one. You are not in a

condition to make a long journey alone."

I felt that as well as she. But of all my friends I could think of no one to fill the bill, and I told her so.

"Tom would go, if he could," she said. "He would lose a year in his classes, though, which is a serious matter. Can you not hire some capable young man, who would act as an assistant and companion combined?"

If I was sure of anything it was that I wanted nothing of that kind. A servant was all right, and there were lots of fellows who would make good travelling companions, but a man who could combine the two qualities would be unbearable.

"There's another alternative you haven't thought of," I remarked, catching at an idea. "What would you say to a typewriter?"

"There are many young men in that business who would be glad to go with you," was her reply.

"Hang young men! If I take a typewriter it will be a young woman," I retorted. "Oh, don't glare at me in that frigid way. There are respectable young women enough without letting your thoughts run wild. Uncle Dugald has been trying to get me to resume work on the family genealogy, which I was plodding through when I was knocked out by that confounded illness. I have all of the notes on hand. Supposing I advertise for a young woman of good moral character to assist a literary man, one that is willing to travel. Don't you think I might secure the right sort of person in that way?"

"Good moral character!" she echoed, her lip curling. "And what do you think her character would resemble when she returned with you from your journey?"

I replied that it would be something like that of a vestal virgin, as near as I could prognosticate. And I demanded where she got the notion that I was a menace to the purity of any young creature who might decide to trust herself in my company.

"The idea is too silly to talk of seriously," she answered.

"Oh, I don't know," said I. "The more I think about it, the better I like the thing. Some of these typewriter girls are not bad looking. Many are well educated. A good salary ought to overcome their objections to travel, especially at this season of the year, when New York is under the dominion of the Ice King. I shall put an advertisement in the 'Personal' column of the Herald, next Sunday."

Statia tried to pretend that she thought me simply fooling, but it was evident that she was not as sure on that point as she would like to be. If there was nothing else to be gained by the conversation, I was at least getting even with her to some degree for the disappointment she had caused me a few minutes earlier.

"You will do nothing of the sort," she said. "Come, Don, don't be an idiot. I can hardly find patience to discuss the senseless thing. If you weren't such a reckless boy, I should know you were only joking. You shall not leave the room until you promise to drop this nonsense."

I liked her, in spite of her cruel conduct; yes, I liked her very much; and it did me an immense amount of good to sense the taint of jealousy in her words and manner.

"Statia Barton," I replied, taking a step that brought me to her side, "it all lies with you. Again I ask you to be my wife and go with me on the journey my doctor declares I must take at once. If you refuse to guard and protect me you have no right to say that some one else shall be prevented from doing so."

She trembled, and I thought she was about to relent. My heart gave a quick bound, only to be stilled by her answer.

"Your conduct in this matter confirms all my previous suspicions," she replied, and her voice was unsteady. "I am merely, in your mind, a toy to be used as occasion requires. If I refuse to lend myself to that object you have only to find another. Now, Donald Camran, I am a little too proud to take that sort of place. Marriage, in my mind, is rather more sacred than it seems to be in yours. You evidently have no idea how near you are to insulting me, which makes it easier to forgive the slight. I thank you for the honor"—she pronounced the word in an ironical manner—"that you have offered and decline it absolutely. Further, I withdraw all my advice, since it evidently is useless to offer any. Advertise for your lady typewriter, make your arrangements with her, and go your way. And now excuse me, as I have to dress for a walk."

I didn't really want to hurt her feelings, and it was too evident that I had done so. I asked meekly if she would let me wait in the parlor till she was ready and escort her to her destination.

"No," she answered, with more determination than I had ever heard in her tone. "I prefer to say good-bye to you here."

I liked her immensely, in spite of all, and was sorry that anything should make a break between us, but I had no idea of crawling on my knees for any woman alive. I took up my overcoat, that lay on a chair—I was as much at home in Tom Barton's house as in my own lodgings—and put it on. Then I took my gloves, my hat and cane, said "Good-bye," with great formality, and left the house.

I preferred to walk, for although the air was frosty, there was heat enough in my veins. Block after block was traversed in an aimless way, for I had no destination in particular. All at once, I noticed a group of people staring into a window, and realized that I had reached the up-town building of the New York Herald.

For several seconds I tried to remember what there was about that building to interest me. It was one of the results of my illness that memory had become treacherous. It frequently happened that I met intimate friends and could not tell their names if I were to be hanged. I slackened my pace, and cudgelled my brain, as the saying is, for some moments.

It was the Herald Building—I knew that well enough. What did I want there? Suddenly, glancing into the business office, it all came back to me and I entered.

The idea I had suggested to Statia as a joke began to strike me as a rather good thing.

I would insert an advertisement for a female typewriter, if only to spite Statia Barton! Dr. Chambers had almost forbidden me to travel alone. I had a right to select my companion, and it was the business of no one—least of all of a woman who had thrown me over—whether the person I chose wore pantaloons or petticoats.

Going to one of the desks I took up a pen, dipped it in ink, and tried to indite a suitable announcement. My hand shook, for I had not recovered a quarter of my normal strength. When I had written the first line it would have puzzled the best copy-holder in the office above to decipher it. I tore it up, took a second piece of paper and began again. When I had written the advertisement at last it did not suit me, and once more I essayed the task with new construction. Other men and several women were using the desks about me, and I glanced at them to see if any nervousness was visible on their countenances. There appeared to be none, however, which fact made my own sensations harder than ever to bear.

Several times I fancied that the clerks behind the wire guards were watching me, that they had managed in some mysterious manner to see over my shoulder, and were laughing at my efforts. Still I hated to give up beaten. It is a part of my nature to carry out any task which I have attempted, no matter how

insignificant. I took the pen once more and finally completed with difficulty the following:

TYPEWRITER WANTED—To travel in the Tropics for the winter. Duties light, salary satisfactory. Machine
Furnished. Address—Herald up-town.

Just as I was about to take this to one of the clerks, an extremely pretty young woman came to the desk I was using and attracted my attention. She had a pair of solitaire diamonds in her beautiful ears and half a dozen costly rings on her pretty fingers. She wore a tastily trimmed hat, with veil, a well fitting seal coat and a plaided silk skirt of subdued colors. I judged her to be the wife or daughter of some wealthy man, who had come to advertise for a maid or cook. With a few quick strokes of the pen, in a hand that I saw was clear and bold, she completed her writing and stepped quickly to the nearest counter. I followed her; and as there was already one customer engaging the attention of the clerk, I plainly saw the notice she had written, as she held it daintily against her muff. Its purport was as follows:

A YOUNG LADY, stranger in the city, beautiful of face and form, 22 years of age, suddenly thrown on her own resources, wishes the acquaintance of elderly gent.

The clerk looked up and nodded to the fair creature, when her turn came. He had evidently seen her there before.

"You have forgotten again," he said, smiling. "Object matrimony."

"So, I have," she answered, in mellifluous tones. "It seems so silly, you know."

"A rule of the office," he responded, adding the words for her. "Dollar and a half."

She took a twenty dollar bill from a purse and received the change as if it was hardly worth picking up. It was evident that much sympathy need not be wasted on this young "stranger," and that the "resources" on which she was "thrown" were likely to be amply sufficient.

"One twenty," said the clerk, to me. "Business Personals, of course. I will write the word 'Lady' before 'Typewriter,' if that is what you mean. It may save annoyance. Sunday? Very well."

He gave me my change and I withdrew to make room for others, who were already crowding for recognition.

It was only Thursday, but it was something to have done the thing. After months of insomnia it is hard to make up one's mind. Delighted that I had taken the first step, I bought a paper from one of the boys at the door and went home to study the steamship routes.

CHAPTER II.

OUTLINING THE SCHEME.

The most intimate masculine friend I had in the world was Statia's brother, Tom Barton. We seemed to have become attached for the reason that a story reminded some one of an event—because we were so different. Tom was not the kind of chap, however, to trust with such a plan as I had just been maturing. Not only was he virtuous—which may be forgiven in a young man of good qualities—but he would never have liked me had he suspected a thousandth part of the peccadilloes of which I had been guilty. Tom was my friend, but never my confidant. For a fellow to share the present secret, there was no one like Harvey Hume.

I was reasonably sure that Harvey would tell me I was contemplating a ridiculous move; indeed I more than half suspected that to be the case. But he would content himself with pointing out the silliness of the plan, leaving it to my own judgment what to do afterward. Tom, on the contrary, would have told Statia all about it, not imagining, of course, that I had done so; then he would have gone to my Uncle Dugald and set him on my track. If these means failed to bring me to my senses, I am not sure but he would have applied for an inquiring to determine my sanity; all with the best intentions in the world and a sincere desire to promote my moral welfare.

Tom is a fellow who would jump off a steamer in mid-ocean to save me, should I fall overboard while in his company, and never think, until he found himself on the way to the bottom, that I could swim, while he could not even float a little bit. He is as decent a chap as it has ever been my privilege to know, and as much to be avoided on certain occasions as a *fer-de-lance*. At any rate, my recent tilt with his sister did not make me particularly anxious to see any person who bore her family name. So I went to Harvey Hume.

Harvey is, or professes to be, a lawyer. One of our mutual friends once got credit for a *mot* that really didn't amount to much, when a third party inquired if Harvey had yet been 'admitted to the bar,' by replying that he had been admitted to every bar in Greater New York, although he had always failed to pass. Whatever might be said of him, he was a thoroughbred. The Spanish Inquisition could not have drawn a secret out of him. The worst he would do if he disapproved of my scheme was to tell me so, and I had a wild anxiety to talk it over with some one.

"Halloa, old fellow!" he cried, as I entered his door. "Devilish glad to see you. Take one of these cigars, draw up here, put your feet beside mine on the desk, and tell me how you are."

Accepting the invitation in both its phases I responded that I was improving every day, and that I believed myself nearly, if not quite, out of the woods.

"Of course, you are," he replied, jovially. "And now you are out, will you get back again, or take a friend's advice and stay out?"

"I don't even know how I got in," I remarked, dolefully. "When I see a chap like you in the enjoyment of all the health and spirits in the world it seems unfair that I should be knocked down in the way I was. Why, all the drinking I've done since I was born wouldn't satisfy you for half a year."

Harvey blew a cloud of smoke to the ceiling and winked knowingly.

"Rats!" he responded. "I only drink just enough to lubricate my mucous membrane. If you had drunk

oftener and done some other things less, you would be in as fit shape as I am. It was plain to me for a long time that you would bring up where you did. No fellow can live on the edge of his nerves month after month without paying the piper, sooner or later."

"Well," I said, "I'm through with it now, at all events. Lovely woman has got to get along without me, in the old way, for a long time to come. Dr. Chambers has given me a scare, and I'm going to profit by it."

"Good!" exclaimed Harvey, with warmth.

"Yes," I continued, smiling inwardly at the scheme I was about to divulge, "the sort of female creature with which I have spent my time and cash is to be banished from my waking and my sleeping dreams. I am going to take ship for some foreign port, and remain away till I am sure of my resolutions."

Hume leaned over and took my hand in his own. My esteem for him rose with the action, which spoke more than words, but I went on with my story.

"The doctor will not hear of my going alone, however," I pursued, "and—"

"And he's quite right," he interpolated.

"So I have advertised for a companion to make the trip. You don't seem to have conceived any plan for me, so I've invented one of my own."

My friend interrupted again to compliment me on the common sense of the move.

"You see, the genealogy of the Camran family that my Uncle has set his heart on gives me an excuse to secure the services of a companion in the guise of a typewriter. It takes off the feeling that I require a nurse, while practically providing the very same thing, in the event that one is needed."

Hume nodded frequently, in approval. I was evidently rising rapidly in his estimation as a young man whose common sense had returned after a long vacation.

"I hope you'll find the right sort of fellow," he said. "You ought to, if you've worded the advertisement right. The last time I put in such a notice, the time I got the man I now have—there was half a peck of answers."

Taking up a pen, and putting my feet nearer the floor, I wrote a copy of the announcement I had left at the Herald office, and passed it to my friend.

"How do you think that will do?" I inquired, gravely.

He read it, sniffed once or twice and then threw it on the floor.

"You are a good deal of a fool, but not such a d——d one as that!" he said.

"It's exactly what I have done," was my reply. "When the answers come in I shall expect you to help me pick out the prizes."

He laughed, refusing at first to be drawn into what he thoroughly believed a trap to catch him. Then he studied my face and grew doubtful.

"Anybody but you, Don, might get some fun out of this. If you really have put such an ad. in the paper, the best thing you can do is to turn the entire lot of replies over to me, for investigation after you have left the country. But," he grew very sober, "to prance around among that sort of stuff yourself—at this time—would almost certainly put you back where you were last winter, with less chance than ever of recovery."

It was a much rougher way of putting it than I had expected, and, to tell the truth, there was something creepy in the suggestion.

"Your generosity is fully appreciated," I replied, with some dignity, "but I cannot think of exposing you to such terrible dangers. On reflection I do not think it best to trouble you in this matter. It would be a source of never-ending regret were I to return from abroad, and learn that you had taken my old place in the Sanitarium."

Hume threw the butt of his finished cigar into a cuspidor and lit another one nonchalantly.

"Don't you really see the difference?" he asked, when he found the weed drawing satisfactorily. "To me the adventures that might grow out of meeting a dozen or a hundred pretty women would result in nothing worse than passing some agreeable evenings. I never lost my head over one of the sex, and I never shall. If Mr. Donald Camran could say as much, I would tell him to carry out his intention. But, I leave it to you, my dear boy, to prophesy the result, if you go into this thing."

I told him, with some mental misgivings, to be sure, that I had learned my lesson during the year that was past. No woman could make me lose my head again. At the same time I had not gotten over my admiration for the sex, and I saw no reason to do so.

"I'm beginning to believe you're not fooling," said Hume, after studying my countenance again. "Now, tell me precisely what your game is. Let us have the scheme, just as it lies in your mind and, if there's a redeeming feature about it, trust me as a true friend to say so."

We had at last reached the point I had hoped for, and I complied without hesitation.

"I am acting primarily on the advice—almost on the orders—of Dr. Chambers. He wants me to take a sea voyage. He advises me strongly not to go alone. Then Uncle Dugald hints every time I see him that I ought to recommence the genealogy as soon as I feel able. A good stenographer would make that task an easy one. The reason I purpose taking a lady instead of a man—but you will certainly laugh if I tell you."

My friend responded gravely that he would promise to do nothing of the sort.

"Well," I continued, "it is this: and you may laugh at me if you like. I have led a life as regards women that I now think worse than idiotic. I have followed one after another of them, from pillar to post, falling madly in love, troubling my mind, worrying over the inevitable separations, getting the blues, losing heart, all that sort of thing; then, beginning over again with a new charmer, and pursuing the inevitable round. I have never been intimately acquainted with a pure, honest girl of the better classes, except one, who, this morning, refused my offer of marriage. I have no feminine relations except a couple of old aunts. I need sadly to be educated by a woman who will not hold out temptation. I believe a few months in the society of such a woman, away from old associations, will make another man of me."

When I think of it now I wonder that Harvey, with his keen sense of the ludicrous, did not burst into a laugh, in spite of his promise. But he took my serious story with equal seriousness and bowed gravely.

"What is to keep you from falling in love with your secretary, when you and she are practically alone, miles and miles from all the people you both know?"

"I intend to secure a promise from her, before we start, that she will repel, absolutely, the slightest familiarity on my part. I shall fix a salary that will be an object. If she allows me to forget the position toward her that I have chosen, she is to be sent home on the next steamer, with a month's advance wages."

Harvey bowed again, with the same gravity as before. He pulled at his cigar, but it had gone out and he did not relight it.

"I have never talked so freely with you before," I went on to say, "and there is no other person on earth with whom I would do so. A year ago, as you are aware, I was stricken suddenly with that damnable thing

called neurasthenia. For two months I had insomnia in the worst form that a man can have it and live. Sleepy from noon to noon, I only secured thirty minutes of unconsciousness in each twenty-four hours. Figure the situation to yourself. At nine o'clock every night I fell asleep; at half past nine I awoke, and there was not a wink again until nine the next night. I gave up all expectation of recovery, and the most disheartening things I heard were the predictions of Dr. Chambers, that I would ultimately get well.

"Finally they sent me to the Sanitarium, where with treanol and bromides I was lulled to unconsciousness for several hours at a time. I would not consent to take opium in any form, even if the refusal killed me. A month passed. The artificial sleep induced brought me little strength, but it helped in a way. Then I went to the Hot Springs of North Carolina, with a valet. My sleeping capacity had returned, and I ceased to use the incentives previously found necessary; but my appetite, poor enough before, deserted me there. For breakfast I actually had to force down the single cup of coffee that formed the repast. At lunch I did not go to the table. For dinner my menu never varied—a few spoonfuls of soup and a small dish of iced cream.

"The days dragged horribly. Somehow in the absence of real courage I developed a dogged determination that I would live. When I reached New York on my return North, I had too little strength to write a letter or to sit upright for more than a few moments. But the worst was over, and I knew it. It had become only a question of time. Step by step I have advanced until you see me as I am to-day."

My friend listened intently.

"And you don't want to fall into the old slough again," he remarked.

"No, and I never will," I said, with earnestness. "Now, listen: I realize that I was a year ago a slave to certain vices. Yes, let us give them the unconventional name. If I go off alone to some distant part of the world, what is to prevent my beginning again on the old road and ending where I did before? I could take a male companion, but do you imagine he would have any influence with me if I started to go wrong? At best he would be but a servant. If he tried to stand in the way of anything I wanted, the result is certain; he would get his walking papers *de suite*. I have no mother, no sister. The only woman I ever thought of marrying has coldly declined my offer. Let me go in the company of a woman that is what she should be, and I will return a different man altogether."

Still Hume did not laugh. I was more grateful for this consideration than I can describe, for I was really very much in earnest. I was like the drowning man, clutching at what seemed to me a life-preserver.

"How old are you?" asked Hume. "Twenty-five?"

"Twenty-four."

"What age would you prefer your secretary to be?"

"About the same. I could not endure an old maid, and I do not wish to undertake the care of a child."

"Won't it be hard to find a woman of twenty-four years with the skill and judgment that your situation seems to require?"

"We shall see. Some of these girls who are obliged to earn their living develop wonderful self-possession."

He nodded, as if he could not dispute this.

"Well, Don," he said, after a thoughtful pause, "I am going to be candid with you. The scheme you have outlined would be considered, as you must know, by nine-tenths of our friends, as absolutely senseless. To me it really has some points in its favor, if it can be carried out. You have left the advertisement for

insertion? Very well. If you like to trust me so far, bring a batch of your answers here next Tuesday and we will go over them together. There will be a certain per centum that we shall both agree are not worth attention. We will classify the others, and pick out a dozen or so to look up. My time, my services, are at your disposal. The Law is not pressing me particularly just now, and I shall be glad if I can be of use to anybody."

I accepted the proposition with delight.

"And now," added Hume, "come over and get a drink."

But this I was obliged to decline. I had made a solemn promise to Dr. Chambers, nearly a year before, that there were two things from which I would refrain for twelve whole months; and one of them was drinking anything of an alcoholic nature between meals, or stronger than claret even then. This I explained to Harvey, with the additional information that I had not broken my pledge and that the time specified would expire within three weeks.

"Meet me on the day it is up and let me see you quaff your first Manhattan," he said, laughingly.

"If I have good luck I shall be far away, on the Briny," I answered. "I shall begin very gingerly, wherever I am. I would rather shoot myself to-night than get into the condition I was when Chambers squeezed that promise out of me. He said the other day that when I entered his office I had eyes like those of a dead fish and so little pulse he could hardly distinguish it."

"He is quite correct," said Hume. "I saw you about the same time, and I thought, as I live, that you were a goner. You're all right now, though, and—upon my soul!—I hope you'll keep so. The charms of Bacchus are not your worst danger, Venus, my boy, is the lady you want to keep shy of."

"Don't I know that?" I answered. "Confound her and all her nymphs!"

"Well, good day," he said, taking my hand in his and putting the other on my shoulder affectionately. "Tuesday I shall look for you, remember, with a dray load of letters from the fair maidens of this metropolis!"



CHAPTER III.

AN EVENING AT KOSTER & BIAL'S.

Before I actually engaged passage to any foreign port I thought it wise to pay a parting visit to good Dr. Chambers. It was six months since I had last called on him, for finding that I was gaining in every way I did not care to fill myself up with medicines. His advice about abstinence from things hurtful had been religiously followed, and I presented the outward appearance of a man in fairly good health when he came into his office and took my hand. Between us there has grown up a feeling warmer than generally, I am afraid, exists between physician and patient. I am intensely grateful for the skill that changed me from a desponding invalid to one so nearly the opposite in spirits, and the odd five dollar bills I have paid seem no equivalent for the great boon he conferred upon me.

In plain terms, he saved my life and more. He redeemed me from a sort of hell which I think the old romancers would have substituted for their fire and brimstone had they ever had personal experience of it, as a means of deterring the sinful from their ways. Money cannot pay for such service, and I shall feel an affection for Dr. Chambers as long as memory remains to me.

If you have the pleasure of his acquaintance, you know that the Doctor is probably the handsomest man in New York. He has a good physique that has not degenerated into mere muscle and brawn; a fine color which does not lead you to suspect that too much old port and brandy is responsible for it. His hair is nearly white, though he has hardly seen fifty years, and has no other sign of age. His mustache and imperial would do credit to a trooper and yet has not that bovine appearance shown in portraits of the late Victor Immanuel. His manner is delightful, his voice musical, though by no means effeminate.

I ascribe my cure partly to a perfect confidence in his powers with which he inspired me on our very first meeting. He is not one to make rash predictions, to tell you that he will bring you around all right in a week; but rest on his superior powers with the confidence of a child and the result will justify your faith.

No physician can cure a man against his will or without his assistance. Go to Dr. Chambers with your heart open, tell him no more lies than you would tell your confidential attorney, obey every injunction he gives you, summon whatever of courage is left in your failing heart, take his medicines according to direction. If you do that and die, be sure your time has come and that no mortal could bring about a different result. If you recover, as you probably will, be honest and ascribe the result as much to the Doctor's intuitive knowledge of persons as to his eminent acquaintance with the best medical discoveries.

One of the nervine preparations that he gave me is manufactured in Paris, and I have heard jealous physicians say that no one here knows the precise formula by which it is compounded; which is, it appears, a technical violation of the rules of the Medical Society, and consequently "unprofessional." If Dr. Chambers cures his patients by the help of this remedy, and other physicians let theirs perish, his course is certainly preferable from a layman's point of view. He has proved the efficacy of the article. Whether it be composed of one thing or another, or whatever be the proportions of the mixture, is of little interest to the one it benefits and less still to the victims of more scrupulous practitioners, after they have passed from earth for want of it. There is a great deal of nonsense in the medical profession and the establishment of set rules to meet all cases is bound to result in disaster.

I asked Dr. Chambers to re-examine me in a general way, and to say, when he had finished, whether he

saw any reason why I should not go at once on an ocean voyage. He devoted the better part of an hour to this task and ended with the declaration that the sooner I went the better my plan was.

"I have urged you before to take a long journey to some interesting place," he reminded me. "At this time of year a warm country is better than a frigid or even a temperate one. You will thus secure a natural action of the skin on account of the perspiration, much better than any Turkish bath, which is at best only a makeshift. You will be able to partake of tropical fruits in their best state, fresh from the trees and vines. Your mind will be stimulated in a healthful manner. The voyage will do you great good. All I insist on now is that you do not go alone. While you have made immense progress you must run no risks. A bright, cheerful companion to fill in a dull hour is very necessary. And, although I believe the year for which I interdicted some of your habits has about expired, it does not follow that you are to plunge into excesses. Use the common sense you have been acquiring. Take all your pleasures sparingly. Still consider yourself a convalescent. I don't want you coming here again in the shape you were last winter."

I assured him that there was no danger; that I had learned my lesson well; and that I would make a sensible use of my liberty. Then, when he had added that I need carry very little medicine—and that only for emergencies—and made me promise to write him once in a month or so, in a friendly way, I grasped his hand warmly and took my leave.

If he had been a woman I would certainly have kissed him. He will never know, unless he happens to read these lines, how near my eyes came to filling with grateful tears.

The next thing was a visit to my Uncle, Dugald Camran, that staid old bachelor, who still possesses the virtues of our Scotch ancestry, that I have put so often to shame. He has charge of my father's estate, which he manages with the same acumen that he handles his own, and which is as safe in his hands as in that of the Bank of England. Between my Uncle and me there has been much good will, but very little confidence. Our relations have been little more than business ones. He has no curiosity apparently as to my personal conduct, and I would be the last to wish him to know what it has been in some respects.

He attributed my late illness, as did most of my other acquaintances, to over-study, and I had no intention of undeceiving him. There was no attempt on his part to influence me in any way, when I gave up my course at Yale without graduating. He only said that I was the best judge.

He could see well enough that I was not cut from the same piece as the rest of the Camrans, staid, methodical getters together of money as they are. Probably, bad as things went, he would have made them no better had he interfered. His is not a nature that could understand mine. When I became twenty-one years of age he handed over without demur the ten thousand dollars that my father's testament said was to be given me on that date, and although he knew well that I had not a penny of it left at the end of a twelve-month he never uttered a word against my folly. He was, as far as appeared, an automatic machine to obey the provisions of the will.

For nine years to come there was the five thousand a year for me, either in lump annual sums or monthly, as I might prefer. With the knowledge that I could not retain my hold on anything in the shape of money I decided to take it in the safer way. My illness had enabled me, in spite of the special expense to which it subjected my purse, to get a couple of thousand ahead, which I was foolish enough to think did me credit. As a matter of fact, I was never extravagant in the necessities of life, and might have gained a reputation as a very careful fellow had I not fallen into habits that sent my change flying like geese feathers in a storm.

Uncle Dugald listened without approval or disapproval to my statement that I was going on a sea voyage, which I took pains to say was advised by Dr. Chambers. In spite of our relation he evidently

regarded me much as the cashier of my bank did when I presented a check—if there was a balance to my credit, all right; if there was none I should meet with a polite refusal.

It was not necessary for this canny Scot to turn to his books to see how my balance stood. His head was full of figures and if a fire had destroyed every account he had, I believe he could have restored his ledgers accurately from memory alone.

"I shall want a letter of credit," I said, "and I shall be obliged if you will attend to the matter for me. I suppose it is necessary to deposit the amount with the firm on which the letter is drawn."

"That is the customary way," he answered, "but I can arrange it a little better to your advantage, by guaranteeing payment through my banker. That will save interest on the money. What size shall the letter be?"

My Uncle had no idea of being responsible for a penny beyond the amount in his hands, out of my annual allowance. Ah, well, that would be more than enough, probably. At the worst, my income was accumulating, and at the end of a few months I could send to him for another letter, if I remained away so long. So I told him to get a credit for \$2000 and send it to my lodgings at his convenience. Then having asked after the health of my two maiden aunts, with whom he lived—as if I cared whether they were sick or well; they never had bothered about me when I was at the worst of my long illness!—I took my departure.

That evening I studied the advertisements of the steamship lines, both in the Herald and in the Commercial Advertiser. There were excursions going to the Mediterranean, which presented most attractive prospectuses, but they did not convince me that they were what I wanted. I never liked travelling by route, preferring to leave everything open for any change of mind. There were the usual lines to England, France and Germany, but I had seen those countries several years earlier, just before entering college, and according to my recollection they were anything but restful. The particular temptations I was to avoid were rather too plenty on the other side of the Atlantic to trust myself there. I was more inclined toward some of the South American countries, till I happened to read in a despatch that yellow fever had broken out there, and I knew that those quarantines were something to be avoided at all hazards.

Thinking of quarantines suddenly brought back the memory of a trip I had taken three years earlier to the Windward and Leeward Islands, where I had been detained in the most comfortable quarantine station in the world—the one at St. Thomas.

I smiled to recall the discouraged feeling with which I and my travelling acquaintances heard, at the little town of Ponce, in Porto Rico, that we would have to be detained under guard fifteen days when we reached St. Thomas; how we had the blues for twenty hours; how the indigo darkened, when we were taken from our steamer and landed from a row boat, bag and baggage, at the foot of a long path that led up to the Station.

And then the revulsion of feeling when we found the cosiest of homes awaiting us! The hearty welcome of Eggert, the quarantine master and lighthouse keeper; the motherly smile of his wife; the cheery welcome of his daughter, Thyra; the bright little faces of Thorwald, his son, and of the baby, Ingeborg; even the rough growl of "Laps," the Danish hound, had no surliness about it.

Then the comfortable beds in the little rooms, curtained from all obnoxious insects; the five o'clock sea baths in the morning, inside the high station fence that we must not pass; the meals an epicure need not have scoffed at; our first acquaintance with a dozen varieties of the luscious fish that abound in that part of the Caribbean.

I remembered them all, as if it were yesterday, and at this juncture that meant but one thing: I must see St. Thomas again, if only to determine whether that fortnight was a dream or a reality.

The craze which this decision inspired brought to my mind the fact that I was still liable to excitements from which I must free myself. The great desideratum for which I must strive above all things was repose. It was mere suicide to go wild over everything that happened to please me for the moment. The chance was more than even that if my feelings ran away with me over the delights of the Antilles I would awake the next morning with an aversion to that part of the world. It was one of the penalties of my illness that the pendulum of a wish could not swing violently in one direction without swinging just as far in the other. I was afraid this would be the result in the present instance; and I sent for a ticket to Koster & Bial's, while I went to take my dinner at the Club, in order to get a diversion that would be effective.

Among the entertainments presented at the great Vaudeville house that evening was the startling sensation known as "Charmion," and I was not sorry to see it, even though I had to hold my breath during part of the exhibition. At the risk of relating what a large number of readers must already know, I will describe briefly the act given by the young woman appearing under that title.

When the curtain rose nothing was visible except a trapeze about twenty feet above the stage, and a rope hanging loosely beside it. Presently there entered a woman in full street costume, who inserted one hand nonchalantly in a ring at the end of the rope and was drawn lightly to the trapeze. Here she sat comfortably for an instant; and then, as if by accident, fell backward and hung head down by one leg, bent at the knee.

Her gown and skirts naturally dropped in a mass over her head, leaving the hosiery and minor lingerie in full exposure, with a liberal supply of what was undoubtedly silken tights, but was meant to simulate the flesh of her lower limbs, in full view. For a second she remained in this posture, and then regained her seat on the trapeze, smoothing her skirts into place, with a pretended air of chagrin at what was intended to be considered her accidental fall.

Next, with a bit of pantomime which indicated that concealment of her charms was useless after what had happened, "Charmion" stood up on the trapeze and began deliberately to disrobe, in full view of the audience, composed nearly equally of well garbed men and women, and completely filling the house.

She took off first her immense "picture hat," black with great ostrich plumes, and let it fall into a net spread beneath her. Then she slowly unbuttoned her basque and removed it, exposing some very shapely arms and shoulders. Next came the corset, followed by a delicious rubbing with the hands where the article had closed too tightly around the form. The skirts tumbled to the feet, then the remaining garments, and the woman stood in her long black stockings, blue garters encircling the lower portion of the thighs.

At this stage I noted a special expectancy in the occupants of the front seats—men leaning forward, with outstretched hands—the cause of which was soon apparent. The fair occupant of the trapeze seated herself, untied her garters and, with a moment of hesitation, cast them, one after the other, into the crowd, where they were seized by the most agile or most lucky of the spectators, and retained as souvenirs. Then came, last of all, the hose themselves, and the actual work of the performer as a trapeze artist began in earnest.

I will do Charmion the credit of admitting that her act was truly wonderful. Suspended first by the insteps and then by nothing, apparently, but her heels, she passed easily from one round of a horizontal ladder to another, backward and forward, hanging head down in mid-air.

But it was easy to see that the marvellous exhibition of skill was not what had drawn the immense audience. It was the risqué undressing which had done that. So far as I can learn, she had gone several

paces beyond anything in this line hitherto permitted in any reputable American theatre.

For myself I am glad I saw it, though I would not care to see it again. I was like the young lady who consented after some demur to take a ride on a very steep toboggan slide. "I wouldn't have missed it for a thousand dollars!" she exclaimed to her escort. "Let us try again," he suggested. "Not for a million!" she responded, with equal fervor.

If such things are to be allowed in metropolitan theatres, I want to "size up," by that means, the taste of what are called the respectable men and women of my time. But I certainly felt a dizziness in the brain when that corset came off in the presence of a thousand individuals who seemed to represent a fairly average respectability of our women.

I saw young girls of seventeen or eighteen there, middle-aged matrons and several elderly ladies, and I did not detect in a single face the agitation I knew showed in my own. Perhaps I may ascribe my extra nervousness to the neurasthenia from which I had so recently recovered.

While at this point I hope I may be pardoned a word in reference to the growing taste among our theatrical audiences for what was once called indecent exposure. Our elders relate that New York nearly had a fit when, in the late sixties, the first "Black Crook" company opened its doors at Niblo's. To see women in flesh-colored tights reaching to the hips was so awful that only eye-witnesses would believe it possible, and to make sure it actually occurred, everybody had to go. Then came the "British Blondes," who wore longer tights, and filled them in a more satisfactory manner than those who had preceded. Soldene followed, with a new and startling sensation, in Sara, the skirt dancer, who pulled her underclothing up to her forehead, to the delight and scandal of the bald-headed row—just as a hundred others do now without attracting special attention.

The demand kept ahead of the supply of indelicacy. Dancers vied with each other in so garbing their lower limbs as to give the impression that they were partially nude, and Mrs. Grundy merely bought spectacles of increased power and engaged a front seat.

Then came the "Living Picture" craze. As Clement Scott said in his London paper, "We are told that these women are covered with a tightly fitting, skin-like gauze, but this is a matter of information and belief and not of ocular demonstration." The nymph at the fountain stood night after night, like her marble prototype, with the water running down her breasts and dropping from the points thereof. She refused to follow Beaumont and Fletcher's advice, to—

"Hide, oh, hide those hills of snow
That thy frozen bosom bears,
On whose tops the pinks that grow
Are of those that April wears."

Venus rose from the sea, with all the appearance of absolute nudity. The glorious curves of the tempter of Tannhauser were revealed in their fullness to cultured audiences. The North Star came down that men might admire her shapeliness, while the three Graces proved Byron's words:—

"There is more beauty in the ripe and real
Than all the nonsense of their stone ideal."

And then a daring manager went all this one better. He posed his women as bronze figures, with nothing between them and the gaze of the audience but bronze powder. The sensation lasted but a short time, spectators not caring for mulattoes when there were white forms to be seen at the same price. Next came the "Wedding Night," which I saw in Paris, and which still seems to me comparatively sweet and innocent—and it was suppressed, perhaps for that very reason. And now we have "Charmion"—meat for strong minds, but not, I fear, for the average young man.

What will come next? I would not dare predict, but really within ten years we may expect anything. "The leaves are falling—even the fig leaves," says George Meredith. They have fallen long ago from most of the male statues in European galleries, and there at least I am in accord with the sculptors. Perfect nudity never stirred the beast in any sane man. Why should we not have afternoon or evening receptions by professional models in their native undress? It would be better for morality than the ingenious titillation of the senses induced by your Edwinas and your Charmions!

Confound Charmion, any way! She spoiled a night for me that I needed for refreshing sleep. In my brief snatches of slumber I was with those silly fellows in the front rows, clutching wildly in the air for the garters she flung from her perch above our heads.

CHAPTER IV.

YOU ARE A HOPELESS SCAMP.

Without even waiting for letters at the Herald office, in answer to my advertisement, I went on Saturday morning to Cook & Son's, on Broadway, and engaged two staterooms on the steamship "Madiana," of the Quebec SS. Company's line, to sail January 12. I found that I could secure both rooms, and, if it proved that I needed but one, the amount of passage money paid in advance—one hundred dollars—could be applied to mine alone. This pleased the remnant of Scotch blood left in my veins, for my relations have always said I "favored" my mother's side of the family, and she was a native of France. Though careless enough with money, I did not wish to pay for a stateroom that nobody would occupy, and there was a possibility that I would go alone, after all. The clerk, an affable fellow, promised to hold the extra room until the 5th of January, and to write me when it became necessary to put up the balance of the price or surrender the rights I had in it. I thought, on the whole, it was a sensible business transaction.

"What name shall I register for the lady's room?" he asked, taking up a pen.

"I am uncertain," I said, hesitating. "There are several of the family, and I don't know which it will be finally."

"I will call it 'Miss Camran,' then," he said.

There seemed no objection to this, and he wrote the name in his book.

Arming myself with a handful of literature about the Islands, that he gave me, and which contained little information I was not already possessed of, I went back to my rooms and took a look at my wardrobe. I decided that I should want one or two new suits, of the very coolest texture, besides thin underclothing, some outing shirts, a couple of pairs of light shoes, etc. On Monday I began a search for these things, and found them with more difficulty than I anticipated. In midwinter few New York tradesmen are able to furnish thin clothing with celerity, and my time was growing short. I visited half a dozen shops before I could get fitted with shoes of the right weight, for instance. There were long hunts for underflannels and hose. The tailors offered me anything but thin weights, until I persisted and would not be put off, and then I had to select the goods by sample. With some extra light pajamas, a gauzy bathrobe, a lot of new collars and cuffs, and an extra dozen of colored bosom shirts, I thought myself at last nearly ready. I urged upon each dealer the necessity of sending his articles at the earliest possible moment, thinking it wisest to deceive him a little about the day I was to sail. The event proved this the only way I succeeded in getting them all delivered in season.

It was with more excitement than was good for me that I took a hansom on Tuesday morning, at an early hour, and drove to the up-town office of the Herald. I expected a number of answers to my advertisement and wanted to take them home as expeditiously as possible. Nor was I disappointed. The clerk handed me out not less than a hundred and fifty envelopes, when I presented the card that had been given me, and he was kind enough to tie them in bundles at my request. Twenty minutes later I was in my sitting room, the door locked for fear of intrusion, and tearing open one after another with the hunger of curiosity.

The first five or six were not at all satisfactory. They contained little beside requests for "further particulars," and had a business-like air that did not suit my mood. Then came one that was interesting enough to be put in the reserve pile from which the final decision was to be made. Perhaps I may as well

give it now in its entirety:

Dear Mr. 107—[that was the number the Herald had assigned me]—Although your announcement does not state your sex, I feel justified in assuming that you are a Man. "Lady" Typewriter! Well, as far as I know I answer that description, and now for the situation. "To travel in the Tropics?" I certainly have no objection to doing that, provided—! You say the "duties are light." Certainly that sounds encouraging. What do they consist of—actual typewriting or keeping dull care from drawing wrinkles on your manly brow? Typewriters are called upon to do such strange things in these days. The individual whose bread I now earn seems to consider that he has a right (in consideration of twelve dollars per week) to kiss me whenever he takes a fancy, which is the reason why I am seeking another employer, who, if he has the same tastes, may have a more attractive mouth for the purpose. How long is your journey to last and what pay do you intend to offer?

I am twenty-six years of age, not specially ill looking, and have a good temper unless angered. I won't say much about my ability on the machine, for I presume that is a secondary consideration. Send your reply—if you think me worth it—to No. — East Sixteenth Street, but don't call in person unless you wish to have an interview with a gouty uncle or a frightfully jealous cousin.

Ever Yours,

ALICE BRAZIER.

N.B. If you take me off with you, I shall let neither of them know where I have gone.

This was bright and breezy, at least. The next one that I laid aside was as follows:

Dear Sir:—I am a Southern girl, if one who has reached the age of 22 may so call herself. I have a good education and am refined in manner. I have no doubt I can fill all the requirements of the position you offer, and would be pleased to have you call, Wednesday afternoon, between two and four, at my lodgings, or on any other afternoon you may name. Please grant me at least an interview.

Very Truly,

MARJORIE MAY.

No. — W. 45th Street.

I read all the others, to the last one; but these two had attracted my attention so thoroughly that the rest palled on my taste. Some were too plainly sent by the ordinary class of immoral women, who had taken this manner of making an acquaintance. One stated that she had the finest form in New York, which she would be happy to exhibit for my approval, in all its chaste splendor. Another had "lost her job" in a big department store, and would "appreciate the true friendship of a man who could spare \$6 or \$8 a week." Another frankly owned herself to be a "grass widow," who on the whole preferred one "friend" to twenty and offered me the first chance to fill that permanent position. Three or four were apparently school-girls who were tired of the wholesome restraints of home and wanted to run away with any man who would pay their bills.

One declared herself to be 42 years of age, an expert typewriter, and warned me against taking a "giddy young thing" on my journey when one of her assured character could be obtained. She added that her reason for desiring a change was that her employer was a scandalous person, whose goings-on with a younger typewriter with whom she had to associate were "awful." And she enclosed as a clincher an autograph letter from her pastor, recommending her to "any Christian gentleman" needing a reliable assistant.

Several were either married to men whose whereabouts were at present unknown or had been divorced. One admitted in a burst of frankness that she had "trusted a professed friend too far" and did not care what became of herself.

All of which was rather amusing in its way, but brought me no nearer to the goal of my desire—a

bright, cheerful companion for the voyage I was about to undertake.

I examined the entire lot before I recollected the agreement I had made with Harvey Hume. Then I gathered up all the letters (except my two favorites)—for I did not mean to show these to any one—and started for his office in the middle of the afternoon. Harvey was in, of course; not that he had any clients or expected any, but because those were his office hours and he had nowhere else to go in particular. He was evidently glad to see me, especially when he espied my package, for he scented something to dispel his ennui.

We withdrew into his private office and he closed the door.

"Any prizes?" he asked, jocosely.

"You can decide for yourself," I answered. "They are entirely at your disposal."

"Humph!" he grunted, as he laid down the first one. "I wouldn't pay that girl's fare to Coney Island, judging by her capacity as a letter writer." Then he struck the communication from the forty-two-years-old damsel and gravely proceeded to show why she was the one I had best select. After awhile he asked leave to retain two or three, that he thought might be of use to him, and that I quite agreed were of none whatever to me. When he had read over about half of the entire number, he pushed the rest aside.

"Rot and rubbish!" he exclaimed.

"That's what I call them," I answered.

"You've given up your plan?" he said, inquiringly.

"By no means. But there's nothing very appetizing in that trash."

"How will you find anything better?"

"Oh, I've a scheme. When it develops I may let you in, but not just at this stage." I wanted to tantalize him a bit. "You asked to see this stuff and I've obliged you."

Just at this moment Tom Barton came in, and Harvey threw a newspaper over the heap of letters, lest it should attract his attention and arouse his suspicions. It was quite needless, for Tom never suspected anything in his life. We talked over a few trifles for fifteen minutes and then, as Tom said he must be going, I walked out into the hall with him.

"I'm going home early," he remarked. "Statia hasn't felt very well for the past day or two, and I am a little worried about her."

I was sincerely sorry to hear it. My chagrin over the things she said to me had modified a good deal and I entertained at that moment only the kindest feelings toward her.

"I wish you would come up to dinner to-night," said Tom, wistfully. "I think that would brighten her up if anything can. She's not ill, but merely out of sorts. Come, that's a good fellow."

I had as lief go there as anywhere and I consented without more demur. There was something in the dog-like attachment of Tom for me that was touching, and in a few days more I would be gone from him for months. As for his sister, I was sure she couldn't bother me more than I could her. I had the two letters in my pocket. If she tried any of her games, I would read them to her.

Statia was unquestionably pale that evening when, after some delay, she came into the parlor to greet me. But she assumed a cheerful air and, when Tom went up stairs and left us alone, inquired if I had carried out my plan of advertising for a companion on my voyage.

"Not only have I advertised," I said, pointedly, "but I have received over a hundred answers. From that number I have picked out several, among which I have no doubt I shall find what I want. In fact, I have secured two staterooms on the Madiana, that sails for the Windward Islands on the 12th, so certain am I that I shall need them both."

There was not much color in her face before, but what little there was left it; which I attributed to her disappointment at the ill success of her predictions.

"Are you really going to carry out this senseless project?" she asked. "I can hardly believe you such a reckless fellow."

"Why is it reckless?" I inquired, boldly. "I need a typewriter. Some young woman needs a situation. Dr. Chambers says it will not do for me to travel alone, and he believes a journey to the tropics the best thing for my health. I'd like to know what ideas you have in that head of yours. I don't mind the reflections you cast upon me, but I object to your attacking the character of a young lady who is to become my employee."

She avoided the point and asked if I was willing to let her see the answers I had received. She added that sometimes a woman's intuitions were better than a man's judgment and that she might save me from getting entrapped.

I laughed at her ingenious stratagem, and drew the two letters that I had laid aside from my coat pocket.

"It is almost like ill faith," said I, "but as you will not even see the handwriting, and can never know the identity of the writers, I am going to read two of these letters to you. They are the best of the lot, so far as I can judge, and I have no doubt one of them will be the lucky applicant."

She composed herself as well as she could, though the nervous fit was still on her, while I read slowly, pausing between the sentences, each of the letters given in full in the earlier part of this chapter.

"Which of them do you imagine it will be?" she inquired, when I had finished.

"I must at least see them before I can answer that. The first one (the one signed 'Alice') is the brightest, and indicates a jolly nature that I would like to cultivate; but there is something in the other that I fancy, also. A sort of melody in a minor key. I shall not be content until I see the original."

Statia twisted the tassels on the arms of the chair she sat in.

"You are a hopeless scamp!" she said, reddening. "Why do you pretend to me that you have the least intention of doing any sensible work with the assistance of these women, or that you believe either what an honest girl should be?"

"Come, that's going too far!" I replied.

"No, it's not," she persisted, earnestly. "It is right that I should say these things to you. You are the most intimate friend of—my brother. You have no mother, no sister, no one to advise you. This plan, which you are entering upon with such a gay heart, may result in dragging you down to the depths, and perhaps your companion, if she be not already in that category. Don, if you ever cared for Tom—for any of us—stop this thing now!"

I was so astounded at the plainness of her insinuation that I could not reply for some moments. She sat opposite to me, her head thrown forward, her lips parted, her eyes slowly filling with tears.

"You had your chance," I responded, not very politely, it must be admitted. "If you had answered in the affirmative the question I asked you last week this could never have happened. Since you throw me back on myself, you have no right to prevent me going my own way."

She dropped her face in her open hands, to recover her equanimity. When she looked up again she appeared much calmer.

"Don," she said, tenderly, "you must not be so impetuous. Give up this plan and perhaps—some day—I ___"

"It is too late," I replied, understanding her very well. "I will never ask any woman a second time the question I asked you. Be decent, Statia. You make too much of a little thing. If there had been anything very wicked in my mind, do you think I would have come here to tell you about it? Let us drop the subject, and be good friends for the short time that remains before I go. Why, there's less than a fortnight left."

She nodded, attempted to smile, and finding that she made a poor show at it, left the room to prepare herself for dinner. When the meal was served, however, we missed her old joviality. She did not speak unless spoken to, and Tom, after trying in vain to engage her in conversation, declared that she must go to see Dr. Chambers the very next morning.

"You'll get into the state that Don did last winter," he said, half jestingly, "if you keep on. He began with just a plain, ordinary attack of the blues, and see where it landed him. Yes, you certainly must go to see Chambers. I never knew you like this before, and there's nothing on earth to cause it."

When I mentioned, soon after we rose from the table, that I had an engagement at my rooms—a fiction, by-the-by—Tom said if I was going to walk he would go part way with me. I was glad to breathe the pure cold air of December and listen to the chatter of the honest fellow, while at the same time escaping from that house, that had nearly sent me again into the doldrums.



CHAPTER V.

MEETING MISS MARJORIE.

The next morning was an awfully long one. I had decided to call on Miss May in the afternoon, "between the hours of two and four," as she had stipulated. Although I had never seen her and had no description of what she was like, I already hoped she would be the One to make my coming journey agreeable. I had the old impetuosity, you will see, that absence of calm deliberation that had sent me to a Sanitarium and nearly to my grave.

If I intended to take a train scheduled to start for any given point at ten I was always in the station without fail at half past nine, stamping my feet at the closed gate, with alternate glances at my watch. If I had an engagement of special interest for a Friday, the Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays dragged horribly.

It had been explained to me fully by Dr. Chambers that I must reform this by my own exertions and that drugs could but assist me in a slight degree. Still breaking away from the habits of years is not an easy thing, and in spite of all I could do I had the old nervousness that day.

At about eleven o'clock, having exhausted the charms of breakfast, the morning papers and several cigars, I thought of a plan to get rid of an hour or more, and taking my coat, hat and cane, I walked down to Cook's office to see if anything new had transpired with regard to the trip of the "Madiana." There was a rumor in the Journal that yellow fever had broken out in Jamaica, one of the points where I wanted to touch, and although the source of the news did not particularly recommend it, I thought it well to inquire what the agent had heard in relation to the matter.

As I entered the office my attention was attracted by a quiet appearing man of about thirty, dressed in black and wearing a white tie, who was evidently contemplating the same journey as myself. Now a man wearing a white tie may be either a clergyman, a gambler or a confidence man, and I had no faith in my ability to decide which of those eminent professions this particular person was most likely to adorn. He glanced up from a prospectus which he was examining, as I entered, and made way for me at the counter.

For reasons which I could not explain I liked the man at first sight. If he was a rogue, I reasoned, it was no more true of him, probably, than of most men, and there was no reason to suppose that he had any design in going to the West Indies other than to recuperate his health, which appeared rather delicate. If, on the contrary, he was any sort of clergyman I would be delighted with his companionship.

When the agent introduced us to each other, as he did a few minutes later, I discovered that the white tie had no especial significance, being merely a fad or fancy; for Mr. Wesson informed me that he was a hardware merchant from Boston, with a slight tendency to bronchitis, and was going south to escape February and March, which are usually injurious to persons affected by that complaint in the Eastern States.

I learned from the agent that the "Madiana" was filling up rapidly, and that there were now no entire staterooms unoccupied, except two or three containing four berths. Mr. Wesson had no choice but to share the room of some one who was already on the list, and at the time I came in he was making natural inquiries as to the other passengers, in the hope of selecting a congenial roommate. The agent told him what he could about those whom he had personally seen, but the information was necessarily meagre.

"It may not seem specially important," remarked Mr. Wesson, in an affable manner, to me, "who occupies the other berth, for a few weeks on a steamer, but I happened on one occasion to get a very disagreeable companion, and ever since I have tried to use caution. I should have entered my name earlier, and thus have secured an entire room, as you have done, but I waited a long time before deciding whether to come this way or another. Now, I am just a little too late to get a room by myself, unless I wish to pay three fares for one person, which candidly I do not feel like doing."

I suggested that unless the boat was very much crowded, which I did not anticipate, an arrangement for a change of cabin could doubtless be made in case the first one proved unbearable. With the remark that this was true, Mr. Wesson decided to take the remaining berth in a room not far from mine, in the after part of the ship, which had the advantage of being removed from all the smells of the cook's galley, as well as the dumping of ashes, which often annoys people quartered amidships at a very early hour in the morning.

I asked the agent for a list of the passengers, so far as he was able to give them, desiring to see if there were any names of people who knew me, and devoutly hoping there were none. Mr. Wesson and I went over them together, and made a simultaneous announcement that the entire lot were strangers to us.

They had come from the West, the North, the South, hardly any from New York, and only one from Boston, a strange thing when every traveller knows that Bostonians rival Chicagoans in being found in all sorts of places.

"I often think," said Mr. Wesson, with a smile, "of the odd fate that brings fifty or hundred people together on a steamer, where neither sees a single familiar face except those he has brought with him; and before the voyage is ended the miniature world is like the larger one outside, with its strong likes and dislikes, its petty jealousies, its small talk, its gauging of character and capacity. Give me a month at sea with a man, and I think I can figure him up pretty well."

I agreed with him to a great extent, but remarked that there was always the disadvantage that the "man" might "figure us up" at the same time. I said further that I had found some most delightful companions on board ship who had proved insufferable bores when encountered later on terra firma.

"Your extra berth is reserved still," said a clerk, coming forward and addressing me, "the one in the opposite stateroom. I don't wish to hasten you, but the list is filling up very fast."

"You won't have to wait but a day or two more, I think," was my reply. "Hold it till Saturday, unless you hear from me. Perhaps I may be able to tell you positively to-morrow."

"If the lady is willing to have another share the room with her," he said, "I have an application that I can fill at once. A very pleasant young woman, too, if I may be allowed to judge. She is to be accompanied by her uncle, and as he is not entirely well he is anxious to have her as near him as possible."

I answered that I must ask a little delay before deciding that question. I told him I had three cousins, and as I could not yet say which would go I could not tell whether she would consent to share her cabin with another person. If I could arrange it, I would gladly do so.

"You are to have a travelling companion, then," remarked Mr. Wesson. "Excuse me for saying I envy you. Mrs. Wesson expected to go with me, but the doctor has forbidden it. She is quite frail, and he fears the seasickness she is almost sure to have. I made a canvass of my female relations that are eligible, and one after another found reasons for declining. I am not used to travelling alone, and I don't fancy it in the least. One of the pleasantest things in visiting foreign parts is to have some one along to share the pleasures."

As we parted he asked me if I would exchange cards, and I readily did so. I already felt better

acquainted with him that I am with some men whom I have known for months.

"If you find you are to bunk with a specially ugly customer," I said, in parting, "take my other berth. You can keep it for an 'anchor to windward,' as our distinguished statesman from Maine might have said. I don't think you and I will quarrel."

He thanked me profusely, and it was plain that the suggestion was the very one he would have made himself, had he felt warranted in doing so. He mentioned that he would be at the Imperial for several days and asked me, if I found it convenient, to dine with him there some evening before he returned to Boston; which I told him I would try to do.

It was now lunch-time and I thought with exultation of the closeness of the hour when I might call at the lodging of Miss Marjorie May on Forty-fifth Street, and see the lady whom I had already surrounded with the most charming attributes of which a young and impulsive mind could conceive. That I might be disappointed I had also thought, in a vague way, but I had little apprehension on that score.

I went over to the club, and partook of a light repast. Then I looked at my watch and found that, if I walked slowly, I need not reach the number at which I was to call before two o'clock.

But I did not walk slowly. It still lacked ten minutes of the hour when I found myself in front of the residence. I took a turn down Seventh Avenue, and through Forty-fourth Street, to dispose of the remaining minutes. Then, with my heart beating in a way that Dr. Chambers would not have approved—and for which I could give no sensible reason—I climbed the tall steps and rang the bell.

A colored servant answered, after what seemed ages, and when I asked if Miss May was in, invited me to walk into the parlor. She then requested my card, and I had nearly given it to her, when I recollected that it was not my intention to reveal my true name, at this stage.

I said I had forgotten my card case and that she need only say it was the gentleman from the Herald.

During the next ten minutes I did my best to compose my nerves, for I dreaded exhibiting their shaky condition to one in whose presence I would need all my firmness. The room was darkened, and I could see the objects in it but dimly, while the windows, being tightly curtained, afforded me no relief in that direction.

"Why does she not come?" I said to myself, over and over. "If she wanted the situation for which she wrote, a little more celerity of movement would be becoming."

I rose and walked up and down the room. The minutes lengthened horribly. I grew almost angry at the delay and had half a mind to drop the whole business, when I heard a low voice at the door, and saw the outlines of a graceful young form.

"I am Miss May," said a bright voice, that I liked instantly. "If you don't mind coming up stairs I think we can see each other better."

Mind coming up stairs! I would have climbed to the top of the World Building, never minding the elevator.

"Certainly," I responded, and I followed her up two long flights, and into a front chamber, where in the bright light I saw her distinctly for the first time.

The reader will expect—certainly the feminine reader—a description of the sight that met my eyes, and how can I give it? A relation of that sort always seems to me but a modified version of the record of a prisoner at a police station, where he is put under a measuring machine, stood on scales and pumped as to his ancestry and previous record as a criminal.

The impression made on me at that moment by Miss May was wholly general. She was not handsome, in the ordinary acceptance of that term, but very engaging. Her smile put me much at my ease.

I could have told you no more, had you met me that evening. All that I knew or cared to know, before I had taken the chair to which she motioned me, was that out of the million women in Greater New York, I would choose her, and only her, were they presented for my approval one by one.

She was evidently waiting for me to begin the conversation, after the manner of a discreet young woman in the presence for the first time of a possible employer. I made the excuse that the stairs were long, to explain my shortness of breath. For I found it very difficult to talk.

She was kind enough to admit that the stairs were hard. She also made some allusion to the weather, and to the unseasonableness of the temperature, for although it was at the very end of the year there had been hardly any snow and very little cold. This helped me along and finally I managed to reach the business on hand.

"I have received a great many answers to my advertisement," I said, "and a certain number seem to have been sent in a spirit of mischief rather than seriousness. I hope that was not the case with yours."

She shook her head and smiled faintly.

"How shall we begin, then?" I asked. "Shall I submit a few questions to you, or would you rather put some queries of your own?"

"As you please," she said, and I noted that there was a confidence in her manner that seemed at variance with her appearance. "Perhaps I may inquire, to commence with, what are the duties of the position."

I hesitated a moment, feeling my breath coming shorter, and this time I had not the stairs to fall back upon as an excuse.

"I have recently recovered from a severe illness," I finally managed to say, "although you might not guess it from my appearance. I may as well admit that while I have use for the services of a typewriter in some work I wish to do, I need quite as much an intelligent person to travel with me—as—a—"

"Companion?" she interpolated, quickly.

"Well, yes, perhaps that is as good a word as any. My physician says I ought not to go alone. I have the literary work to do. Under all the circumstances a combination of assistant in that respect and friendly companionship seems advisable."

She bowed affably, doing her best to put me at my ease.

"You are a younger man than I expected," she said.

"I hope that is not a serious objection," I remarked, "for I see no way to overcome it at present. I want this considered as a business matter—in a way. I should pay a regular salary, and give you the best of travelling accommodations. I am only twenty-four, and you wrote me that you are twenty-two, but I cannot understand how the addition of fifty years to either of those ages would make my proposition more agreeable."

She bowed again, still pleasantly, and inquired what sort of work I was engaged on. I told her, after which she asked what machine I preferred to use. This I left to her, although I mentioned that I owned a Hammond, which had the advantage of being more easily carried than some. She said she had never used that machine, but could easily learn.

"Only give me three or four days alone with it," she smiled. "And now, as these things must all be settled, what salary do you wish to pay?"

I wonder what salary I would not have paid, at that moment, rather than hear her decline the position on the ground that it was insufficient, but I realized that I must not seem over-anxious.

"I would prefer you to name the price," I replied, "I do not think we shall quarrel on that score."

"When do you wish me to leave the city?" was her question.

"I have already engaged berths in the 'Madiana,' of the Quebec SS. Line, which will leave her dock on the North River, Jan. 12th next."

"Berths? You have engaged two?"

"It was necessary to secure them. I have determined that I will not go alone. The list is filling up and I had to put down the names."

"What names?" she asked. "You can hardly have given them mine."

I was getting more and more at my ease. I said I had registered for "self and friend," with the understanding that the "friend" would be a lady.

"Ah!" she said. "Now, how do you intend that I shall travel—if it is decided that I am to go?"

She did not redden as she asked the question, and I do not know why I did.

"As my cousin," I answered. "It is my belief, Miss May," I added, "that you will find this journey very charming, if you go about it right. To be registered simply as my secretary, which will come as near as anything to the fact, or not to be given any title at all, might arouse silly gossip among the other passengers. A relationship of the kind I suggest will still idle tongues and make your position more agreeable."

She thought a little while and then said, suddenly:

"You—you are not married, I suppose?"

"Not in the least," I replied, smiling.

"There is hardly time for much preparation," was her next observation. "What kind of clothing should I need?"

"After the first few days, about the same as you would want here in August. I am not well versed in ladies' attire, but I should say that a travelling dress of some very thin material would be the first requisite; then a 'best' dress or two of very light weight; a liberal supply of articles" (I stammered slightly) "that need laundering, as there may be a fortnight at a time when washing cannot be obtained; thin shoes, slippers, walking boots suitable for summer, two or three hats—and—" I paused to think if I had omitted anything—"an umbrella and parasol."

She laughed as I finished. A sweet, engaging laugh that made me resolve that I would kidnap her and convey her on board by force in case she refused to go.

"No gloves?" she inquired, archly. "No cape, no—"

"Oh, there are doubtless a lot of kickshaws that will occur to you," I admitted, "that I need not mention. I am pretty sure that I do not even know the names of all of them. On January 12th and 13th the weather will be winter, on the 14th, 15th and 16th spring, and the rest of the time till May midsummer. I don't know as I can give you any better guide."

She said she would make an overhauling of her last year's clothing and see where she stood; which led me to ask, with, I fear too much anxiety in my tone, if she had, then, decided to go.

"Have you decided?" she replied, parrying the question. "You cannot have seen all the women who sent replies. Perhaps you will yet find one more suitable for your purpose. It is only fair to both of us to leave the matter open for a day or two."

"No," I answered, shaking my head decidedly. "As you said a few moments ago, the time is very brief for any one to get ready. Let us settle the matter now. And if you wish any part of your salary advanced—on account of the immediate expense you will have to assume—we shall have no difficulty in arranging that matter."

She grew thoughtful, and finally begged me to give her till the following morning, at least. She promised to send a messenger to my address before noon. I did not like the idea, but I could say nothing in opposition without appearing unreasonable, and ended by consenting to it.

"I passed some months in the part of the world to which I am now going, three years since," I said, to strengthen her resolutions in favor of the journey, "and I can assure you that the voyage, from beginning to end, is simply delightful. The Caribbean is truly a summer sea; the Antilles are beautiful to look at, charming in flora and delicious in atmosphere. Then think of the escape you will have from the freezing and thawing of a New York spring. I promise to treat you with all consideration, and as for the labor you are to do, it will be very light indeed. If there is anything I have omitted, consider it included. I am sure," I added, as I rose to go, "that you will never be sorry for the chance that brings us into each other's company."

"Oh," she answered, with superb frankness, "I have no fear that I shall not like you, or that you will treat me in any manner unbecoming a gentleman. I only wish to think the matter over. In the meantime let me thank you for the partiality with which you view my application."

She insisted on going to the street door with me, where I bade her good-by without more ado, fearful that if I talked much longer I should say something foolish.

"To-morrow morning, then, I am to get your letter," I said, handing her a card on which I had previously written an address that would do for the present—"David Camwell, Lambs Club." "And to-morrow afternoon, at two again, I shall return to complete our arrangements."

As she bowed an affirmative, I lifted my hat and left her there; wondering why I had not chosen the Klondike for my vacation, so near the boiling point was every drop of blood in my veins.



CHAPTER VI.

"DO YOU REALLY WANT ME?"

I did not sleep well, that night, and as I tossed from one side of my bed to the other, I began to fear that the insomnia from which I had escaped, and whose return I so much dreaded, would fasten itself on me once more. During the long, still hours I had many moments when I was inclined to give up my plan of travelling in the company of a charming young woman, and even to drop the entire trip itself. I imagined my condition in a far land, with no physician at hand who understood my case or had the history of my illness. Only one who has known the horrors of sleepless months can conceive the terror which a possible renewal of its symptoms inspired. The mere thought of meeting my fair correspondent had deranged my arterial circulation. The sight of her, our conversation, though carried on in the quietest manner, had thrown my heart out of equipoise, speaking physically. What would happen when she and I were alone together for weeks and weeks?

She was very pretty—there was no doubt of that. She was also marvellously self-contained, and in a conflict of desires would certainly prove the stronger. Was it not the part of common prudence to "foresee the evil and hide?"

I had almost decided to adopt this course, when the sleep which had evaded me descended and for four hours I was blissfully unconscious.

It was nearly eight o'clock when I awoke, and with returning reason all the fears of the night vanished. I could only count the minutes now before the expected message would arrive—that message, I assured myself, which would confirm the hopes I so fondly cherished. Not a single doubt remained of the perfect wisdom of the double journey I had planned. I thought again of Dr. Chambers' advice not to travel alone; of Uncle Dugald's wish that the "genealogy" should be pushed to completion as rapidly as possible; of the advantage of having with me a constant companion, to while away the inevitable hours of loneliness. I raised Miss May to the highest pedestal as a young lady of excellent attributes and delightful personality.

Whatever happened, I would not go alone. If Miss May failed me, I would fall back on Miss Brazier. If she also proved obdurate or unsatisfactory, I would go through my other answers and try again.

But I came back always to the original point. It was Miss May I wanted, Miss May I meant to have.

Why should I not induce her to go? She needed a situation, or she would not have written for it. She had seen me and expressed herself candidly in my favor. There could hardly be anything now in the way, except the financial aspect of the case, and I was prepared to meet her on any ground she chose to name.

I lingered as long over my breakfast as possible, to kill the time, and read the morning papers, advertisements and all. Especially closely did I scan the "professional situations wanted," thinking perhaps there might be among them one from which I could fashion another "string to my bow." Most of the advertisers that morning were, however, either German governesses, or elderly ladies who wished positions in private families.

There were several professional models, who would "pose" for the figure at from one to two dollars an hour. In my desperation I almost resolved to turn painter and carry one of these off with me, if worse came to worst. Anything was better than making the journey alone, in my present state of mind.

A knock at the door startled me, and to my faint "Come in," a boy responded, wearing the uniform of a messenger. I looked at him like one in a dream, as he walked across the carpet and handed me an envelope. Was there anything to pay? I inquired, and when he responded in the negative, I put a silver dollar into his hand for himself. Did I wish him to wait for an answer? No, I did not. I wished him to get out of the room as soon as possible, and to close the door behind him; which he proceeded at once to do.

For what seemed hours, and yet did not probably exceed ten minutes, I held that envelope in my hand, before I found courage to open it. Laugh at me, ye who will, your siege with nervous prostration has evidently not yet arrived. No prisoner awaiting the decision of a governor as to whether his sentence of death is to be commuted could lay greater stress on the contents of a message. I wanted Miss May to take that journey with me, as I had never wanted anything else. Her decision undoubtedly lay within that bit of paper.

I stared at the name I had given her, written in a bold, and still feminine hand, strong, clear, handsome. I turned the envelope over and noted the sealing wax with the impress of some sort of stamp which I could not entirely make out. And at last, with shaking fingers, I took up my paper cutter and made the requisite incision which released the note within.

My Dear Mr. Camwell—[this was the way it read]—Since you were here yesterday I have given a great deal of thought to the matter of which we spoke. It is a little more serious than I imagined when I answered your advertisement, and I am somewhat in doubt even now what I ought to say. ["When a woman hesitates, she is lost!" came to my mind.] Will you pardon me for being perfectly frank, [Pardon her? I would pardon her anything but a refusal] in relation to a few personal matters? I wish to tell you my exact situation, and then I will leave it to you to decide. [Joy! It was coming.]

I am at present employed by a man—excuse me if I do not say gentleman—who pays me what I consider the liberal salary of twenty dollars a week, my services occupying only a portion of the morning hours. For reasons which I need not give in full I find the place very distasteful. In fact, had I been able to afford it, I would have resigned the position long ago. I am, however, entirely dependent upon my exertions for a livelihood, and not only that, there is another who looks to me for a certain amount of help, which I cannot, nor do I wish to withhold. When I read your notice in the Herald it seemed to contain two opportunities that I would be glad to secure. One was to change my situation, the other to absent myself from the city for a time, where I would escape annoyances which have become almost unbearable.

Now, on the other hand, as I told you when here, you are a much younger man than I expected to see. It is a little difficult to believe—you will excuse my frankness—that you wish my companionship from a purely business standpoint; indeed, you admitted that one of your reasons was a disinclination to travel alone. You cannot deny that a trip such as you contemplate, taken in my company, would subject me to unpleasant suspicions from any person we might happen to meet, who has known me before or should discover that the relationship claimed between us is a false one. A girl who has her way to make in this world cannot always listen to Mrs. Grundy, but there are certain precautions which she can hardly be excused from taking. How can I best protect my good name, if I accept your generous offer? That is one of the prime questions you must help me to settle.

Again, while, in a friendly journey like the one suggested, the matter of compensation seems almost impertinent, in the present case it cannot be treated as such. Were my circumstances what I could wish them, I would gladly make the journey without thinking of payment; candidly, I do not feel that the services I might render you would justify me ordinarily in accepting money for them. Necessity, it has well been said, knows no law. I have never learned how to live and assist those depending on me without cash, that brutal desirability. You have expressed a willingness to pay a salary in addition to travelling expenses, and I, if I go, shall be compelled to accept it, reluctant though I am to do so.

On looking over my wardrobe I find that there are more things required than I supposed when you were here. When you call this afternoon I will make that matter plainer by exhibiting exactly what I have suitable to the climate to which you are going. I do not wish to influence you in the least, and I beg that if my needs are greater than you desire to supply, you will say so without fear. All of the money I could spare was expended very recently for winter garments, of which I have a supply suitable to a girl in my station. I had no warning that I should be asked to exchange them at this season for others suitable to a tropical clime. If I do so, I know no source from which the cost can come except your purse. There! Could anything be more candid than this straightforward statement?

If I see you at my room this afternoon, I shall understand that you appreciate the candor with which I write, and are willing to accede to my requests. If there is a doubt in your mind as to the advisability of doing so, it will be best for us both that you do not come. I shall comprehend and leave the field open to some happier girl, who may be able to accept your generous offer without these disagreeable preliminaries.

Yours, M.M.

No. — West Forty-fifth Street.

I was all impatience till I read the very latest line, fearing there would be some qualification that I could not meet. When I found that it had resolved itself into a question so easily solved I sprang up and shouted in glee.

She would go! She was going! My dream was to become a reality!

Seizing a sheet of paper I began to write a note in response to the one I had received. She might get it only a short time before the hour of two, but it would prepare her for my coming, and clinch the bargain a little sooner. For five minutes I wrote rapidly, and when I stopped to peruse the lines I tore up the sheet.

Had she been my sweetheart for ages I could hardly have used more extravagant language than I had been guilty of on that first page. Would I never learn the first principles of common sense? I had begun

with the words, "My Darling Marjorie," and gone on to state that "your sweet letter fills me with supreme happiness;" "I shall not breathe until once more I am in your loved presence.

"Already I contemplate those heavenly hours when you and I will sail out upon the seas of Elysium," was another sample sentence, a type of the others. I paused in the rapid walk that I took up and down my room to look in my mirror, and was almost frightened at what I saw there. My cheeks were suffused with unusual color, my eyes dilated, my hair dishevelled, where I had run my nervous hands through it. My collar was rumpled, my tie disarranged, and in a room where the mercury was not above seventy the beads of perspiration stood on my forehead.

Dame! I went to the bath-room that formed a part of my little suite, let the icy water run till it filled the bowl and bathed my hands and face in it. Slowly I dried them with the towel, and then applied bay rum in liberal quantity.

I realized disagreeably for the hundredth time how that awful neurasthenia had left its traces upon me, and that if I was ever to wholly recover I must regain control of my emotions. With this in view I again seated myself at my desk and indited the following:

Dear Miss May:—It is with much satisfaction that I have perused your letter. The amount necessary to purchase the articles you need shall be left entirely to you. I will furnish whatever sum you decide upon. I will be at your lodging promptly at two. If there is anything else that occurs to you, please consider yourself at full liberty to mention it then. In the meantime I am going to Cook's office to pay the balance on the two rooms, as the time for doing so will soon expire.

Your Friend,

D.C.

It was pretty sensible, I thought, as I read it over; a sort of medium between the cold tone of an ordinary employer and the unrestrained ardor of a happy boy. I was glad, however, to get out of doors and breathe the frosty air, for my temperature was still excessive. At Cook's I learned that several new names had been booked, and that there would soon be no more room, as things were going.

"I have given Mr. Wesson the upper berth in your room, subject to your approval," added the clerk. "He has a positive dread of bunking with an absolute stranger and he says you made him a conditional promise."

"That's all right," I said, pleased at the news. "I am sure we shall get along together finely. You may register the berth in the opposite room, that you have reserved for me, in the name of 'Miss M. May.' I have finally prevailed upon my cousin to go."

While he was entering the name, I wrote a check for the balance, upon receiving which the clerk handed me the tickets, from New York to St. Thomas.

"Hadh't you better book for the entire cruise?" he asked. "I don't believe you will care to remain at St Thomas longer than the day the Madiana is to be there."

"Oh, yes, I shall," I answered. "I stayed on the island three weeks the last time, and found it delightful. Probably I shall join some of your later cruises, but I must go unhampered."

"Supposing when you are ready to take one of the other boats you find every cabin full?" he asked, in a good-natured way.

"That's a risk I must run. The Royal Mail comes every fortnight, and there are three or four steamers a week, of one kind or another, at St. Lucia. There are ways enough to keep moving and I am unlimited as to

time."

"Well, if I don't see you again," he said, with that affability that only one of Cook & Son's clerks can assume, "I wish you a very pleasant voyage."

"I am sure to have that," I replied.

I wondered if he would doubt it if he knew all!

Before leaving I purchased several books about the Caribbean, for the purpose of giving them to Miss May. There was "English in the West Indies," as entertaining as a romance, though in some respects hardly more reliable; Stark's "History and Guide to Barbados and Caribbee Islands," better than nothing, in the absence of a really desirable work on the subject; and half a dozen paper covered documents, issued by the Quebec S.S. Company, a perusal of which revealed so many discrepancies as to make one doubt whether the line actually ran any boats to that part of the world. With these under one arm I went over to the "Lambs" and partook of a brace of chops and some musty ale. Then, after smoking a cigar, I found the clock indicating that I might with safety begin my second pilgrimage to the Mecca of my ambition.

Crossing Broadway, great was my astonishment, and very small my satisfaction, to come suddenly upon Miss Statia Barton. She was looking undeniably pretty in her fur turban and cloth jacket, but she had no charms for me at that moment and I was sorry to lose the few seconds necessary to be courteous to her.

"Have you deserted us entirely?" she asked, with a constrained smile. "Tom said this morning he hadn't seen you for nearly a week."

"My time is much occupied," I answered. "You know it is but a few days now before I sail."

Had I been less full of another subject I should certainly have noticed that the coldness of my manner hurt her, and I hope I am not brute enough to do that intentionally. But, I did not think of such a thing then, nor till a long, long time after.

"Have you arranged the—the other matter?" she asked, with short breath.

"Excuse me. We can gain nothing by talking on that subject," said I.

"Then your charmer has decided not to go with you?" she said, interrogatively, but with a hard little laugh. "I thought it would come to that."

I was foolish enough to take out Miss May's letter and hold it up.

"On the contrary, since you insist on knowing," I answered, "here is the final decision, and it is in favor of the plaintiff."

Her eyes opened as the conviction that I was telling the truth forced itself upon her. She was evidently not pleased.

"Mr. Camran," she said, in tones as clear and cutting as ice, "I asked you a moment ago why you had not been to my home. I now say you need never call there again, as far as I am concerned, and I shall endeavor to have my brother write you to the same effect."

"Don't put Tom to so much trouble," I replied, stung by her manner. "I have business too important and too pleasant to allow much time for mere duty calls."

Lifting my hat, an action that she did not see, as her eyes were bent on the sidewalk, I resumed my stroll. I should have been more annoyed at the occurrence if another subject had not so fully filled my head. The clocks struck two before I reached the number I sought, and I walked more rapidly.

"Miss May said you were to come to her room at once," said the colored servant, when she recognized my features. Needing no second invitation I mounted the stairs.

Her door stood slightly open and as I entered, without knocking, she rose from a low rocker and came toward me.

I could not have resisted had I been liable to execution for the offense; I met her in the middle of the apartment and held out both my hands.

In the most unaffected and delightful manner she extended her own and I clasped them.

"It is settled, then?" I cried. "You are going!"

"Take a seat," she said, releasing herself composedly. "There are still a few things that I must talk over with you."

The blood rushed back upon my heart, leaving my face pale. I was very glad to get the support of the arm-chair to which she motioned me.

"I have recently been ill, as I told you," I said in pleading tones, "and doubts, whatever their nature, are trying to me. Tell me only this—you are going?"

She breathed deeply for several seconds and then, with her head slightly on one side, looked at me.

"Do you really want me to?" she asked, gently.



CHAPTER VII.

GETTING READY FOR MY JOURNEY.

She could not know the pain she gave me by her evasions, that was the excuse I found for her. The dread that after all she intended to disappoint me pressed like a heavy weight upon my brain. She must have seen something in my face that alarmed her, for she asked if I would like a glass of water—or wine. When I replied in the negative she came at once to the preliminaries that were in her mind.

"I am going, of course," she said. "That is, if you think it worth while to grant all the demands I find necessary. I shall be glad when this disagreeable part of our bargain is ended, and I believe you will be equally, if not more so."

"What is it now?" I inquired, rather querulously. "What do you want? Come to the point, I beg, without further delay."

She turned to a mirror, and with a brush that lay on the bureau pushed back the hair that was half tumbling over her face—hair that was light and yet not blonde; hair that matched well with her blue-gray eyes and her regular features.

"It is not so easy as you may think to detail these things," she said, when her face was again turned toward me. "I have to depend on myself for my living, but I hate to assume the guise of a beggar. Still, as I told you in the first place, my purse is practically empty. There are many articles needed if I am to go with you, that I would not otherwise want at this season of the year. They will cost money. I—"

"All that was settled in my letter to-day," I interrupted. "Have you not received it?"

"Yes, I received the letter, and I want to thank you for its kindness of tone. As I understand it, you offer to advance me what I need to prepare for the journey. This, I presume, is to be deducted from my salary, which under ordinary circumstances, would be quite acceptable. But, as I told you, I have another to support, and I have to rely upon my weekly stipend for that purpose."

For a moment I doubted the girl. Was she after all an adventuress who meant to get what she could in advance, and disappear when the time of departure came? No man likes to be made the victim of a schemer. I do not care any more for a few dollars than the average of my fellows, but the thought of having them cheated out of me is not pleasant to contemplate. I imagined my chagrin if I should go sailing off to the Caribbean with the reflection that I had been the victim of a smooth-tongued woman—I, who had been through the same mill, and ought to have learned something.

"I see my suggestion does not please you," came in low tones from my companion. "I was a little afraid it would not. I am such a stranger that I cannot wonder if you distrust me. Well, I have no desire to influence you. I have told you my situation."

Rousing myself from my reverie I looked earnestly into the fair young face.

"Marjorie," I began; "may I call you 'Marjorie?'"

"As you please."

"I am sure, as I gaze into your eyes, that I trust you implicitly. The recollection of a woman whom I once trusted to my sorrow came between us for an instant, that is all. I am going to believe in you without

the slightest mental reservation, but I want to say just one thing. If I discover that I am again deceived it will not be the paltry cash I shall mind. I shall only regret the new wrench to my confidence in the honesty of your sex. What you will need in the present emergency will have but little effect on my income. I would willingly make you a present of it, if no plan such as I have in mind were a part of the contract. Marjorie," I continued, leaning toward her and taking up one of her hands respectfully, "I trust you perfectly. Tell me how much money you wish and I will bring it within an hour. As the expense is caused entirely on my account, I have no idea of deducting a cent of it from your salary, which, if agreeable will be the same you already receive, twenty dollars a week. While I shall not promise too much, let me add that this will not be the extent of your compensation, by any means, if we get along together as well as I hope. Now, my dear girl, say there are no more lions in my path and that your last stipulation is agreed to."

She did not answer at once and her delay filled me with the most disagreeable forebodings.

"I want to go," she said, at last; and it was something that she did not compel me to release her hand. "I want to go, very much indeed. Only, you must not expect—" she paused again—"anything more than—"

"Do not distress yourself," I replied, divining what was in her mind. "I am going to the West Indies. Until the importation of coal begins at Newcastle, no one will dream of taking a woman on such a journey for an improper purpose."

She brightened visibly, and although she released my hand at the same moment she did it in a way that implied naught of distrust.

"It is a peculiar arrangement, though, take it altogether, is it not?" she asked, softly. "You are a man with, I judge, some knowledge of the world. What would your masculine friends say if you told them your plan? Would they believe in the innocence of your motive, as you ask me to do?"

I told her that my masculine friends were like others of their sex, I presumed, and might put the worst construction on anything, if they chose. There was not one of them to whom I had imparted my secret, and there would be none. I had looked over the "Madiana's" passenger list and seen no familiar name. There was not a chance in ten thousand that any person on the boat would know me, and if they did, there was a practical impossibility that they would know my family. I promised the most perfect discretion while on board, desiring as much as she to avoid exciting suspicion. Would she, I asked her, be any better off if I had proved what she imagined when she answered my advertisement—an elderly gentleman with rheumatism and green glasses? The proverb that there is no fool like an old fool might answer that question. As she had remarked in her letter, Mrs. Grundy could not arrange the lives of all her friends, and the best thing was to satisfy one's own self.

This seemed to please her, for she dropped the subject and asked particulars about the amount of baggage that each passenger was allowed to carry; which put me in better spirits, for it indicated that her face was at last turned toward the morning. I told her that a steamer trunk for the stateroom, a handbag, and a larger trunk to put in the hold was what I intended to take for myself, and I thought she would need the same. I asked if she had the articles, saying that, if she had not, I would be glad to order them sent to her.

"I have only a small trunk—it has managed hitherto to hold what things I have," was her reply.

"Then, with your permission, I will procure the entire outfit," I said. "Now, about the clothing and that sort of stuff. How much cash shall you require?"

She drew a long breath, and conceiving that she was afraid to name a sum I came again to the rescue.

"I will bring you two hundred and fifty dollars this afternoon," I said. "That ought to take you through."

Indeed, I thought the amount very liberal, and supposed she would say that it was even more than she expected. She did nothing of the kind, however, but only nodded acquiescence.

"There is something I was to ask you," I said, remembering what Mr. Cook's clerk had requested. "The berths are getting scarce on the 'Madiana'—and the agent wishes to know if you are willing to have another person share your room."

The young woman drew herself up and surveyed me with a cold expression. It was several seconds before I divined its cause, and then I had sense enough to pretend not to notice.

"A passenger who is going to occupy a room in that part of the boat wants, if possible, to have his niece near him," I continued. "She will take the upper berth, if you are willing, in your cabin, but it rests with you. I have arranged for the entire room."

Her icy features relaxed and she was herself again.

"I am quite willing," she answered. "In fact, had I known you intended to reserve an entire room for me I should have protested. Of course, it adds to the expense and I would rather have some one there than not. Are you going to occupy your room alone?"

I told her about Wesson, and she endorsed my action unreservedly.

"Where a trip cost so much, there is no need of adding to the expense," she said, thoughtfully. "I want to say another thing: As I am putting you to so much cost, you need not feel obliged on my account to stop at the highest priced hotels, when we are on shore. Anything comfortable and respectable will satisfy me."

I laughed as I responded that the best hotels in the Caribbean were neither very dear nor very luxurious. I would take her where I should have gone had I been alone and I hoped she would find herself "comfortable," as she expressed it, at all of them. I glanced at my watch at this juncture and suggested that perhaps I had best be going. If she was to do any shopping that day she would have to receive the "needful" very soon.

"Oh, to-morrow will do for the shopping," she replied. "If it is convenient you may send the money to-night, but I could not make much progress after this hour of the day. I shall probably have to get my suits ready made and submit to alterations. There is very little time left us now."

There was a partnership in this expression that pleased me greatly. I said as I rose that I hoped no new doubts would creep into her head, for I felt as if the journey we were to make together had actually begun.

"I cannot conceive of a reason to change my mind, unless it comes from some action of yours," said Miss May. "And I feel quite certain there will not be any."

"You may be positive of it," I replied. "I will go now to order the trunks, which may not, however, arrive before morning. As to the money, I will send it by a messenger as soon as possible. Au revoir."

"Au revoir," she said. "Let me add one thing more before you go. I am very grateful for the kindness you are showing me, more so than I fear I make plain, and as far as lies in my power I will endeavor to prove it."

"Don't mention it," I said, affected by her words. "All the obligation has been and will continue to remain on my side. Expect me Saturday afternoon."

I had again escaped without yielding to a temptation to do something foolish, for which I thanked my stars. It was with positive elation that I walked toward Sixth Avenue.

The dream was coming true. She was going with me. Nothing would come between us now!

I went without delay to my bank and drew four hundred dollars in fifty dollars bills, three hundred of which I enclosed in an envelope and sent at once to Miss May, by a district messenger. I thought it would drive another nail in the transaction to increase the amount I had promised, and fifty dollars was to me, in this connection, like a brass farthing to a millionaire.

Taking a passing car I rode to Macy's, where I purchased a large and a small trunk of compressed bamboo, covered with cloth of imitation leather, the lightest and strongest trunk that human ingenuity has yet invented. The larger one had several trays and a hat box, and was pronounced by the salesman the very latest thing. The bag gave me more trouble, but I settled at last on a tasty affair, with special arrangements for toilet articles, which was to be its main object of use, and heard to my delight that all of the things would be delivered without fail that very evening.

On returning to my room I picked up the letters received from the Herald office and read them over again, laughing occasionally at something particularly amusing. What a lot of silly women there must be in New York, when a modest "Personal" like mine had set so many of them spoiling good stationery with such nonsense. The only two worth giving any thought to were those from Marjorie and Miss Brazier. A whimsical notion struck me to write to "Alice" and tell her how near she had been to winning the "prize" in my case. In the course of fifteen minutes I had produced the following letter:

My Dear Miss Brazier:—As there were but two answers to my Herald advertisement (out of nearly as many hundred) worth noticing, and as yours was one of them, I may be pardoned for telling you that your Hated Rival has been secured by me for my Tropical Trip. Had you given me the least chance to discover your excellencies, it might quite as likely have been your fate to accompany me, so you will see how very narrow was your escape. Having recently recovered from a long illness (whence the necessity of a Southern voyage) I had no desire to meet your angry relatives, and I have yet to learn how to gauge a young lady's personality by mail. So you put yourself out of the running to begin with.

I am sure, however, it will please you to know that Another has satisfied herself with my proposals and is now engaged in preparations to accompany me to a warmer clime. She is not only "all my fancy painted her," but more. As near as I can tell in the absence of actual measurements, she is about 5 feet 4 inches in height, well made, full chested, with a face to dream about, bluish gray eyes and hair of a rather light shade. But this description fails utterly to convey an adequate idea of her exquisite charm.

I am to pay her—imagine making a pecuniary arrangement with an houri!—twenty dollars a week and expenses, only; except that the wardrobe which she finds it necessary to purchase for a climate averaging 78 deg. at this season, is also to be charged to me.

Was ever so much given for so little? I shall certainly insist on her accepting a nice little purse of "conscience money" on her return, if we decide, on mature reflection, to terminate our contract at that time.

Now, be magnanimous and write me a note of congratulation; I am sure you have a kind heart and will be glad all my correspondents did not threaten me with gouty and quick tempered uncles in case I wished to call on a purely business errand.

Very Truly,

David Camwell, Lambs Club.

New York, Dec. 30, 1897.

I summoned a district messenger, by a call in my room, and dispatched this to East Sixteenth Street, though why I did not put it in the mail I do not know. There was certainly no haste required. The steward of the club would send an answer, if one was received, without delay, for I had given him my pseudonym, and he was too wise to ask questions.

That night I dreamed I was at St. Thomas; that Marjorie had somehow changed into the Quarantine Keeper's daughter; and that Laps, the Danish dog, was proceeding to tear her in pieces, when I interfered and treated him as Samson did the Lion in the Hebrew tale. The girl had fainted in my arms and, I was calling wildly upon Heaven to restore her senses, when a servant, up late, woke me by knocking on my

door and inquiring if I wished for anything.

I searched for a bootjack to throw at the fellow's head, and not finding it in the dark, I threw a few uncomplimentary expletives instead. But sleep had vanished for that night, and after taking a cold bath I threw myself on a sofa, where with a pipe in my mouth I spent the long hours till morning drawing pictures of the happiness so soon to be mine.



CHAPTER VIII.

"A WOMAN I LIKE VERY WELL."

The first thought that struck me when I was ready for breakfast was that my new secretary ought to terminate her arrangement with that disagreeably affectionate employer and keep open house during each entire day and evening for my benefit. The mornings that were to elapse before the sailing of the "Madiana" would be terribly dull. I had tried to make it clear to Miss May that her salary had already begun to be reckoned and I did not see why she should carry on two business engagements at the same time.

When I rose from the table on which my coffee and eggs had been spread, it was to receive a letter which had passed through the Lambs Club and was undoubtedly a reply to the one I had sent Miss Brazier on the previous day. It would at least entertain me for a few moments to know what that apparently lively young lady had to say:

Dear Sir:—[it began—coldly enough, I thought] Your communication has been duly received and its contents noted. Although it is unlikely, and certainly, on my part, not desired, that we shall ever meet, I must inform you that my answer to your advertisement was written purely in fun and without the least idea of accepting your remarkable proposition. I will add that I am surprised that you have succeeded in inducing any woman of the least respectability to undertake such a journey, and I fear that your impression of her high character will receive some severe wrenches before your return.

It must require unusual "nerve" to start off for several months with an unmarried man (or a married one, for that matter) putting ones self at his mercy, for that is what it amounts to. When the individual is wholly unknown to the woman who is to accompany him—when he may, for all she knows, be a "Jack, the Ripper"—the foolhardiness of the idea grows on one. I am sure I do not envy your companion, though it is by no means certain but you, and not she, will be the most swindled in the affair.

I conjure you, however, though a total stranger, that if your friend proves to be merely a misguided girl of good intentions, you will not soil your soul with the greatest guilt of which a man can be capable. Remember, if your thoughts are dishonorable, that you have or have had a Mother, perhaps a Sister, whose memory should make you pause before you inflict irreparable ruin on one of the same sex.

Yours Sincerely,

A.B.

New York, Dec. 31, 1897.

A strange letter, I thought, take it altogether. I read it over slowly for the second time. The first few lines indicated disappointment, and a perusal of the remaining portion did not remove this impression, entirely. The final sentences sobered me. The reflections they induced were certainly not exhilarating. Although I have no sister and cannot remember my mother, I have a great veneration for my lost parents, and there is no string so susceptible of influence on my actions as the one this writer touched.

I made a new resolution that I would carry myself like a gentleman in the truest sense of the word with Miss May. I had been honest in the expressions I used when talking the matter over with Harvey Hume. The earnest admonitions of Dr. Chambers had not been without effect. I meant to prove by this journey that I was capable of being in the close companionship of a young lady without becoming either a brute or a Don Juan.

Looking at it even from the standpoint of an enlightened selfishness I was sure to get more satisfaction

in a voyage with a woman whom I could respect than with one who assumed the role of a cyprienne.

Loose creatures are to be found in plenty in the Caribbee Islands, as well as in New York. A sweet, true, honest, intelligent bit of femininity was quite another thing, and infinitely to be preferred, from any sensible view.

Marjorie! So far as my uncertain mind could do so I pledged to her a purity of intercourse such as a man might give to his affianced sweetheart.

I had folded the letter up and put it in my pocket when a visitor was announced, no less a person than Tom Barton. He came toward me with a distressed look on his honest countenance and it was plain that he was far from being at ease.

"Don," he said, paying no attention to my motion toward a chair, "what is the trouble between you and Statia? I can't believe you have done anything intentionally to set her so against you, and yet—"

"Sit down and don't get excited," I responded quickly, deciding to dispose of the matter in the calmest way. "Have you had your coffee? If not, let me ring for another pot. You don't seem well this morning, old boy."

"I'm not well," he said, in a dispirited tone, taking the chair at last. "But you can make me so with one word. Last night Statia came to me with her eyes full of tears. 'Tom,' she said, 'if you love me I want you to promise never to see Donald Camran again.' 'Never to see Don!' I exclaimed, unable to believe my ears. 'Yes,' said she, 'I've told him I don't wish him to call here and I want you to write him to the same effect.' You may imagine what a staggerer that was. There's not another fellow in the world of whom I wouldn't rather she'd have said that. I tried to get her to give some reason—any reason, or the hint of one—but it was no use. She only cried the harder, and when at last I went to bed, I tell you I didn't get much sleep. Tell me, Don, what it means."

"It seems you didn't make your sister the promise," I replied. "And you were quite right. The whim of a girl should not come between stanch friends like us."

That did not satisfy him, however. He murmured that we had been good friends—that he couldn't bear to think we should ever be otherwise—but he wanted to understand what his sister meant. As she wouldn't tell him, he had come to ask that favor of me.

"Supposing I don't care to say anything about it," I replied, quietly. "If Statia is set on keeping the wonderful secret, how can you expect me to divulge it?"

He struggled a moment with this idea, for Tom was always slow in grasping abstruse problems.

"You'll have to help me clear up the mystery," he said, at last. "I've only got one sister, Don, and she and I are all there are to the family now. If it comes to losing my sister or my best friend, I must stand by Statia."

I felt a chill going over my flesh as he spoke. I liked Tom, and I liked Statia—yes, in spite of the silly meeting of the day before. It was better to back down a little than to lose such friends.

"What a serious matter you make of it!" I exclaimed. "You ask me what is the trouble between Statia and me. Well, the fact is, I hardly know. She met me in Broadway yesterday and wanted to make me promise something that I could not see—to be candid—was any affair of hers. When I declined, as courteously as I knew how, she flew at me with the statement that I need never call at her house again. I had no choice in the matter, Tom, not the least. I wouldn't do anything to justify her in talking to me in that way, if I could help it, but one must retain a few of his personal rights, you know."

"And what was it about?" asked Tom, very earnestly.

"It was about a woman. A woman I like very well, and who happens to be going on the same steamer I am to the Tropics. There! The terrible secret is out."

Tom studied the answer a long time, but evidently could make nothing of it.

"Statia has always liked you immensely, Don," he said. "I've been almost jealous of you sometimes. She wouldn't go against you all of a sudden without what seemed to her a strong reason."

"And I like Statia," was my reply. "Yes, in spite of the ugly attitude she has chosen to take toward me. Why, Tom—I don't know but, under the circumstances, I ought to tell you—I asked her only a week ago to marry me."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, in a mixture of happiness and pain, that was very touching.

"Yes, and she refused positively. I was disappointed, you may believe, for I had thought she entertained a decided feeling in my favor, and would have asked long before except for that illness of mine. Her attitude might have thrown me back into the doctor's hands, for my head is not yet any too strong, but I managed to crush down my thoughts and bear up under it. I hope it's not wrong to tell you this, old chap, but I don't think I ought to let you go off with wrong impressions of me."

He shook his head in mute dismay.

"The other woman—the one you and she were speaking about," he said. "Who is she? It seems as if the key to the whole trouble was there."

"Now, Tom," I replied, "you have no right to ask me a question like that and I shall have to decline to bring the name of a third person into this discussion. I have the greatest regard for you and the highest respect for Statia. If you decide to throw me over, the responsibility must rest where it belongs."

"Would you—would you come round to the house and talk it over with both of us together?" he asked, after a long pause. "It troubles me more than I can tell you. Would you come over, say Tuesday evening?"

"Yes," I said, smilingly, "if Statia writes me a letter asking me to do so."

"She must write it," he said, brightening. "I can't have our friendship broken up like this. Shall you be at home all day?"

I answered that I would be there just before dinner, at least, to receive any communication that might be sent, and Tom, taking my hand in his hearty grasp for the first time since he had been in the room, said 'Good-by' and left me, evidently much relieved.

I was by no means as certain as he that Statia would make any such back-down. I have noticed that women are more apt than men to stick to a position they have once taken, even after they find that the mistake is on their side.

But, I really hoped some avenue would be opened for a reconciliation without my having to go on bended knees to either of them, which I saw no reason for doing.

I had told Tom all it would be safe to tell. He was so immaculate in all his thoughts of women that there was no saying how my plan, if fully presented, would strike his mind. I certainly did not mean to risk it.

It was a day that had begun disagreeably and I was looking forward to at least a pleasant afternoon, when a note from Miss May came, to dash that prospect to the ground. Here it is:

My Dear Mr. C.:—I fear you have undertaken a larger contract than you anticipated when you began. To be plain, the amount you left in my hands will hardly suffice to provide all the necessities for a lady travelling as your relation and equal. If you are satisfied I will consent, though I am sure I would not have done so at first, to go as your ward, merely,—as a young woman whom you have promised some friend to see on her journey to a point where she is to be a governess or whatever you like to say.

In that case you will not be disgraced if I do not dress very well. I cannot endure the thought of being suspected; and a lady such as you wish me to appear would have three or four gowns suitable for appearing at table, with at least a little jewelry—of which, alas! I have practically nothing.

I write you this with a heavy heart, for I fear you will begin to consider me a nuisance, but I hope you will understand. I went out this morning and priced several gowns, but finding that the money you left me would be exhausted before the really necessary things were obtained, I returned to my room without breaking one of the banknotes.

Please reply by messenger, stating what you think it best to do. If I am going to cost you more than you wish to expend, tell me so frankly and I will release you from every obligation. I resigned my other position last night, but am certain my old employer will gladly take me back if I have to ask it. Ugh! that is the most disagreeable thought in connection with this entire matter!

Understand, I am ready to go with you—I want to go—and I leave the position I am supposed to occupy to your own judgment. If I am to pass as a governess, in whom you have no special interest, you may return me half of the money enclosed and I shall find it amply sufficient. If I am to be your "cousin," I fear it will have to be doubled.

Please do not decide in a way you will regret. I am obliged to leave the city on an early train, to remain over New Years with friends, but shall expect you Tuesday at any hour after ten. That is, if you wish to see me again.

Yours Faithfully,

M.M.

P.S. The trunks and bag are splendid. Of course, I shall hold them subject to your orders if you decide to drop our arrangement.

I looked at the six fifty dollar bills lying on the table, where they had fallen from the envelope. The messenger boy looked at them also, as if he half wished he had run away with the package instead of delivering it. His presence disturbed me and I told him to walk around the block, returning in a quarter of an hour. This he hesitated to do and I shoved a two dollar bill into his fist, as a guarantee of my good faith.

What a criss-cross of ideas piled upon my brain when I was alone! At one instant I said to myself that Miss May was a schemer, who had determined to "play me for a sucker,"—to use a common, though not over delicate expression. She had been indiscreet in returning my cash; I would put it in my pocket and forget her. On the other hand, the thought of going south alone was enough to madden me. I did not care two straws that the cost of the trip would be doubled, if it possessed the charming features I had allowed myself to paint.

The woman's going into the country for two whole days when the question was unsettled was also most exasperating. If I could proceed immediately to her room and talk with her face to face it would be easier to decide.

The fifteen minutes passed, the boy returned, and I was still in a quandary. Finally, when the young imp presented himself in a business-like attitude, I seized a pen and wrote as follows:

Destroy the note I sent a moment ago and substitute this one.

Dear Miss May:—"Dear" does not mean anything at the beginning of a letter—I am very sorry to learn that you feel it necessary to be absent over Monday, as I have many things to say to you. Perhaps, as you can do nothing in the meantime, it is best to let the matter rest till Tuesday morning, when I will call, promptly at ten, and we will decide everything.

Yours,

D.C.

The boy took this note, when it was sealed and addressed, and disappeared like magic. He had hardly gone when I wished I had sent a letter of different purport. There was an awful possibility that Miss May would take the chance I had undoubtedly offered, to give up the whole idea of going. She had certainly not seemed as enthusiastic as I could wish. I ran to a window, threw it open, and would have whistled to the boy, but he was nowhere to be seen.

It was like a matter of life and death to me then. Ringing in a call I took my pen again and indited the following:

Dear Marjorie:—for so you said I might call you:—I return the money that you sent back to me. Keep it till I meet you Tuesday morning at ten, when I will come prepared with a sum which will certainly meet every demand you can put upon it. You are wiser than I about feminine apparel and could not please me better than by the forethought you display. It is with great regret that I learn you are to be absent over Sunday and Monday, when I had hoped to pass some pleasant hours with you, but I cheerfully yield to your arrangement. Within a few days there will be no other friends to distract your attention from one who will prove himself the truest of them all.

Sincerely Yours,

D.C.

No. — Thirty-fourth Street.

I procured a large envelope and took it into the bedroom, where I could re-insert the bank bills without danger of arousing the cupidity of young Mercury. With a lead pencil I added to the note a request that the recipient would send just a line by bearer to show that my message had arrived safely, and saw the boy depart, feeling that I had at last done the sensible thing.

Whether this proved to be the case I will leave the reader to judge when he has finished this volume.

CHAPTER IX.

A PRIVATE DINING ROOM.

Saturday evening was dull enough, being only brightened by a pencilled note from Miss May, reading simply, "Money received. Will see you Tuesday." I went over to the Lyceum Theatre to a play called "The Tree of Knowledge," which I now believe one of the brightest things produced on the American stage in years, though I was too full of other thoughts to appreciate it at the time.

It was an attempt to shift the burden of blame that has rested in all fiction on the shoulders of the man, to that of the woman, and was so far rather welcome to me. We are a bad lot, as a rule, I am afraid, but some allowance should be made for a case like the one in the play, where a well intentioned young fellow is used as a football by a girl who does not care if his life is ruined, so long as she accomplishes her designs.

I remember being somewhat surprised at the apparent approval of the fine audience, but that may have been due in a measure to the delightful acting of the various parts. I had not been to the Lyceum for a long time and did not remember to have seen the "wronged young man" before, but he made a most favorable impression on me as more natural and less stagey than the average. The "villain,"—the masculine one—was an excellent actor, also. As for the "wicked" woman, I thought, if Marjorie failed me, I would give her an invitation to spend the rest of the winter in the Caribbean.

Sunday was weariness itself. I poured over the newspapers, took a walk, managed to get a short nap, for I was tired, ate my lunch, and then, to fill up the time, wrote a letter to Miss Brazier, in defense of myself from the severe attack that unknown young woman had made. It was a silly proceeding, but I liked to write about Marjorie, even to one wholly unknown, and this is what I said, as near as I can remember it:

Dear Alice (Ben Bolt):—I feel justified in calling you "Alice," now it is settled that you are not to be my companion for long and (to you, doubtless) weary weeks, a liberty I should never have dreamed of taking had you decided to go. I do not know in what way I have offended you, which I judge by your letter to be the case, but as the children say, "If I've done anything I'm sorry for, I'm glad of it." (Of course I don't mean exactly that.) The reason I write this is to ask you to dine with me (in a highly respectable public dining room—no cabinet particulaire, mind!) some evening before the 12th, when I am to sail.

If you will do this, I will fill your shell-like ears with such an account of your Rival that you will acquit her of intending any of the horrors you intimate. She is neither, I believe, a sinful creature nor a dunce—just a sweet, strong-minded, trusting seeker after change and rest.

And I don't like your insinuations, either, about my own moral character. If you knew me, I should not blame you so much, but as you don't—it's simply reprehensible. I have no intention of "soiling my soul," or that of any other person, but if that awful event happens (I wonder how I would look with a soiled soul!) you will be to blame. If you really thought I was in danger, why did you not do the patriotic thing and offer to go in her place? That would have disposed of the s—s—possibility.

Now, if you have not already thrown this down in a rage—I judge you to be a woman of the most fiendish temper!—let me be sensible for just one moment. I am recovering slowly from a long illness and am as harmless as a dove. I have, honestly, some work for a typewriter to do, and my physician has advised me to take one. The young lady who has agreed to go is not the sort you seem to imagine. She has consented only after the most distressing stipulations in regard to my conduct—all of which were entirely unnecessary, by the way. I am to file a bond to return her to New York by May 1st in absolutely perfect condition.

Come and dine with me, Alice dear, and have your doubts removed. I won't bite you, nor offer the slightest familiarity, upon my word! Name your hotel and, provided it is of undoubted respectability, I will meet you there at

any hour you choose, after 6 P.M., or I will send a carriage for you. I only wish I could bring 'Marjorie'—isn't it a perfectly sweet name! One sight of her soulful eyes would say more than all my protestations. Unhappily she is out of town, and I am afraid she wouldn't like to be exhibited, if she were here.

You'd best come.

Yours Fraternally,

D. CAMWELL.

The Lambs, Dec. 31, 1897.

It didn't seem too funny, when I read it over, as I thought it would, but I sent it to East Sixteenth Street by a messenger that I summoned, telling him to bring an answer, if there was any, and to return for his pay, if there was none. He came back in half an hour, saying that a boy at the house took the letter up stairs, presumably to Miss B., and returned in a few minutes stating that she would reply by mail. As this exhausted all the fun I could expect out of that matter for the day, I went over to the Club and lounged away the afternoon.

It was nine o'clock and I had only been at home for a few minutes when a note came from Statia Barton. It was written in a very cool strain, but its contents were unexpectedly agreeable, for all that. Statia said she was afraid she had been a little too severe, and that, as it distressed Tom very much to have a general falling out, she had made it up with him. She had nothing to take back in what she had said relating to a certain matter, (what woman ever took back anything?) but was willing to admit that it was, really, my personal affair and that she had no right to control my conduct. She believed it best, on the whole, that we should see each other as little as possible before I went away, but she did not wish, on reflection, to make trouble between her brother and his friend. If Tom wanted me to come to spend an evening with him, she hoped I would do it, and she promised to keep out of my way.

It was a queer mixture, take it altogether, but I was very glad to receive it. The calming effect on my general condition was such that when I went to bed, I slept for nearly seven hours without interruption, something I had not done for the previous fortnight.

Monday, on account of New Years, was as dull as Sunday. When I awoke with the exultant knowledge that it was at last Tuesday morning, I sprang from bed joyfully. Filling my tub with water as it ran from the street pipe, I plunged into its icy depths. Rising again I repeated the operation half a dozen times, until the effect on my entire body was of a healthy glow, and then proceeded to dress with care. I was long in selecting a necktie, for one thing, and tried three pairs of cuff-links before I was content. My coffee was barely tasted, and the newspapers were scanned as if in a dream.

All the time, mind you, I was trying my best to obey the injunction of Dr. Chambers to avoid the least excitement. I persuaded myself that I was simply happy and that no injurious effect could be apprehended from a merely contented frame of mind. I did not stop to think that I was pursuing a short road to the nervous prostration from which I had emerged, and which had its origin in the same lack of control I was exhibiting.

Tom Barton called about eight o'clock and, as he entered the room, came straight to me with his right hand extended. I took it heartily in mine, glad that the chasm between us was bridged at last.

"Dear old fellow," he said, with strong feeling, "forgive me for anything disagreeable I said, the other day. I feel now that I misjudged you. Let us end that matter and when you come to my house this evening, tell me exactly what route you are going to take, so I can arrange where to write you."

I promised to come if I could, and if that was impossible, to send a message to account for my absence. I told him I had bought a set of small maps which would show my route perfectly and that I hoped for

frequent communications with him. Neither of us said anything about Statia, for I think he felt as I did that we should get along better without bringing in her name. He was obliged to leave after a brief call. As soon as he was out of sight I donned my out-door garments and proceeded by round-about stages toward Miss May's residence.

The hands of my watch pointed to ten exactly, when I rang her bell. It is considered a virtue, I believe, to be prompt at an appointment. The woman who attended the door dampened my ardor somewhat, however, by informing me that Miss May had not yet returned. She suggested that I go at once to the lady's room and make myself comfortable till she came, which must be very soon.

I walked slowly up the stairs, which seemed longer than ever, oppressed with a new series of doubts. Perhaps she would not come at all. Perhaps she had taken my three hundred dollars and fled to parts unknown. Perhaps—oh! the ugly things that came into my head between the lower hall and the door of that empty room.

I turned the knob and entered. Somehow the sight of the things that belonged to her began to mollify me. There was the chair in which she had been seated when I saw her last—happy chair! There was the dressing table, the brush and comb she used, the glass into which she had looked with her beautiful blue-gray eyes. Yes, and masquerading as a cabinet, yet deceiving no one for a second, was the folding bed that had often received her lovely form, with her head pillowed in happy slumber.

It was something to be in the room she occupied, to see the furniture she used.

I seated myself in her chair—the one I had seen her in—but almost instantly rose and walked about. My nerves were too much on edge to permit me to remain long without motion of some kind. At the end of half an hour I began to grow incensed again. She had made the appointment for ten o'clock. She knew from previous experience that I would keep it to the moment. Trains from the suburbs ran frequently enough. Did she consider me merely a puppet, to be played with?

Between half-past ten and eleven I was a hundred times on the point of descending the stairs and leaving the house, ending the whole affair.

But I didn't.

She came about ten minutes past eleven, with many expressions of regret at having kept me waiting. The timepiece at the house of her friend had broken its mainspring, or something of the sort, and with the carelessness of a woman she had forgotten to wind her watch the evening before. The family were all deceived by the fact that the sky was cloudy. When she reached her station the train had just gone and she was obliged to wait three-quarters of an hour for another. As soon as she alighted in New York, she took a cab and bade the driver hasten. Had I been waiting very long?

I did not know, at that instant, whether I had been a minute or a week, and I did not care. It was enough that I was again in her presence—that she had actually arrived. I begged her to say nothing more about it.

"I have kept the cab," she said, looking me full in the face, "thinking you might be kind enough to go with me to the shops and help me pick out my things. If it isn't asking too much—"

I assured her it would give me the greatest pleasure to accept the invitation and that I had no engagement so important as helping her to get ready for our journey. With a smile, she took off her hat and arranged her hair at the mirror, with a few passes of the brush and comb. Then she put it on again and said she was quite ready.

"Drive to Altman's," she said to the cabman, as she stepped inside the vehicle.

We were together, side by side. Had we been on the way to the steamer nothing could have exceeded my delight. These preliminaries all tended in that direction, however, and I was fain to curb my haste and content myself with the present.

"I think you ought to see what it costs to dress a young woman who is going to masquerade as the cousin of a gentleman of means," said Miss May, as we turned the corner. "I want you to decide on each article, since the expense is to come out of your pocket. I must say another thing also, at this time. I shall not consider as my own anything I need to buy. I am merely in the position of an actress whose wardrobe is to be provided by her manager. Whenever our engagement terminates I will return every article to you in as good shape as possible."

I was staggered by the suggestion, as well as impressed by the sentiment that led her to make it.

"What could I do with a lot of gowns—and—lingerie?" I inquired, helplessly. "They would be a veritable drug on my hands."

"They could be altered," she said, thoughtfully. "I shall be very careful of them."

"Altered!" I cried. "For whom?"

"For the next typewriter you may happen to engage."

I laughed to conceal the disagreeable feeling which the thought gave me.

"As a joke that is stupendous," I said, "but, if you don't mind, I would rather you would be funny on some other subject."

She relapsed into silence, something after the manner of a child who has been chidden, which did not add to my ease. I had no idea of scolding her. Luckily we were soon at Altman's.

I had come provided with plenty of money that time. The cash she had brought was exhausted when we left this place and we did not seem to have got much for it, either. A milliner was next visited, where the price of the few articles purchased was forgotten in my admiration of the charming appearance Marjorie made in her new headgear. Then we drove to another establishment, where she was obliged to hide herself from view for three-quarters of an hour, with a bill of eighty-five dollars as the result. She explained that she had got nothing she could possibly avoid, when it was considered that we might be several weeks at a time without a laundress, and I said the only fear I had was that she would buy too little.

A boot shop came next in order, where I had a jealous pang as one of the salesmen fitted her with various articles in his stock, all suitable for a warm climate, at a total cost of forty dollars. And then we drove about, from glove shop to perfumer's, from umbrella maker to fan dealer, from this to that, and the hands on my watch showed that it was nearly five o'clock.

"I think that is about all for to-day," said Miss May, drawing a long breath. "You must be glad it's over."

"Not at all," I replied. "Isn't it about time, though, that we had something in the way of refreshment?" (She had declined several offers to lunch during the preceding five hours.) "Mayn't I tell the driver now to take us to a restaurant?"

She consented, after a little thought, and also said she would leave the place to me. When I suggested the Hotel Martin, she thought a little longer, and then surprised me with a request that I would get a private room.

"Impossible," I said, when I could catch my breath. "They will assign no party of two to a room alone."

She blushed, which was not surprising. I had put her in the position of wishing to break a puritanic rule of which she had never heard.

I mentioned several other places, and we finally agreed on one some distance up-town, at which I told her the regulation against a single couple dining alone did not apply. She was rather tired and leaned back in the carriage in a manner that showed it. I studied her face as much as I could without appearing to stare, but it was wholly expressionless.

"You are very good to me," she said, after a long pause.

"And you are very kind to me," I answered.

"What a lot of money we have spent to-day," she added. "Aren't you sorry yet?"

"No," I answered, smiling. "Not yet."

"I shall need almost nothing more," she said, "to appear in a garb that will not disgrace you. Nothing, but a little jewelry, I think."

I said we would go to-morrow and attend to that, or she could go alone if she preferred, and send the bills to me.

"It must be lovely to have all the money one wants," she remarked, dreamily. "To order whatever you please without stopping to see if you can afford it."

"Yes," I assented.

"You can do that?" said Miss May, putting one of her gloved hands on my arm.

"Within a reasonable limit. My wants are seldom extravagant."

"Why," she asked, slowly, "is the world arranged so unevenly? Why are some provided with all they want, and more, while others have to study each item of actual necessity?"

"That is a deep question, that I would not like to settle in my present state of hunger," I replied, at which she smiled and sat up in the carriage. "We are luckily near the end of our route. I think I had best dismiss the cab and get another one when we leave."

She agreed and then asked if I had any objection to her donning a veil. It was all right, of course—dining in a private room with her employer—but it might not seem so to a casual passer, who would possibly recognize her face at some future period. A woman had to be so particular.

I cut her explanations short by saying that I did not object to the idea, but quite approved of it; at which she put on the veil, which to my consternation was blue and quite opaque. I did not wish to let any difference of opinion come between us, but I reflected that if one of my friends saw me, with a woman veiled like that, his conclusions would be anything but pleasing. There is such a thing as going too far.

We were shown to a nice little room, where the waiter came near getting himself into trouble by informing me with needless severity that it was not permitted to lock the door.

Miss May did not seem to hear what he said. She was removing her blue veil at a little glass that hung on the wall.

When she took the chair opposite to me and accepted the menu at my hands, she looked so charming that I had to put a veritable Westinghouse brake on my arms.

CHAPTER X.

ONCE THERE WAS A CHILD.

The meal that we ordered was well cooked and well served, and being provided with that best of all sauces, hunger, I did it full justice. Our conversation seemed, however, rather dull, and there was not that flow of spirits that I expected when we entered the place. Miss May seemed absorbed in thought, though she declared, when I rallied her on the point, that she was not down hearted, but very happy to be there. Occasionally when footsteps were heard in the corridor she started nervously, which led me to suppose that she feared intrusion. I thereupon remarked that while it was against the rules to bolt the door of the room, I believed a good-sized tip would secure the privilege; to which she replied, with a vehemence I could not understand, that she would not hear of such a thing.

One might imagine she suspected me of an intention to murder her, so earnest was her protest.

"Oh, I would much rather leave it unlocked," I said. "I was only trying to please you."

She made no answer, and I found my spirits, always mercurial, beginning to sink a little. Noticing my dejection, she came to my rescue and soon had me all right again. We talked of the journey, she asking many particulars of my former visit to the Caribbean Islands. She had never been at sea for more than a few hours and wondered if she was liable to that malady so much to be dreaded, seasickness. I assured her it was not nearly as bad as it was painted and told of my own slight experiences in that line, years before.

My companion ate and drank sparingly. She declined my proposal to order champagne, and mixed her claret and apollinaris like a veritable tyro in restaurant dining. This rather pleased me, on the lookout as I was for indications that she might be other than she seemed. She had every mark of the true lady, and I was well prepared to believe it, when I learned, some days later, of the station in which she had been born and in which her childhood was passed.

"I have been thinking," she remarked, after one of her long pauses; "would it not be best for me, to take your family name? I wish, above all things, to avoid suspicion."

"I fear we are a little too late for that," I replied. "I was obliged to give your name to the agent and he has already placed it on the passenger list."

"Will that list get into the newspapers?" she asked, nervously.

"I presume so."

"Then you must manage to have my name changed, at all hazards. My old employer would use every means to annoy me if he discovered where I am going."

"It is only recorded as 'Miss M. May,'" I said. "Surely there is more than one person of that name in the world."

She shook her head and bit her lips in distress.

"It must be changed," she repeated. "It will not do to give him the slightest clue. He imagines himself 'in love'—Heaven help me!—and I dare not risk it. Any name you like, but my own."

"What can he do?" I inquired. "You don't think I would let him annoy you, when you were under my protection."

"He can do many things. No, there is no way but to alter the name. Tell the agent the lady you expected is not going—that she has been taken ill—and that another is to fill her place. Do not argue, do not hesitate, or I shall be compelled, even now, to give up the journey. And that," she added, seeing my sober face, "you know well I would not like to do."

This was enough to settle the matter and I said I would give the agent in the morning any name she desired.

"I would like it the same as your own," she said, thoughtfully. "It might save infinite trouble. Just record me as Miss M. Camwell. Is there any reason against that?"

Yes, there was one and it occurred to me. The name, which I had decided to use, was so near my own that Uncle Dugald would be likely to see it, not to say anything about Hume, Tom Barton and Statia. They might lay the twisting of Donald Camran into "David Camwell" to the carelessness of copyist and printer, but their suspicions would certainly be aroused if they saw next to my name that of a "Miss" Camwell.

"I will change your name in some way," I answered, after a long pause, "but I see dangers in the plan you propose, nearly as great as in the present one."

I then gave her an inkling of my fears, saying I did not wish any sharp friend to guess what I was doing, which was possible with two such uncommon names in just a position on an alphabetical list.

She did not seem satisfied, but raised no objection when I asked her if I might call her Miss M. Carney, which I thereupon decided to do.

It was rather dull, take it altogether, the dinner, but when we were again in a cab and rolling toward Forty-fifth Street, Miss May brightened, like the close of a cloudy day, just before the sun sinks into the obscurity of the western sky. She put one of her hands on mine, quite as if the act was a wholly thoughtless one, but it sufficed to cheer me up. She even volunteered a prophesy that we would be good friends and contented fellow voyagers.

Before we reached her door she asked me at what hour I would call on the morrow, quite as if anxious to see me. After a little debate I decided upon three in the afternoon. That would give her the entire morning with her dressmaker, for necessary alterations in the garments she had purchased.

She did not seem to notice particularly when I raised the gloved hand I held and pressed it to my lips at parting. It was an act that any lady might pardon, and she probably thought nothing of it.

"To-morrow, then, at three," she said, smiling at me from the curbstone.

"Yes. Don't keep me waiting," I answered, remembering the morning.

"I will try not to; these dressmakers are so unreliable, though. You—you wouldn't rather I would come to your rooms? Perhaps there is another of those rules we have been running across, against it. If there is none, and you prefer—"

I said I approved of the idea highly and that I was at liberty to invite to my apartment any person I pleased.

"You spoke of a machine that I have never used," said Miss May, tentatively. "If you have one there, as a sort of excuse—"

"I have one," said I. "Although it won't be needed for that purpose. You remember the number, — West

Thirty-fourth."

She nodded and spoke to my driver, repeating it to him. Then with another of her bright smiles she waved me good-by and ascended the steps, while I was driven away.

"Henry," I was saying ten minutes after, to the hall boy, "I expect a young lady to-morrow, between three and four, who will ask for Mr. Camwell."

"There isn't any Mr. Camwell in the house, sir," said the boy.

"There will be at that hour. He will be in my rooms. You may not see him enter and you may not see him leave, but he will be here. All you have to do is to say 'Yes, ma'am,' to the lady and bring her to my door."

"I understand," said Henry, with a wholly superfluous grin, that showed how little common sense the average hall-boy possesses.

"No, you don't understand anything," I responded, snappishly. "Do as I order and you'll lose nothing. Make the least mistake and I will see that you get your notice."

He responded meekly that he would be careful and then handed me a letter, which I saw was from Miss Brazier. He also said that Mr. Barton had called and expressed surprise when he heard that I had left no word for him.

Poor Tom! It came to my recollection all at once that I had promised to spend the evening at his house, or send him a note if unable to do so. Well, I would write him an apology before I went to sleep.

This is what Miss Brazier said:

Dear Mr. Camwell:—I wish I could understand you, but the riddle grows harder and harder. Sometimes you seem a combination of Don Quixote, Mephistopheles and Hector Greyburn. At one moment I believe you the greatest wretch alive; at the next I ascribe your sentiments to the buoyancy of youth and convince myself that you are at heart an honorable man.

As to dining with you, I must deny myself that pleasure. I do not believe you would "bite" me, nor am I afraid your levity would turn my head. I can merely say that dining with a stranger is not in accord with my habits and that I see no sufficient reason to make your case an exception. I would be glad to see your "Marjorie," though, were that feasible, but this also I must forego.

Now, as a last word—for my correspondence may weary you—remember that true happiness in this life does not consist in the mere gratification of every passing whim, and that the path you have before you may contain thorns as well as roses. If you return to America with your conscience void of offence toward God and your companion you will have accomplished something of which you may well be proud.

Won't you write me just a line when you are again at home, to say that my petition has been answered.

Your True Friend,

A.B.

Jan. 2, 1898.

Sobered more than I could account for by reading this letter, I sat for a long time in silence. Then, after writing a brief note to Tom, excusing my neglect, I sought my pillow, or in plain English, went to bed.

My first act in the morning after coffee was to go to Cook's and alter the name of May to that of Carney, as well as change my own to "David Camwell," for which I gave a satisfactory reason to the clerk. He told me that he could omit both names from the list sent to the newspapers, if I desired, and I decided that this was, on the whole, the better way.

On leaving I had an idea that pleased me, no less than to visit Tiffany's and purchase a little jewelry for

Marjorie. It would be pleasant to see her eyes light up as I put it into her hand.

Taking a Broadway car, I soon reached the shop I sought, and emerged a few minutes later with a pair of diamond eardrops, a ring of turquoise and small diamonds, and another of chased gold without a stone. Each was enclosed in a tasty case. I was much pleased that the selection had been made so easily.

Miss May arrived at my room nearly on time, with a fine color in her cheeks, due to the fact that she had walked some distance. She was undeniably good-looking and my heart warmed as I thought of the long companionship we were to have together. She was a little tired, she said, from standing for the dressmaker's measurer, and dropped into my largest chair with a very fetching air of fatigue. As soon as I could without seeming in haste I produced the case containing the turquoise ring and presented it for her inspection.

"I took the liberty," I remarked, "of buying this, to fill the vacant place on one of your fingers. If it does not fit, you can take it back for alteration; or if it does not please you Tiffany will exchange it."

She took it out languidly and found that it fitted very well. She was not as delighted as I had supposed she would be, but her tired feeling probably accounted for that.

"It is very pretty," she said, "and you are very kind."

Then I opened the case containing the plain ring and she found a suitable position for that also. When I showed her the eardrops she grew more interested and on trying them on declared them "perfectly sweet."

"I used to have some very like them," she said, with a sigh, "but that was long ago. How very good you are. Are you not tired of the expense I cause you?"

I assured her that I was not, in the least.

"I do not own a piece of jewelry in the world," she added, "except a wedding ring, that belonged to my mother."

"And these," I corrected her by saying.

"No. These are not mine. They are merely part of the make-up for the rôle I am to play. You shall have them all back again when the curtain is rung down."

She took out her purse, and drew forth the ring of which she had spoken. Placing it on her wedding finger she held it out to me.

"Don't I look quite like a married woman?" she asked, smilingly.

"Quite," I assented, "and a very sweet bride you make, too."

"Have you the typewriting machine here?" she asked, ignoring my compliment. "I wish to see what it is like."

I put the machine on a table, arranging it for her inspection. It was an original Hammond, which I prefer to the universal keyboard. She drew up a chair and listened intently while I explained its workings, showing how the capitals and figures are produced with the same set of keys as the lower case letters. I showed the working of the ribbon, the arrangement of the alarm bell and all the other points needed by one who had never operated that style. When I had finished and inserted a sheet of paper she began carefully to write a sentence, encouraged occasionally by my guidance when the unfamiliar location of the keys caused her to pause.

"I shall be able to use it as rapidly as the Remington, in a week," she said, when she finished the sheet.

"It is not nearly as hard as I imagined."

She left the table and resumed her seat in the chair, where we fell into a conversation that lasted several hours. She counted with me the days that remained and was glad they were so few. She said she could think of nothing more that she needed before starting: yes, the jewelry was quite sufficient. She put back each piece in the case it had come in, asking me to keep them till we were ready to go.

"You are sure you will not be sorry for what you are doing?" she asked, after a time.

"How can I, if you enjoy the journey?" was my reply.

She shrugged her shoulders prettily and said it was time to leave. She declined with many thanks an invitation to dine with me again, making a light excuse, and with a friendly grasp of the hand took her departure. It had been agreed that she would call for a short time each afternoon that remained.

When I had become chilled at the vacancy her absence made in the room I went over to the table and looked at what she had written on the machine. It was a pleasure even to see the lines her fair hands had made, and I withdrew the sheet she had covered as if it were something sacred. Glancing over it I noted to my surprise, that the lines had not been written with accidental meaning—that it contained a message for my eyes and heart. There were naturally slight errors caused by the writer's unfamiliarity with the instrument, but no ambiguity of any kind. And this is what the message said to me:

Once there was a child, who had been reared in comfort, almost in luxury, in the fairest part of the fair State of Maryland. At the age of sixteen a cruel fate deprived her of both parents. The guardian to whom her small means were intrusted proved false and in another year she was left to face poverty alone.

Almost stunned by her misfortunes, this child found it necessary to provide herself with some means of subsistence, for even sorrow must have bread. She learned the art of stenography and typewriting; and after attaining sufficient speed in these branches went to a large city and sought a situation. Luckily she found one, though for a long time the pay was very small and she could no more than support life in the poorest manner.

Later a place was offered her with a largely increased stipend, and the cloud seemed about to lift a little. But her new employer soon unmasked his soul and disclosed himself a wretch. The girl could hardly breathe in his presence, but she resolved to endure his attentions as long as they were bearable, hoping for relief from some unknown source.

When the purpose of her employer became all too plain, and she was on the point of despair; when advertisement after advertisement had been answered and nothing secured; when she had advertised, herself, and found by the replies received that the majority of the situations promised nothing better than the one she was unable to endure—there came a ray of light.

A gentleman, or what seemed to be one, sought an interview in reference to a most novel proposition. He wanted her to accompany him, alone, on a long journey; announced his willingness to provide her with an outfit suitable for a member of his family, which she was to profess to be; and assured her that behind this offer there was lurking no sinister design such as she at first suspected.

Her situation had grown desperate. Slowly she came to the decision to trust this man. She grew to believe that there might be one who could give these things with an honest mind and a pure purpose.

She accepted the situation, if such it might be called; purchased the necessary clothing; donned the jewelry he provided; gave her trust into his hands, and sailed with him on the ship he selected.

He was only twenty-four years of age, she but twenty-two. She had not concealed from him that she was poor and nearly friendless. He was rich and what is called a man of the world.

What will happen to the girl on that journey?

There can be but two possibilities. Either the man will prove the kind friend he has represented and they will return able to look the world in the face without a blush—that is one of them. Or somewhere beneath the blue waters of the Caribbean Sea the fishes will gnaw the flesh of a woman who is drowned—that is the other. Let neither delude themselves, when the hour of temptation comes. There is no possibility outside these two.

I rose and paced the floor in remorse for my ill-spent life, in sympathy for the unhappy creature whose fears clouded the pleasure I meant to share with her.

If there had been, away down in the lowest depths of my wild nature, the slightest thought of wrong to Marjorie May, it was crushed out of sight by that pathetic appeal.

Crushed out of sight, yes! But there are seeds that put forth life with the dust of years piled above them.

CHAPTER XI.

A THEFT ON BOARD SHIP.

The time before the date set for the sailing of the Madiana passed slowly enough, but contained little that is worth recording at length. Miss May took another dinner with me, though not in the same restaurant as before, she expressing a preference for another in a different part of the city. She came to my room daily about half the time and I went to hers the rest, for our afternoon talks. Her gowns were fitted, her baggage made ready; and she sent the trunks out to have the initials "M.C." marked upon them, to consort with her new title.

As the date of sailing approached she grew visibly nervous, saying repeatedly that she would be glad when the ocean waves lay between us and Manhattan Island, in which sentiment I concurred heartily. On the day before our departure she expressed a wish to go to the wharf alone, rather than have me come for her, giving as a reason that she did not like the people at her lodgings to connect us in that move. This seemed sensible and I agreed without demur. I had long since ceased to have any suspicion of her and felt as certain that we would meet at the steamer as that the boat would sail.

The evening before the day I was to go, I passed with Tom Barton at his house. It was the second time I had been there within a week. In some way Tom fixed it so that Statia consented to dine with us. She did the best she could, I suppose, to act as usual, but made a poor show of it to eyes as watchful as mine.

I got a minute alone with her by accident and tried my best to cheer her up.

"I wish you would write me a line or two while I am gone," I said. "If you send to St. Thomas by the 18th, I ought to get it before I leave there. The mails are fearfully slow in that part of the world, but they do arrive eventually. I will let you know how I am getting on, if you wish it, besides what I send to Tom. I'm not going to let you quarrel with me any longer."

She said without much enthusiasm that she would be glad to have me write, and that perhaps she would do so herself. I did not care to press the matter, thinking it best to leave it that way.

On the morning of the 12th I went early to the steamer, inspected the cabins I had engaged and made arrangements with the head porter to reserve a good place for my steamer chairs on the after-deck. I was rather pleased with the accommodations, for I had not expected too much. Driving back up-town I secured my letter of credit and did a last bit of shopping. An hour before the time the vessel was to slip her moorings I was again on board, not wishing Miss May to arrive and find me absent.

As the passengers arrived, one after another, I looked into their faces to see if there was a familiar one, but there was none, until Mr. Wesson came. I exchanged a few words with him about the arrangement of things in the room we were to occupy jointly. When he left, my attention was attracted to a woman, just coming up the plank, whom I certainly had seen before. An elderly man walked just behind her, and as she turned to speak to him I judged they were together. It was some time before I remembered where I had seen that face, and when it flashed upon me I could not restrain a low whistle.

She was the woman who had advertised in the Herald "Personal" column that she desired the acquaintance of an "elderly gent," describing herself as "beautiful of face and form," with her "object matrimony."

Well, she seemed to have found what she sought and I hoped the "gent" was also not disappointed. I did not believe that the ceremony of marriage had been performed between them, but perhaps a temporary arrangement was equally pleasing to both. One of the stewards took their hand baggage and descended with it, showing them to their rooms.

Miss May, arrived finally. I did not recognize her at first, heavily veiled as she was, though happily without the blue article she had worn to the restaurant. I rose and escorted her to her cabin, where she seated herself on the sofa and tried to recover her breath, which I could not see she had any reason to lose. As soon as she could speak she asked which was my room; when I told her, she begged me to wait there a few minutes.

Rather distressed by her manner I could, nevertheless, do nothing but comply. After what seemed an endless time I heard her voice, speaking my name in low tones, and went to see what she wanted.

"Don't come in!" she said, opening the door slightly. She spoke hardly above a whisper and yet in a way that conveyed an imperative prohibition. "Has the boat started yet?"

"No," I answered. "I think it will go in a few moments."

"Will you inquire if my baggage has been brought on and have the smaller trunk sent down here as soon as possible?"

"You ought to come on deck and see the start," I said. "That is one of the interesting things of a voyage like this."

"Oh, no!" she said. "I am feeling faint—I don't know what is the matter—doubtless I shall be better in a few minutes. I am going to lie down and see if that makes me more comfortable. Go on deck and amuse yourself. I shall try to get a nap."

Seeing that I hesitated she looked pleadingly into my eyes.

"Please go!" she said.

I went, swallowing my disappointment. The boat had commenced to move and I witnessed the usual waving handkerchiefs, tearful eyes, loud good-bys, and that sort of thing. The elderly gentleman with his well-formed, matrimonially-inclined lady was apparently enjoying the scene, for both of them looked happy. Mr. Wesson smiled as I approached and uttered some commonplace remark, as he made room for me by his side. Each moment the distance between the Madiana and her late moorings widened; presently we were well out in the river and proceeding down the Bay.

Wesson suggested a walk on the deck and as we were both well wrapped up I saw no objection. I remarked what a wonderful thing it was, how soon our heavy clothing would be discarded. Ice and snow to-day and summer garments day after to-morrow.

"That is due to the Gulf Stream, of course," he replied.

"Yes. In two days any passenger not actually an invalid can bathe with pleasure in water pumped from the ocean."

Wesson expressed his surprise at this statement. We fell to talking of the islands we were to visit, he appearing deeply interested in all I had to say. The time was thus occupied until the first dinner bell rang, when I excused myself to go and look after my "cousin."

Miss May answered the knock by saying that she had already asked the stewardess to bring her a cup of tea and would want nothing more. She would try to get upon the deck to-morrow, if the water was

sufficiently smooth, but at present she was quite unable to move. I was to be at ease about her and not allow her condition to interfere with my enjoyment. As there seemed no help for it, I went back to the deck and soon descended with the others to the dining table.

I thought it an odd fate that the "elderly gent" with his matrimonially-inclined companion should be seated at the same table with myself and Mr. Wesson, but odd things happen continually on shipboard and this voyage was to prove the rule. There were just eight of us assigned to that table, a married couple and one man travelling singly, besides those mentioned. Before we separated I took a printed list of the passengers, such as had been generally distributed, bearing on the reverse side a map of the Windward Islands, and requested those present to mark their names, that I might know them better. Wesson and I marked ours first. The "elderly gent" put his cross against two names reading Matthew Howes and Miss Nellie Howes, the married couple endorsed the names of Mr. and Mrs. H.G. Stone and the single passenger claimed the title of Robert Edgerly. The seats had been assigned by the steward with written cards on each plate, and Mr. Edgerly, who sat at my left, took up that of Miss Carney.

"We have still another messmate, who has not made her appearance," he said, to the table in general. "Miss M. Carney."

"The lady is not feeling well and will not appear to-night," I said.

"I believe she occupies the stateroom with me," said Miss Howes, to my surprise. "She is evidently not used to the sea, for she was taken ill before the steamer left the dock."

"Miss Carney is my cousin," I explained, forced into it by the inquiring eyes of Mr. Howes, who evidently connected us in some way. "She was not very well before we started, is in fact taking the journey mainly for her health. I hope she will feel able to be out to-morrow."

With the freedom that sometimes prevails in parties thrown together at a steamer table the conversation then became general, and before we rose I knew that Mr. Edgerly claimed Albany as his home and Mr. and Mrs. Stone, Montpelier, Vt.; while Mr. and Miss Howes said they resided in Binghamton. It helps very much in remembering people to get a city or town tacked on to their names, and I wrote the locations on my passenger list.

It was a dull evening, in spite of the fact that I passed it in the smoking room, where considerable cheap wit was bandied about and my fellow-passengers got acquainted with each other and with me. The push-button was kept busy until the steward in charge of that department gave signs of exhaustion. I drank very little, though I paid for several rounds, after the fashion of most Americans, who think such proceedings necessary to preserve their self-respect.

At last, when there was nothing else to do, I went to my cabin and to bed.

Before breakfast I saw the stewardess and asked her to learn how Miss Carney was and whether she would be at the table. She soon returned with the information that the lady thought it best not to leave her room, and that she wished me to procure her a list of the passengers. This I did, marking the addresses of those who sat at our table, and scrawling a bit of advice on the margin, recommending her to make her appearance on deck during the forenoon as the sea was remarkably smooth.

After leaving the table I took a novel called "His Foster Sister," which somebody told me had a reference to the Islands, and seeking my steamer chair became absorbed in its contents.

In a short time Mr. Edgerly came along and dropped into my second chair in a friendly way. He also had a book and it was some time before we engaged in conversation beyond the customary greetings.

My first impression of Edgerly was decidedly favorable. He was apparently a jolly sort of chap, ready

for a joke or story and not inclined to be a bore. We got along together famously until about eleven o'clock, when Miss May came slowly up the companion way, with the stewardess to assist her. Edgerly saw her before I did and sprang to offer her his arm. As she looked into his face and detected that it was that of a stranger, she drew back, but he reassured her in low tones.

"You must permit me to help you to your chair," he said, "which I have just vacated. It's evident you cannot reach it without aid."

By this time I had arrived at her side and Miss May took my arm, leaning very heavily upon it. I was surprised to find her so weak and as soon as she was seated I asked if there was anything I could order to give her strength.

"No," she replied, faintly. "I shall be better soon. Please wrap the rug around me."

The stewardess had the rug on her arm and at my request placed it over the lady's skirts, tucking in the ends about her feet. She wore her cloak and a steamer cap, and seemed provided against the coolness of the air, which was still marked.

When the stewardess had gone, and Edgerly also, for he disappeared at once, I waited for Miss May to speak again, but she lay with closed eyes so long that I grew uneasy.

"There is a doctor among the passengers," I said. "I think when you go below, you had best let him see you. I am alarmed at your condition."

She raised herself and surveyed the decks in every direction. Then she took a less recumbent position.

"Who is the man that came to me at the top of the stairs?" she asked, in a whisper.

"His name is Edgerly and he is from Albany. I never saw him till yesterday."

"He has called at the office of my last employer, and I am afraid he recognized me. Did he say anything to intimate it?"

"No," I answered. "There is not one chance in a thousand that he remembers you. I never in my life have looked closely enough at a stenographer to know her if we met outside."

"I hope he doesn't," she said, uneasily. "I felt so sure there would be no one here who had ever seen me!"

"His chair is next yours at the table," I remarked. "If he intimates that your face is known to him you have only to convince him that he is mistaken."

"I want that seat changed," she said, earnestly. "Can't you sit between us? I—I can't explain why, but I don't like him. What business had he to offer me his arm?"

I laughed at the serious way she regarded the matter, saying he had only done as any gentleman might, but added that I would certainly put her between myself and Mr. Wesson, if she preferred.

"And who is Mr. Wesson?" she asked.

"My room-mate, that I told you about. He is a splendid fellow."

"Can you see him anywhere at this moment?" she asked, looking around.

"Yes—he is there, talking with the second officer—the man with the white cap. If he comes this way I will present you."

She said there was no need of haste, that she did not wish to meet the passengers any more than was

absolutely necessary; when we went to the table would be quite time enough.

"Mr. Camwell," she added, after a pause, "you can't imagine how I feel. If I had dreamed I should experience such sensations I never would have come."

"What sensations?" I asked, rather shortly, for I thought she might consider my feelings a little.

"The sensation of being a deceiver of those about me; the shame of passing for what I am not; the dread of somehow being exposed for what I am."

I grew angrier as she proceeded.

"If you were not ill," I said, "I should be out of patience with you. What awful crime have you committed? You are travelling in a perfectly respectable way, with a respectable party of people; occupying a room with a lady; acting in a rational manner except for these vagaries, which I must ask you to suppress. To be sure the name assigned you on the passenger list is not your own, but plenty of people travel incognito, even princes and dukes, for that matter. You make a mountain out of a molehill. Your whole journey will be ruined—and mine, if you care anything about that—if you go on as you have begun."

She begged my pardon humbly, saying she would do her best to amend her conduct in the future. And, as usual, the moment she took this attitude, I repented of my hard words and assured her I had no intention of being too critical.

"The lady who occupies the room with me is very agreeable," was her next observation. "She offered to do anything she could to relieve my head last night, and this morning she bathed it with cologne for half an hour."

"She sits opposite us at the table," I said. "With her uncle."

"I am glad of that. I feel quite acquainted with her now."

Then she assayed a question of the sort that emanate from women.

"Don't you think her very handsome?"

"She's not bad looking," I admitted.

"I call her magnificent. Such a face and form do not often go together."

I wanted to reply, "So she said in her advertisement," but I merely nodded.

"There is another woman on this boat that I would not exchange for a thousand of her," I said, presently, in a low voice.

"Point her out to me," said Miss May. "I would like to know what your ideal is."

"Look in your mirror," I responded.

"Why do you think it necessary," she asked, frowning, "to pay me that kind of compliment?"

"I think it necessary to refrain from doing so, but sometimes I grow forgetful."

She saw that I was very sober again.

"If you meant what you say, it would not be so wicked," she replied, gently.

"You know very well that I mean it."

"Mr. Camwell," she said, leaning very close to me, "we are obliged to lie to outsiders, in the contract

we have assumed. Let us always tell the truth to each other."

"If I told you the truth," I responded, gloomily, "you would not sit where you are. You would find strength to walk down those stairs and back to your room alone."

She grew slightly paler, though her cheeks were waxen enough before.

"Then do not tell it to me just now," she replied, with an attempt at a laugh. "I would rather remain on deck where the air is purer."

When the lunch bell rang I advised Miss May to take her repast where she was, promising to send a steward to her with a bill of fare. It pleased me to learn when I came back that she had made quite a meal and was feeling considerably better.



The succeeding two days contained nothing of high importance, but there were several little things that deserve to be chronicled.

The first time Marjorie came to the table and was introduced by me to the others as "Miss Carney," I fancied that a smile rested lightly on the features of Miss Howes, for which I could not account. Marjorie was seated between Mr. Wesson and me, and I saw with pleasure that they seemed likely to be good friends. It was desirable in the interest of our general plan that she and I should not act as if there was no one else in the world. Stone and his wife were quiet people, who rarely spoke unless first addressed. Edgerly was good-natured but not obtrusive. The most of the talk, therefore, at table, came from Mr. and Miss Howes, Wesson and myself. We got to be at last a rather jolly party.

Carrying out my plan, now that Miss May had apparently recovered from her indisposition, I left her alone a good deal, or rather with one or more of the others as her companion on deck. They aroused in her an interest in the trip, for which I was glad. Edgerly probably talked with her the least of all, and she told me he never mentioned having seen her before. Miss Howes was her most constant companion, quite naturally, when it is considered that they roomed in one cabin.

But on the third day out, just before dinner time, Miss May came to me with a distressed face that showed unusual perturbation. She was actually trembling and her eyes looked as if she had been weeping.

"A terrible thing has happened!" she said, when I followed her to a place where no one could overhear us. "I would not tell you if I could help it, but you will have to know." Then, in response to my inquiring look, she added, "Some one has entered my stateroom and robbed me!"

As far as she could learn, nothing had been taken but her turquoise ring, but the feeling that her effects were unsafe agitated her greatly. In response to questions she said she had left the ring on a little rack above the washbowl, when she washed her hands for lunch, as she had done twice before. She was absolutely certain where she put it, but had made a thorough search of her handbag, the only other place it could have been.

I told her not to get excited, but to ask the stewardess, whom I would send to her when she went down again, if she had seen it. I remarked, also, that I believed a theft on that line under such conditions was of extremely rare occurrence, and that she had best quiet her nerves until an investigation could be made.

"But it was your ring—it really belonged to you—" she stammered, "and I feel ever so much worse than if it were my own."

"That is mere casuistry," I replied, "but, if it pleases you to call all your things mine, of course, you will continue doing so. Whosoever it is, we must do our best to recover it."

At dinner Miss May whispered to me that the stewardess had made a diligent search, but without effect. The meal passed rather dully. Miss May was pale and distraught. I sympathized with her, though the value of the lost article was not great. I wished I had some of the intuition of a Monsieur Lecoq that I might place the offence on the right person and relieve the strain I could not help feeling.

It must be one of the stewards, who were continually in and out of the adjacent rooms, or a fellow passenger. In either case something of the ease and comfort of the voyage was lost. A mosquito who enters your room at night is not as large as a lion nor on the whole quite as dangerous; but he can, if he chooses, banish sleep from your eyes.

That confounded ring made a lot of trouble. I began to suspect everybody on board. The stewardess promised to say nothing of the occurrence, and I at first followed the same course. The only one I did tell, and that the next day, was Mr. Wesson, and the contribution he made to the case was merely a depressed shake of the head and a long-drawn sigh.



CHAPTER XII.

A LITTLE GAME OF CARDS.

The reader will doubtless have come to the conclusion that I was by this time tired of my bargain and wished Miss Marjorie May had never come across my path. On the contrary I was well satisfied with the way things were going, in the main. The ocean has a charm for me that nothing else can equal. The bracing effect of the sea air was being felt in every fibre of my frame. Miss May's coolness was not of a kind to annoy me seriously, and much better than the opposite extreme would have been. There was nothing like a breach between us. She was merely allowing me to get the full benefit of my voyage.

I had never, at any time, feared that I would experience trouble in passing my time while on shipboard. My dread was of the days to be spent ashore, and for these she would be with me to divert my mind. The matter of the stolen ring was a mere incident of travel, and might have happened anywhere. The intrinsic value of the article was small. It would not be hard to replace it.

Miss May asked me the day after the ring was missed if I knew anything about her roommate. She said it in a way that showed suspicion and set me to thinking. "Miss Howes" had plenty of jewelry of her own, and was hardly likely to purloin the turquoise; but I knew her to be rather "off color," and more open to suspicion than a woman of different character. I asked Capt. Fraser, the commander of the boat, what the record of the stewardess was, without leading him to guess my object, and when he told me I dismissed all thoughts against her.

It might have been Miss Howes, it might have been one of the stewards. I urged Miss May to think of it as little as possible.

But this was not to be. Miss Howes told her during the day that she also had lost some jewelry, taken from a bag that, more careful than Miss May, she had locked. The article consisted of a bracelet of the value of \$300, and was a serious affair. Miss May was obliged to relate her own misfortune, and Mr. Howes, when the matter was brought to his attention, went straight to the captain with the news. A vigorous questioning followed of all the steward's staff, but without result. There was nothing to clear up the mystery.

Miss Howes being certain that her bag was locked made the theft seem that of an expert, who was provided with keys. Her "uncle" thought it best after that to put the bag into his own steamer trunk, which had a peculiar lock that he did not believe could be opened except by force. Before night I discovered that a diamond stud, the only valuable jewel I ever wore, had been taken from my own room, but when I could not tell. I had not worn it on the trip, nor indeed for some time previous, and had carried it along merely because it happened to be in a small box with some cuff-studs and collar buttons. I locked my trunk after that, but said nothing about the loss.

The next morning when Marjorie reported, with tears, that her earrings had also disappeared, I comforted her as well as I could, but I felt that both of us had been culpably careless in leaving our valuables about so loosely.

Wesson learned of the loss of these jewels and said in a quiet way that he was going to try to unearth the rascal. He spent hours at a time in our room, listening for approaching steps in that part of the steamer, besides interviewing the ladies at length. I thought he acted as if suspicion might fall on himself,

occupying quarters so near the scene of the theft, but this was of course ridiculous.

Miss May had now made the acquaintance of several passengers, and had little need of my companionship. I got into the habit of spending considerable time in the smoking room, where cigars and cards were the attraction, besides an occasional story from a passenger. Of course, I played in a few games, sometimes for fun and oftener for a small stake. My luck is usually good, and I began to be pointed out as a man ahead of the game. One evening, on a very low limit indeed, I retired \$75 ahead, though at the last I really tried my best to lose.

Edgerly, who was on the opposite side, and had given up considerable of this coin, was one of the best-natured fellows I had ever seen. He was equally jolly whether luck was on his side or against him. I chummed with him more than with any of the other passengers, now that Wesson had gone into the business of amateur detective. Sometimes when I was with Miss May, Edgerly would come and sit by us, addressing an occasional remark to her. She had not learned to like him, however, and he did not find it very agreeable.

"Miss Carney has never forgiven me for offering to assist her that day she came on deck," he said to me, once. "I meant well enough, I'm sure. I knew that she was in your party, for I saw you when you came on board, and I thought it as easy to help her as to call your attention to her presence."

I made light of the matter, saying that my cousin was of a very retiring disposition and made few acquaintances when travelling. In talking with her afterwards I asked her to treat my friend as politely as she could, as I felt that she injured his feelings.

"If he was a true gentleman he never would complain of such a little thing," she answered, coldly. "But, of course, I am in your service—"

"Then do as I ask," I replied, shortly. "The next time he comes to speak to either of us, don't act toward him like a she-bear."

She promised meekly to obey; and an hour later, when I went to look for my steamer chair I found Edgerly in it, apparently on very good terms with his neighbor. They were laughing over something at the moment, which seemed to please both mightily. Rejoiced at the change I did not make my proximity known, but went back to the smoking room.

That evening the fact that we were to see our first land the next day was the general topic of conversation. Several of us who had made the voyage before were airing our wisdom, when Edgerly entered the smoking room and, slapping me a shade too familiarly on the back, asked if I was ready to give him his revenge for the times I had worsted him at poker. He was too evidently under the influence of liquor and I did not like to play with him while in that condition. When I made an excuse, however, the Albanian looked so downhearted that I altered my decision and said I would play him for anything from a glass of soda up.

There was no need of putting our stakes on the table, as we were both supposed to be gentlemen. All I wanted was to leave the steamer at St. Thomas with none of his cash in my pocket. In this I succeeded, as will appear, even better than I could have hoped.

In a quick succession of plays Edgerly convinced me that he had a hand which he could rely on. Before I hardly realized it, I had over \$200 in the game. I heard a low whisper at my elbow. It was from Wesson and conveyed a warning to drop out at the earliest opportunity. Edgerly noticed what was up as quickly as I, and neither of us relished the interference. At that instant my opponent raised me \$200 and having three aces I called.

Edgerly's face lit up with joy as he exhibited a straight flush of diamonds, king at the head.

Success had transformed my quiet friend. He put his hand on the cash which I counted out to him, uttering an exultant yell, as he gathered it up, \$425. His exultation, or at least his manner of showing it, was quite out of place, I thought, in a game between friends; but I merely rose, and remarking that I would now take my evening stroll and smoke on deck, went out. The moon was at its full. In my admiration for its beautiful effect on the sea I forgot for the moment the folly of which I had just been guilty. But Wesson soon joined me, as was his nightly custom, and began to talk of what had just occurred.

"Some other topic of conversation would please me better," I responded. "It is not a delightful reflection that one has been drawn into a course against which his better judgment distinctly warned him."

"But the man is a fraud," he persisted. "He did not win your money honestly, and if I were you I would make him give it back."

"Pshaw!" said I. "He's the better player, that's all. I lost my head and got over-excited. Now, we must drop the subject, as I wish to think of it no more."

Seeing that I was determined, Wesson obliged me and nothing more was said about the unpleasant matter. The next morning Edgerly was not at the breakfast table. Some time later, as I was walking the deck, he came toward me, with a good-natured greeting, though his face bore evidence of the foolish amount of liquor he had swallowed the night before.

"I'm afraid," he said, "that I won more of your money yesterday than I intended. I was astounded this morning when I counted what I had in my pocket. You must let me return at least a part of it. In a gentleman's game—"

I interrupted with the statement that I had no fault to find and that I should not listen to any proposition of that nature. My pride was hurt by a suggestion that I would crawl out of the result of my own acts.

"Oh, well, if you insist," he said, in a disappointed tone. "I am disgusted with myself for getting in that condition, which is something I seldom do. There is one thing you must do, however. Let me give you back the cash in exchange for a check or note. I would not for anything leave you short of ready money on a trip like this, and I know travellers seldom think it necessary to carry a great deal about them."

I had not thought of that, but it did occur to me as he spoke that with two persons in my party, and a journey without fixed limits, I might, as he said, run short before I reached home again. There was nothing lowering to my pride in exchanging my check for the money he had won. I thanked Mr. Edgerly and said, on reflection, that if it really made no difference to him, I would write him a check for whatever sum he pleased to exchange. And I proceeded to do so for \$350, as he named that figure.

Wesson came up just as we parted, but I did not think it necessary to inform him of what had taken place. To tell the truth I did not exactly like the air of protector that he was putting on over me of late. It seemed impertinent when he warned me to leave the card table, just before my heavy loss, for I would rather a hundred times have dropped the amount than exhibit myself as a craven before my fellow passengers.

Nor did I fancy his characterization of Edgerly as a sharper. I saw nothing to justify the assertion. He had taken his losses like a man when the luck ran my way, and no one, so far as I was aware, had indicated that I stacked the cards.

I resolved to show Wesson, if he interfered any more in my affairs that I resented his conduct. He was a well meaning fellow and I had no wish to quarrel with him; but there are limits to forbearance.

"Have you told any one on the steamer that you are going to leave at St. Thomas?" Miss May asked me, soon after breakfast, when the outlines of the island were in view.

"The purser has our tickets. Why?"

"If we could get away without any of the passengers knowing, I would be very glad. I hate good-bys. Everybody will go ashore. Let us be the last to leave, and put our baggage in a separate boat."

I thought her reason a strange one, but she was to be my sole companion for a long time now, and I wished to please her in every way. I responded that I would do as she said, and even ask the purser not to mention my intention to any one.

The warm clasp she gave my hand would have repaid me for a much greater effort to suit her. Her eyes shone with a new happiness and her cheeks, which had been pale ever since the boat left New York, took on a faint tinge of color.

Lunch was served just before landing and at the table Edgerly asked me what there was to see on the island. I mentioned the points of particular interest, which to tell the truth are few, though the town of Charlotte Amélie is in itself well worth a visit.

"I shall spend the day with old friends," I added. "I feel quite like a resident here."

Only those who have sailed into this harbor will appreciate its special beauties. I had been a warm friend of the project of annexing the Danish Islands, consisting, besides St. Thomas, of St. Croix and St. John, to the possessions of the United States, ever since I was here before. While neither a jingo nor a land grabber, the value of St. Thomas from a naval standpoint is so apparent to one who will stop and think that I have hardly patience to argue the matter with opponents of the scheme.

If the United States is to maintain a navy, an occasional coaling station somewhere away from the coast is of prime importance; and these islands are offered us for an insignificant sum by Denmark, who with her crippled commerce has no longer any use for them.

St. Thomas has a harbor that can accommodate a great number of vessels, a floating dock, immense coal wharves, skilled artisans for the repair of ships, and a conformation from which could be made a small Gibraltar with reasonable expense.

The Trans-Atlantic cable lands here, giving communication with all parts of the world. In case of a war with any European country the possession of St. Thomas would be of incalculable value to us. However much one may love peace, it is poor policy in these days to be unprepared for a conflict. China is the latest instance of a great country that finds itself open to the assaults of any fifth-rate power.

When it was first proposed to sell St. Thomas to the American nation (in 1867, I believe) a vote of the inhabitants showed but 14 opposed to the plan. No European government has expressed the slightest objection to the purchase. I only hope that before this story is published a bill to that effect will have been signed by President M'Kinley.

"Aren't you going ashore?" asked Mr. Wesson, as he passed down the stairs to a rowboat, in which the Howes, "uncle" and "niece," and Edgerly were already seated.

Just then I heard my name called by a voice from an approaching skiff—my right name, this time.

"Camran!" came the voice. It was awkward, but I must try to explain it as an error, in case anybody noticed.

It was Edward Moron, agent of the line, whose acquaintance I had made in my former visit. I would

have known his white helmet and Dundreary whiskers anywhere, but at the moment he was most inconvenient.

I waved my walking stick in reply, and as soon as he could get on board he grasped my hand. Excusing myself from Miss May for a moment, I followed him some steps away.

"Confound you!" I said, "my name is not Camran, but Camwell."

"It used to be 'Camran,' I'll take my oath to that," he replied. "But, whatever name it is, how are you? Going to stop here, I hope."

"Till evening," I answered, for I feared if I told him the truth he might tell it to other passengers, who would be sure to run across him. "Now, answer me a question. Is Eggert's place in quarantine?"

It was not, for which I was profoundly grateful. If I was to stay in St. Thomas at all I wanted to stay at the Quarantine Station, where I had been before—the only quarantine in the world where a man is happier inside than out.

I went to tell Miss May that we could go to Eggert's, and then to ask my stateroom steward to have my baggage brought on deck.

"I don't want you to tell anybody that I leave the boat here," I said, flourishing a five dollar bill in his face. "Now, mind!"

He promised. The baggage came duly up and two boats were engaged to take us directly to Eggert's.

With the lightest heart I had known for a year, I helped my fair companion down and heard the oars of our negro boatmen splash in the waters of the harbor.

CHAPTER XIII.

BATHING IN THE SURF.

There was something really delightful in the way Eggert received me. (I am not going to put "Mister" before his name—even his wife does not do that, in ordinary conversation.) He heard "Laps," the dog, barking violently and came to the veranda to ascertain the reason.

"Do you know me?" I asked.

"Know you!" he said, grasping both my hands heartily, and looking from me to Miss May. "Of course, I know you. Where did you come from? I am so happy to see you again!"

I introduced my "cousin," and he gave her as cordial greeting as he had given me.

"Why, even Laps knows you," he said, as the dog barked and capered around us. "Mother will be very glad to see you. You came on the Madiana? How good you were to think of us and come out here!"

Mrs. Eggert soon appeared and answered my numerous questions. The eldest daughter was married and lived in the town. The children had gone there to spend the day, but would soon return.

Of course we were going to remain to dinner.

When I said we might stay a week or more, it was plain that we were very welcome. Rooms were assigned us, on one of the verandas, I having my old one, by special request, and Miss May the one next to mine.

Eggert walked up and down with me, smiling broadly and talking of the old days when our party was quarantined there. There never was another party like it, he insisted. He produced a large photograph that he had taken of the entire group, with donkeys and negroes in the foreground.

"This was your room," he said, indicating it. "Mr. A—— had the next one, Mr. H—— the next, Mr. Mapp the other, and so on. We never had a party like that before or since. You were all so good natured and had such a good time!"

I responded that he did very well for us, which aided in our enjoyment, and that I had not thought of staying at a hotel unless his place was quarantined; which pleased him mightily.

When Miss May retired to her room to arrange her dress, Eggert asked me slyly if she was to be the future Mrs. Camran. This reminded me that I had reached a fork of the road, where I must either take this whole family into my secret or explain my change of name to my companion. The latter was decided upon as the most feasible. When she emerged and drew a chair to the edge of the veranda to admire the prospect of land and sea I told her that henceforth she must call me by a new name.

She looked inquiringly into my face.

"Do you remember suggesting on the steamer," I asked, "that as we had to lie to others we ought to tell the truth among ourselves? Well, my name is Camran, not Camwell. The family here will call me by that name, and as there is no need of deceiving you, I will admit that it is the correct one."

"But why," she asked, "did you use the other? Was it because you were afraid to trust me?"

"Remember how little I knew you," I said.

"Quite as well as I knew you," she replied, reproachfully.

"And have you told me the entire truth in all things?"

She reddened deeply.

"Your name, then, is David Camran—am I right now?" she asked.

"Donald Camran," I corrected. "That is my real name and henceforth you may call me so; unless we come across any of the Madiana's passengers, in which case consistency will compel you to use the old one."

Miss May seemed agitated by my last remark.

"How can we meet them?" she asked. "Is not our separation from them final?"

"It is supposed to be; but how can we tell that some may not follow our example and stop off at one of the islands? In that case it is quite possible we may encounter them as we proceed on our journey."

She did not seem to like the idea, but remained silent for some minutes.

"Does any person, on the Madiana, know that the name in the passenger list is not your true one?" she said, finally.

"Yes. Mr. Wesson knows; and Mr. Edgerly."

She put her hand over her mouth with a quick motion, as if to suppress a scream.

"How could you tell those casual acquaintances what you concealed from me?" she said, hoarsely.

"What difference can it make? I was introduced to Wesson in the office of the steamship agent, some time before we sailed, as I remember telling you. We exchanged cards. When he afterwards saw the way my name was spelled on the list he asked me how it happened and I ascribed it to a printer's error. I added, that as all the passengers would probably call me Camwell, it was easier for him to do so than to explain the mistake to fifty people."

"Yes," said Miss May, slowly. "And—Edgerly?"

I thought she was awfully pressing, but I wanted to keep on good terms with her and I proceeded to account for his knowledge also.

"Well, Miss Inquisitive, Edgerly's case was like this: He won a small sum of money from me at poker and was kind enough to offer to refund it, and take my check for the amount. Thinking I might want the ready money to buy you a paper of pins or something of that sort I accepted his proposal with thanks. Of course, he asked what right I had to sign the name of Donald Camran to the check, and of course, I told him of the agent's 'error' on the passenger list. There! Is there anything else you would like to know?"

Saying this I took the hand nearest me in mine, to show that my bantering was entirely good natured, and was surprised to find it quite cold.

"Marjorie!" I exclaimed. "You are ill!"

She smiled faintly and admitted that she had a slight chill. I persuaded her to take a hot drink and went at once to prepare it. When I returned she had gone to her room and was bathing her face with cologne water. Her hair, which she had combed with care half an hour earlier, was much disarranged and her eyes were swollen.

"Come in and sit down," she said. Then, as I hesitated, she added, "Oh, you can leave the door open."

The door was a frame affair covered with mosquito bar, there being nothing more seclusive in the house. Cold weather never reaches St. Thomas at any time of year. I explained to her that to leave the door open was to invite the intrusion of insects.

"I am going to lie down," she replied. "My head aches." She drank part of the liquid I had brought. "We can't be prudish," she said, then. "The door is practically open at all times, for it is free to admit light and sound. Are you afraid to be alone with me? Perhaps you had best send for one of the servants to guard you."

"Or Laps?" I suggested, laughing.

I entered and took a chair, while she arranged herself upon the bed, with pillows to prop her up into a half-sitting posture.

"Don," she began. "You will let me call you Don?"

"You can call me what you please," I said. "Don or anything else that begins with D. 'Dear' or 'Darling,' if that suits you better."

I could not make her smile.

"Are you very, very sorry you took me with you?" she asked, earnestly.

"Not very, very."

"But—you wish you hadn't?"

I shook my head decidedly.

"Of what use am I to you?" she asked.

"Women were never made to be of use," I answered. "They are like bouquets, meant to fill the atmosphere with beauty and fragrance."

"And—do I do that—for you?"

I kissed the fingers she placed in mine. The smile came to her face at last.

"I shall be ready to begin the typewriting to-morrow," she said. "I understand the machine now, I think, well enough." (She had practiced on it in her cabin on the Madiana, several days, for some hours.) "I shall be glad when I am doing a little to earn the salary you pay me."

I made a grimace. The confounded record of my family's descent was far from interesting me at that moment.

"You earn more than your salary every hour," I said. "I am immensely in your debt already. By the way, I must pay you what I owe, before the sum gets any larger. It is quite three weeks and you have had nothing."

I counted out sixty dollars in gold coin and she took it without a word. She was always doing something strange and I had ceased to wonder. I had imagined that she would say it was too much—or that I had reckoned the date of service too far back, or something of that kind.

"Would you bathe my head a little?" she asked, indicating the cologne.

I bathed her forehead, and found it as much too hot as her hands were too cold. It had a soothing effect on me, as well as on her, this action. It made me feel as I had not felt before, that our fortunes were really for the time running in the same mold.

"Perhaps you could sleep a little before dinner," I suggested, after a time. "Let me leave you to try."

She thanked me and before my hand left her, she put it gratefully to her lips. She did not kiss it, but rather breathed upon it a sigh of appreciation.

Thorwald and Ingeborg had just arrived from town and it was evident that the former's claim that he remembered me was founded on fact. The little girl was too young at my former visit to recollect anything about it, but she seemed to know me in a way and nodded when her mother asked if she did not remember my face in the photograph that hung in the dining room. Thorwald was now nine and about the finest specimen of a little man I have ever seen. His father could not conceal his pride in the boy, and I did not blame him.

"Ah, I am very happy with that little fellow!" he said, repeatedly.

I looked over the harbor just before dinner was served and saw the Madiana getting under way, bound for St. Croix (or Santa Cruz, as we are more apt to call it.) Eggert rigged his powerful telescope for me in the doorway, where I could see without being seen.

I easily picked out the passengers who were on deck. Mr. and Miss Howes and Mr. Edgerly were in one group. They were talking earnestly, and I guessed that Miss May and myself were quite likely the subject of their conversation.

I imagined them wondering whether our stay on shore was the result of design or accident. I hoped Howes was getting his money's worth and that his "niece" was satisfied with the fish she had caught with her Herald hook. As far as I could judge neither of them had thus far repented of their bargain.

I could hardly believe the lady had taken Miss May's ring, that she had entered my room and walked off with my shirt-stud. There was a big difference, it seemed to me, between a love affair based on natural law and a deliberate theft. The mysterious disappearance of the jewelry would probably never be accounted for and I certainly cared very little about it.

My companion came to the table, but ate sparingly. The meal suited me to perfection, especially the fresh fish, drawn that day from the Caribbean, which swarms in the most appetizing varieties. The butter came in tins from Denmark, and was not bad. There was a ragout, some cakes, plenty of oranges and "figs," as the small yellow bananas are called in the Islands, good black coffee and cheese, and a fine *petit verre* of brandy to top off with.

Eggert and his wife dined with us at my earnest request.

The quarantine master filled up the time with little reminiscences of my former stay, which he remembered much better than I. He pointed to the exact spot where each of the "famous party" sat at the table and laughed himself nearly into a fit as he spoke of the jokes Mapp played on the good-natured Haytian Jew we had named from his home town—"Puerta Plata." One of the guests of that day was the grandson of an American president and another the son of an American senator, but that did not harm either. A more diversified party, it is safe to say, were never placed together in a quarantine, or made the time pass in livelier fashion.

When dinner ended the Madiana was out of sight. Miss May's headache had vanished and she passed the evening with me on the veranda, inspecting the stars through the telescope. They seemed brighter and larger than in America and what knowledge I had of their names and locations (gained principally three years before from the grandson of the President, who was an amateur astronomer of no mean acquirements) I imparted freely.

"You seem ever so much better in health than when we left New York," said my companion.

"I am," was my reply. "The sea always does wonders for me. I have lost entirely the nervous feeling I had before we started."

"I wish I could say as much," she said. "I dread, for instance, going to bed alone in this strange place. Those shadows dancing on the grass almost terrify me."

"I will get Eggert to put a lock on your door," I said. "He must have one somewhere and he is an excellent carpenter."

She shuddered till her teeth chattered.

"Not for the world!" she said. "I could not sleep with the door locked. I should feel as if I were choking. There is always a chance that one may be taken ill and have to call for help. With a locked door, what could I do? No, no! I will conquer my fears, which I admit are foolish ones."

"The station is surrounded by a high fence," I said, "and the gate cannot be unbarred from the outside. You are perfectly safe. My room is close by. If the slightest thing alarms you, you have only to speak."

She breathed with difficulty. It was plain that her terrors were genuine.

"You will come—if I call you?" she asked.

"Assuredly."

"Do you sleep as lightly as that?"

"I sleep like a child, as a general thing; but my name spoken by your voice will wake me instantly."

We went to her door, where she parted from me with little ceremony and in twenty minutes I was unconscious. The night passed without the summons from her that I half expected. In the morning she admitted that after some delay she had gone to sleep and enjoyed a good rest.

Among the articles we brought was a bathing suit for each of us, for I remembered the pleasant beach at the foot of the rocks. At five o'clock, to escape the burning rays of the sun which rises soon after, Miss May came from her room, looking as pretty as can be imagined. Her sleeveless arms were even rounder than I had anticipated, and her low-cut vest told a pleasant tale. The long black hose were filled symmetrically and the short skirt revealed just enough to make the picture enchanting.

"You look wonderfully well in that costume," she said, evidently to anticipate what I was going to say. So I contented myself with replying, "And you."

The water was quite warm enough and we enjoyed the surf hugely. What I did enjoy however, was the sight of a man on the veranda of Eggert's, apparently awaiting our return.

No less a person, in short, than Mr. Wesson, our late fellow passenger, whom we supposed forty miles away at St. Croix!

CHAPTER XIV.

"OH! THIS NAUGHTY BOY!"

As has been intimated once or twice before, I had modified to some degree the liking I at first entertained for Mr. Wesson. He interfered in my affairs rather more than was to my taste. I had never placed myself under his guardianship. He had no right to advise or to warn me on any subject whatever. As I beheld him on the veranda at Eggert's I saw in his presence a new impertinence which I was far from relishing. If there had been any way to avoid him I would have done so gladly.

Of course Miss May had no means of knowing what was in my mind. She therefore waved her hand to Wesson as soon as she recognized his face and on coming nearer gave him a cordial welcome.

"Well, this is a surprise!" he exclaimed, glancing from one of us to the other. "You did not tell me you intended to stop at St. Thomas and I supposed you still on the Madiana."

"How comes it you are here, yourself?" I asked, pointedly. "I do not recollect that you expressed any intention of leaving the boat."

"Did I not?" he asked, as if surprised. "I could have sworn I did until you spoke. I certainly made you talk about this island, for hours at a time, and I thought you understood it. I feel almost as well acquainted with Mr. Eggert and his family, through your descriptions, as if I had actually been here before. Being an early riser I inquired the way this morning, at the Hotel du Commerce, and walked out to see the place you had made so attractive. One of the darkies let me in at the gate, and here I am."

It was plain enough now. He had supposed I understood his intention, though he had never, I was sure, put the statement into words. He had as much right there as I, if it came to that. There was really no reason why I should treat him uncivilly.

Miss May went on to her room and I waited a moment before going to mine.

"Now you are here," I said, "you will of course take breakfast with me—or at least coffee, if you are in too much haste to wait longer."

"I'm not in the least haste," he responded, "and I accept your invitation with great pleasure."

"I've found an old friend here, Mr. Eggert," I said, as that individual appeared in a doorway. "We came on the Madiana together."

Asking Eggert to entertain him for a little while I went to dress. Miss May heard me come in and spoke through the thin partition between our rooms.

"You didn't act overjoyed to see Mr. Wesson," she said.

"No. He's a sort of 'third person makes a crowd,' you know."

"You're a selfish fellow. But wasn't that bath delightful!"

"Perfection. Did I overstate it, when I described it to you yesterday?"

"Not in the least—ough!"

"What is the matter?"

"I've stuck a pin in my finger."

"I'm so sorry!"

Then followed sounds which indicated that the finger was being placed in her mouth to assuage the pain.

"What a pity you are not a girl!" she said, a little later. "You could help dress me and save a lot of trouble."

"I could help dress you without that awful alternative," I replied. "I am like the pilot in the story, I know every rock in the harbor."

"Oh, I've no doubt. Look out, like that same pilot, you're not wrecked on one of them some day."

"Can you manage a string tie?" I asked, as a more important subject was forced on my attention.

I always made a mess of that operation and this morning my luck was worse than usual.

"Easily," she said. "Do you want me to fix yours?"

"I wish you would."

"I will, with pleasure," she said. "Come in here when you are ready; or, shall I come there?"

"For goodness' sake don't come just yet!" I exclaimed, thinking I heard her step. "I am not at all prepared. In fact that tie is about the only article of dress I have on."

"Don't be afraid," came the mocking tones. "I am in much the same situation. Fifteen minutes from now we will both be ready, and then I shall be at your service."

After several minutes of silence I inquired whether any more pins had proved unruly.

"No, I'm getting on pretty well. Say, can you get at your soap?"

"Why, do you want some?"

"Yes."

"How can I get it to you?"

"Put on your morning gown and come to my door."

I did so, with the cake of soap in my hand and met my companion, somewhat similarly arrayed, holding out a bare arm. She did look to my eyes at that moment wonderfully pretty.

"Come, Marjorie," I said, dropping into the affectionate form, "you might let me in for a minute or two. You don't know how becoming that attire is."

"I know all about it. I've been looking in the glass. Hurry up and finish dressing. I will meet you on the veranda."

Wesson came along at that moment with Eggert and smiled. I resented that smile. It meant a hundred things that he had no right to surmise; besides, they weren't true.

"It is perfectly lovely here," he commented, to Eggert as much as to me. "My friend Camwell has not misrepresented it in the least."

"Camran," corrected Eggert, for which I could have punched his head. Were they going to argue that point over between them?

"Camran, I should have said," corrected Wesson. "Could I make arrangements to come out here and board while I remain on the island?"

"Damn!" I exclaimed, under my breath, but Marjorie heard me through the partition.

"What is the matter?" she asked, sympathetically. "Has something pricked you, too?"

"Yes," I said, for the couple on the veranda had moved out of hearing. "Something I don't like. What do you think that confounded Wesson is saying to Eggert?"

"I don't know."

"He wants to come out here and board."

"Well, that idea does credit to his judgment."

"But it will put me to lots of bother."

"I don't see how."

"Why, if he moves out here, you and I will have to move up to the town."

She digested this statement for a while, during which she put the finishing touches to her toilet. Then she asked if I was in suitable condition for her to come to my door.

"Come and see," I retorted. "I've got on much more than either of us had when we strolled down to the beach an hour ago. I think I heard somebody say yesterday that there was no need of being too prudish."

"But at that time I wasn't feeling well."

"And at this time I'm feeling devilish bad, myself."

She came slowly, with little stops, at which she renewed her inquiries and asked for fuller information. When she finally arrived I proved to be completely dressed with the exception of the tie and a morning coat, and we had a laugh together.

"You didn't really mean that you would leave here just on account of Mr. Wesson's coming?" she said, interrogatively, as she arranged the tie.

"Yes," I replied, holding up my head to give her fingers full play. Her breath was in my nostrils, sweet breath that made me think of meadows and new-mown hay.

"What harm can he do us?"

"He'll be continually in the way."

"He seems very polite always."

"That's just the trouble," I snarled. "If he would only get ugly I could have it out with him in a minute. If he would keep at one end of the veranda while we were at the other, all would be well. He won't do that. He'll be good natured, sociable, all that sort of hateful thing. The quarantine grounds measure only five acres and there's not room enough here for any other man, while it is your residence."

She was so near that I could have snatched a kiss before she could stop me. I would almost as soon have bitten her.

"Eggert?" she said, tentatively. "He's got to go, too, then?"

"No, I make an exception of Eggert. But Wesson—I simply can't have him here. Either he must go, or I shall."

We had passed the coffee hour, forgetting it in the pleasure of the bath and the labor of dressing. The regular breakfast was now announced. I determined to be as agreeable to Wesson as I could, but I did not think Eggert need to have placed him on the other side of Marjorie, next to her. Still, how was he to know?

"I have been talking with our host about coming out here for awhile," said Wesson, as we were breakfasting. "It is ever so much pleasanter than in the town."

He must have seen, in spite of my efforts, that I did not enthuse over the idea, for all I could say was "Ah," and wait for him to proceed.

"I hardly think I will do it, though," Wesson went on to say, eyeing me narrowly. "I have a very comfortable room at the hotel. If you don't mind my coming out for a stroll occasionally"—he looked alternately at Miss May and at me—"I think it would help me get over my lonesomeness."

Marjorie did not wait to consult me, but said she was sure he would always be welcome. She added that some literary work she and I had to do would keep us very busy for the present. To my joy, Wesson settled his plans on the spot, as he had outlined them. We were to be left alone, after all.

Soon after rising from the table Wesson started back to town. I hoped as I saw his form disappear that he did not think I had been discourteous in not endorsing his scheme to make my life a burden.

"Now," said Marjorie, brightly, as he vanished through the gate, "let us get to work. You can't imagine how happy I shall be to find myself of use after this long vacation."

I got out the memoranda required, from the bottom of a trunk, and arranged the writing machine on a little "dressmaker's table" which I had brought, folded up in a tray. It was exactly the right height, and took up hardly more room than a chess board—I mean the table, of course. For an hour I tried to put the genealogy in shape, and then threw it up with an exclamation of disgust.

"Confound the thing! I'm going to drop it for to-day," I said. "It's dryer than dust."

Marjorie obediently put away the machine at my suggestion, saying that perhaps we would begin again after lunch. I told her that the next three hours after lunch were sacred to Morpheus, and that we were now in a region where it was impossible to resist the drowsy god with impunity.

We drew our rocking chairs together and talked, and I was very happy. Sometimes I took one of her hands in mine. It was very sweet to have her there.

"It is going to be dull for you," I suggested, after a time. "Whenever you can bear it no longer say so, and we will move on."

"I am in your employ," she answered, "and shall stay or go, as you bid me."

"Marjorie," I exclaimed, suddenly, "have you ever been in love?"

"I would rather talk on some other subject," she replied, soberly.

"Then I know you have. Tell me, is he living? is he still single? do you expect to marry him?"

She closed her mouth tightly and I knew no way to open it.

"I am such a foolish fellow!" I added. "Does it surprise you to learn that? I don't want you to love any one, or even to think of any one while you are with me. I want you to like me very much indeed."

She turned her face toward me and surveyed me leisurely with those blue-gray eyes.

"I do like you," she said, kindly, "but—"

"You think I demand too much for my twenty dollars a week," I said, with an attempt to be merry. "I know I do. I realize that my contract with you was for typewriting services. There is no doubt you can hold me to that bond if you so elect. All I want to say is, I am like most contractors—and mean to better my bargain, if I can."

"What do you want?" she asked, in clear, distinct tones. "We have agreed not to lie to each other. What do you want?"

I rose and looked out upon the sea. A tiny sail was visible in the distance.

"I want a closer friendship with you," I replied, after studying the form of words.

"I think we are pretty close friends already," she said. "I would not have believed, had I been told by some fortune-teller in New York, that in ten days we would be on such perfectly intimate terms."

I resumed my seat and stretched my arms above my head.

"Why, this—this is nothing!" I said.

"I was afraid you would take that view of it," she answered, soberly, "and I hope you will permit me to resume the position called for in what you term our 'contract.'"

I was alarmed by her words and the way she spoke them. She might take a notion to carry that idea into effect, and what a dull existence I would have then.

"You certainly agreed to act as a 'companion' to me," I reminded her.

"And though I have been much more than that, you are still discontented! I have acted as if I had known you for years; in fact, that is exactly the way I feel. You may think me forward—I fear you do—but I have only tried to be natural. You talk to me as to a friend; I reply in the same strain. You take my hand in yours; I do not withdraw it. You call me to arrange a tie; I come as freely as if you were my brother. My head aches; I ask you into my chamber, lie down and submit to your manipulations with the cologne. If all this means nothing to you, as you say, it means very much to me. It means that I like you, trust you, believe you what you claimed to be—when you first told me of this plan—a gentleman."

She had put me in the dock and was reading a sort of left-handed indictment, to which I had no intention of pleading guilty.

"Listen, Marjorie," I replied. "You must not misunderstand. If any cloud comes between us it will not originate with me, knowingly. If you knew the life I have led hitherto—which you never will—you would realize what an ungovernable chap I am, and how much forbearance you are going to need. I am perfectly contented. If I can make you happy on this journey my greatest object will be accomplished. Tell me how I can best secure that result?"

"By not talking about it," she said, with a smile. "And by remembering at all times that the greatest chivalry is due a woman who has placed herself absolutely in your power—to make or mar her life."

"If you would only give me one kiss when you say that so prettily," I began—

"Breaking the rules already?" said Miss May, with an admonishing finger. "Oh, this naughty boy! what shall be done with him?"



CHAPTER XV.

WESSON BECOMES A NUISANCE.

It did not seem as if we were likely to have any serious trouble. After a couple of days we actually got down to work on the family tree and began to make some progress. Miss May showed an astonishing aptitude on the unfamiliar instrument, as well as a grasp of the subject we were trying to put into shape. Her white fingers flew over the keys, her quick mind suggested improvements in my phraseology, and she never exhibited the slightest sign of fatigue. Once at it we made a regular thing of working from seven in the morning till eleven, except for a fifteen minute rest, and made the progress that such devotion warranted, to the immense satisfaction of us both.

Those days were much alike. We always rose in time to take our ocean plunge at five and the bath never grew less exhilarating. We took coffee at half past five, breakfast at half past six, lunch at twelve, slept from one till four; strolled about the grounds or up to the town—or took a boat ride till seven; dined; talked nonsense on the veranda or played a game of whist with Eggert and his wife till ten, and then went to bed.

On Sunday we went to church, for Miss May wanted to go and I could not let her go alone. She had a nice little prayer book which she carried in a most becoming way and she was certainly the prettiest woman in the house. Wesson was there and looked devotional, though his eyes wandered in our direction more than I liked. I began to have an incipient jealousy of the man.

It got to be almost a regular thing that he came out to breakfast. Sometimes he stayed and talked with Eggert for an hour after Miss May and I had fastened ourselves down to work. Eggert liked him, which was natural, for he was always bringing something for the children. He had a cigar case, too, that was at anybody's call, filled with Havanas that were mighty good and had paid no duty, St. Thomas being a free port. Then, of course, he paid for his breakfasts, no doubt liberally. One evening when I walked up to town alone, I found him on my return chatting with Miss May in altogether too confidential a manner.

I wondered how long he intended to stay at St. Thomas. He acted quite as if he had been naturalized there. Well, we should certainly see the last of him on February 6th, when the "Pretoria" would arrive and bear us away.

Wesson stayed to dinner, though I don't know that any one invited him—probably he found the item in his bill. But he went early to town, which was better than nothing.

That evening something strange happened. I was looking over a small stock of books that Eggert kept in a case. There was not much choice, for the subjects were mostly dry ones, though I don't know as he will thank me for saying so. I happened to light on the only modern work in the lot, after a long hunt, and brought it to the lamp.

It was entitled "Our Rival, the Rascal," if I do not mistake, and was made up of letter-press and illustrations relating to prominent criminals of the day, the work of some heads of a police department, I believe. On the principle of any port in a storm it was worth spending a half hour over. I asked Eggert where he got it and he said it had been given him by a quarantined American not many months before. He looked over my shoulder for awhile as I turned the leaves, and commented openly on the villainy in the great world outside his quarantine fence and little lighthouse, with an air of simplicity that was charming.

There were the lineaments of bank robbers, murderers, sneak thieves, shoplifters, etc., by the score, evidently photographed in some cases against their will, with a sketch of the career that entitled each to this dizzy seat of fame. Once in awhile I recognized a name, that had appeared in the newspapers, but the majority were rascals with whom I was wholly unfamiliar.

Marjorie was working with a needle at the other end of the room, talking in a low tone with Mrs. Eggert. It occurred to me presently that the book might interest her, and I asked her to come to me. Mrs. Eggert went to see about some household duty and Miss May and I were left quite alone.

"Are you interested in criminology?" I asked my companion, as she took the chair by my side. "If you are, here is entertainment for you."

She stared at me vacantly, and when I turned one of the pages to her she caught at her throat as if choking.

"Oh, this is awful!" she gurgled. "How could you show a thing like that to me?"

"My darling," I protested, soothingly, "I did not know you would feel that way. This is a book that Eggert has just lent me and I thought it might interest you."

"It is horrible!" she said, going to the open door as if for air. "The one glance I took was quite enough. What good can it do to print the faces of those unhappy people? It seems like catching a rat in a trap and bringing it out for dogs to tear."

She shut her eyes and stood there, still panting. What a nervous organism she had, to be sure!

"I will put it back on the shelf," I said, "and you shall never think of it again. I seem fated to wound your tender feelings. Dear little girl, you know I do not mean to."

But it was she who would not drop the subject.

"It is shameful to print such a book," she repeated. "It is like a proposal made just before we left America, to publish the names on the pension roll."

I had an opinion on the latter suggestion, decidedly in its favor. So I explained that it was feared there were names on the list that ought not to be there and believed that a publication of the roll would result in weeding these out.

"And at the same time expose the honest poverty of half a million brave men!" she said. "All my people were on the Southern side, but I admire courage and devotion, wherever it is found. To expose the recipient of these pensions merely in the hope of detecting a few dishonest ones is shameful! So with that awful book. Some of the men pictured there may be trying to redeem themselves. What chance will they have with their faces exhibited everywhere? Oh, Don, Don! You seem a tender hearted man. How can you endorse such a wicked, cruel thing?"

I said I did not wish to argue the matter, but I understood from the preface that only persons belonging to the criminal class by profession were pictured in the book. The miserable man who had made his one error was not in the list at all.

"But who can tell," she said, growing earnest, "that even some you mention have not repented of their acts and are trying to redeem themselves? Did you never read these words of Shakespeare?"

"Why, all the souls that were were forfeit once,
And He that might the vantage best have took
Found out the remedy!"

We went to the other side of the veranda, where the moon was shining beautifully, and took chairs side by side. I gradually succeeded in turning my companion's thoughts from the disagreeable trend into which I had brought them, and for several hours we discussed other matters. We spoke in low tones, for after a short time we were the only persons awake on the premises.

We both grew to feel the spell of the Queen of Night, nowhere more lovely than over the Caribbean. Our hands wandered together and I felt strange thrills that made me wish I were even closer to the lovely being at my side. In spite of the promises I had made—to her and to myself—I could not help talking nonsense.

"What harm would it do," I said, at 11 o'clock, "when I leave you at your door at night, if you gave me just a little—a very little—kiss? It would sweeten my slumbers, I am sure, and it wouldn't hurt you."

"It would sweeten your slumbers—perhaps," she replied, soberly. "And it would drive mine away entirely. Do you think that a fair transaction?"

I chose to answer that I thought she was acting cruelly and added that if she was going to treat me in that way I would go to bed at once. She was evidently agitated by my manner, for when we reached her door she stopped.

"I am going to tell you something," she said, impressively. "Yes, at the risk of lowering myself in your estimation, unless you bid me pause."

"How can I, when I do not know what you are going to say?" I demanded.

"Then you wish to hear it?"

I nodded, curious to learn what was in her mind.

Looking with eyes that scintillated into mine she said, impressively, "Don, you cannot possibly want that kiss more than I want to give it!"

"Well," I answered, delighted at her communication. "What prevents you? I promise, on my honor, not to scream—nor even to tell."

"If I leave you to decide," said Miss May, with lips that whitened at the words, "what will you advise me?"

A chilly breeze swept along the veranda. The figure of Statia Barton came across my vision, with her finger uplifted in warning. Out on the ocean I saw a wave that was transparent and beneath it a beautiful figure, cold and dead.

I raised one of her hands to my lips and breathed a sigh upon it. I was quieted so easily!

"Good night," I said, with emotion.

"Good night," she replied. "You do not—no, you do not hate me?"

I had turned away, but I faced her again.

"I am—afraid—I love you," I said. "It was not in the compact, I did not mean to do it, but I'm afraid—I love you."

She entered her door and I passed to my room. Pulling off my clothes at haphazard I threw them on a chair and donned my pajamas. The bed was hard. I turned every way to no purpose. Sleep would not come. At last I sat up, then opened my door noiselessly and stepped barefooted upon the veranda.

Marjorie's light was still burning. The objects in her room showed with perfect distinctness through her screen door.

I paused as if petrified at the sight before me. In her white nightrobes she was kneeling by the bedside, her face buried in her hands.

It was beauty prostrate before its God, doubtless uttering a petition that he would protect her from evil.

I paced up and down the veranda noiselessly for half an hour. When I paused again before Miss May's door, the light was extinguished and I could see nothing.

"Marjorie," I whispered.

"Yes, Don."

"Forgive me. I will not offend you again."

"Yes, Don. Would—would you like to come in and bathe my head? It aches a little."

"I cannot, Marjorie. Shall I call Mrs. Eggert?"

"Her hands are not like yours."

It was a severe struggle, but I told her I must not come in—that if she would think a minute she would see I must not. She said "Very well," and we exchanged good-nights. I went to my couch very proud of the victory I had won over myself—prouder than it seems to me now I should have been.

We must both have slept some, for I was aroused by hearing Laps barking, and Marjorie had not made her appearance when the hands of my watch pointed to half past five. She told me through the partition that she did not feel like bathing that morning, and I decided to omit the bath myself.

The barking of Laps was caused by the arrival of Mr. Wesson, whom I blamed without much reason for the headache I had awakened with. The fellow irritated me exceedingly and I made up my mind to get away from the Island without waiting for the Pretoria, if there was any feasible way to do it.



CHAPTER XVI.

IT IS FROM A GIRL.

The arrival of letters, both for myself and Miss May, the next day, made me forget everything else till mine were read and answered. I had not looked for them so soon and do not know yet what course they took to reach us. It is supposed to be a rule of the postal department to forward all mail by the most expeditious route, but previous experience in the Caribbean had taught me that the rule is reversed there in most cases.

Eggert brought the things to us, having had sense enough to inquire at the office when he knew a steamer was in. Miss May had taken the precaution to have hers addressed "Care Miss M. Carney," after I told her she would be weighted with this title, and her friends supposed, no doubt, that the unfamiliar name represented the proprietress of a hotel or boarding house. She gave a joyful cry as I held two letters out to her, made the usual feminine inquiry if that was all, and retired to a corner by herself to read them, like a dog with a bone.

The first letter I opened was from Tom Barton, the second from his sister. Tom's was merely a recital of the latest happenings that he thought might interest me, and expressions of hope that I would derive great benefit from my cruise. Statia's was a homily on the beauty of holiness and a sermon on the alleged fact that wicked deeds are often punished nearer home than in that subterranean place of extreme heat of which most moderns have begun to doubt. She was evidently in about the same frame of mind as when I last saw her, but I was too glad to know that she cared enough about me to write at all to be severely critical. I liked Statia. She filled a place in my heart that had been vacant before—a sort of sisterly place, as near as I can tell—and I resolved while reading to curb my tendency to joke when I answered her and take a weight off her mind if I could.

The next letter was a formal one from Uncle Dugald, reading like an official document. And the only remaining one was—of all things—from Miss Alice Brazier, who had adopted my suggestion and renewed her injunctions at the expense of a five cent stamp. I expected something from Harvey Hume, and when I looked over the odd packages of printed matter I detected his handwriting on several of them. Like Mary of old, he had chosen the better part, and had contributed as much to my happiness as either of the others. Six daily papers and three magazines, besides a new novel, bore his fist on their wrappers, and he had broken the laws of the postoffice by scribbling on stray corners certain "God bless you's!" for which I hope he will be forgiven.

"Do you want to read a letter I have received, warning me against you?" I asked, laughingly, going to where Miss May sat. "Or perhaps, to state it more accurately, warning you against me; at least, warning us against each other."

She looked rather startled at my first observation and held out her hand for the missive as I finished.

I sat down beside her, prefacing an actual exhibition of the note from Miss Brazier by a reminder that I had informed her early in our acquaintance of the lady's answer to my Herald advertisement. She read the note through, as I held it in my hands, and when she had finished wore a very sober face.

"This seems to amuse you," she said, regarding me with a strange look. "I do not see why it should. The person who wrote that is actuated by the sincerest regard for your welfare. It would have been much

better for you had you taken her on this journey instead of me."

"But," I answered, lightly, "it would not have been half so well for you, which is why I did not do it. I want you to understand that I am not here for my own health, but yours. As for Alice Brazier, she wrote me, when she found I would not take her, anyway—that she was surprised at the 'nerve' of the successful applicant."

"I am surprised at it myself," said Miss May, refusing to laugh. "I grow more and more surprised at it every day."

"I suppose you wish me to believe you are sorry," I said, bridling just the least bit.

"No, my dear Don," she replied, gently, "I am very glad I came. It is not that which troubles me. It is the thought that some day it will end."

"That thought would spoil the pleasure of life itself," I said, much mollified nevertheless. "I would advise you not to become a monomaniac. Take some of these papers and get into touch again with the planet on which we used to live."

She looked them all over, scanning the dates.

"Why, who sent you these ancient things?" she said. "The very latest is dated January 18th."

"Well, did you expect yesterday morning's?" I asked. "Have you forgotten that we are some little distance from Manhattan Island?"

She smiled at last, as the recollection of our situation with regard to news came over her, and thanking me, began to look over the papers, beginning with the day after we left. I took the next one and for some time this occupied us. When either encountered anything of general interest there was an interruption, followed by prolonged silence.

"Are you going to answer that letter of Miss Brazier's?" Miss May asked, all of a sudden.

"Why? Would you?"

"Yes; in a very formal way."

Was she attacked with incipient jealousy of this unknown one, even while she approved of her counsel?

"All right," I said. "I will let you dictate the words."

"What other letters did you get?" she inquired.

I showed them to her. She wanted to know what each contained; and when I spoke of Statia, though I did not mention her name, the same smouldering fire flashed up slightly as in Miss Brazier's case.

"Who is that lady?" she asked.

"The sister of my dearest masculine friend."

"Why does she write to you?"

"For the same reason as the other girl, to give me good advice."

She had to ask the next question.

"Is there no love affair between you?"

"Not the slightest. I did not think she would even condescend to write a line."

Miss May drew a long breath, and then, as if ashamed of the interest she had shown, buried her face in the newspaper.

"If you have finished with your cross-questionings," I remarked, "I will take a hand. Who are your letters from?"

She clung to the envelopes as if she feared I would try to wrest them from her.

"A friend," she answered, frigidly.

"Two friends, at least. One is directed in the handwriting of a man. Now, Marjorie, I am not going to permit that sort of thing. I draw the line at male correspondents while you are travelling with me."

Hesitating an instant she laid the envelope of which I spoke in my lap.

"Read it," she said, looking me full in the eyes.

"Not unless you wish me to," I answered.

"I do wish it."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"I must refuse to oblige you, for the first time, and I hope the last. I would not read that letter, under any circumstances," I replied.

"Then I will read it to you," said Miss May, and she read as follows:

Dear Marjorie:—I hope you are well and happy in that far-off land, with the gentleman who has engaged you as secretary, and that you have had no cause to regret accepting his offer. I have no great fears for you, believing that a wise girl will so conduct herself as to disarm the most persistent man, if temptation comes. If Mr. Camwell is all you believed him when last I saw you, your journey must be a continuous delight. If he proves the contrary I shall be sorry, for he can make your path a miserable one, but my confidence in you will be unshaken.

The other girls all send love and best wishes. I shall look anxiously for the first letter from you.

Mr. Barnard, the cashier, has promised to address my envelope and put on the right stamp.

Your Friend,

HELEN.

I glanced at the writing, which was certainly that of a woman, and again at the envelope, quite as surely in the penmanship of a man.

"It is from a girl who used to write in the same office as I," said Miss May. "Now you must hear the other one."

But this I absolutely refused to do. She was putting me in a position I did not covet. I said I had some letters to write and would go to my room for awhile. Miss May did not press her point further, but said she would take the time to answer her own letters, if I did not need her.

For the next hour I pushed my pen over the stationery, replying to the missives I had received, and also sending brief notes to several of my other friends. When this was finished I went to Miss May's door to speak to her, and found her absent. Looking over the veranda railing I saw her at some distance, frolicking with Laps, the dog, apparently having recovered her spirits, which were rather low when I left her.

Glancing back into her room I noticed that a letter she had just written lay open upon the table. To save

my soul I could not resist going in, taking it up and reading it. My curiosity about her was intense. There might be something in this letter, either to confirm my belief in her or to dash it to the ground. At any rate, though the act was repulsive to my nature, I could not help taking advantage of the opportunity.

Dear Helen [was the way the letter read]:—Many thanks for your sweet note. I am glad to say I can set your mind at rest at once regarding my fate. Mr. C. is one of the kindest men I ever knew. I have lost the apprehension which I had in regard to him during the first few days of our voyage and am as happy as I hoped to be when I told you of the engagement. I only wish you could have seen him before we sailed. You would not wonder I was so pleased to go, though, of course, I had to hide my feelings when talking with him about it.

I will try to describe him to you. He is rather above the medium height, four or five inches taller than I, I should think. His hair is brown. He wears a mustache, but no beard—a nearly blonde mustache that adds a charm to a sensitive and finely cut mouth. His eyes are hazel. He is slightly pale, owing to the illness of which I told you, but he has gained immensely since we started. When he smiles I never saw a more engaging countenance; when he is troubled the clouds are like those of a summer sky, and the first puff of wind blows them away.

I do not mean to tell you he is perfect in everything. He has not led the best life always, I am afraid, and with a different woman for his constant companion there might be a another story to tell. But when he shows signs of getting unruly, I never fail to quiet him with the right word. He is a gentleman, after all, and I am sure he will never be else than that to me.

Helen, dear, I must tell you a great secret. I have all I can do to prevent myself falling head over ears in love with the man. If I were an unscrupulous young woman I believe I could make him care a great deal for me. As I look at it, such a course would be wholly disreputable. He is impulsive and might say things he would regret later in his life. So I keep my heart as quiet as I can, in his presence. He will not guess what I have confided to you and what I never shall tell to another.

If I were of his social grade—if I could have retained the position in which I was born, he would be my ideal as a husband. Such thoughts, alas! are not for

Your Poor Friend,

MARJORIE.

St. Thomas, W.I., Jan. 29, 1898.

My hand trembled so before I had half read this letter that I could not make out the lines. I had to put it down to finish it. Twice I crept to the door to see if Miss May was still on the lawn, playing with Laps. She was there, absorbed in her amusement and I finally finished it unchallenged. Then I left the room and went to my own, where I fell from sheer weakness upon my bed.

Marjorie loved me!

The reflection was overpowering. She was battling not only against me but against her own affections. I was absolutely dumfounded. What a train of thought swept through my heated brain!

At one instant I resolved to offer her my hand in marriage that very day and have the ceremony performed in the evening, by one of the clergymen of Charlotte Amelie, with Eggert and his wife as witnesses. At the next I planned a slow campaign to win her, which, with the evidence in my possession, could have but one result. The slower way would bring the most pleasure, if I could persuade myself to patience. Again, the vision of my Uncle Dugald rose before me, mutely protesting against an alliance with one of whom I knew practically nothing. Then Tom Barton and Statia joined the procession, shaking their heads dolefully.

Miss May's voice at my door aroused me to a sense of my condition and I bade her come in, if she was not afraid. She came quietly, removing as she did so her straw hat. A steamer had just entered the harbor, she said, that I might like to see. I always wanted to inspect each craft, and she supposed I would not like to miss this one.

I sat up and listened to her in a half daze. How little she knew that the burning secret under her calm

exterior was already in my possession.

"Marjorie! Marjorie!"

I could only repeat the name in the joy of my discovery; repeat it to myself, lock it in the recesses of my inmost bosom.

I bathed my face, after which she took my brush and arranged my hair for me. How delicious her hands on my head! Some day they would be mine, and forever!

I suffered her to lead me out of doors and set me a chair before the telescope, which she arranged to command a view of the incoming steamer. Eggert came while we were there, with a little trouble on his mind. The book that had annoyed Marjorie so—that copy of "Our Rival, the Rascal," had disappeared from his bookcase, and he wanted to know if either of us had seen it. Miss May shook her head with disgust, while I responded that I had left it on the table the night he showed it to me, and had never picked it up again.

Eggert turned to the steamer I was watching through the glass and said he had known for an hour what it was—his seaman's eye had told him that when only the tops of her smokestacks were visible.

It was going down the islands, he said, and would make its next stop at St. Croix.

An idea sprang into my head. Here was an opportunity to escape the daily visits of Mr. Wesson!

I asked how soon she would leave. Eggert said probably in an hour.

"We must pack our things at once, then," I exclaimed. "I have reasons for wanting to get to St. Croix to-day, and this is a chance not to be missed."

Eggert pleaded with me to wait for the Pretoria, as I had first intended, but I would not listen. I wanted action; the excitement of departure was just the thing in my state of mind. Miss May dutifully went to her chamber and put her things in their receptacles, coming afterward to mine and helping me appreciably. The covers were down, the keys turned in the locks, the typewriting machine in its bag, and everything ready in thirty minutes.

As I left my room my attention was attracted to Miss May, who was talking earnestly with some one from the adjoining veranda. I soon saw that little Thorwald was below, with a handsome mongoose in a trap, which he was exhibiting to her with much pride.

"What are you going to do with that poor creature?" she asked the lad.

"Going to kill him," he answered, in his sharp, clear way.

"Why do you want to kill that helpless thing?"

"Why I want to kill the mongoose?" he repeated. "You better ask why the mongoose want to kill my chickens. No, that little mongoose will never trouble my chickens any more."

"Will you sell him to me?" she asked, earnestly.

"You want to buy a mongoose?" asked the boy, incredulously. "No, you can never tame him. He will only bite you. See:" (he put down the trap and pushed a stick into the wire cage, which the animal bit ferociously.) "I don't think you want to buy that mongoose."

"But I do want to buy him," she insisted. "I will give you a dollar for him."

(It is a strange fact that the terms of trade are generally spoken of in United States money in these islands, even where the only coins are European.)

"You will give me a dollar for the mongoose?" said Thorwald's bright voice.

"Yes, I will gladly give you a dollar for him."

"You may have him," said the child, hanging up the cage and receiving the money, evidently hardly able to credit his eyes. "But the mongoose is not worth one cent."

Taking the trap to the ground on the other side of the house, Miss May lost no time in releasing the little prisoner from his bondage, whereupon he vanished with all speed in the shrubbery. She gave Thorwald his dollar, and as she came to where I stood, there were tears in her bright eyes.

I kissed the children hastily, handing them at the same time some small pieces of silver, settled my bill, directed the negroes who were summoned about the baggage, said good-by to everybody, from the Master to the scullery maid, and started down the long path to the boat. In ten minutes more we were being rowed toward the steamer, and a quarter of an hour later were safe on board.

As soon as our chairs were arranged on deck and we had dropped into them I felt the old weakness coming on. I could not endure such a strain without showing evidence that I had not yet wholly recovered my form. I asked a steward who happened to pass, to get me a brandy-and-soda.

"Close your eyes and try to sleep," said my companion, soothingly, as to a sick child. "You have been overdoing for the last hour."

I took her hand and tried to obey her. That dear little hand on which I would one day put the symbol of a love to last through eternity!



CHAPTER XVII.

A STRUGGLE ON THE BALCONY.

It was something to be free at last from Wesson. While I had nothing definite that I could bring against the man, he was in my way. I wanted to be alone with Marjorie. Not literally alone, for wherever we went there were people near by, of course; but alone as far as any one who had ever known us was concerned. As we approached St. Croix, my mercurial spirits began to rise again. When we were once more on shore, and domiciled in the second class hostelry to which we were shown, I could have danced with glee. I could hardly refrain from giving vent to my feelings in a yell that would no doubt have astonished the quiet town as if a cannon had been discharged.

All through this part of the world the native population speak in tones so low that a foreigner has to listen intently to know what is being said. It is charming after you get used to it; one wonders how Northerners got into a habit of screaming when discussing the common events of the day. A negro or colored person (colored is only used here for people of mixed race) will address another a hundred feet away in as low a tone as the ordinary American would use at as many inches. I got partially into the same habit before I left the Islands. I only wish I had retained it and could persuade my friends to do likewise.

"What is there to do here?" asked Marjorie, as we sat in the evening on the balcony that projected from the house.

"Nothing whatever," I replied. "Unless it be to make love, and that, you will remember, is forbidden by our agreement."

She bit her lips, acted as if she were going to say something, and suppressed it, whatever it was.

"If you wish the stipulation removed," I continued, gaily, "there is no better opportunity than this. I believe I could make love, after my long abstinence, in a way that would do me credit."

She turned and surveyed my face for some seconds.

"In the same way you have often made love before, I presume," she said, finally; "and with the same degree of sincerity."

"No," I said, growing sober. "I have never loved a woman till recently. The others were idle fancies. They lasted, on the average, a week, while this—"

"Might last a month?" she interrupted.

"Or an eternity."

"I think we had best talk of something else," she said, uneasily. "In the morning we must begin our work, bright and early. I suppose there will be no beach bathing here, and we can commence before coffee if you wish. I want to be of all possible use while we are together."

"You will never leave me, Marjorie," I answered, "if I am allowed to set the time of your departure. Don't think, I beg, that I would say these things if I did not mean them. I want you for my true and loving wife—understand, that is what I mean—wife; and something tells me that, when you think it over, you will grant my wish."

She flushed until her neck was as rosy as her cheek. Several very long breaths came and went to stir her matchless bosom. She seemed as if strangling for an instant and recovered her equanimity with difficulty.

"Mr. Camwell—" she began.

"Don," I corrected.

"No, not at this moment," she answered. "Do you recollect to whom you are speaking? I am a nearly friendless girl—who has trusted herself to your manhood and honor. I am far from my home, if indeed I can truly claim to have one; you know nothing about me. It is madness if you mean what you say. It is villainy of the deepest dye if you do not mean it."

"We shall have to call it madness, then," I replied, smiling at the thought that I knew her heart in spite of all her efforts to conceal its true pulsations. "I might fall at your feet, declaim my story after the manner of a stage hero, all that sort of thing. I believe it best to tell you what I have to say in the plain, sincere tone that a matter of great moment should be spoken. I love you, Marjorie! I have loved you since the minute my eyes rested on your face. I shall love no other woman while life remains to me. I offer you my hand in sincere and honest affection, and may God—"

She half rose from her chair and lifted a hand deprecatingly.

"Don't say that!" she interpolated, with distress in her tone. "I will believe you without the oath. But, I cannot listen. It is impossible. You must not—you must not—"

"My darling," I said, leaning toward her, and speaking lower than any native of St. Croix, "I know I have surprised you, by coming to the point in such an unconventional and sudden fashion. We will say no more about it—to-night."

"Neither to-night, nor ever," she replied, earnestly. "Oh, why have you done this? We were such good friends; and now, it never can be the same again!"

There were tears in her eyes, and at sight of them my resolution to remain cool took wings. Rising, I clasped the shrinking form in my arms, and poured into her ears the love that was consuming me. I said the only answer I would ever listen to from her was "Yes." I would wait, if need be, but I must have it. Never, never, should she separate from me. The love I had to offer was that of a lifetime.

"I am not a poor man, either," I added, trying to weight my proposition with all the things that would count. "I can give you a home of comfort, even luxury. The days for you to toil in disagreeable offices are ended. The time when you will count your money to see if you can afford the necessities of life is past. We will go on long journeys, to interesting lands. Your existence shall be, as far as I can make it so, a dream of happiness. Marjorie, believe me! I want to hear your sweet lips say the word that will make this world a heaven—now!"

Instead of being influenced by my passionate flow of language, she seemed only to shrink further and further away. I saw at last that, in some manner I could not understand, I was actually frightening her. Alarmed at her appearance I quickly released my hold and stood there, a very confused figure, panting with the excess of my emotions.

Marjorie seemed fainting and in my alarm I begged her to let me go and summon assistance.

"No," she whispered. "But you will stop—you will say no more? You may, if you will be so kind, get me—a—glass—of water. I shall be better—presently."

It took a long time to get the simple thing she wanted. There are no bells in the house, to begin with.

The principal ambition of West India servants is to keep out of sight and hearing, lest they might be asked to do something. When one was at last found he could produce nothing colder than water that had stood in a jug since dinner. This would not do and, by the time he had found the ice, at least ten minutes must have passed.

Bringing the glass of water with all speed to the balcony, great was my disgust to find that a man had reached there before me and was even then engaged in conversation with my late companion. He had come upon the balcony from the public sitting room and was trying to persuade the lady to let him fetch something from his own chamber that he promised would speedily restore her. When he turned to meet me I was filled with positive rage. For the man was none other than my old fellow passenger, Edgerly!

"Where the devil did you come from?" I demanded, hotly.

"I hope I have done no harm," he answered, in an apologetic voice that made me feel as if I ought to punch my own head instead of his, which was my original intention. "I happened to step out on this balcony and seeing that the lady was ill offered to assist her. That is all."

He was always offering to assist her, it seemed to me, as I recalled the time when he flew to the companionway of the steamer with the same end in view.

"I think I will go in now, if you don't mind," said Marjorie, wearily, after she had sipped the water I brought. "I was overcome by—by the heat—I think, but I am much better."

Thinking that Edgerly might wish to "assist her" again I made haste to offer her my arm; but she declined it with a faint smile, saying she had no need of help. Her window was open and she left the balcony as she had entered it, closing the glass doors after her.

"You were not very polite to me, a moment ago," said Edgerly, in clear, cutting tones. "I thought it the part of a gentleman not to notice it while the lady was present, but now I am obliged to express my opinion of you; which is," he paused a moment, looking me squarely in the eye, "that you are a cur!"

I grappled with him almost before the words were out of his mouth. We went down together in a heap, his hand at my throat, mine at his. I would have thrown him over the railing, or he would have thrown me, in an instant more.

A voice interrupted us—the voice of Miss May, through her window.

"Mr. Camwell, will you kindly call a chambermaid," she said.

It was like the sudden appearance of a flag of truce in the midst of a battle. Edgerly muttered something about seeing me at another time, and released his hold. I did the same, remarking that I was at his service whenever he pleased. We both rose. Edgerly entered the sitting room, lifting his hat ironically as he vanished. I entered my own chamber, reaching the hall in that way. Finding the woman, I sent her to Miss May, telling her to knock at my door when she had executed the lady's requests. Then I threw myself into a chair, and realized for the first time how inadequate my weakened physical strength was to cope with a well man like Edgerly.

Had not that voice separated us, I would now have been lying, either dead or mangled, on the stone pavement, twelve feet below!

When I thought the matter over, I could see I had been in the wrong. The fellow had done nothing that deserved my abuse, in the first place, and the epithet he had hurled at me was in a measure justified by my conduct. It was now too late, however, to consider the origin of the quarrel. Blows had been exchanged, threats had been passed, we had agreed to settle the matter later. It was not in my disposition to crave the

pardon of a man under those circumstances. If he carried out his evident purpose of trying to trash me, I would have to meet him. The fact that I was still in effect an invalid—that I was not in condition for such a game—was no excuse, nor did I intend to avail myself of it. I felt pretty certain that, within a given number of hours, I would be very lucky if I knew myself in the glass.

The chambermaid came to say that "Miss Carney" would like to see me after a short time had passed. I therefore made myself as presentable as possible, bathing my heated face, brushing my hair and arranging a necktie that had got sadly out of place. When twenty minutes had elapsed, I went to Marjorie's door and knocked softly. She came and opened it just enough to see who was there, but instead of asking me to enter said she had found, on reflection, that she did not need anything and believed the best course for her was to retire. She evidently either knew or suspected what had occurred and wanted to see if I bore evidence of having been injured.

"Very well; good-night," I said, in answer to her suggestion.

"Good-night," she answered. And, "God bless you!" she added, fervently.

"My love!" I murmured, hoping she would relent and give me a longer interview, but she shook her head with a sad smile and closed the door. I heard the key turn in the lock and, realizing that it was useless to remain longer, re-entered my own chamber and prepared for sleep.

In the midst of a sound slumber, for the events of the evening did not much disturb my rest, I suddenly came to consciousness. A figure, distinct enough, stood between me and the window. The bright night of the tropics made the principal objects in the room look almost as clear as day. Half doubting whether I were really awake I sprang up, when a low voice made me pause.

"Hush! Not a sound," said the voice. "It is only I."

The window was wide open, showing where she had entered, for it was Marjorie that spoke.

"I was nervous, and could not sleep, and on going upon the balcony I found your window unfastened."

The wonder that she had entered overpowered every other sentiment. How could it be true that this girl, who had nearly fainted with fear when I merely put an arm around her, had come in the night within my bedroom, clad, as I plainly saw, in the garments of slumber.

I stretched my arms toward her, but she moved away. What an incomprehensible creature she was!

"Do not stir," she continued, earnestly, and with a trembling tongue. "I tried to make you hear me, without entering, but you slept too soundly. It is not well—it is not safe—to sleep with your window unfastened. I thought you ought to know. That is all. Good-night."

She was moving toward the exit and I called after her softly.

"Marjorie!" I said. "Come here a little while before you leave."

She turned her white face—whiter in the pale moonlight than I had ever seen it—toward me, still moving slowly away.

"And you," she whispered, "are the man who told me, only a few hours ago, that you wanted me for your wife!"

"I do, my darling!" I replied, with all the fervor I could put into the words. "I mean no more than I say when I ask to touch your cheek with my lips, your hand even, the hem of your gown."

She was gone; and as I sat there I reflected for the second time that evening what an ass I had been.

Marjorie had taken what I thought a harmless request and turned it into an insult. I cursed anew the damnable training I had had in the field of love-making. It had me as unfit to win the heart of a pure and virtuous maiden as a brigand.

The worst was, she had gone to her chamber with the thought still on her mind that I was a liar of the meanest stripe. After professing a pure love I had, at the first opportunity, she imagined, showed the emptiness of my pretence, the falseness of my heart.

Sleep fled this time from my eyes, and no wonder. I propped my head high with pillows and resigned myself to wakefulness and moody thoughts till daybreak.

As soon as it was light I took stationery from my trunk and wrote an impassioned letter to my beloved, that she might see, before we met again, how terribly she had misjudged me. I told her the story as it really was—my sudden awakening, the longing that possessed me for some recognition from the being to whom all my life's love had been pledged. I detailed the sickness of heart with which I realized how woefully my object was misapprehended. I touched on the absence of sleep that followed my error, and in closing begged her to write me just a word to say that I was forgiven, before I underwent the agony of meeting her unjustly accusing eyes. This I signed, "Your husband that is to be—that must be—with all respect and love."

It was almost as great a shock as if she had refused to read my note when the maid whom I summoned to deliver it, brought me a tiny sheet of paper bearing these words:

"Of course you are forgiven, my dear boy. I understood it all a minute after I left you. Sorry you took it to heart. If you wish to please me do not allude to it when we meet."

From some remarks that I heard below stairs I gathered that Edgerly had left the house, taking his baggage with him, before the early breakfast was served. A little later I learned that he had gone to a town on the opposite side of the island where the capital is located. I therefore came to the conclusion that he had decided not to push his intention of mauling me at present. Probably, I reflected, he did not realize how easy a victim I was likely to be in the present condition of my health.

We passed the rest of the time while at St. Croix in morning work, midday siestas, evening drives and after dinner talks. Marjorie succeeded in keeping the conversation away from the delicate ground of the former occasion, but she did not succeed in eliminating the subject from my mind. Knowing from the letter I had read at Eggert's, that she cared much for me, I was not to be dissuaded from my intention of taking her home, either as my actual or my promised bride. The security I felt gave me willingness to wait. What I needed now was to strengthen the affection she had admitted until it was too strong for her to resist longer.

No shadow came between us during the week that remained before the coming of the Pretoria, on which we were to embark for another voyage. We heard the boat had arrived on the morning of the 8th of February, and would leave late in the evening. I engaged a carriage to drive us to a distant point, so that we might go on board too late to meet any of the Americans with whom the steamer was sure to be filled. That day was one of unalloyed happiness.

Alas! that so soon my troubles were to break out afresh!

I had arranged with the local agent to secure me the requisite berths and he brought the tickets to the hotel at night when we returned. There was only one unpleasant feature about them—he had not been able to secure a place for the lady very near me—but we had no right to expect anything else, and Marjorie

seemed disposed to make the best of it.

At eleven o'clock we were rowed out with our baggage and shown to our rooms.

Reaching mine, I turned up the electric light and started as I saw the face of Mr. Wesson in that lower berth.

"The devil!" I could not help exclaiming, aloud.

It seemed to partially waken him, for he turned over and muttered something indistinguishable, immediately relapsing again into sound sleep.

I said to myself that this was decidedly too much. I would be d—d if I would sleep there. When I had donned my pajamas, therefore, I went up to the deck above and passed the night on the cushions of the music room, of which I was the only tenant.



CHAPTER XVIII.

OUR NIGHT AT MARTINIQUE.

Of course I had to meet Wesson in the morning; and as I could assign no reason for the distrust which I felt, I had to choose between giving him the cut direct and putting on an air of coolness without a real affront. I encountered him on deck, before I had been down to dress, as I went out to take a view of the island of St. Kitts. He murmured something about being glad to see me again, but did not attempt a prolonged conversation. He evidently had not yet ascertained that I was his roommate.

Slightly uneasy to have Miss May so far from me I went as soon as I was dressed to her door and knocked. She was awake and in response to an inquiry said she would be up to breakfast. Luckily she had been given a room alone, due perhaps to a small inducement I had sent in a note left with the agent the day before. As I stood outside I chafed at the restrictions she continually put upon me; and yet I knew very well I had no right to complain. What earthly business had I in the room of a young, unmarried woman, before she was out of bed? The fact that I had been in more than one under similar circumstances did not count in a case like this.

The scornful words of my darling came back to me—the expression she had used at St. Croix. I must put better control on my wild thoughts or I would yet do something she might regard as unpardonable.

The table to which we were assigned in the salon had no especial interest. The other people had become acquainted from their nine days' voyage together and clearly looked upon us as interlopers. For this I was not sorry. Beyond necessary requests to "pass" the butter or the ice, I had nothing to say to them nor they to me; while Miss May's mouth was sealed entirely to conversation.

The succeeding days would have been insufferably dull but for the presence of my idol, as I had been to all the islands on my voyage of three years previous. To show them to her with the confidence of an old traveller was in itself a charm not to be despised. We went ashore together at St. Kitts, and drove extensively; took our turtle dinner at Antigua, where I was much grieved to hear that Mr. Fox, the American consul, with whom I had formerly been acquainted, had died shortly after my previous visit. He was one of the pleasantest men I ever met and an honor to the civil service. A new consul, bound to Guadaloupe, was on board, with his wife—a Chicago man with a French name and the unusual ability to speak the language of the place to which he was accredited. He struck me as much better educated than the average consul and withal a good fellow. In his party, much of the time, were two charming young ladies from Alleghany City, whose father, a German, was taking a well earned vacation from his duties as cashier of a bank there. Had there been any place in my mind that was not filled with Marjorie, I should certainly have tried to become better acquainted with these girls.

I also made a smoking room acquaintance with three delightful fellows, a Mr. T——, from Indianapolis, a Mr. S——, from Greensburg, and a Mr. H——, from Brockton, Mass. The first was an attorney; the second engaged in the theatrical business, and the third a license commissioner. I should be sorry to think I had seen either for the last time.

At Dominica I went ashore very early and engaged two horses for a ride into the mountains, making arrangements with an individual who seemed (actually) to rejoice in the cognomen of "Mr. Cockroach." He announced himself to me as the owner of that title with evident pride and when we came off after

breakfast had ready two of as mean animals, judging by appearance, as could be imagined. They endured the long climb, however, remarkably well, and were as easy to sit as a rocking chair. Marjorie unbent herself more than usual when we were in the heart of the hills, with no one near, for the black boy who was supposed to follow us on foot had a way of cutting across the fields and keeping out of sight nearly all the time.

The island of Dominica is very beautiful and I remembered enjoying this ride greatly on my previous visit. The vegetation is thoroughly tropical. The excessive moisture caused by rains which occur daily through most of the year gives to everything a luxuriance not exceeded north of the equator, I believe. The mountain path by which we went is too narrow in most places to ride abreast, but wherever we could get side by side I managed to do so. At such times the sense of companionship was thrillingly delicious, and while I dared not risk offending by becoming too familiar, I managed to play the discreet lover and was very happy.

I thought I was certainly improving. There had been a time, not so very long before, when I would have planted myself in the lady's way, and exacted tribute before letting her by, trusting to her forgiveness after the deed was done. I would have given much to have dared the same thing now, but the thought did not seriously enter my head. I was certainly growing better under my excellent teacher.

There was one point at which I had a jealous pang, so ridiculous that I think it only right to detail the occurrence. We went out of our way to view a sulphur pit, where the Evil One or some of his satellites have apparently secured an opening to the air from the very Bottomless Pit itself. The atmosphere is charged with fumes, while the deposit bubbles and froths in a way to strike terror into the heart of an infidel. To get a near view, one must be carried across a small stream by a couple of negroes, or—take off his shoes and stockings and wade. Miss May looked somewhat aghast at both propositions, and I allowed the boys to carry me over first, to show her how safe the process was. But, though it might be safe, it was clearly not graceful, for they handled a human being quite as if he were a sack, thinking their duty done if they got him across without dropping him in the brook.

She said, at first, that she believed she would rather wade and sat down to take off her boots. Then, when it came to the hosiery and her fingers had begun to wander toward the fastenings, she had another period of doubt, calling to me to know if there was really anything worth seeing. Finally putting on her boots again, she directed the negroes how to make a sort of "cat's-cradle" chair and arrived safely in that manner.

It was then that I had my pang. For she put both her fair arms around the neck of the bearers to steady herself in transit.

"I shall insist on being one of your porteurs, on your return," I said, as she was placed on her feet. "If you are going to put your arms around the neck of any man in this island it must be myself."

She tried to laugh off the idea, a little nervously, saying she had more confidence in those experienced fellows on the slippery stones than she had in me. I persisted a little longer, till it became evident my expressions were not agreeable. In returning she managed to steady herself by merely touching the shoulders of her bearers, and brought back the smile to my face by calling my attention to the fact, with a comic elevation of her eyebrows. I helped her mount her horse and all the way from there she was kindness itself. On the whole the day was the most delightful I had passed since leaving America.

She was to be my wife! This thought was uppermost in my mind. She must be my wife! I would think of nothing but that blissful culmination.

It was not the time now to press for an affirmative answer. I must make myself more and more

agreeable, more indispensable to her. When the hour came that she was about to leave me—when the alternative presented itself to her mind of going back to her unpleasant struggle for bread or becoming the consort of a man she had admitted was not distasteful to her—I had no fear of the result.

The next stop after Dominica is Martinique and here I intended to make a stay of a month at least. My tickets were only purchased as far as this point. Our baggage was taken ashore and, as far as appeared, we had bidden a permanent farewell to the good ship Pretoria.

Again, however, my plans were to be altered.

The Hotel des Bains at St. Pierre, is not by any means a first-class house, but there is something quaint about it that to me has a certain charm. The meals are served in the French style and not at all bad. The beds are immense affairs, and I never yet saw a bed that was too big. In the centre of what might be called the patio, so Spanish is the architecture of the building, is a fish-pond, giving an air of coolness to the entire place.

The patois of the servants is pleasing to my ear. I entered the house in high spirits, remembering a delightful visit there in the former time. The mulatto proprietor recognized me, as did his slightly lighter colored wife, presiding over her duties as only a woman of French extraction can.

"A large room with two beds, I presume?" asked the proprietor, in French, bowing affably to Miss May.

"He asks if we wish a large room with two beds," I said translating his words into English, smilingly, but she evidently did not consider the joke worth laughing at. So I said that we wished two rooms, as near together as possible.

Madame looked up. She was searching, evidently, for the wedding ring that was absent from Marjorie's finger, to explain my decision. A servant was called to attend to us and presently we were established in very comfortable quarters.

As I wanted Miss May to see the island as soon as possible, a carriage was summoned immediately, in which we took the road to Fort de France, where we viewed the statue of the Empress Josephine, erected to commemorate the fact that she was born in that vicinity. We had a nice lunch at a hotel there and took rooms to secure the siesta to which we had both grown accustomed. Then we drove back to St. Pierre, and arrived at the Hotel des Bains in season for dinner.

The Carnival, which lasts here for four or five weeks, had already begun. The streets were crowded with masquers and sounds of strange music filled the air. There was something very odd in this imitation by the negro race of the frivolities of the Latin countries of Europe as a precedent of the forty days of Lent. Miss May viewed it with me from the balcony of a restaurant until nearly ten o'clock. A number of the steamer people were also there and I fancied we were the object of more than ordinary attention from their eyes.

After reaching the hotel again I asked Miss May if she would mind being left alone for an hour or so, while I went to see a peculiar dance. I assured her that the house was absolutely safe. She made no objection and I went with a party of Pretoria people—no women—to witness the spectacle of which I had heard so much. It was not half as entertaining as I had expected, but there were several girls of the Métisse variety that well repaid me for going. The Métisse is a mixture of races, the original Carib prevailing, one of the most fetching types extant. They were dressed becomingly, in thin gowns, of which silk was at least one of the textures used. On their heads were party-colored handkerchiefs, draped as only a Martinique beauty can drape them.

At the risk of being thought extravagant in my statement I must say they appeared to me strikingly handsome, both in their faces and their lithe figures. I was told that each of those I saw was the mistress of some well-to-do merchant of the place and strictly true to her lover. The dance was not of a kind one would wish to take his sisters to see, but it was evident the negroes put a less libidinous interpretation upon it than the Caucasian visitors. It was one, however, where "a little goes a long way," and before twelve I was in my room at the hotel.

I had just lit the lamp when I was surprised to hear a knock at the door and opened it to find Miss May standing there, with an anxious expression on her face.

"Don't undress," she said, in a slightly shaking voice. "I have been full of all sorts of fears since you went away. I want you to sit up awhile and talk to me."

I accepted the amendment, as they say in deliberative bodies, with the greatest pleasure, for I would rather sit up with her than to sleep on the softest down ever made into a couch. She went to the window, which was innocent of glass, and threw open the wooden shutters.

"What did you hear to disturb you, a mouse?" I asked, jocularly.

"I don't know. The place is full of creepy sounds. The noise in the street continues and every step in the corridors makes the boards creak. Did you enjoy your dance?"

"Not specially," I said. And then I told her of the Métisse women I had seen, praising their appearance.

She did not seem to notice what I was saying. She acted as if in constant fear of something unpleasant.

"You do not care to talk as much as you thought you did," I remarked.

"No. I was tired and sleepy, but I did not like to be alone. Why can't I—there wouldn't be any harm, would there?—lie on this smaller bed just as I am, and you can get your sleep over yonder?"

Conflicting sentiments filled my brain as I listened. What a strange woman she was! Alarmed at the least approach on my part, when we were on a steamer deck, a veranda or in a carriage; and now proposing to drop to slumber in my very bedroom, as if it were nothing at all!

A dim suspicion that she meant more than she said forced itself upon me at first. Was I deceiving myself by paying too much attention to her protestations? Had she run away merely for the sake of being pursued?

The best method to prove the truth or falsity of this was to take her strictly at her word, which I decided to do. I told her that the room and everything in it was at her disposal, as she very well knew. She might lie on one bed, or the other, or the floor, or sit in a chair. It was unfortunate that in this house, as I had already learned, there were no rooms with communicating doors, or I would get our quarters changed. She thanked me, as if I was doing her a particular favor, and, curling herself up as she had suggested, was soon, to all appearances, sound asleep.

Then the thoughts she had communicated to me, about the strange noises in the house, entered my own head. I tossed on my pillow, from side to side, sat up and lay down again a hundred times. There were mice enough in the building to satisfy a cat for a year, if noises went for anything. Late lodgers perambulated the halls, met each other and whispered in tones much more disturbing than loud voices would have been. Somebody, doubtless a servant, entered the next room, the one Marjorie had occupied, and moved about there, as if in stocking-feet. She had left her lamp lighted and this individual blew it out, as I could tell from certain signs. When this was done he went away, but returned again presently, repeating the operation several times.

All the nerves in my body quivered with the strain.

I looked at my watch every half hour, by the light of the moon that shone clearly through the open window. I thought I must awaken my companion; the loneliness was becoming unbearable. Nothing but shame prevented me—shame and a disinclination to disturb her calm and regular breathing.

At last I grew a little calmer. And the next I knew Marjorie was standing by my side, with one of her hands on my forehead and saying in whispers that if I was going to take breakfast I would have to think of getting up.

It was after ten o'clock and I had slept the sleep of a tired man for seven hours!



CHAPTER XIX.

IT IS A STRANGE IDEA.

The immediate result of the strange proceedings of the night was that Miss May asked me, before we had finished breakfast, whether I cared much about remaining in St. Pierre. She approached the subject with some timidity, saying she did not like to have me make any change in my programme on her account, but added that she would be very glad if I could, without too much sacrifice, go back to the Pretoria and make the break in my journey at some other point.

"Why, my dear girl," I answered, immediately, "if you don't wish to stay here I shall never dream of asking you to do so. Pack up whatever things you have taken from your trunks and we will return to the steamer."

She was gratified and showed it so in every line of her expressive face that I was more than repaid for my decision.

"You are quite willing?" she said, interrogatively.

"Entirely. Where would you suggest that we stop, Barbados? That is the next port where there is a fairly good hotel."

After a little discussion we settled upon Barbados and began the labor of packing. I sent a boy off to the steamer with a request to the purser to give me a berth in some other stateroom than the one I previously had, and to reserve Miss May's room for her. I did not mean to get in with Wesson again if I could help it. That afternoon we spent at the market, which is the most interesting I have ever seen, until the time came to go on board.

"As we may have to tell a falsehood to some inquisitive person," I said, when we were in the rowboat, "let us tell the same one. Fear of yellow fever quarantine is what led us to change our mind about remaining in Martinique; you understand?"

"Yes," said Marjorie, dreamily. "We were to lie to outsiders, if necessary, and always tell the truth to each other."

"Are you doing that as faithfully as you promised?" I asked.

"What do you mean?" she asked, with a violent start.

"Nothing that should induce you to tip the boat over, as you just came near doing," I replied. "I merely asked a question."

"You must believe I am deceiving you in some way, or you would not use that expression," she said, eyeing me narrowly.

"I have a great deal more confidence in you than you have in me," was my answer.

"You can say this—knowing where I passed last night!" she said, reproachfully.

"Oh, I don't mean that sort of confidence," I remarked. "I mean the confidence that would make you promise to spend every night as long as you live under the same guardianship."

A little sigh came from the lips of my companion, which had whitened suddenly; the kind of sigh that

might mean almost anything. The boatmen were too busy to listen to us, even had they understood a word of English, which they did not.

"Marjorie," I whispered, for I could not resist the desire to hear her say it, "don't you care for me, just a little bit?"

"Please!" was the only word she vouchsafed, and I heeded the request.

We came to the steamer's side, meeting many astonished gazes. I gave the requisite directions to the porters who came down the ladder for the baggage. The purser had assigned me another room, as requested, which was something. Wesson lifted his hat and said "Good-afternoon," when we met, but that was all. If he guessed that I had managed to avoid rooming with him by a set plan he made no remark.

The purser of the Pretoria is young, handsome and obliging. His father, a custom-house officer from Canada, was making a tour on the boat and struck me as a fine type. I learned that another of his sons was a member of the Dominion Parliament.

Capt. McKenzie came up to say he was glad I was going to be on his ship a little longer, which was agreeable, to say the least. I had noticed the Captain before, though I did not get well acquainted with him. He was the sort of man one likes to meet, straightforward, intelligent, understanding his business thoroughly. He knows how to treat the ladies among his passengers equally well, too, instead of devoting all his time to a favored group, like so many sea captains. This in itself is enough to make him a marked man in my memory.

The only place we had to call before reaching the island of Barbados was at St. Lucia, where there was little to interest us on shore, but where I was glad to see a troop-ship just arrived from Africa, with a cargo of wives (more or less) of black troops that were serving near Sierra Leone, each one accompanied by a parrot and monkey, beside several small children. The British government had taken them from the West Indies to Africa with their lords (I mean the women) and was now returning them a little in advance of their dusky partners. I asked half a dozen at random if they had ever been legally married and the reply in every case was "No, suh," delivered with a certain pride. The West Indian negro has not yet added matrimony to his list of virtues.

Early on the morning of the day our vessel anchored off Greytown, which is the capital of Barbados, I found on deck Mr. "Eddie" Armstrong, manager of the Marine Hotel, ready to answer questions in relation to that hostelry. "Eddie" told me that he had just the sort of rooms I required for myself and "Miss Carney," and put me under obligations by refraining from cheap insinuations, which nine men out of ten in his position would have made. Later he saw us through the custom-house with expedition and sent us in a carriage to the Marine, which is two miles from the centre, in a breezy and roomy location, just enough removed from the noise of the sea waves.

Miss Byno, at the hotel counter, greeted me with a precise copy of the smile she had worn three years before, while Mr. Pomeroy, the proprietor, said he was glad to see me, exactly as if he meant it. Our apartment consisted of a sitting room and two connecting chambers on the second floor, which were clean, airy and cosy. It was the nearest to "house-keeping," as I remarked to Miss May, of any place we had found.

"We must resume our genealogy to-morrow," she said, as she opened the table and set up the typewriting machine. "We have neglected it dreadfully."

"No," I answered, for I had been developing a new plan. "I am going to lay that ponderous history on the shelf for the present and ask you to aid me in another and more interesting task. The family tree is in

such shape that it can afford to rest awhile and I am sick to death of it."

Then, as the anxious look came into her face—the look that came so easily when I said anything that lacked explicitness—I continued:

"Don't laugh at me, but I am going to begin, to-morrow, a—novel!"

"A—novel!" she repeated, wonderingly. "Do you write novels?"

"I am going to write one, with your help," I said, decidedly. "It won't be exactly a novel, either, because it will be based on fact, pretty nearly all fact—in fact. What would you say to a novel based on the very trip we are making?"

She was lost in thought for some minutes.

"Are you serious?" she asked, finally.

"Entirely."

"But, do you think it would be interesting—to—any one else?"

"I am sure of it. Of course I shall suppress our real names, but the rest I mean to put in print precisely as it has occurred. If I am not mistaken it will make the hit of the summer season."

She was silent again.

"Doesn't an author have to know—before he begins his story—how it will end?" she asked, after awhile.

"I suppose he does. I certainly know how this one will."

"How?"

"The hero will marry the heroine, make her the happiest woman on earth, and they will live contentedly ever after."

"Hardly exciting enough, I fear, to suit the popular taste," she commented. "A story, like a play, should have a 'villain.'"

I laughed and said I would use Wesson for that character. I could, if necessary, invent some disreputable things and attach them to his pseudonym.

"And how shall you describe me?" she asked, demurely.

"You will have to wait and see. I shall make one important stipulation. Your part of this writing will be merely mechanical unless I call for aid. It is to be my story, not yours."

"It is a strange idea," she said, watching my face. "Really, I think you had best keep on with your family tree. I am getting quite interested in the Alexanders and Colins who preceded the Dugalds and the Donalds."

"No, I am determined," was my reply. "We will leave those aged gentlemen in their graves and begin the true history of the Marjories and the Dons. There will be time enough for both before you and I end our partnership."

She responded dutifully at last that she was at my disposal, as far as the use of her time was concerned. It was agreed that on the very next morning the novel would be begun.

"And you must not interrupt me, either with approval or disapproval?" I said. "For whatever is written

I alone will be responsible."

"That will be hard, when, as I suppose, you will discuss me more or less," she said, with a bewitching pout. "How do I know you will not make me out the most disreputable female that ever lived? But I promise. In fact, I don't see as there is anything else I can do. I am working for wages and I might as well offer to alter a business letter as a story in which I am merely an amanuensis."

"I shall carry our original contract into the novel," I said. "There will be no falsehood. If I have suspected any person, or repented of my suspicions—if I have resolved not to fall in love, and afterwards done so—it will be all there. I shall record what has transpired with the accuracy of a Kodak, even if, like the sensitive plate, it has to be taken into a dark room for development."

"Such a story ought to interest two persons at least," she said. "I hope you intend to send me a copy or let me know where I can buy one."

"Every bookseller in the country will have it," I replied, "and the sale will be phenomenal. You didn't think I brought you out here just to throw away money, did you? I expect to make a fortune out of the portrait I am going to draw."

She laughed lightly and we closed the subject for the time, quite agreed upon it. Before we went out she surprised me by asking if it would be convenient to let her have a little money, for I supposed she had the sixty dollars previously paid her, still in her purse. She had never expended a penny that I knew of, except the dollar she gave Thorwald. However, I said she could have any sum she liked; and she asked with some hesitation, if I could spare as much as a hundred dollars. She wanted to send it home and would consider it a great accommodation if I could pay her as far in advance as that would be. She said she would try not to ask me again for anything until we returned to New York.

We took a carriage and went to the Barbados Branch of the Colonial Bank, where I could draw money on my letter of credit—if I was willing to wait long enough. I have visited various branches of that Bank in the Tropics and I will challenge any institution on earth to vie with it in slowness of waiting upon customers. I stood at least five minutes at the counter before any of the numerous clerks who sat on high stools condescended to notice me. Then one did see that I was there, and whispered to his nearest neighbor in a way that showed he thought it a rather good joke. Two or three men who seemed of an upper grade of clerks passed near enough for me to speak to them, but none deigned the least reply. After this had gone on until it grew rather monotonous I addressed the entire institution, from president to office boy, with a request to tell me if I was in a deaf and dumb asylum.

The youngest clerk thereupon made his way slowly—nobody in the Colonial Bank could move otherwise—to where I stood and mildly inquired if I wished for anything. I told him that, strange as it might appear, I did. I said I wanted \$350, and I wanted it d—(that is to say, very) quick. I said I was only going to stay in the island three or four weeks more and I wanted the money to pay my hotel bill when I left. He did not seem to grasp the idea exactly, but he did go to the farthest man in the room and direct his attention to me by pointing, after which he resumed his seat at his desk.

The Farthest Man, in a way that showed he had a deep grudge against me for disturbing him, came more slowly than the first one across the room and asked me if I wanted anything. I threw my letter of credit on the counter and said what I had already said to the other, adding for emphasis the name of the deity to my previous observation. The clerk took the letter and went away with it. For some time he was engaged in exhibiting the thing to various clerks, all of whom regarded it with wonder, as if it was a piece of papyrus from some Egyptian tomb. At last he found a chap who took the letter of credit from him and divided the next five minutes between reading it with care and looking at me over his spectacles; having done which the latter clerk came to the counter where I stood and asked what denominations of money I would like.

I told him, with some warmth (the thermometer stood at 85 in the room) that I would like part of it in Hardshell Baptist and the rest in African Methodist Episcopal, or any other old thing, but that I did want it in a hurry. He might give me a draft that could be used in New York for \$100 of it, and the rest in sovereigns, in case he should decide, on reflection, to give me anything at all. These remarks he met with

a vacant stare, but took from his desk, when he had again reached it, two pieces of paper, which he filled with duplicate statements, after the manner of his kind. Reading these over several times, to make sure he had committed no error, he took them to another man (apparently a sort of manager or director) who pretended, as long as he could, not to see his subordinate or to guess that he wished to attract his attention. Afraid, I suppose, to speak, the clerk finally coughed mildly behind his hand, at which the manager glared at him fiercely, and reaching out for the papers, studied them for a long time. When satisfied (though you wouldn't have thought it to look at him) he wrote something on each and the clerk returned to me.

If I should detail the manner in which that fellow tried to evade giving me my money, now that he had a chance to do so, I fear I would not be believed. It ended, however, in my being sent to a cashier and getting what I wanted. Tired and hungry I returned to my carriage and was driven back to the Marine Hotel with Marjorie.

"Here is your cash, or rather what can be used to get it," I said, drawing a long breath and handing her the draft. "When you have written your name on the back it will be good anywhere."

"I don't know how to show my gratitude," she answered, her face flushing.

"Excuse me. You know very well, but you refuse," I replied. "Now, here is something for you to think of. All the wicked things you do, the cruelties you practice, are to be spread before the novel reading public of America! That ought to soften your hard heart. You know 'All the world loves a lover,' but there is no proverb to fit a thoroughly heartless girl."

"I would like you much better if you would not say such things," she pouted.

"You speak as if you did like me a little, even now," I responded.

"Like you!" she exclaimed. "That's just it. I like you ever and ever so much. How can I help it, when you are so kind to me? I like you and I want to continue to like you, Mr. Camran. I wish I could think you would never learn to dislike me."

As I began an impassioned declaration that the day would never dawn, she started violently and bit her lips till the teeth marks showed plainly. In another instant I saw what had caused her mental disturbance; two men were looking at us from a street car that was trying with some success to reach the hill by the hotel before we did. Those men were Robert Edgerly and Horace Wesson.

"Don't let him get you into trouble," she whispered, between her closed lips. "I heard him threaten you at St. Croix. Oh, how did he get here!"

She referred, of course, to Edgerly.

CHAPTER XX.

NEW WORK FOR MY TYPEWRITER.

It was plain that these two men had become closer friends than they appeared to be when on the Madiana. Wesson's pretence of regard for me did not sort with this affiliation with a fellow against whom he had been at such pains to warn me. They both seemed disconcerted at our meeting and I learned later that they had decided to stop at different houses. Edgerly registered at the Sea View, a small hotel situated about a quarter mile from the Marine, while Wesson came boldly to the latter hostelry and took a room there.

However, as I did not own the house, I was not at liberty to prevent him living where he liked. I made up my mind to avoid him and let it go at that. It began to be apparent that his movements were influenced in a large degree by my own. I wondered if he meant to dog me from island to island during the rest of my journey.

On the day following my arrival I began to dictate to Miss May the novel of which I had spoken, or rather a correct transcript of the proceedings that had brought me where I was. You already know the story, and if you care to read it again you have only to turn to the first chapter of this volume and begin at the point where she did. It took me the whole of that forenoon to finish the opening instalment, as I wanted to put it into a shape that would not necessitate its being re-written. Miss May proved a splendid amanuensis and, as requested, made no comments till the lunch hour arrived, though I could not help seeing that she was filled with interest as well as vivid curiosity.

When I began to allude to Statia and to detail her conversations with me, my typewriter's face was at times suffused with pink. I fancied, when I came to the place where I asked Statia to be my wife, that Marjorie was about to refuse to continue, but she merely drew a very long breath and let her nimble fingers touch the requisite keys. When Tom's sister declined my offer I heard a light sigh that I took to mean relief. The tale of my visit to the Herald office and of writing the advertisement clearly interested her. She wrote rapidly when I told about the handsome woman who wished the acquaintance of an elderly gentleman, on whom to lavish her beautiful face and form, with her "object matrimony."

When I said we would let that chapter suffice for the day she sat back from the table and uttered an uneasy little laugh.

"It's not so bad," she was kind enough to say. "I may have to change my mind about your project. But are you going on as you have begun, exposing every thought—making the world your confidant. I am afraid few people could afford to do that."

"Precisely," I said. "Men have written fiction so vividly that people have believed it truth. I am going to write truth in such a manner that people will take it for excellent fiction. Yes, I shall follow Othello's advice, 'nothing extenuate nor set down aught in malice.' It is a camera you are operating, my dear, not a typewriting machine."

That afternoon we took a long drive, to Farley Hill, which point is said to be nine hundred feet above the sea. I was tranquil enough now. We were alone except for the driver, whose back was toward us. The long stretches of sugar cane made a pleasing prospect. Every individual we met, mostly people of various degrees of negro lineage, addressed us pleasantly. The trade-winds from the east, that blow over

Barbados six months in the year, brought ozone to our lungs and coolness to our faces. The road for the entire distance was smooth and hard. It was one of the most delightful drives I had ever taken and there was nothing to mar the occasion.

We passed the evening after dinner in our joint sitting room, with the windows wide open and retired early.

"You are the most honest man I ever met," said Miss May, the next morning, when she was in the midst of her work. She had just written this paragraph:

I have led a life as regards women that I now think worse than idiotic. I have followed one after another of them, from pillar to post, falling madly in love, getting the blues, losing heart, all that sort of thing. I have never been intimately acquainted with a pure, honest girl of the better classes, except one.

"Was there ever another man who would put such things about himself in cold type?"

"But, listen," I said, defensively. "See what follows:

I need sadly to be educated by a woman who will not hold out temptation. I have an idea that a few months passed abroad, in the society of such a woman, will make another man of me.

"Marjorie, my life, I was right. It has made another man of me. I shall never be what I was before—never as long as I breathe."

She shook her head, half doubtfully, but declined to discuss the subject further. When she came to Hume's question, "What is to keep you from falling in love with your secretary?" she seemed troubled until she had received the answer I gave him, declaring that my "secretary" would be sent home with a month's advance wages if she allowed me to forget that I was merely her employer. Then she broke the rule we had adopted, and I could not blame her.

"You are evidently of a forgetful nature," she said. "The promise you made your friend does not agree with some of the foolish things you have tried to say to me."

"But, my angel, I had not met you when I made that assertion. I was speaking of an imaginary woman. Men are not expected to do impossible things. Besides, you do not realize how very ill I had been. I think we shall get on better if you will reserve your comments till the end of each chapter, when I shall be delighted to hear as many as you like."

She returned good naturedly to the machine, and recorded the balance of the chapter that is numbered two in this volume. When I said we had done enough for one day, she answered that she thought a little work in the afternoon would hurt neither of us; and that, for her part, she would be glad to begin again after lunch. It was plain that she was becoming interested and wanted to get on as fast as possible. Pleased at this, I consented to her plan. It was only half past eleven when she stopped and a rest of two or three hours would put us both right again.

"I don't think I realized you had been so terribly ill," she said, taking a rocker and placing herself at ease.

"I don't like to talk much about it, or even to think of it," was my reply, "but you may be sure it was hard enough. I would rather endure any pain than the awful depression that accompanies neurasthenia. When I recovered it seemed as if I had died and been resurrected. My old life was gone and I did not wish to recall it. The new one was full of new possibilities and dreams. How happy I shall be when they are all

fulfilled!"

"And were you so very—very wicked?" she asked, constrainedly. "I cannot believe it when I look at you. Vice ought to leave some distinguishing mark, but your face is as innocent as a babe's."

"You are very kind to say so. But I want to talk about that still less than about my illness. Both of them have come to an end."

"Let us trust so," she said, gently.

How gently and sweetly she did say it!

The third chapter, which we did that day before taking our drive, called for no interruption on her part with one exception, and that was because she did not quite catch one word. It was in relation to the letter of credit that I had brought.

"Did you say two thousand?" she asked, "or three?"

"Two thousand," I answered, and she went on rapidly, talking down the words as they fell from my lips. The account of Charmion's performance at Koster and Bial's disturbed her visibly, but she went bravely to the end.

"Do you really mean that this exposure took place in a New York theatre, at a regular performance?" she asked, when I said that was the end.

"Exactly as described."

"It is shameful!" she exclaimed, angrily. "If women had charge of the theatres such things would not be permitted."

"You forget," I replied, "that half the audience were women—ladies, if you please."

She bit her lip.

"You ought not to put it in the story, at any rate," she said. "It will only encourage people with debased minds to go to view it."

"By the time my book is published there will probably be an entire change of programme," said I. (I wonder if there will.)

Another drive, another chatty evening, another morning, and we went on again. Miss May smiled occasionally as I told of my preparations for making this voyage and of engaging a berth for her before I had even received her reply to my advertisement in the Herald. Then she listened with interest to the letter (the first one) I received from Miss Brazier, breaking our rule enough to remark, "That's a bright girl." I took her own reply from my pocket to give it verbatim, upon which she said—

"Have you kept that all this time? Tear it up now and throw it in the wastebasket."

"Tear it up?" I echoed. "Money wouldn't buy that little note!"

When the end of the fourth chapter was reached, and we took our noonday rest, she spoke at some length about Statia. She wanted me to tell her more than appeared in the story. That was the kind of woman one could admire, she declared.

"And yet, how can I judge a girl who has always been under the watchful eye of a kind father or brother?" she added, thoughtfully. "Who can say what evil might have crept into her life, had she been compelled to face the cruel world and fight for her bread?"

"But you have done that," I protested, "and are to-day as sweet and pure as if all the fathers and brothers on earth formed your guard."

She turned on me suddenly.

"How do you know?" she demanded. "You know nothing whatever about me. Oh, Mr. Camran, there are things in my life that would make a novel even more interesting than this one of yours. But I could not sit down and expose my errors as you do. I could not! no, I could not!"

I said that all the errors of her young life must be wholly in imagination. She was like some child at a first confession, trying to magnify a baby fault into goods big enough for its new market. She made no reply, but went silently into her chamber where she remained till lunch time. When she came out the matter had slipped my mind and did not recur to me till long afterward.

The fifth chapter occupied us during most of the afternoon. Miss May showed great interest when Mr. Wesson appeared on the scene and much more when she herself was first presented. My intense anxiety to meet her seemed to strike her as odd, for she uttered little "oh's" and "ah's" when I described our first meeting. When she came to the expression "she was not handsome," she said "I should think not!" in a tone of disdain.

At the end of the chapter she had to talk about it as usual.

"Well, it is something to see one's photograph, as it appears to another," she said, smiling. "I don't understand, though, how I managed to produce such a favorable impression. I really had little idea I should be the successful applicant when you left my room that day. I wasn't even certain that I ought to accept, if you offered it to me. I had never heard of an arrangement exactly like it. We were strangers to each other. I had a place that I detested, but how could I be sure you would prove a more considerate employer than the one I was to leave? Had it not been for my desperate plight I must have told you frankly that I could not go."

"You are not sorry—yet?" I whispered.

"Oh, no! And you can prevent my ever being sorry, if you will."

It was useless to begin the old argument. I went down to see if the carriage was ready. Wesson sat in the hallway, where the draft of air was strongest, and did not see me until I was close to him. When he realized my proximity he closed the book in his hands with a bang and looked much confused. But he had not performed the action quickly enough for his purpose.

I had seen what he was reading:

It was a copy of "Our Rival the Rascal," undoubtedly the one Eggert had missed just before we left St. Thomas.

I said nothing, but I thought a great deal. A man who would steal one thing would steal another. If Wesson had carried off that book from the dining room of my host Eggert—

A mile from the hotel I decided to convey to my companion's mind the suspicions that filled my own.

"You remember that book I had one evening at Eggert's—the book you did not wish to look at," I began.

"That horrible thing!" she exclaimed, with a shiver, nodding an affirmative.

"Just before we left Eggert's, you know, he missed the volume. Nobody had been in the house except you and me, and Wesson. Eggert knew me too well to suspect that I would be guilty of such a theft, and yet he was puzzled. Why, Marjorie, what is the matter with you?"

My last expression was called forth by a strange look on the face of my companion. She fell against me as if too weak to sit up, and yet her eyes were open and not devoid of intelligence.

"My darling!" I cried. "You are ill. Let us return at once."

"No," she said, in a whisper. "It is only temporary. But please say nothing more about the book. If anybody took it—ugh!—it must have been by accident."

"But, my dear," I explained, when she seemed more comfortable, "you must let me tell you of a discovery I have made. I saw that book—"

Rousing herself with difficulty Miss May looked me in the eyes like a sleep-walker.

"Don!" she said, vehemently. "Don! Sometimes you tell me you love me! How can you then persist in this torture! I cannot bear to think of that book, to hear it spoken of! You may call me foolish, and probably I am. There are women who are afraid of snakes, lizards, rats; not one of those creatures could disturb my nerves. But when I think of men that live by crime, that rob and steal—and murder—it is as if the hands of one of them was on my own throat!"

Soothingly I promised to be careful in the future—sadly I spoke my regrets at the pain I had caused her. I knew too well the vagaries of ill-balanced nerves not to understand that they require no reason to set themselves on edge.

I bade the driver cut our ride short and we drove back to the hotel in nearly perfect silence.

But I could not help my thoughts. If Wesson had stolen that book, what was there to show that he had not stolen my diamond, and those of Marjorie and of Miss Howes? What could I think but, with his almost exclusive opportunities on the steamer, he was the guilty man? I recalled his offer to watch from our cabin, his assumption of the rôle of a sleuth-hound—undoubtedly to deceive me. What was he doing at Barbados unless to watch for another chance to ply his profession?

The more attention I gave to the matter the clearer everything grew.

Undoubtedly Wesson was, on general principles, much more than a match for me in shrewdness, but when I started to do a thing I usually accomplished it.

I resolved that if he was the thief, I would trace his work home to him and make him restore the fruits of his larceny.



CHAPTER XXI.

"YOU WERE IN MY ROOM."

Letters that came the next morning were hardly read, so interested was I in my plan to entrap my sly fellow passenger. They were from Tom and Statia Barton and from a club friend who had obtained my address from Tom. Statia's had a tone of melancholy that she seemed trying to conceal. Tom's was full of cheer, with wholesome advice about keeping well now I had got into that condition. They had received my first letters, mailed at St. Thomas, and congratulated me on escaping what both persisted in calling the dangers of the sea.

How to expose the knavery of Wesson—that was all I could think of consecutively. I told Miss May that I would not dictate to her that morning and she took the opportunity to drive down town, to do, as she said, a little shopping. Wesson also took a carriage about the same time and I heard him tell the clerk, Miss Byno, he would probably be gone till noon at least.

When they were both out of sight I began to haunt the vicinity of the Boston man's room, which was on the same floor as mine, though much further down the corridor. When no one was near I tried the door, in a foolish hope that he might have left it unlocked, which, of course, he had not done.

If I could get ten minutes alone there I believed I should discover something. At the same time I realized that I was running considerable risk. Should I be discovered in the chamber of another man, rummaging among his things, the fact that I suspected him of having robbed me would be a poor excuse in the eyes of a magistrate.

Still, anxious to convince myself, I was ready to dare even the danger of arrest and punishment. It was a very dangerous proceeding, as I now view it, and only to be justified by success. At the time, nothing could have dissuaded me from my purpose.

As I strolled back to my own room a chambermaid met me, with a bunch of keys in her hand, and she went directly to Mr. Wesson's apartment. For the next twenty minutes, she remained there, engaged in the customary work of her profession, and then came out and began to turn the key in the lock behind her. This was my time, if ever. Hastening to her side I told her in low tones that I wished to play a little joke on my friend who occupied the room and wanted her to leave the door unlocked for an hour or so, or until I called her. To emphasize my desire I exhibited a sovereign and put it into the hand which she held doubtfully toward me.

"I only want to go in a little while," I repeated, trying to force a laugh. "It will be all right. Don't say a word to any one."

The woman looked at the coin, representing a month's wages to her, as if to make sure it was genuine. It probably never entered her head that my intention was other than the one I stated. It was not likely that a gentleman of my cloth would have a felonious design or carry it out in this manner. I had only to add that if it was discovered that the door was unlocked I would take all the blame, and the woman slunk away without a word.

The first thing I noticed after entering and locking the door behind me was the copy of "Our Rival, the Rascal," that had been stolen from the Quarantine Station. It lay on a table and I took it up with interest. On the fly leaf was written Eggert's name and address, proving conclusively that it was the one I

supposed. The baggage in the room consisted of a steamer trunk and a "dress-suit case," both of which were locked. A moment later I had tried both locks with keys from my pocket and found—to my joy—that the one on the trunk yielded to the pressure.

I felt awfully uncomfortable, to tell the truth, as I lifted the lid of that trunk. I glanced at the door, wondering if some prying eye might be at the key-hole. Getting a towel from the rack I covered the aperture. The blinds at the window were shut, so there was no other place from which I could be observed, if I except the high heaven above, and the rectitude of my purpose justified me there, in my belief.

Carefully I lifted the articles in the receptacle, one by one. They were the ordinary things to be expected in the possession of a gentleman travelling. I had nearly relinquished my search when a little packet wrapped in brown paper, attracted my notice. Taking it up I pinched it carefully for an instant, and then, becoming excited, untied the string.

How my heart did beat! For there lay before my eyes the bracelet stolen from Miss Howes, the earrings that Miss May had worn and the stud purloined from my bag! Everything, in short, that we had lost, except the little turquoise ring.

I put that package in my pocket, shut and locked the trunk, and was preparing to quit the room when I heard a turn at the handle of the door. Who could be there, at that time of day? Was it possible Wesson had given up his drive? or had the chambermaid returned with some article needed? The fumbling continued for another minute and then a distinct, though rather low knock followed. I call it low, for subsequent judgment so deems it, but at the time it was as loud to my ears as a pistol shot. Still I kept quiet, for there was nothing to be gained by jumping from the frying pan into the fire. If it was Wesson I fancied I had a card to play that would prevent his putting me to much trouble. If it was any one else they would certainly leave when they received no answer to their summons.

The person outside renewed the knock two or three times and then moved slowly away. As soon as the noise of his steps ceased I opened the door cautiously and stepped out. It took several seconds before I could remove the key from the inside and put it in the aperture toward the hall. Before I could turn it, I was more than disgusted to see a face peering around the nearest corner and taking in the whole proceeding. It was the face of Robert Edgerly!

"Well, well!" he said, coming toward me and leering in an exasperating way. "I took the liberty of calling you a cur the last time we met, but I didn't think—"

He stopped and laughed provokingly.

"It makes very little difference what you think," I retorted, white with anger. "I can explain this to the only person interested, whenever he chooses to inquire. As he seems to be a friend of yours, you may tell him so, if you see him first, with my compliments."

He strode toward me threateningly, his right hand wandering toward his hip pocket.

"Have a care!" he said. "You pretend to be a gentleman, and I find you a sneak-thief. Give me another word and I will denounce you to the proprietor of the hotel!"

Perhaps he had a right to assume that air. I was not in a very creditable position; but I did not think of this till afterward. He had called me names, had threatened me with violence in the most contemptuous manner. I sprang at his throat with my right hand extended to grasp it and had I succeeded I fear his lease of life would have been short. He was, however, too agile for me. Springing backward he drew a revolver, and the sight of that steely barrel with five cartridges behind it stopped my headlong course like

magic.

"Not quite so fast as you were, eh!" he said, between his teeth. "You know a little joker when you see one. Now, turn your face the other way, put your hands to your side like a whipped boy, and march to the end of the corridor. I will follow you; and when I feel sure you are not up to some scurvy trick—of which I quite believe you capable—I will let you crawl to your room and continue the wonderful genealogy of the idiots from whom you sprung."

I had thought rapidly since he first produced the weapon. I had no anxiety to be murdered. He had the "drop" on me beyond question. My own revolver was in the bottom of one of my trunks, not even loaded. Discretion was the better part of valor then, if ever since the world was made. Had he not uttered his closing sentence I would have submitted to the humiliation he outlined. But I have a reverence for my ancestors of the Camran race that amounts almost to worship. So far as I can learn I am the only scion of the house who has lowered that distinguished name. To have them dubbed "idiots" was more than I could bear, and I would have died in their defense as cheerfully as any of the Alexanders whose bones whitened the battle-fields of ancient days.

With a curse I again threw myself upon Edgerly and so quickly that he had no time to discharge his weapon. We had a fierce struggle on the floor of the hall, which I soon saw was going against me. Physically I was still, with my long illness behind me, no match for my adversary. He was much the cooler of the two and I knew that he was merely waiting till he could get one hand free from my clasp to turn that revolver against my body.

In fact, he had nearly succeeded in doing this. I saw a smile of satisfaction creeping over his features and realized that nothing but a miracle could save me. We had not made enough noise to attract attention and no one happened to come along the corridor. The miracle arrived, however, or I should in all probability not be writing these lines. I heard a springing step behind me, saw a form bending over both of us and a strong hand wrenching the pistol from Edgerly's grasp. Then a voice that I recognized as that of Wesson said:

"Come, gentlemen, this is carrying your disagreements a little too far."

We rose to our feet, both pretty well winded. Then, to complicate the situation still more, Miss May appeared in the hallway. She stopped humming a light air, as she saw us, and turned deathly pale, as was her habit when alarmed.

"Hush! Say nothing," whispered Wesson, to both of us at once. "Not a word, remember!"

I thought it very wise of him and was more than willing to follow his advice. But Edgerly was not so easily quieted.

"I caught this fellow creeping out of your chamber," he said, without mincing matters. "Yes," he added, as if he thought he might be contradicted, "there is the key he used in the lock now."

Wesson looked strangely at me.

"I have no doubt Mr. Camwell can explain his conduct," he said, and again I noticed the thoughtfulness he used, in referring to me by the name I had registered at Cook's office. "If he will consent to accompany me to my room for a few minutes I shall be glad to hear anything he has to say."

Edgerly sneered again.

"Camwell!" he echoed. "Why, that isn't even his right name. It will do to travel under, but when he signs checks he writes at the end the words, 'Donald Camran.'"

"How do you know that?" asked Wesson, in a startled way. "You are making some grave charges."

"He tells the truth," I interposed, anxious to end the scene. "The name he gave is my right one. Why I used the other is a private matter. I shall be glad to accede to your suggestion, Mr. Wesson, and hold an interview with you in private."

"If you and Miss Carney will excuse us, then—" said Wesson, tentatively.

"Miss Carney!" echoed Edgerly, with a laugh that made me half inclined to try conclusions with him again, now that we were less unevenly matched. "Miss Carney! Ha, ha!"

Wesson was evidently watching us, prepared to interfere again, should it be necessary. He managed to end the affair by a display of finesse, asking Edgerly to meet him at two o'clock at the Sea View House, and saying pleasantly to Miss May that he would keep me but a few minutes. I saw the other two going in opposite directions before I followed the Bostonian into his room, which seemed the only thing I could do after what he had heard about me.

"Well?" said Wesson, good naturedly, when he had closed the door and, at my suggestion, locked it. "You were in my room? Yes. Do you care to tell me why? I leave it entirely to you, Mr. Camran. If you choose to tell, well and good. If not I shall be perfectly satisfied."

His courtesy was complete and, knowing what I did, seemed to me well advised.

"Mr. Wesson," I said, "you have just saved me from a disagreeable and possible dangerous situation. That man had a loaded revolver—I had nothing. He is in the best of health; I, as you know, have recently recovered from a long illness. Had you appeared two minutes later it is no exaggeration to say you would probably have found a dead man on that floor."

"In that case I am glad I came when I did," he replied, affably. "What was the row about?"

I told him briefly of the previous encounter on the balcony at St. Croix and the incentives to the present affair.

"Strange!" he answered. "There doesn't seem much to found a murderous attack on in those two things, does there? Had you never met him before this trip?"

"Never."

"How did he know your right name?"

I explained the exchange of my check for the cash he won of me in the smoking room of the Madiana.

A peculiar look came into Wesson's face.

"That was about five weeks ago," he said, musingly.

"About that."

He covered his eyes with one hand a few moments as if in deep thought. When he looked up he had regained the pleasant expression with which the interview began.

"Now, about your being in my room, Mr. Camran. Do you wish to say anything in regard to that?"

I took from my pocket the package I had found in his trunk and silently held it up for his inspection.

"You intend to retain those things, I presume," he said, with excessive politeness.

"With your permission," I answered, not to be outdone in courtesy by a thief.

"Certainly," he said. "And the bracelet, will you do me the favor to find some way in which it may be returned to the owner?"

What a cool rascal he was! I could not help admiring his *sang froid*, the like of which I had never seen or heard of.

"The shirt stud, I think is yours," he went on, affably, "and the earrings belong to your cousin? Yes, that was my impression. Let me, if I may be so bold, advise you to keep them under better surveillance in the future. Now, that I may not be blamed by Miss Carney for keeping you too long, let me say that if you have finished we will call this interview at an end, except for one question. Do you intend to do anything disagreeable about the matter?"

Still as cool as an iceberg, as unruffled as a bank of pansies.

"I shall do nothing," I answered. "The service you rendered a few moments ago puts me under a great obligation. Rest assured, sir, you have nothing to fear from me."

He walked hospitably to the door and opened it.

"You had best avoid another rupture with Mr. Edgerly," he said, in a friendly tone. "He is quick tempered and, as you have well observed, you are not strong enough to contend with him. As to pistols, he is a dead shot. He can knock a penny off a wall at two hundred paces."

I thanked him for his advice and went to find Miss May, whom I was not surprised to discover in an excited state, and bathed in tears.

"Oh," she cried, when she saw me, "let us return to New York as soon as we can! You have had nothing but trouble ever since I have been with you. Take me to America and end this unfortunate agreement of ours. I knew you and that man would have trouble again. If the other one had not appeared you would now be dead, and he—"

Her sobbing broke out again, terrifically. All at once it occurred to me that the news of the recovered jewels would partially comfort her.

"Marjorie," I said, "Marjorie, my love! There is a silver lining to the cloud to-day, a golden lining, a diamond lining. Yes," as she looked intently at me through her tears, "I know where my stud is, and your earrings, and Miss Howes'—"

Instead of giving the joyful cry I expected my companion uttered a long wail and lay limp in the arms I stretched out to catch her.

I cursed my indiscretion and, laying her gently on a sofa, rang for aid.

CHAPTER XXII.

TOO MUCH EXCITEMENT.

It seemed as if I never would learn that my companion could not bear sudden surprises, or mysterious hints. Her delicate nature took alarm at the least departure from the conventional. Before the arrival of the servant I was tempted to imprint on her pale cheeks the kisses she had always denied me, but a spark of manliness still left in my composition prevented.

Her swoon was but momentary. Before the slow bell boy could arrive she had roused herself and begged me to admit no one, saying she would be all right again in a few moments. Realizing that I had probably rung already, she asked me to make some excuse to the servant when he arrived and not to open the door wide enough for him to see her. When the boy had come and gone I began my apologies in the most profuse way.

"Do not excuse yourself, I beg," she answered. "I was very foolish. You speak of being a convalescent, but you will begin to think I am the invalid. I will try my best not to disturb you again."

She was very sober and though she was able to sit upright I saw that her strength was returning but slowly. She would not go down to lunch when the bell rang, and I sent her up a little toast and tea, which she barely touched. As the evening approached I asked if she felt able to drive, but she said if I did not mind she would rather I would go alone, and I complied with her suggestion. On my return two hours later, she was up and about, with a little of the old color in her face. I connected her improved state, in a certain way, with information that I received later from Mr. Armstrong, that Edgerly had left the island on a steamer bound directly for New York. Her anxiety lest he and I should come again into collision was thus abated. In fact, I had never seen her so bright at dinner as she was that day, her appetite good and her manner actually vivacious.

The next day being Sunday we went to a church not far from the hotel, where I was struck as before by the devotional bearing of my companion. Not being an Episcopalian, I have always considered it quite a feat to know just when to kneel and to rise, to find the place in the prayer book, to stand and sit at the right places. I watched Miss May carefully, doing exactly as she did, though, I am afraid, the effort detracted from the religious effect on my mind. When the affair was over we walked back to the Marine and went over to the little Park, called for some unknown reason "Hastings Rocks," the entrance of which is guarded by a black Cerberus who demands a penny from each visitor. Here we sat and looked out on the sea, and my mind reverted to Edgerly, now a hundred miles or so to the north of us.

If Wesson had only accompanied him, I thought, there would be nothing to disturb the even tenor of my life. Why did he continue to remain at the hotel?

He could not hope to rob us again; and he must know that the promise I had given him would not tie my tongue if any other guest of the house should report that his valuables were missing. Perhaps he was waiting now for some steamer bound to South America or Colon. I sincerely hoped that, if this was so, the boat would arrive at an early date.

Monday I rose very early, and in pursuance to an arrangement made the previous night, took a carriage before breakfast with Miss May. We drove in our bathing suits and bath robes to a beach about a mile up the road, where we had a delicious bath in the surf. The sight of her again in that attire aroused all the

masculine forces in me and made me resolve anew that I would win her for my life mate if there was any possibility of so doing. A more exquisite shape it has never been my fortune to meet, and I must confess I am not exactly an amateur at that business. She seemed wholly oblivious of the effect her charms created, but declared with bright eyes that there was no pleasure in the world half as great as bathing in salt water of that temperature.

After breakfast the typewriting machine was put in use again and that day, urged on by Miss May's statement that she was just in the trim for work, we accomplished what are catalogued as the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of the book you are reading.

Marjorie was plainly interested to a high degree now in every word that I gave her to write. The tale of the excited night I passed after first meeting her, my half-formed resolves to give up the plan of taking a companion on my voyage, the celerity with which I changed my mind the following morning, upon awakening, the reception of the next letter she sent me, with my comments thereon, kept her as entertained as if the story had indeed been fiction. She laughed a little when I admitted starting the letter in reply beginning "My Darling, I cannot breathe until once more I am in your loved presence," and paused to remark that she had never known a man so excitable and uncontrollable. My meeting with Statia on Broadway seemed to affect her strongly. All her sympathies were evidently with that young lady, for she shook her head and uttered several sighs as I told how we parted after her withdrawal of the invitation to call at her house.

Then came the chapter in which my amanuensis had said at last, "I am going, of course," with the stipulations she had made, her cheeks blushing, as to the conduct she would demand from me. Marjorie smiled again at the letter I wrote to Alice Brazier, in which I tried to describe my "secretary," and the dream I had that night, but she grew as sober as possible when I read the second letter from Miss Brazier, adjuring me to treat my fellow voyager with courtesy and honor. The solemn resolutions I made to comply with this request pleased her, as did the story of Tom Barton's visit to my rooms and his plan for a *modus vivendi* between Statia and me. Then she had to copy, at my dictation, her own long letter explaining why, if she was to travel as my relation, more money than I had given her would be required.

At the end she commented aloud on what she called the mercenary tone of that note.

"You had a good many doubts of me, first and last," she added.

"First only," I reply, "not last. I'd like to know what could make me doubt you now."

The chapter ended (the ninth chapter) with the sentence before the one that now closes it and Miss May rose from her long task with a sigh of relief.

Tuesday, both of us being still in excellent trim, the dictation was resumed. That day she finished the tenth, eleventh and twelfth chapters, smiling at the right places and looking pensive when there was occasion. Once she interpolated, "I like that Tom Barton—he is made of true metal," which naturally pleased me. The nervous wait I had at her rooms made her shake her head in a way that meant much, and the excessive joy with which I greeted her when she did come sobered her considerably.

"Have you not drawn the long bow a little here?" she asked, pausing. "You need not think it necessary to stretch your sensations just because the object of them happens to be their recorder."

"If anything I have understated them," I replied, "Language is wholly inadequate to describe the constant anxiety I felt till you were actually on board the Madiana. But proceed. If I get on that strain I shall never be able to finish."

My account of our shopping, with our subsequent visit to the restaurant, made her remark that I was a

close observer. She said there was not a thought in her head that I had not photographed.

"Who but a born novelist," she said, "would have deemed it worth while to tell that I objected to having the door of our little dining-room locked?"

"It is merely to show the reader another proof of your excessively proper conduct," I replied, "and give him an opportunity to appreciate your true character."

"You have mistaken your vocation, after all," she said. "You would make a splendid detective. Not even the smallest thing escapes you. You make me think of a hunter on a trail. A broken twig, a nearly indiscernible print on the moss, a leaf brushed aside, show you where the creature has passed."

"The only wild creatures I have ever hunted were 'dears,'" I answered, laughing. "Don't you think such earnestness in the chase deserves its full reward?"

"The reward is all very well for the hunter," she said, solemnly, "but for the deer there is only the bullet and the knife."

She had cornered me there. Instead of trying to straighten out the muddle I went on with my work. Miss May was plainly affected when I told of the remorse I had felt for my ill-spent life, after reading the note she had left on the typewriting machine at her first visit to my rooms. The concluding paragraph of the tenth chapter, as it now appears, had not been written then.

Wednesday we did but one chapter—the eleventh. I noticed that my companion appeared fatigued when it was finished and I refused to let her continue. She was intensely surprised when I identified Miss Howes. I detected a repellant shrug of the shoulders as she realized the kind of woman who had occupied the stateroom with her during her voyage from New York to St. Thomas. She showed great interest when I described my fellow passengers at table, and grew white when I came to the point of the larceny of her earrings. Fearing that I would excite some unpleasant memory I made no comment whatever on the occurrence beyond what was in the MS. she was writing.

She wanted very much to continue her work, but I would not listen. She was too evidently ill. There is a limit to what even the best natured amanuensis can perform with impunity.

When we went on, the next day, I tried to give out my dictation in a slower manner, to conserve Marjorie's force, but it was a difficult thing to do. Her speed was naturally great and I had got into the habit of speaking in much my ordinary manner. She told me twenty times that I might dictate more rapidly, and her fingers flew over the keys at a speed that astonished me. All she would consent to do was to let me order a glass of wine, from which she sipped occasionally. She declared that my "novel" was so diverting that she was anxious to get as far along as possible.

The description of my games of cards with Edgerly caused her to have frequent recourse to the wine, but the meeting with Eggert and his family came to relieve the strain. She grew uneasy again when I told of sitting by her bed and bathing her forehead; and reddened like a peony when I remarked how lovely she appeared in her bathing costume that morning we took our first bath on the beach of the Quarantine Station.

"Must you put in such things as that?" she asked, pleadingly. "I think it spoils what was getting to be a very entertaining story."

"I can leave out nothing," I answered. "Really, Marjorie, you cannot conceive how rapturously beautiful—"

She shivered as if a cold wind had blown on her.

"Are you dictating?" she asked. "I think we had best keep to the text."

"Then do not attempt to go outside your path and province," I said. "Once more, this is my story, not yours, remember. Here is something that will interest you."

I gave her the concluding paragraph of that chapter—the one recording the sudden and unexpected appearance of Mr. Wesson.

She went on very quietly after that, though the frequent allusions to my growing affection disturbed her visibly.

Every evening after our work we went for a drive. On most of these occasions we met somewhere on the road a blue-eyed man and a brown-eyed woman, riding in a cart, drawn by two horses, hitched tandem. I often wonder what has become of them; whether they have decided to go through the world tandem—one in front of the other—or side by side, as I used to see them there. Sometimes they rode bicycles, which they handled equally well. When the darkness settled their lamps were lit, according to the local laws, and the lanterns looked like fireflies as they spun along the hard roads. Perhaps that is what Froude saw which made him say in his book that there are fireflies in Barbados—who can tell? The woman was rather handsome, with a well rounded form, and a mouth made for kisses, though she assured me once that none had ever rested there. If true, it is a sad case of luscious fruit going to waste on a tree well worth climbing.

With the exception of the following Sunday we worked every day. Miss May was getting more and more used to hearing her every act recorded and made few interruptions. I warned her when I came to the episode of the book on criminology and she steadied her nerves and went through it like a heroine. She did demur a little—hesitating and flashing an appealing look at me—when I came to her admission that she wanted to kiss me quite as much as I wished her to do so, and she breathed heavily when I told what had caused me to decide that, even if permitted, I must refuse the boon. When I reached the place where I had to admit reading the letter she wrote to her friend Helen she stopped short and we looked for some seconds at each other.

"That is the only really dishonorable thing I have known of you," she said, reproachfully.

"I do not defend it," was my reply; "but I would not give up the happiness it caused me for all the world."

"You surely cannot remember that letter, word for word!"

"I believe I can give it literally."

"If you have any doubt, I will get the original for you," she said. "When I came to read it over I thought it wiser not to send it. I wrote another in its stead and kept the one you saw—as a warning for the future."

She arose, went to her bedroom, procured the letter, and brought it to me.

"But it came from your heart, my love," I said, bending toward her. "That is what gives it value. And all this time you have been pretending that my slightest sentiment of affection must be repelled. Have you forgotten our compact, dear one? We were only to lie to outsiders, never to each other. Marjorie, once more, listen to me. I love you! I want you for my wife. Here, with this confession before us, need we go on longer without a definite understanding? Why not say that little word that will make me the happiest man who breathes?"

I had not uttered all this without many attempts on her part to stop the flow of words. When I finished she turned her chair directly toward me and spoke with firmness, though her face was as white as I had

ever seen it.

"Mr. Camran, you are taking an unfair advantage. Having violated the privacy of my room and read the letter I wrote to an intimate friend, you now seek to make that act the basis for renewing a suit I have told you more than once cannot succeed. Ah, no! There are reasons stronger than I care to make known why I cannot be your wife. I beg you do not give me the pain of compelling me to say this again. I will repeat, if you desire, the words I wrote to my friend: 'It is all I can do to prevent myself falling head over ears in love with this man.'

"Yes," she continued, "that was true—that is true. It is all I can do; but I can do it, I have done it, I shall continue to do it! Mr. Camran, I esteem you beyond the power of language to express. Your kindness, your consideration, your generosity have affected me wonderfully. Some day you will know to what extent. But there can be no relation between us nearer than the one we now occupy. Never, never, never!"

She had covered every point, but like suitors the world over I would not believe her.

"Answer me a few questions," I said. "Yes, in justice to my proposal, which I cannot but feel does honor to both of us. Do you mean to say that your final declination of my offer is based on the fact that I read your private correspondence?"

"No, it would have been the same without that," she answered. "Let me add that I forgive you freely for what you did in that respect."

"Is it because—I want to understand perfectly—you think it dishonorable to wed a man richer than you, whose acquaintance you made in an unusual way?"

She shook her head in negation.

"Is there, then, anything that you have heard, or suspect, against my reputation?"

Again she shook her head decidedly.

I took up her letter and read:

If I were of his social grade—if I could have retained the position in which I was born, he would be my ideal. Such thoughts, alas! are not for your poor friend, Marjorie.

"Those words mean something," I said, earnestly.

Tears came into her eyes.

"Mr. Camran, do you think it is fair to press me like this?" she asked, with a sob.

"There is an adage," I replied, "that all is fair in love. To give you up means to shatter my existence. I have been a reckless boy. With you as my wife I would make a worthy man—worthy of you, of myself, of the noble line from which I sprung. I fear, and I say it deliberately, that if I lose you I shall sink again into the depths from which I have escaped."

"All that," she said, gently, "you said when your friend Statia gave you the same answer I am compelled to give now."

"It is jealousy!" I exclaimed, excitedly. "You are angry because I asked her, before I had even seen you! Very well. But, understand what you are doing! I cannot go through the agony I suffered a year ago."

She sprang up, as if to ward off an impending danger, and came so near that her face was within six inches of mine.

I looked her squarely in the eyes.

"You cannot fascinate me in that way!" I cried, bitterly. "You have ruined a man who has taken you from poverty and given you for two months, at least, the life of a lady. Don't put your hands on me!" as she attempted to touch my shoulder. "I have finished with you. Take the advance payment you have had and go to your home, if you have one. But, remember, by your own agreement, the clothes in which you stand belong to me. Take them off before you leave this room, give them up, or I will strip them from you by force!"

I do not know that I am quoting my exact words, but I am sure this was the sentiment that, in my rage, I expressed. At the moment I hated the woman more than I had loved her a few minutes before.

"You shall have them, every one," answered Miss May, without the least trace of excitement. "I will go immediately to the village and buy just enough articles of dress to make me fit to take passage to America. All I had from you shall be packed in the trunks you bought and left behind."

"And the jewelry," I added, still blind with my disappointment, for she had received and was wearing it again. "Take those rings from your hands, those diamonds from your ears. They are mine, remember. That was our agreement. I broke into Wesson's trunk and reclaimed them. They are mine!"

At the mention of Wesson she paled even more than before, but complied with my request, laying the articles on the table before me, one by one.

"Good-by," she said, softly, going toward the door that led to her chamber.

Like an avalanche the horror of what I was doing swept over me. I rose, clutched wildly at the air, and fell, not unconscious, but with a deathly nausea. The next moment a woman's form was kneeling by my side and my head was raised to the support of a woman's arm.

"Forgive me—oh! forgive me!" was murmured convulsively in my ear.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A WEDDING RING.

For the next week I was a very sick man. I remember almost nothing of what happened, except that I was in bed and that Miss May was nursing me with all the care a mother gives an infant. Yes, I remember another thing—that Mr. Wesson came several times to my bedside and conversed in low tones with my companion and with a physician whom somebody had summoned. I was too weak to think much about it, or I should certainly have objected to his presence, but I knew in a dim way that he was there.

Afterwards I began slowly to regain my memory and my strength. My first attempts to engage in conversation were discouraged. Mr. Pomeroy, the proprietor of the house, came in and said sympathetically that if I wanted to get on my feet soon I must be very quiet. "Eddie" Armstrong, the manager, whom I had grown to like immensely, said the same thing. I obeyed their injunctions for several days more; but one morning I awoke so strong in heart that I announced my purpose of rising, though all the doctors in Christendom—or even in Barbados—forbade it.

Miss May hesitatingly brought my bath wrap and assisted me to sit up in bed. One movement upon my feet, however, had more effect than all her persuasions. I must wait a little longer. She propped me up and gave me a strengthening drink that was waiting upon a table. Then she sat by my side and, at my request, read extracts from some newspapers that she had obtained in the reading room below.

The news was all about a possible war with Spain, on account of the blowing up of the warship "Maine," in Havana Harbor. I grew indignant at the hot-heads in my country who were willing to plunge two nations in the horrors of war without waiting to see if a catastrophe could be honorably averted. When the reading was finished I lay passive for a long time and then my thoughts reverted to the scene that preceded my illness.

"I am very, very sorry!" I murmured, drawing Marjorie toward me by the hand which she allowed to rest in mine.

"Sorry? For what?"

"My cruelty to you."

She bade me think no more of what had passed, declaring that the blame, if any, was her own, and that, at least, I must not talk about it for the present. Her manner soothed me more than words and I lay very still, fondling the hand I held and occasionally murmuring grateful expressions. They came to me gradually—all the hateful things I had said and done; and I contrasted them, to my discredit, with the thoughtful care she was giving me.

The love that had vanished during my anger returned ten-fold.

The doctor came and looked wise. I would be able to sit up in a day or two, he said. Good nursing was what I most required now; as if I didn't know that as well as he! And I had the best nurse in the world—the one I wanted above all others. Could I only be assured I never would lose her!

On the third day I refused to heed longer the advice not to talk. I had too much to say that I wanted Marjorie to hear.

"If you really wish me to be quiet," I said, "you can stop me very easily. Tell me you will be my wife when we return to New York. Only say 'yes' and I will not speak another word."

She leaned over the bed, pushing my hair back gently with her soft white hand.

"Only that one word, Marjorie; only that one! And then we will both be still."

"When—we return—to New York," she answered, slowly, with a pause between the syllables, "I have—something—of great importance to—tell you. If—after that—you persist in your question—I—I—"

"That is enough," was my joyful reply. "You will leave it to me? Dear girl, I ask no more. God bless and keep you!"

I fell asleep early that evening and did not waken once till the sun had risen. Then the medicine she had given me showed its efficacious power. I was quite able to rise and even to take my breakfast at the table in the sitting-room with her. Once started on the road to recovery each hour showed a rapid gain. In another day I was taken for a short drive. The next I remained dressed from morning till night, though I reclined part of the time on a sofa.

And I could think of nothing but returning to the United States. The sooner the better now, when the wish of my life was to be granted there.

Marjorie showed herself a woman of wonderful capacity in more ways than one. She arranged with the Colonial Bank officials to have a draft all ready for me to sign when I drove up one day for money, thus saving what must have proved a weary wait. She bought new steamer chairs, the others having been left carelessly on the Pretoria. She paid the hotel bill and made all arrangements for our departure, having taken pains to learn which steamer would take us away the soonest. We were to go on a Royal Mail boat, "the Don," (happy omen!) to Jamaica, being sure of plenty of American steamers from that point.

On the day we were to depart I was nearly as strong as ever. Bidding farewell with some regrets to all the guests I knew, to the proprietor, the manager, Miss Byno and the brown-eyed bicyclist, I entered the carriage with really a light heart.

I was going again on a voyage with Marjorie; going, though the route might be slightly circuitous, to a land where she and I were to be indissolubly united. Is it any wonder I was happy?

The crowd of boatmen that assailed us at the water's edge nearly carried me off my feet. Money is too scarce in Barbados to make the possible gain of a dollar a light matter. One of the men caught me, however, by the name of his craft, which he repeated loudly. "Here yo' is, Massa; de Marjorie, dat's yo' boat, Massa!" I engaged him on the spot and a black patrolman scattered the horde of disappointed applicants. Our baggage and ourselves filled the little boat, but we knew we were safe. Off we started for the big black steamer, near which I could discern the American man-of-war "Cincinnati," bringing a leap of patriotic blood to my heart.

Home? We were almost at home now, with the stars and stripes floating so near us!

The "Don" and the "Marjorie." What could be more propitious?

"I hope you won't scold me, Don," said Marjorie, in a low voice, "but I have taken a liberty that perhaps I should have spoken about beforehand."

"Take any liberty you like, sweetheart," I answered. "I am yours now, to do what you please with."

She drew off one of her gloves and advancing a hand asked me to inspect it. After doing so for a minute I told her I saw nothing except the dearest hand in the world; upon which I took it up and kissed it.

"Don't you notice that I am wearing another ring?" she said, flushing.

She certainly was: A gold ring at that and a plain one. It was on her wedding finger, too.

My first thought was that she had summoned a minister and married me during my illness. This was too good to be true and I at once dismissed it.

"You are not yet quite well," she explained, demurely, "and I shall have to be in your cabin frequently. I thought it best to avoid attracting notice, and as I had that ring of my mother's—I just—put it on."

How sweet it was of her; how confiding!

"But our names on the passenger list?" I said.

"That is all arranged. We are Mr. and Mrs. Camwell."

It was bliss enough for one day. Nothing but the purest thoughts regarding her could enter my head now. She was to be my wife!

The next morning she arranged a pleasant way to pass the time. Our cabin was very large and roomy, and she said she could go on with my "novel" quite as well there as on shore. She made me recline on my berth, which had no other above it, and dictation was therefore done entirely at my ease. It was undoubtedly better for me to keep my mind actively employed, and the task to which I set myself was a most agreeable one. My darling recorded the lines I gave her, with rapidity, and made very few audible comments that day, although it was evident from the tell-tale expression of her mobile countenance that she was keenly alive to each situation I detailed. The lines that seemed to affect her most were those wherein I confessed the depth, the sincerity and the purity of the love that had sprung up in my heart.

She could not complain that I was misrepresenting her own part in these affairs, for I thought no alteration could improve a straightforward statement of the real facts as they appeared to me. She winced a little—I thought more about that afterwards—when I referred to seeing Wesson in my stateroom on the Pretoria and again when I spoke of meeting him in close converse with Edgerly in Barbados.

The nearest she came to a full stop was when I related the reasons I had for believing Wesson stole the book from Eggert and was more than likely the thief who had taken the jewels, but after a second her fingers flew over the keys as usual.

The waters through which we were passing were smooth as any millpond. I have never seen so calm a sea, and my tranquil mind sorted with it perfectly. There was nothing that could add to my happiness. I believed each revolution of the steamer's screw brought me nearer the goal of my ambition, the possession of my lovely companion as my true and lawful bride. In the meantime I was producing what I had no doubt would give me a successful embarkation on the sea of literary fame, a voyage I had long aspired to take.

During the three days the "Don" occupied in going from Greytown to Kingston we accomplished much. Marjorie gasped several times when I came to the chapter that detailed my entrance into Wesson's room and my success in finding the packet containing the missing diamonds. As I told of my interview with the rascal she grew as pale as chalk, but she did not entirely stop her writing. At last we came to the time when the "novel" itself was begun and she brightened enough to say that we were walking now in our own tracks. But, at the bald revelation of the things I had said to her when I lost my temper, and demanded back the very clothes she wore, she protested.

"You are unjust to yourself to put that literally in your story," she said, pleadingly. "Your readers will never feel the extent of your provocation. It makes you appear a very detestable character."

"It must go in—exactly as it happened," I answered. "I had no valid excuse for the contemptible things I did. The public will consider it all a piece of fiction. I think it necessary to show the extent to which I lost my reason when I believed I had lost you. It is much safer in a novel to abuse the 'hero' than the 'heroine.'"

Seeing that nothing would move me she went on as I dictated and when the boat was due to arrive at Jamaica the next day we had reached the very words you are now reading. I had apparently recovered my strength entirely. That night I slept as soundly as if I had never known illness or mental trouble. In the morning we went early upon deck to see the entrance to the Harbor and had a pleasant talk with Captain Tindall, one of those affable and handsome men that England produces in such numbers and assigns to this duty all over the world.

Inquiry had convinced me that there was but one suitable place to stay at in Kingston—the Myrtle Bank Hotel—and the result proved the wisdom of my choice. While open to some slight criticism—as what hotel is not?—it was on the whole a delightful home to us during our brief stay. There being no more work to do at present I occupied the hours in talks, walks and drives with Marjorie, happy as the butterflies among the roses in the pretty park which separates the hotel from the shore.

We went one day to visit a camp of soldiers in the suburbs, on another to the Constant Spring Hotel, situated six miles from town in a mountain nook, to Castleton Gardens and Hope Gardens, beautiful for situation and high culture, with lovely roads leading to each. Again, we took the train to Spanish Town and drove to Bog Walk, as pretty a bit of scenery as one could desire. And later we passed several days at Mandeville, some fifty miles or so away, a village perched among the hills 2100 feet above the sea, where the scent of coffee flowers and orange blossoms fairly filled the delicious air and the thermometer recorded a degree of heat more grateful than that to be found in the lowlands. I noted the mercury at 70 when I went to bed, at 60 when I rose, and at 75 when the sun was in the zenith. I really do not know another spot more charming in any land, in March or April.

Besides this we visited Montpelier, Montego Bay and Port Antonio, seeing at the latter place a steamer of the Boston Fruit Company setting sail for the Hub with an immense cargo of bananas and oranges. The country thereabout is one field of those fruits, combined with the stately cocoanut palms, while a short distance away tobacco is grown that rivals the famed product of unhappy Cuba. On the 28th we bade farewell to the island, with genuine regret on my part at least, and took the little "Beta" of the Halifax line for Bermuda.

Before we left Kingston a batch of letters was received, some for each of us, and I did not attempt to annoy Marjorie this time by prying into her correspondence. My confidence in her was now at its highest point. She did not write any answers, nor did I, as we were so soon to reach home. After three days in Bermuda we started for America. I saw that, for some reason, she wanted to return, and with the hope that filled my breast I had no wish to prolong our absence.

It was agreed that we would have to separate when we touched land, she to go to her old lodgings and I to mine, but I stipulated that we were to meet again within a very few days and that she was to write me when to expect her. As I saw her enter her carriage, with her baggage strapped behind, I held myself well in hand, though the wish to embrace her at parting nearly overpowered me.

"You will write as soon as possible?" I said, interrogatively.

"Yes," she answered. "I will write; and then, if you still insist, I will come to you."

If I still insisted! I did not believe as I saw her wheels disappear in the street that anything could change the resolutions I held so dear!

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BRUTAL TRUTH.

Three days passed—three awfully slow days, though I visited Harvey Hume and Tom Barton, spent every evening at the theatre, and loafed away many hours at the club, where the boys made me tell them of the islands I had visited and asked my opinion over and over, (as if it amounted to anything) in relation to the probability of a war between the United States and Spain. I refused to enlighten Harvey at the time in reference to his question whether I had not been quite as happy "without my secretary" as if I had taken one. I said I would have something to tell him one of these days and that he must be content until that time came. Tom was the same dear fellow as of yore, but Statia, who came in to welcome me, was as sphynx-like as on the eve of my departure.

I also had to run in a moment on my Uncle Dugald, who gave me his hand in his old, impassive manner, and expressed the opinion that I looked better, on the whole, than when I went away. A brief call on Dr. Chambers completed my list. I thought that excellent gentleman looked a trifle disappointed when I called his attention to my improved physique and said I was as well as I had ever been in my life. I have no wish to do him an injustice, for it was certainly a feather in his cap when he raised me out of the Slough of Despond and made me fit to travel at all; but it is only natural if professional men are not filled with special delight at announcements that their services are no longer required.

On the third evening there came a packet from Miss May—at last! an awfully big packet, which set me to wondering what it could possibly contain. I thought as I received it from the messenger that it would have answered for a presidential message to Congress on the Cuban situation, with all the correspondence that had passed between the United States and Spain since the blowing up of the warship. It may be believed I lost no time in tearing open the paper that encircled the missives. Inside I found a small envelope marked "Open first," and a larger one inscribed, "Read this only after you have read the other carefully." All this was so deliberate and so much like a deep plan that I was far from my ease when I complied with the request and cut the smaller envelope. And the reader may well believe that my sensations were not of a very enviable nature when I read these lines:

My Dear Mr. Camran: I know no easy way to break the truth I am obliged to send. If you have any doubt of being able to bear a shock without medical attendance do not read what I have placed in the other envelope until you have summoned your physician. I fear it will not be pleasant reading, but you must have the truth. At least, I must keep my promise now of lying only to others and not to you.

With this warning, I subscribe myself, for the last time,

Yours,

M.M.

April 8th, 1898.

I was surprised at the calmness with which I saw all my hopes blown to the winds in a single paragraph. Curiosity was the most pronounced feeling in my mind at the moment. I took a long breath, steadied my nerves for an instant, and then opened the larger envelope. There were typewriter sheets, twelve in number, done, apparently, on a Remington machine. And this is what I read:

Prepare yourself to hear the worst about me, my dear friend, for your imagination could hardly make me out a greater scamp than I am. Know then, to begin with, your companion in the Caribbean was a well-known criminal, whose entire trip with you was planned for the purpose of fraud. If she failed to accomplish that end you must ascribe it to a weak yielding to sentimental considerations, of which she should—from a professional standpoint—be heartily ashamed.

If you have survived this statement, read on, and I will be more explicit. I am what is known to the police as a "confidence woman." My usual game is to beguile persons of the opposite sex into "falling in love" with me and then fleece them out of as large a sum as I can do with safety to myself. I may add, without egotism, that I have been fairly successful in this, my chosen field. If you care to get another copy of that book I stopped you from reading at St. Thomas, "Our Rival, the Rascal," you will find on one of its pages a fairly accurate portrait of your humble servant, though the name affixed is not by any means the one I thought it wise to give you.

One of my favorite methods of making the acquaintance of probable victims is through the advertising columns of newspapers. I have found no better medium for the purpose than the "Personals" in the New York Herald; it is generally to be supposed that a masculine individual who will use that column or reply to anything contained therein is good game for my purpose.

Naturally my attention was attracted to your announcement that you wanted a typewritist to accompany you to the West Indies for the winter. I wrote as modest and taking an answer as I knew how and the fact that it proved most attractive to you out of a hundred you received justified my judgment. The next thing was to hold you fast, when you came to see me, and here again I flatter myself that I evinced the right sort of talent. I sized you up at the start for what you were—a good-natured, easily-led gentleman of means, who would answer very well for my purpose.

Now, see how I proceeded: To have accepted your offer at once would have been to awaken your suspicions. I knew better than that, and I played what is technically known as a waiting game. As I look back on our primary interviews and correspondence I do not see a wrong step on my part. I wrote you that I could be seen "only between the hours of two and four," to give you the impression that I was no ordinary girl who would go anywhere, or with any one, and whom you could lead with a thread.

You were to come at my hours; I knew you would like that. You came, but it was I who saw and conquered. You told me at once that you had engaged berths for two on the Madiana. This showed that you were not likely to back out, but I did not take your word alone. I had a friend verifying your statement at Cook's office within an hour after you left my room.

Had I told you that I would go, that afternoon, you would have had a chance to think it over and perhaps to change your mind. It is the fleeing bird that attracts the attention of the hunter. You gave me the name of "David Camwell, Lambs Club," which before I slept that night I had turned into Donald Camran, from a list of members which I was easily able to procure. I learned that Donald Camran was rich; that he was considered erratic; that he answered your description in personal appearance; and that he had been, as you said, recently ill.

The next time you adopt a false name do not use your own initials. Nine-tenths of the people who do this slip up on that banana peel.

When you left my room, that first afternoon, I was as certain you would return as that the sun would rise on the following day. The chapters of the "novel" you afterwards dictated to me prove how entirely accurate I was in my estimates. I take much pride, also, in the second letter I sent you, for I covered my

"fly" with attractive colors to dazzle your eye and meet every point likely to arise in your mind. My card was to convince you that I was the very proper young lady I professed to be. To do this without acting the silly prude was a task fit only for such thoroughly trained hands as mine. Next I spoke of the matter of compensation, to convince you that I was really a working girl and not a mere adventurer. You had plenty of means and the price of my weekly stipend was not likely to alarm you.

As it would really be necessary for me to have considerable money to make a suitable appearance I gently hinted something in relation to that matter, leaving it, however, to your own judgment what should be done. I believe I may claim that in the composition of that letter I showed decided talent. At any rate it accomplished its purpose.

When your answer came I knew that I was going. I would not have paid five dollars to be assured of that. But when you returned to me I still had to pretend a little doubt—not too much, that would have spoiled everything. I left it to you to say whether, after all, you really wanted me to take the journey, doing it in a way that alarmed your fears lest you were going to lose me. I had to keep "the scent warm," as the saying is. The rushing way in which you bought my trunks and sent me the first installment of cash would have removed my doubts, had any remained.

I then thought I might as well get clothed while I was about it and sent the third letter, which we may call "Exhibit C." In that I appealed to the chivalrous part of your nature, arousing your sympathies, and yet without putting myself for one instant in the rôle of a mendicant.

"If I am to go I am unwilling to disgrace you"—that was all there was to it.

Again I was justified by the result. You came as soon as I would let you—I had "gone out of town over New Years," you remember, and you showered another lot of bankbills on my head.

Now here is just where a less experienced person would have made her mistake. Seeing how easily you could be induced to disgorge, she would have hinted at expenditures that would have caused a revolt even in your generous brain. I came late on purpose that Tuesday morning (I had only been a couple of blocks away) in order to work up the fever that I knew was latent in you. I suggested that you go to the shops, knowing that you would grasp at the chance to occupy so close a position to me as the cab would afford. At Altman's I pretended to be shocked at some of the prices, so that you would pronounce them the extremity of cheapness. (How could you do anything else?) And I hinted bashfully at the question of jewelry, knowing that you would send me all I could reasonably expect, as you did the next day.

Then I went to dine with you in a private room, primarily because I was nearly starved to death, secondarily because I knew it would fasten you to me the closer. I put on that awful blue veil to give you the impression that I had never done such a thing before, when as a matter of fact the waiter who served us knows my face as well as he does his mother's, if he has one. He knew enough to conceal that fact, however, as I am certain, from previous experience, every waiter in that house would have done.

Now we come to one of the fine points. You did not forget to mention in your description of that evening how I refused to have the door of our *cabinet particulaire* locked, which you were kind enough to ascribe to maidenly modesty on my part. The fact is, ever since I was imprisoned three years ago for two months, awaiting trial for one of my schemes that went awry, the thought of a turned key on any room I occupy drives me into fits. In that at least I was honest. The scare you gave me in proposing to lock that door took away my appetite to such an extent that I ate, as you have recorded, very sparingly of the excellent dinner.

You may remember that I showed similar trepidation at St. Thomas, when you suggested that Mr. Eggert might lock the door of my bedroom. It was enough like a jail with the high fence around the grounds, and I

never felt quite easy till we had left the place. I really did not take one good breath there, so vivid is my recollection of the horrible days when high walls and locked doors meant imprisonment.

I don't suppose I shall explain everything you will wish to know, but I shall do my best. The next thing that occurs to me is that I refused to allow you to register my name on the Madiana's passenger list as "Miss May." As this was merely a *nom de guerre* you will wonder why I objected to its going into print. The fact is that my husband—yes, I am married, and by a minister of the church, too—did not like to have me take that journey without going with me on the boat, while I was sure it was much better for him to remain away. He has no jealousy, as you will immediately imagine—he knows me too well to be guilty of such a senseless thing. I love him with all my soul; and I can take care of myself, if it comes to that, against the persuasions or the force of any living man.

He merely wanted to be with me, just as you would want to be with your wife, if you had one and loved her. I knew he was not always a safe companion in a game of this kind, that he had a quick temper and was lacking in judgment in any case where I was concerned; and I told him plainly that this was my affair, that I should manage it alone, if at all, and I should not tell him where you and I were going.

As he knew your name, having made the inquiries at your club, he would have a double chance to discover us if he saw mine anywhere in print, and "Miss May" was a title he knew I had once before assumed. So I got you to change it to "Carney" in hopes to throw him off the track. He proved too shrewd for me, however, as you will agree when I mention that he travelled on the steamer with us under the name of "Edgerly."

I may as well tell you at this point that the "cruel employer" to whom I alluded so often was a creature of my imagination, and that all the typewriting I have ever done has been for my own profit and amusement in schemes like the present one.

If you had recorded me as "Miss Camwell" I meant to work another racket on you. I expected to institute a suit for breach of promise on my return, not one to be taken to court, but only to use as a lever to pry a few thousands out of your pocket; I would have done this if you had not, contrary to all precedent, made me an honorable offer of your hand, which spoiled my plan in an unforeseen manner. It was with this in view that I went to your rooms several times before we sailed. It is always handy to have evidence ready in a case of this kind and hallboys are excellent witnesses if wanted.

Don't you think I am a lovely girl, now? And aren't you sorry I am not free to wed. What a charming wife I would make for a man like you!

Well, to resume, I played what I thought a good card by saying that I should only accept the things you paid for as "the costuming of my part" and return them to you when the show was over. It didn't cost anything to say that and I knew you never would accept them. The little screed that I left on the typewriter at your room was not a bad stroke, either. I flatter myself it was a fair piece of English composition, and although it contained not a word of truth, it answered just as well. It made you think of me with more respect than if you had supposed me a mere waif of the streets.

You wondered—didn't you?—why I went to my cabin on the steamer and remained there for part of two days after it started. Perhaps you can guess the reason now. I had seen my husband on deck and not being anxious to meet him any sooner than could be helped I kept out of his way. Before I did come up I received a note from him, by one of the stewards, detailing the course he intended to adopt, which was simply to act as if he had never seen or heard of me in his life. I could not help a slight uneasiness, though, at his presence, for he is not always as shrewd as a husband of mine should be. I was rather displeased that he had come in spite of my advice; and I felt afraid that he would hamper my movements even if he

did not destroy my plans.

What made me suspect that man Wesson I do not know, unless it was instinct. The moment I set my eyes upon him I put him down for an enemy. I wrote a few lines to my husband, telling him to watch, but he answered that my suspicions were groundless, another proof how much clearer are my intuitions than his. Wesson was always prying around. I had some conversations on deck with him when you left me alone, but could come to no positive conclusion except that I wished he was somewhere on shore.

I didn't really guess what he was up to until we had landed at St. Thomas.



CHAPTER XXV.

"WITH HIS WIFE, OF COURSE."

I leave the reader to imagine my feelings, [it is Camran writing now] as I read these lines, if he can. To describe them is more than I am able to do. Suffice it to say that I read on and on, like one fascinated, and there was no sign of the collapse I might have expected from the dreadful revelations. The catastrophe was too immense to be met in any ordinary way.

You will now need no confession of mine [continued this strange MS.] to inform you who purloined Miss Howes' bracelet and your shirtstud. Who stole my own jewelry might be a harder riddle, so I will make haste to say that I did that also. It was the easiest way to prevent suspicion falling on my head, though it can hardly be said to have been entirely successful, as Mr. Howes never had the least doubt of my guilt. I knew that from the first, by the freezing manner he immediately adopted toward me and the chilling way in which his "niece," or friend, as she afterwards proved, used me until I left the boat. I ought to say here that common thefts are not in my line, and that I regret having been drawn into the commission of these acts. My husband urged the deed upon me, and rather than let him run the risk of doing it himself—which he threatened—I yielded to his importunities. He had embarked with very little ready money, on account of recent ill luck at the faro table, and dreaded being stranded in some foreign port without enough to complete his voyage. I was, as you know, powerless to aid him much in any other way.

You will naturally inquire why, if this is true, my husband returned to you the money he won at cards, taking your check instead. He did so because I insisted upon it. I told him, at the rate he was going, we should be high and dry on the reefs before we got back to America. There was little sense in killing a goose (I meant you, my dear Donald) that was likely to lay golden eggs for a long time if properly tended.

Wesson worried you at Eggert's, didn't he? Well, he worried me a great deal more. I had an instinctive fear of him and was at my wits' end to give a reason. I knew also that my husband was waiting for me at St. Croix and wished to consult him in regard to several matters. I wished to get away from Eggert, the two or three fainting fits I had there were simulated for the purpose of inducing you to cut your stay as short as possible.

I wanted you to make the proposal to leave and at last succeeded. I let you kiss the ends of my fingers; and sometimes I pretended to reciprocate your affection, though I could hardly keep from laughing in my sleeve. Do you remember the time you bathed my forehead with cologne? I could hardly control my risibles at the pathetic figure you made. Oh! It was really too amusing. I took the sea bath every morning, not because I cared for it, but in order to awake your fancies and bind you tighter to my triumphal car. The lovely, silly things you said to me!

Now, about that book: I saw it long before you did and tried to think of some plan to keep it out of your way. You might notice the similarity in features Between Miss —— and myself, if you were allowed to pore over its pages. I had another fear, too, even stronger, for I believe I could have convinced you that the resemblance was merely accidental: I dreaded Wesson's sharp eyes if once they got hold of that volume. So it was I—not he, of course—that put the book out of the way, and it was only by my

carelessness that he afterwards got his hands on it.

I had ceased to have the slightest fear of you; of course, I never had any for myself—I mean, there was nothing about you to endanger the wifely duty I owed to my dear, unhappy husband. You could be handled as easily as a kitten, by touching your sentimental side. Do you recall looking in at my screen door and seeing me in the attitude of prayer? Why, I had posed in that position, night after night, waiting for you to come! When I asked you to enter, a little later, I knew as well as that I breathed what your answer would be. There never was another man so easy to control.

Then there was the letter I received from my dear friend Helen. All arranged for, copied from one I had left with her—before I sailed—just on purpose for you. I forced that card on you as nicely as any conjurer could have done it, didn't I? And my answer—which you entered my room and read—(excuse me while I go behind the door and smile) that was cooked up for your eyes in the same way. I didn't know that you would go into the room, although I hoped so, but if you hadn't you would have been given the letter to mail, with the unsealed envelope turned so as to attract your attention, and you never would have been able to resist a peep, never. How did you like my description of your beauty? The blonde mustache, the "hazel eyes," the "engaging countenance?" If I had been as silly as that letter indicated, it would not have taken a very gay Lothario to accomplish his designs on me.

Your reiterated offers of marriage convinced me that I could pull that string whenever I was ready. That I have not pulled it is due to the "weak yielding" of which I spoke at the beginning of this letter. Professionally, I repeat, it was an error. I could have got a nice little pot out of you if I had kept along that line.

But I am not the only member of my "firm" who has weak moments. My husband could not keep himself quiet in that hotel at St. Croix, when everything depended on his remaining out of sight. He had to stand in the sitting room and listen to your protestations of affection, until I was frightened out of my wits, for I know what an excitable fellow he is.

It is one thing to have your wife let another man make love to her—for a legitimate purpose—and quite another to overhear the burning declarations. I had to play the fainting gag again, in order to send you after water, and—do the best I could—my husband would not run when he heard your returning step. I was in mortal fear that he would kill you and only by the best diplomacy of which I was mistress did I send him away.

Even then he had not finished. I went into your room at midnight, do you recollect? to keep him from entering there. Not altogether to save you from injury—though I would have done that, too—but for fear of the legal entanglements into which his rashness might bring him.

And in the morning you sent me that sweet letter of apology! Whenever I get the blues I shall only have to take that out and read it. It was so funny!

I am afraid you are getting tired of this story, but you might as well have it all. It will cure your complaint called "love," that you have had so severely, if anything will, and that ought to be one comfort.

My husband was on the steamer with us when we left St. Croix, and—where, do you suppose? In the stateroom with his wife, where a true man should be, of course. I smuggled him in there and kept him hid till we reached Barbados, if you please. But the night you and I stayed at Martinique, I had a terrible fear that he would come ashore and do something silly. He kept insisting that he had an account which he must settle, sooner or later, with you. So, if you remember, I went into your bedroom and stayed all night, for I knew he would trust me, and that he would not try to touch you in my presence. In the morning you took me back to the steamer, as I had intended you should; and that night and the next I slept again in the arms I

love. It was he who was prowling around the Hotel des Bains, who played the part of mice and ghosts. Disguised so that no one on the Pretoria recognized him he made his way to land and back again. It wasn't a bad trick, considering.

At Barbados I made him go to the Sea View Hotel instead of the Marine, though with the greatest difficulty. He is so hard to manage when he sets his mind on anything. It was distinctly foolish for him to be seen walking the street with Wesson, for you need never have known he had gone further down the islands than St. Croix. Then why should he come to the Marine in broad daylight, and get into that row, that nearly spilled all the milk? I love the man, I tell you, but I must criticise such conduct.

Where did Wesson get the jewelry? will be the next question in your mind. All I know is that our mutual friend "Edgerly" pawned the lot at Martinique for four hundred francs and afterwards sold the ticket for 125 more, like a dunce! to the proprietor of the Hotel des Bains. That is an indication of where Wesson got hold of the swag. But why did he let you take it from him without making the least resistance? This is another riddle which you must discover for yourself. I can't fathom it.

If you are trying to find anything in my favor because I forgave your insulting language at the time you bade me give up the clothing you had bought, strike it out of your mind. I was merely doing the prudent thing in keeping you quiet until you paid my expenses back to the United States. As to the clothing I knew very well you would never ask for it, in your senses, nor get it, if you did. I finished the work you asked me to do, with the typewriter, to understand exactly how each item in this account seemed to you at the time.

Now, once more, my dear Donald, where does this leave you and me? I might remain in New York without the slightest fear you would molest me, either in person or through the law. No man would like to have this story printed, with his real name, in the daily newspapers; now, would he? Neither is it likely that your fondness for your Marjorie (ha, ha!) will long outlive the confessions she has so freely made. But I am not going to remain in this city. The haunts that have known me will know me no more. I am going far away, with my husband—my darling husband—and I can promise that your eyes have gazed upon both of us for the very last time.

Why, now, did I give up attacking your bank account when such a good opportunity still remained? I will tell you, candidly. There are sportsmen, many of them, I trust, who would not shoot a fawn that stood still at their approach. I never supposed there was a man with whom a woman could travel as I travelled with you, who would not give cause to bleed him with a good conscience by the outrageousness of his conduct. I thought, of course, you would be like the rest. In that case the fountains of mercy would have dried up in my bosom and I would have taken the last dollar I could wrench from you without the slightest compunction. It was a game I believed infallible. I had found it, more than once, to work like a charm.

There are usually only three moves: 1st, to convince the male animal that I am pure and wish to remain so; 2d, to put myself where he believes he can insult me with impunity; 3d, the insult.

I only wanted one move toward the third play on your part to pick you financially to pieces. You did not make it, and I could go no farther.

If this leniency of mine is a deadly sin I can only pray that the temptation to commit another like it will not come to me soon.

And now, my very dear friend, I must say good-bye. Take it altogether, my two months with you have not been unhappy ones. On your part, if you have learned your lesson well, the investment you have made ought to yield a fair dividend. Forget me, if you can, forgive me at any rate. I have already given up my lodgings, so you need not seek me there. My address is for the present a secret.

Yours Sincerely,

"MARJORIE."

Donald Camran, Esq., The Lambs.

I had finished the entire story and yet I sat upright, with my senses all about me. I was going to bear it very well, after all.

A knock was heard upon the door of my apartment. The hallboy entered when I bade him do so and handed me a card, with the statement that the gentleman wished to see me on very important business. The name on the card was unknown to me, but I bade the boy send the owner up. It might prove a diversion and anything was welcome that would take my mind from Marjorie.

I rose and was about to greet the new comer in the usual terms when a sight of his face stopped me.

"Mr. Wesson, what does this mean?" I asked, angrily.

"It means," said the person, with all his old coolness, "that Mr. Wesson has disappeared from the scene, and that I am plain Martin Daly, of the Blinkerdon Police, at your service."

Staggered to the last degree I scanned his card again. It read, "M. Daly, Boston."

"What do you want of me?" I asked, still standing and allowing him to do the same.

"In the first place," he answered, "perhaps you will permit me to take a chair. In the second, you may be kind enough to read a letter which I have brought."

He took the chair, without waiting for my permission and I received the letter, which I saw at once was addressed in the handwriting of my Uncle Dugald.

My Dear Nephew [it read]:—This will introduce Detective Daly of the Blinkerdons, who, at my request, has been for eight or nine weeks attending to matters of importance to you. He will show you his bill for services and expenses, which I would suggest deserves your early consideration. If you decline, for any reason, to pay the bill, kindly let me know at once, that I may give him my own check for the amount.

Yours, etc.,

DUGALD CAMRAN.

New York, April 9th, 1898.

I opened the bill, which had fallen upon the table, and read the following:

Donald Camran, Esq., to Martin Daly,	Dr.
To services ninety days at \$7 per day	\$630.00
To expenses of travel, etc.,	521.50
To cash paid pawnbroker at Martinique and holder of ticket	125.00
	<hr/>
	\$1276.50

"What the devil does this mean, sir?" I demanded, very red in the face.

"It means," said Mr. Daly, affably, "that your uncle engaged me to make the West Indian voyage in your company and protect you from any designing persons. The price per day was the one he himself fixed, and is somewhat less than I am in the habit of receiving. A desire to visit that part of the world induced me to accept the lower rate. The expenses, I hardly think you will deny, have been kept very reasonable."

I reddened more than ever.

"In plain English, sir, you have been dogging my footsteps, and desire me to foot the bill."

"You or your uncle—it is all the same to me," he responded, quite unruffled. "I think you have had some narrower escapes, sir, than you yet realize."

With Miss May's confession lying before me on the table I could not well doubt that. Still the shame of my position was no less galling.

"We can postpone the consideration of that little matter for the present, if you desire," continued Daly, for such I must now call him. "What is of more pressing importance, is the examination of Jack Hazen, or Robert Edgerly, as you knew him, which is set down for day after to-morrow."

"What!" I cried, startled out of myself.

"Oh, I forgot. You know the check for \$350 that you gave him when he buncoed you on the Madiana? Well, he raised that to \$3500, and was arrested while trying to collect that sum at your bank. After you told me you had given him the check I had just time to stop the swindle by cable."

Edgerly arrested? Poor Marjorie! That was all I could think of.

"He is an old offender," continued Daly, "and will get a sweetener this time. At what hour can I expect you to-morrow at the district attorney's office? Twelve o'clock will suit me. Twelve? All right. I see you are busy. Good day, Mr. Camran."

He was gone and I sat there alone with my reflections. It may readily be guessed they were not agreeable.

The only thing I was sure of was that I should pay Daly's bill at once, if I had the requisite balance to my credit in the bank; and that I wished he had been in a warmer place than Barbados before he ever interfered in my affairs.



CHAPTER XXVI.

BEHIND THE BARS.

Why should I blame poor Daly for doing what his profession and the law he followed dictated plainly? Why should I blame my Uncle Dugald for putting me under guardianship, after I was supposed to have reached the years of discretion?

These are indeed pregnant questions. If the reader has had neurasthenia and only partially recovered, he will know that the victim of that malady needs no legitimate reason for any fancies that possess him. It is plain to me—now—that in sending Daly on my track, my Uncle was acting the part of a considerate and thoughtful relation.

It is equally clear to me—now—that the conduct of Daly, from first to last, deserves the highest praise. Instead of demurring for an instant at his bill I would have done well to add \$500 to it as a present.

At the moment he was to me like a blistering plaster, making me think of nothing but the irritation and pain. It is little consolation to be told, under any circumstances, that one has played the part of a fool.

I went to dinner at the club moodily, and on returning to my apartments set myself to consuming as many cigars as possible in a given time. They were cigars I had bought from a Kingston manufacturer and were decidedly better than many sold under the name of "Havanas," since the troubles began in Cuba. I must have smoked at least twenty of them before I paused, put on my hat and light overcoat, and went out of doors, to see if the open air would have any effect in clearing the mist that hung over my brain.

I walked aimlessly for some time, in various directions, and found myself standing opposite my own windows an hour after I began. I wondered if I would be able to sleep if I went into the house. Unconsciousness was the thing most to be desired, it seemed to me. As I had about come to the conclusion to try it, a low voice called my name and its tones filled me with a thrill that was indescribable.

"Mr. Camran!"

"Yes," I replied, laconically.

"I know," said the voice, and I saw the outlines of the figure I remembered so well, "I know—that I have no right—to appeal to your pity—or to ask your aid. I have, unfortunately—no other resource—and—I beg you—as you hope for mercy at the bar of Heaven—give me—a few minutes—where I can speak to you—in private."

That form was bent, the tears in that voice were real; she was not acting now.

"Will you come up to my rooms?" I asked.

"I should be so thankful!"

"Come, then."

We went in together, astonishing the hallboy somewhat, for to do myself justice, he had never seen me enter at that time of the evening so accompanied. When we were in my sitting room, and the door shut—I did not turn the key, remembering her aversion to locked doors—she began to speak, slowly and tremblingly:

"I am overcome with shame—I am plunged in a despair that only you can lighten. I know well—that I deserve nothing—at your hands. I—I have robbed you, insulted you—done everything to earn your hatred and contempt; and yet—"

"And yet," I interrupted, for her attitude touched me deeply, "and yet—you have not succeeded in earning either."

She sprang up with the evident intention of throwing herself at my feet, but I caught her by the hands—those hands whose touch had given me such delight only a week ago! How cold they were!

"Let us come to the point," I said, when she was again seated. "Your husband is in jail; you found it out after you sent me that confession; and you want me to free him."

She rocked herself backward and forward.

"You have known what it is to love," she moaned. "You have not known what it is to be wedded. That man is my very life! If they condemn him to a long term in prison they will, at the same time, condemn me to death. I realize how little right I have to appeal to you—but there is no other way. If you testify against us, we are ruined irreparably. Oh, Mr. Camran—Don!—if there is one bright memory in your heart in all the days you and I passed together, let that one plead now for a most unhappy woman!"

I did not want her to suffer. I had no desire to punish her. Had she been unmarried I would have offered her my hand again—yes, after all I knew!

"It was not by my wish that your husband was arrested," I said, gently. "In fact, I only learned of it an hour ago."

"But you can save him—you, and you alone!" she cried. "What does it mean to you, the money you have lost by us? The check you gave him was never paid, not even the sum for which you wrote it. I know—I know he struck you, he tried to kill you—I know it all! but you escaped unharmed. As for me, I swear to send to-morrow every article you bought—yes, I will get even the money you have paid for my passage and hotel bills. Every penny shall be put into your hands before noon—if you will have mercy on us."

"Marjorie," I answered, "I do not know what I can do, but let me assure you I will do all I can. If any act of mine will set your husband at liberty you may rely on me to perform it."

She seemed hardly able to believe that she heard aright. She laughed through her tears, discordantly.

"You will do this!" she exclaimed. "You are in earnest? And what are your stipulations? Oh! Remember how little I have left of womanly honor, and ask nothing I cannot grant."

A whiteness had come to her lips at the sudden thought that alarmed her.

"I only ask," I answered, shakingly, "that you carry out the purpose of which you spoke in your last letter; that of going far away from this part of the world—where I shall never set eyes on you again. You are to me like a dream that is past: a beautiful dream I must blot from my brain. Within a week I shall have forgotten the thorns and recall only the perfume of roses. A year later I hope to forget the roses themselves. Marjorie, you are the wife of another man. You are, by your own admission, a woman with whom it would be suicide to link my life. But I love you yet. No, do not start. This is my last word on that subject. After all, you have done something for me. From this day the love of woman will never be esteemed a light thing in my mind. A young roué has had a shock that he will not forget. His idle search for pleasure is ended. I shall be another and a better man—even because I have known you."

"And you will save Jack?" she said, entreatingly.

"I will do all I can—'perjure myself like a gentleman'—if necessary. I think you may be sure of having him set free within a very few days."

"What can I do to thank you?" she asked, the tears streaming again from her eyes.

"Nothing," I said, after a moment of hesitation.

For a second I had thought of asking one pure kiss, on the lips. I knew, before the next second had passed that she would refuse it, though her husband's freedom depended on the issue.

"Nothing," I repeated.

As she rose and held out her hands to me in the attitude of parting, I affected not to see the movement. "Good-by," I said, huskily. "No; say no more. Good-by."

At the door to which I allowed her to go alone, she had an instant of doubt.

"You would not be so cruel as to deceive me?" she said, trembling.

I waved my hand in a negative, but I could not trust myself to speak. I was afraid, terribly afraid, that if she did not go at once I should clasp her, willing or unwilling, in my arms, and crush her mouth with my own. And that I would not have done for the world.



As early the following morning as I could expect to find Harvey Hume in his office I was there. Having nothing whatever to do, as usual, he drew me into a private room, closed the door and asked to what he was indebted for a call at that hour.

"I want to consult you on a legal matter," I said, gravely. "Now, do not get excited, for you will need all your wits. Listen!"

I told him that a man was lying in jail under the charge of having raised the figures on a check of mine; that it was my desire that the man should go free; and that I wanted him to tell me how to accomplish that result.

"He is unjustly accused?" he said, interrogatively.

"Whether he is or not doesn't matter. I want him set at liberty."

Hume thought deeply for some moments.

"Did you give him the original check?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then, of course, you remember the figures it bore at that time."

"I wouldn't like to swear to them," I said, evasively.

"They can't convict him unless you do, if he is well defended."

"But," I said, "I don't want him tried at all. I want him released now. Isn't there some way to accomplish that?"

Harvey thought a little longer and finally said he would arrange it. He was to go at once to the jail and unveil his scheme to "Edgerly," and afterwards turn up about noon at the district attorney's office.

As the clocks were striking twelve I met Daly on the steps of the courthouse. He complimented me on my promptness, with a keen look that showed he scented his prey. As we were entering the room of the dispenser of justice, Hume came along and addressed me.

"I say, Camran," he remarked, careful that Daly should hear every word, "I am engaged to appear for a poor chap who is up for raising a check of yours. I was just going in to see the district attorney. I must say, the man seems as innocent of wrong as any fellow I ever met."

"Will you kindly introduce me to this gentleman?" asked Daly of me.

When this was done, he informed Hume that Hazen was a well known sharper and that in the present case there was no doubt whatever of his guilt.

"Mr. Camran gave him a check for \$350 to settle the balance of a game of cards that I will swear was a swindle, for I watched it; and when the check was brought into the bank it had been raised to \$3500. Luckily I got word that the check had been given in time to put the bank people on their guard by cable and he was arrested on the spot."

"Is this true?" asked the lawyer, of me.

"I don't know," I responded, carelessly. "I gave him a check—certainly—but for what amount I am absolutely unable to swear. I was confused at the time—a little put out, naturally—"

Daly was surveying me with a look of rage.

"So you're going to throw it up, are you?" he asked, gutturally. "And one of the prettiest cases I ever worked on, too."

"I will mail you the amount of your bill this afternoon," I said, impudently.

"The amount of my—" he repeated, dolefully. "Yes; but the gain to my reputation that would have resulted—who will compensate me for that? Gad, I'll never take hold of another case that has a woman in it! They can knock over the best of us. You can let your check-raiser go, for all of me," he said to the district attorney, as that gentleman came to the threshold. "The evidence seems to have petered out."

Mr. Hume and I talked the matter over with the official, explained the part he took in the affair, and it was arranged that the case would not be brought before the Grand Jury at all.

"I want to say I think you've played it a little low down on a man that interfered to save your life," said Daly to me, as he left the building. "But I'll watch for that fellow and you can bet I'll get him on something yet before he dies."

I had no wish to argue with him. He was undoubtedly right, from his standpoint.

It was enough for me to know I had succeeded in accomplishing what would put the roses into Marjorie's cheeks once more.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"I PRESSED THEM TO MY LIPS."

I was very lonesome for a few weeks after my return. This it was that took me so often to the house occupied by the Bartons. Tom was immensely glad to see me, at all times, and Statia, though still very sober in my society, began to treat me with her old kindness.

One day, when Hazen was out of jail, and undoubtedly far away from the city, I asked Statia if she would like to hear a diary of my journey to the West Indies. She hesitated a little, saying finally that her answer would depend a great deal on what the diary contained. I told her how I had put the entire affair, from the beginning, into shape for publication and what I wanted was her opinion of my scheme. While there were many things that might not reflect great credit on me, there was nothing, I believed, that it would be improper for her to hear. She thought a little longer and then asked if she might not read it for herself instead of having it read to her. I accepted the amendment, being in fact glad she suggested it, and brought Miss May's MS. to her the very next morning.

When a couple of days had passed Tom dropped in to say that his sister would like to see me, if I found it convenient to run over. In another hour I was in her presence. She met me with a frown on her pretty face and stood for a minute regarding me silently.

"Don, have you told the whole truth in that manuscript?" she asked, then.

"The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me!" I responded with upraised hand.

"It is an awful avowal, take it altogether," she said, soberly. "I almost wish you had not brought it to me. I never shall feel quite the same after this. How could a woman of that description so affect a man like you?"

"I am not going to discuss that," I answered. "Is it worth publishing, that's the point? I have altered every name, you see, so no one not in the secret will recognize a single person involved. It's a rather unusual collection of occurrences, don't you think?"

She assented with a nod to the last proposition, and said as for the literary "market" she supposed in its present state it was not over squeamish.

"The success of the season is 'Quo Vadis,'" she added, "and I wasn't able to read half of it. There is at least a lesson to be learned from this experience of yours, if men will only heed the warnings."

"Thank you," I said, with polite irony, though I didn't agree with her about Sienkiewicz' great work. "Can you think of anything I might add, to round out the tale, as it were?"

A flush came into her face and a slight smile to the corners of her mouth.

"Yes. You might say that 'Statia' admitted to you afterwards that the letters signed 'Alice Brazier' were her own, copied by a friend in the handwriting of the latter and sent from her residence."

My surprise, which was complete, turned the smile into a little laugh at my expense.

"And you might say also," she continued, "that during your absence with 'Marjorie,' your friend 'Tom's' sister was taking lessons in typewriting and became quite proficient in that art. And that she told you,

whenever you wanted to take another journey, and needed assistance in literary work, she would apply for the position rather than have you made the victim of any designing creature of her sex."

"Statia!" I cried, "you have entirely forgiven me?"

"Entirely," she said. "I couldn't wish you any greater punishment than you have endured."

A month passed and one day a box addressed to me was brought to my door by an expressman, with the charges prepaid from some point beyond the Rockies. Wonderingly I saw it opened and then, at the first glance into the interior, I told the boy who plied the hammer that I would unpack it myself.

It contained the entire outfit that "Marjorie" had bought with my money—the jewelry included.

There were the hats which had adorned her fair head; the gowns that had been draped around her graceful body; the shoes, the hosiery, the lingerie—everything!

I took them out slowly, one by one. I pressed them to my lips, letting teardrops fall on each separate article. I could only think of what I had lost—of what, in truth, I had never gained. I put the articles away, finally, locking them securely from all prying eyes.

This little note was found in the box, pinned to a scarf:

My Dear Friend:—Although you told me you did not want to take your things back, I shall feel better to send them to you. It leaves me in your debt only for the other expenses of my voyage, and perhaps the typewriting I did will in some measure compensate for that. Long ago you must have recovered from the tender sentiment with which you used to insist I inspired you, and I hope have also learned to think of me with less aversion than you felt at the last. If I might be permitted to give advice it would be offer your hand and heart to 'Statia Barton.' You need a wife; I am sure, she would make an excellent one.

Farewell; this time, forever!

M.M.

Recovered from my love for you? Not yet, Marjorie, not yet. That will come in time, I trust, but it is still too soon.

Offer my hand to Statia? I would not insult that noble girl again with such a worthless gift. As for my heart, it has not come back to me, and I do not know as it ever will.

"Well," said Mr. Cook, the senior partner of the Dillingham Company, as I signed the contract which gave him the right to publish this "novel,"—"you've had what the doctor prescribed, at least."

"A New Sensation," he explained, as I looked at him inquiringly.

THE END.

SPECIAL NOTE: If this should meet the eyes of Mr. Mathew Howes of Binghamton, or Miss Howes, they are hereby informed that a diamond bracelet is awaiting its owner at The Lambs Club. D.C.

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Obvious typographical and printer errors have been corrected without comment.

In addition to obvious errors, the following changes have been made:

Page 53: removed the word "be" from the phrase "... who is to be become my employee...." leaving, "... who is to become my employee...."

Page 153: changed "profoundedly" to "profoundly" in the phrase, "I was profoundly grateful...."

Page 234: changed "an" to "as" in the phrase, "... your face is as innocent as a babe's."

Other than the above, no effort has been made to standardize internal inconsistencies in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, etc. The author's usage is preserved as found in the original publication.

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