

# *The Hoosier Widow*

By

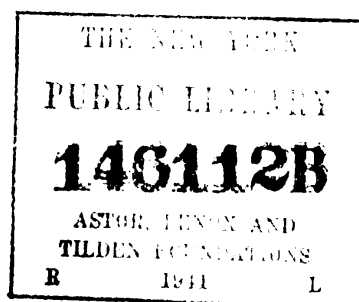
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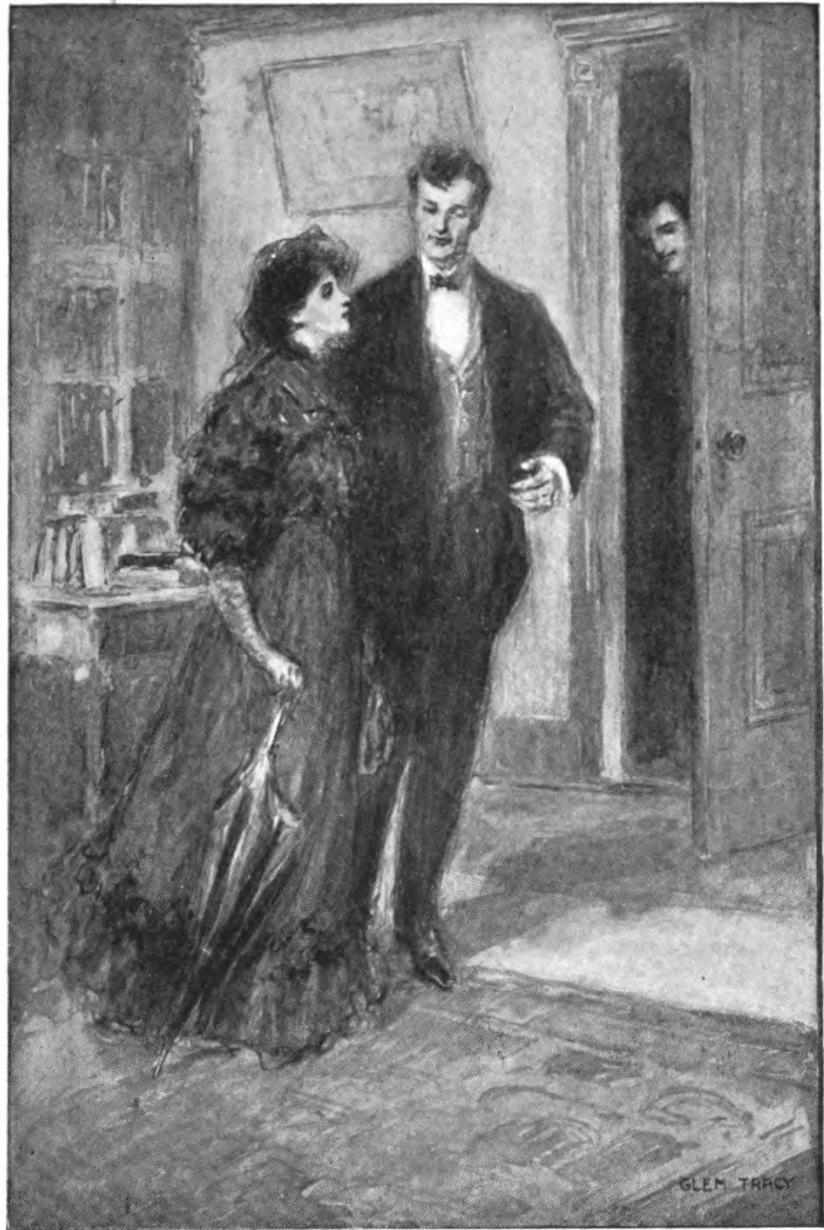
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The Hoosier Widow

FRONTISPIECE

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## CHAPTER I

EVERY wedding of social importance during the winter season of 1897 was compared with the mid-autumn marriage of Dorothy Blake to Howard Pemberton Stafford. Measured by the social tape-line, this particular wedding was a gorgeous and artistic success. It was the beginning of the usual number of social tragedies, and yielded more than the average crop of heartaches, headaches, and unhappy results. Nevertheless, at the time of its happening the world was none the wiser that the apparent happiness and satisfaction were but superficial.

Both bride and groom were counted rich and smart, and were undoubtedly securely anchored to the top rung of the old, aristocratic social ladder. Howard Pemberton Stafford had long been the hope of anxious mothers with marriageable daughters, because he had in addition to wealth and social position, legal talent of an extraordinary quality. His law firm, Stafford, Hanford & Deal, was one of the best known and most successful in New York, with a clientele among the ultra-fashionable class.

"Howard is such a sturdy, steady-going chap," purred the dear old mothers, when they thought their eulogies would reach the ears of the desir-

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able bachelor, or of his aunt, Margaret Kidder, who had to be reckoned with in all things pertaining to her nephew; then they would affectionately stroke the velvety backs of their own kittens—some of whom could be classed as good, healthy cats.

Mr. Stafford was really a most charming and desirable man of merit; a student, philosopher, and secretly a philanthropist. He would not take a criminal case, because of his philosophic beliefs regarding crime.

All his life he had been most loyally devoted to his aunt, Margaret Kidder, who had been as a mother to him since the death of his parents, when he was an infant.

He had often declared that he would not marry so long as his aunt was happy to have him remain single. He actually kept this vow until he had passed his fortieth year. Having lived an abstemious and regular life, he did not appear to have reached the two-score mark, but could easily have passed as thirty. His fine athletic figure was good to look upon, and many young women both in and out of his set would have loved and married him for his manly qualities alone.

Aunt Margaret was a wise old lady, as well as a dear old soul. She knew that he was too good a man to be wholly sacrificed on the questionable altar of bachelordom; she frequently threatened to turn him out into the street if he did not select some nice girl and marry her. "I'm lonesome," she would say; "I want to be mother-in-law to some sweet, good young woman."

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Howard had his own views about love, and he was not certain that he owed the community at large a debt of gratitude, sufficient for him to abandon his comfortable bachelor's life; therefore he determined to wait until the right woman came along and wounded him with a dart tipped with the sting of real love. "I presume the savages will get me sooner or later, but they are going to know they had a fight," he would say to his dear old friend, Mrs. Parker, at times when she would eagerly whisper to him the many nice things she had heard the girls say about him; she was quite as fond of him as was Aunt Margaret herself.

The girls really liked him, and had lots of innocent fun with him, but not one of them pretended to say that she had any special claim upon his attentions, unless it might have been Dorothy Blake; rumor had it that she was the favored one.

Thursday was Mrs. Kidder's receiving day, and to escape the ordeal of trying to appear entertained by a lot of childish old ladies, with a sprinkling of marriageable young and middle-aged ones, Howard usually dined at one or the other of his clubs on that evening. One Thursday afternoon, however, he found it necessary to go home, and there he encountered a flock of about a dozen of the smartest women in their set; the kind that are always looking for sport.

He tried hard to escape, but they surrounded and captured him, leading him, an unwilling prisoner, into the drawing-room.

"Now, Howard," said Mrs. Parker, "you are a

philosopher, and you can settle a question we have been discussing; no two of us can agree. The question is this: What is love in the abstract?"

"Yes, Mr. Stafford," chimed in two or three others, "please do tell us; you are a lawyer."

"Pray, what has the law to do with love?" said Mrs. Kidder. "It deals only with matters the opposite of love."

"What do bachelors know about love, anyway?" asked pretty, practical Mrs. Bell. "If they knew what love is, they wouldn't be bachelors, would they?"

This wise speech was not wholly understood, but it created much laughter, because it was intended as a facer for Howard.

"You flatter me, ladies," exclaimed Howard. "I have no idea of opening a night-school to teach the art of love; that is a dangerous philosophy. Experience is the only teacher that has really been successful in the promulgation of its inner mysteries. I must confess my own education in this respect has been sadly neglected, which vindicates Mrs. Bell's estimate of the knowledge bachelors have of love."

"Well, I just want to remark right here that should you or anyone else decide to open a night-school to teach that subject, you wouldn't find a hall in New York big enough to hold your class," said Mrs. Parker emphatically.

Howard joined in the hearty laugh which this provoked, then said:

"You are an alarmist, Mrs. Parker. Really, I

fear the police would raid the meeting should they become aware of the radical views you express so openly. However, I will deliver to you a little lecture on love; also its antithesis, hate.

"Love and hate partake of the nature of heat and cold. Love is warm, and hate is cold. Heat rises, and cold falls; love uplifts, and hate casts down. Heat is generous, profligate, dissipating. It dissipates the ice into water, and the water into mist, in order that it may inspire them to rise upward or expand outward from a center.

"It disintegrates the dry solid into smoke, and thus releases the spirit of that body to enable it to rise heavenward.

"The living products of heat aspire to expand and to rise upward. Love is of this nature; it attempts to soften and thaw the hard, fixed, solid things of nature, giving to them a freedom to go laughing and dancing out into space, there to generously transmit their joy and happiness to others.

"Cold, on the other hand, is contracting in its nature. It demonstrates its attraction and affection, which is not necessarily love, by grasping and crushing its objective.

"It condenses the mist into water, and the water into raindrops, sleet, snow, or ice, in order to bring them wholly under its subjugation and powers of concentration, and by this power they are crushed back to earth. Cold gives out nothing, but in its selfish greed it grasps everything and holds fast thereto. Hate is of this same nature, the opposite

of love; selfishness is at the bottom of all hatred. A miser is a hateful being because of his cold, grasping nature.

"True, generous, sacrificing love cannot be selfish, because it is contrary to its nature. Ice can express no sound but that of its own cracking, a single note, with a falling inflection.

"Heat sets all things into vibration and motion, and motion is music. The music of the spheres is made by their motion.

"Both hate and cold embrace the object of their attraction for the purely selfish motive of conquering and possessing it. They can radiate no warmth or love, because that would mean a surrender of their substance and their own self-destruction.

"Love surrenders, and hate kills or imprisons."

Howard paused, and Mrs. Parker exclaimed:

"Splendid! Why, Howard, you are truly a philosopher; I never heard a better declaration of love, and I have had a hundred in my time."

There was a motive in Mrs. Parker's wit; Howard's lecture had struck deeper in the minds of his hearers than it was intended, and she quickly tried to draw them out of the trance into which his earnest talk had put them. She utterly failed, however, for the others sat silent and meditative.

The embarrassing silence was broken by Mrs. Bell, who had expressed her doubts about bachelors knowing anything about love. She soberly said:

"Mr. Stafford, I must apologize for having cast aspersions upon the wisdom of bachelors. I see you at least know much about love that is not down in

the books. I should like to be further enlightened, that I may be able to put into practical use your philosophy. Allow me, if you please, to ask you one question. Is there any sign or symbol of nature by which one may always distinguish between the 'hots' and the 'colds' without coming in actual contact with them?"

"Indeed there is," exclaimed Howard; "a never-failing sign, and one which may be easily understood by all. I speak now of principles. That which is cold presses downward; that which is warm aspires upward.

"These two opposing spirits or principles are identical in all things, therefore we may know by the spirit whether a thing or a person is warm, loving, and generous, or is cold, selfish, and hateful.

"Of course, like in heat and cold, there are degrees and shades of love and hate. Inflection is the mysterious key. It reveals the innermost secrets of the human heart. The human voice manifests the hidden passions and the shadings of sentiment by speech. When you hear a voice with a gentle cadence and a constant rising inflection, it is the voice of love. The speaker only desires peace, harmony, and love. By this note the spirit of that person extends a flag of truce, conveying one message only, a message of peace and friendship, and these are degrees of love. Woe to those who disregard or abuse this proffered confidence, for love turned to hate is a fury. There are dangerous extremes in all things. Love is a happy medium.



"When you hear a voice with a constant falling inflection, no matter what your relations may be, take warning—it is the voice of selfishness and hate. This nature will take all you will surrender, but will give only that which it itself is compelled to yield.

"Now, ladies, I hope you know what love is; if you will excuse me, I will withdraw."

With many expressions of thanks they allowed him to go.

They were quite amazed at the profundity of Howard's wisdom and the depth of knowledge he displayed regarding the passions of the human heart. They ever afterward had a higher regard for his opinion. He became the acknowledged oracle of Marchmont.

The next day Mrs. Kidder said to him: "My boy, you showed those butterflies considerable depth of thought yesterday; but will they benefit by it?"

"Why, auntie," replied Howard, "only two out of the whole lot understood what I was saying; they were Mrs. Parker and Mrs. Bell, who doubted bachelors."

"Why do you say that, Howard?" asked his aunt in surprise.

Howard laughingly explained: "Surprise and ignorance of a subject produce in the listener temporary paralysis of the facial muscles, especially the muscles which support the under jaw. Did you notice that all the others had their mouths wide open while I was talking?"

"Well, you are too deep for my weak under-

standing also," declared Mrs. Kidder. "I presume I, too, must attend the proposed night-school, if I am to keep up with the procession. Sherlock Holmes should look well to his laurels."

Margaret Kidder was Howard Stafford's only near relative. His parents dying while he was a tiny baby, his aunt assumed the responsibility of raising him. To his credit, she had always said with much pride, that not once had she had cause to regret it.

They had always resided in the stately, old, high-ceilinged mansion on Madison Avenue, with its ancient but rich furnishings.

It was definitely understood that she should play the part of mother-in-law to any wife Howard should bring there, and that this should remain their town house as long as she chose to live there. She also had her beautiful country home at aristocratic Marchmont.

Margaret Kidder was a most important personage in the social circle of this smart colony, she having been for twenty years the acknowledged censor of manners and morals for the wealthy and fashionable set which spent its summers there. None had dared to challenge her position of authority, because under her keen scrutiny and watchful eyes the riff-raff could not break in, and under her tactful and discriminating supervision Marchmont had long held the distinction of never having had a serious public scandal. The people of Marchmont were perhaps no better than the smart set in other similar communities, but somehow the world

was not wise to their shady doings, if any there were.

Mrs. Kidder, acting as social health officer, had declared a perpetual quarantine against people with questionable morals and bad manners. Newcomers said it was like taking a civil service examination to get into Marchmont society.

Aunt Margaret, as nearly everybody called Mrs. Kidder—and this privilege was the high sign of acceptance in Marchmont—cleaned house, as she called it, early in each season; a ceremony which consisted in going carefully over the lists of guests to be invited to the numerous gay house parties at Marchmont during the summer. People who did not know the value of these services often said it was absurd that anyone should take the liberty of censoring another's list, but the old families of this aristocratic place didn't think so.

She knew everybody "down from Adams's time." She would say:

"We could not consistently invite Adam and Mrs. Adam into our houses knowing they did not have proper clothes; why should this rule not apply to the Joneses and the Browns as well? Polite society demands good and proper clothes." Thereupon she would blue-pencil one more "shoddy-genteel"—she could tell them at a glance.

She wasted neither time nor tolerance on "has-beens," no matter how old or blue-blooded the family. "Society is no asylum for broken-down families; it is an expensive luxury for the rich. People are supposed to pay their social obligations as they

go, therefore those who have lost fortune and are thereby incapable of keeping up their obligations should gracefully withdraw from further participation in smart doings and seek solace in literature and things nearer their hearthstones. They will find this an excellent remedy for heartburn and disappointment. Nothing is more intolerable than the poor, impecunious young man, the son of once wealthy society people, scouting around the social fringe, and always boasting that he is poor, but that nothing can impugn his 'high social position.' "

At times when Howard would hear her sermonizing on this pet subject, he would tease her a bit. One day he heard her talking about the importance of good clothing, and he said:

"Auntie, had you been born a man you would doubtless have been a spotter on a street-car system, or else a plain-clothes man on the police force."

To this she had an apt answer, saying: "As a speculative proposition that might be correct, Howard; plain clothes might do on the police force, but never in the drawing-rooms at Marchmont."

She plucked many from the lists, giving reasons therefor which were invariably satisfactory to those whose lists she crippled. It was done so gently as to not offend or hurt. Her suggestions were generally accepted as compliments and favors, no matter how radical. She had never abused this confidence.

Those who did come to Marchmont on invitation were received with a cordiality most pleasing and flattering. Thus Marchmont enjoyed a

high reputation for the delectable entertainment of its guests.

Mrs. Kidder entertained an especial antipathy and abhorrence for the army and navy officers who infest certain social places. She always became excited when they were discussed, and vehemently declared she would not be responsible for a soldier at any time or place; they were invariably troublesome, she said. "They are, to a man, offensively egotistical and selfish. I have always found their boasted chivalry and their ideas of honor consisted mainly of brazen impertinence to women and high-headed insolence to gentlemen. They seem to think that the calling of an idling soldier is the most honorable on earth.

"On the most casual verbal invitation they insinuate themselves into polite places, and never seem to know when they have worn out their welcome. They bring with them those abominations, their machine-made romance and their shoddy clothes, smelling like a freshly disinfected hospital. Strutting about in cheap tinsel and barbaric gewgaw, they feel fully indorsed for social recognition. Not being to the manner born, they lack that intrinsic refinement which would deter the born gentleman from being a soldier in times of peace; therefore they are, both by nature and calling, disqualified for the drawing-room. Their associations necessarily make their speech and manners awkward and vulgar. With but few exceptions they are moral degenerates, having most of the vices which good custom condemns."

"Why, Auntie," said Howard to this, "I fear your prejudice against the soldier blinds you to the fact that the army is a national necessity, and that we cater to the soldier more or less as an indorsement of the army rather than a social duty."

"The army a national necessity? That is all political fol-de-rol," exclaimed Mrs. Kidder. "For what purpose, pray tell me, must we maintain a large standing army of idle men in time of peace? Do you mean to say any European nation is going to come over here and begin to kill its own kith and kin? Or, perhaps, we may want to use it for plundering expeditions against some of the small, struggling republics not so close akin to us. No; the only stock reason given is that we require a standing army to maintain our dignity among nations and protect our foreign commerce. This is not a valid excuse, because the cost of maintaining the army and navy is many times the actual profit to the people at large realized from our foreign commerce; moreover, it keeps in absolute idleness tens of thousands of the most able-bodied men in the country. Instead of being producers, they are parasites, living upon the body politic without a single return in time of peace.

"But even though there were good and valid reasons for the idle army and navy, society is under no obligations to bolster them up by unduly petting and patronizing the soldier. It is said the army is our national police force. If it must be pampered to lazy fatness to make it popular, it is an unholy institution which should be wholly disbanded in

time of peace. A paid soldiery in a great republic like this is a menace to the nation. It smacks too much of monarchy, which must be sustained by a paid standing army in order that the people may not take the reins of government in their own hands.

"The army officer has no more right to claim social recognition than have the officers of our city police force; their occupation and social status seem to me to be identical. Society boots and spurs belong to the hunt, and its uniforms to the servants.

"The medieval period is past, and with it its vanity, egotism, and cheap gewgaw. In the minds of the people who are in the true current of evolution it is no longer fashionable to kill, even by the surreptitious excuse of dignifying our standing among nations. It is not now considered good form to shoot salvation into the heathen, or to enforce 'benevolent assimilation' at the muzzle of a musket.

"At this enlightened age personal merit must count for something. Correct personality is the uniform of good breeding and cultured refinement; this is not taught in the army, because it would take away the instinct of the soldier to fight and kill.

"If we must have classes, and no doubt nature intended we should, let the line be clearly defined, in order that there may be constantly in sight a definite reward to which the lower classes may aspire by refining evolution and education. But enough of this; it is a disagreeable subject. It is

sufficient that I will not seat a soldier at my table with refined, gentle young women, nor have him clawing at my carpets with his spurs."

"Auntie, if I am not mistaken, you yourself are a Daughter of the Revolution, are you not?" said Howard.

"Yes, Howard, I am. Make no comparison between the soldier of which I speak and the soldier of the Revolution. The cause for the Revolutionary soldier was life and liberty, and a right to establish a nation and a government free from the tyrannies which had been maintained by a standing army. His tinsel and decorations were a blood-stained bandage and tattered uniform. There is a vast difference between this and your so-called soldier to safeguard commerce—and political intrigue. The one, an actual necessity of circumstances; the other, the creature of political emergency. The one battered, starved, and frozen; the other pampered, petted, and fêted.

"I am a Daughter of the Revolution, but these daughters of the grand men who fought monarchy that we might have a country are not now daughters of war; they are daughters of peace, and they advocate only the sweet, wholesome things which go with peace."

"My dear aunt," exclaimed Howard, "I did not mean to so arouse you. Truly you are an orator; let us proclaim peace and return to the main issue. We shall petition Congress to disband the army, turn the muskets into gaspipe and the sabers into pruning-hooks. Now do go on and tell me all you



have to say about Dorothy; that is what I sought you for." They had been talking of Dorothy.

"Very well, Howard," went on Mrs. Kidder, "it is well for you to know that Dorothy is not like her gentle mother, whose heart she has so often crushed; but she is the image of her father. Why, old Blake died simply to be contrary. I remember when the last consultation was held by several prominent doctors, old Doctor Moss, one of the best doctors in New York, was called. While they were about Blake's bedside, expecting the next breath to be his last, he raised on his elbow unexpectedly and offered to wager Dr. Moss a large sum, the winnings to be donated to the 'Cat and Dog Hospital' on Long Island, that he would not pull through.

"The proud old doctor felt so outraged at such a proposition he said to Blake: 'You blasphemous old fool, as far as I personally am concerned I don't care a tinker's dam whether you live or die! It is only out of respect for Mrs. Blake and my profession that I am here.'

"Well, Blake would have won the bet, for he died that night."

## CHAPTER II

HOWARD had sought his Aunt Margaret to have an important conference with her regarding his attentions to Dorothy, when he suddenly found himself tangled up with her radical notions about the soldier.

He had only broached the subject, when something started her, and, as Howard was wont to say, "A lecture from Aunt is like starting a barrel down a hill; one must wait till it stops to know how much damage is done."

After having cited the dying eccentricity of Mr. Blake to demonstrate his stubborn nature, she continued:

"I started to say, Dorothy is stubborn, like her father, especially when she is opposed. Now is the time, Howard, for you to consider carefully. My observation has been that every man who closes his eyes to the real faults of a woman and marries her with a full knowledge of them invariably finds cause for profound regret. A woman with serious faults knows she has them, and no person, woman or man, can easily correct established faults and habits; therefore, if condoned and pardoned before marriage, they will not be corrected after.

"Dorothy is a proud, haughty girl. She might

make a good, model wife; then again she might give much cause for worry. She is willful, headstrong, and ungovernable.

"But, Howard, there is one thing in particular to which I want to call your attention. In my mind it is the most serious thing about Dorothy you have to consider. Do you remember that renegade Captain Winnans, whom she introduced at Marchmont two seasons ago—a dissipated-looking chap?"

"Yes, auntie, I remember him very well," replied Howard.

"Well," continued Mrs. Kidder, "for some wholly unaccountable reason Dorothy became so infatuated with him her mother asked me to talk to the silly girl about it, which I did. It was on this occasion I learned something of Dorothy's true nature. You cannot make her do anything. She has that most deplorable kind of obstinacy which so often makes unhappiness where it is entirely unnecessary, a determination to oppose, whether right or wrong, anything another person insists upon her doing, especially when that other is someone having a right to so insist. It is a curious, freakish disease, causing persons inflicted with it to often do mean and foolhardy things contrary to their own judgment merely to oppose someone else.

"You must understand, Howard, you will have this to contend with in Dorothy if you marry her. She is unreasoning, and would rather die than admit she is wrong, even though convinced of her error.

"She tried to impress upon me that this Captain Winnans had been a great swell at Newport, where

he had cut some sort of figure at the time when the 'army jolly-bureau' was being worked overtime in Washington. I could not help showing my utter disgust, and I told her that a girl with her refined and gentle raising should be ashamed to be seen with such an uncouth man. She paid no attention whatever to what I said, and you know the consequences of her introducing him to Marchmont. I was told that Dorothy actually confessed to being really in love with the brute, and was at one time secretly engaged to him. She was more or less identified with his drunken escapades, and I am told she actually paid his debts at the club and other public places and prevented his name being posted."

"Yes, auntie," responded Howard, "it did seem unfortunate that Captain Winnans came to Marchmont; his conduct was not what it should have been, that is quite true, but I have had more than one confidential talk with Dorothy on this very subject, and I am convinced she has been misunderstood. Moreover, it seems a little unfair to the average army officer for you to take this dissipated fellow as a fair example. I know Colonel Winnans, his father, quite well, and I find him to be an excellent gentleman, even himself deploring the conduct of his son. I have quite a liking for him."

"What, you like Captain Winnans?" excitedly exclaimed Mrs. Kidder, half arising from her chair.

"Oh, no, no! his father, I said," hurriedly explained Howard. "No, indeed; I took a hearty dislike for the overbusy captain; in fact, gave him to understand so. He made some complaint about

my treatment of him, I believe, but nothing ever came of it."

"I wouldn't make an enemy of him were I in your place; I do not believe he would be an honorable adversary," advised Mrs. Kidder.

"But to return to Dorothy," she continued. "I have never wholly forgiven her for her attitude regarding this serious matter, but, Howard, if you have made up your mind that she is the one you want to marry, I will do all in my power to help make you both happy. But, you must keep in mind, I will not change my rule; this Winnans and all of his kind are barred from my house. You must not come to me with the 'some good fellows' story; they are much better at the bar with you men, or in Washington, where the army and navy actually take social precedence over the Senators and Representatives who create them and vote them their pay—a monstrous farce in itself."

"Then, that is about all you can bring up against Dorothy? That is what I call her now when we are alone together," said Howard, with a twinkle in his frank eyes. "Suppose, auntie, I should tell you that I believe Dorothy's good qualities offset her bad ones, and that I have asked her to become Mrs. Stafford and she has accepted, what would you say to that?"

"Huh! you have, have you? Well, you have been in a big hurry. You must have been making hay while the sun was under a cloud, for Dorothy has only been back from Narragansett two weeks, and I do not think we have had three days of sun-

shine during that time," and she looked inquiringly at Howard.

"The sun occasionally shines at Narragansett Pier, auntie," said Howard, with an air of mystery.

"Why, Howard Stafford! Have you been courting Dorothy Blake down there?" exclaimed Mrs. Kidder in surprise.

"That's what I have, dear auntie," replied he; "I hope you are not displeased."

"Oh, that is different; it's too late to be displeased," said his aunt thoughtfully. Suddenly she said:

"Did you see Captain Winnans down there?"

"No, not that I remember," he replied.

"Did you speak to Dorothy about him, or she to you?" asked Mrs. Kidder anxiously.

"No, auntie," said Howard, with some asperity. "Furthermore, I have no fears of his giving me trouble; I believe your own fears are groundless. Dorothy and I have both expressed ourselves as believing that we can live together in peace and harmony, and, by Jove! I believe I am thoroughly in love with her." With this he arose and paced the floor, with his hands deep in his pockets.

Stopping in front of Mrs. Kidder, and striking a dramatic attitude, he said: "Auntie, we want you to help us set the day, and prepare for the swellest wedding New York has ever seen; the date must be early."

Ah! well did the experienced old society leader know the dangers which lay in the path he had chosen. Uncertainty, even now, was teasing his

conscience. He was inwardly whistling to keep up his courage. However, he had committed himself with his eyes wide open, therefore he could blame none but himself if he should find serious cause for regret afterward. Mrs. Kidder wisely refrained from commenting further on his choice, but went bravely to work to make the best of it.

The eventful day was October twenty-first.

The wedding bells seemed to ring out joyously that morning for the handsomest couple ever seen at that altar. The church was magnificently decorated with the rarest flowers money could buy. The prettiest and sweetest young women were chosen for bridesmaids and the handsomest men for ushers. They marched down aisles carpeted with ferns and roses to the chancel, where the contracting couple knelt upon a pillow of snow-white roses. The atmosphere of the great edifice was heavy with the incense of orange blossoms, while chancel and walls were bedecked with all of the paraphernalia of the ultra-fashionable wedding. Not a thing was lacking to make the occasion perfect beyond criticism.

"It smells like a funeral," some thoughtless person said audibly and at a most inauspicious moment, for someone was trying to disentangle Dorothy's lace train from a piece of smilax which it had gathered from one of the pews.

As the prophetic words rasped through the room an ominous silence fell upon the assembly. Many a one there afterward referred to this awkward occurrence and the subsequent events, which seemed to prove that it was an ill omen.

The bride was cold, stately, and beautiful, with a face like whitest marble. The groom was flushed, but dignified and self-possessed; his whole appearance was that of a proud and happy man, showing not the slightest sign of embarrassment.

The ceremony was most impressive, stirring the emotions of everyone present.

At last the trying ordeal was over and the tension relaxed.

No wonder the ruddy, overfed bishop was most profuse in his congratulations, with a check for ten thousand dollars snugly tucked away where he could occasionally rub the tips of his tingling fingers upon it, then pinch himself to be quite awake; they didn't come often that size.

Congratulations were heaped upon the newly wedded ones by those who, thirty minutes later, had them upon the social dissecting table.

The usual mob had gathered in the street fronting the church; the usual motley crowd, filled with the morbid curiosity which is a disease with the American people. To avoid the jeers and insults of the disrespectful throng, a thing which invariably occurs on such occasions, the bridal party was ushered out at a side entrance.

As they approached the door a man was seen steadying himself against the wall. He was flushed from the too free use of alcohol and seemed scarcely able to stand. Several who knew him recognized Captain Frank Winnans; thoughtful friends of the bride and groom stepped quickly forward and shielded Winnans from their view while they passed



out of the church. Dorothy did not see him, but Howard's quick eye had recognized him and had also perceived his condition. He felt grateful toward those who had considerably concealed the man from the sight of Dorothy, and he gave vent to a sigh of genuine relief upon reaching the street where their carriages awaited them, with the spruced coachman on the alert.

Howard and Dorothy were to take Mrs. Blake's carriage from the church. Old Jeffords, who had been butler in the Blake family since Dorothy was a little baby, begged that he might be allowed to act as second man on the box that day, and it was granted the faithful fellow. There he stood by the carriage door, looking for all the world like a well-polished piece of Mrs. Blake's rosewood furniture. It seemed a good omen to see his ruddy face bursting to smile; his burgundy-colored livery matched his wine-colored complexion.

Dorothy was handed into the carriage, and Howard was about to follow, when an unexpected thing occurred. A more than half-intoxicated man pushed his way through the crowd of friends surrounding the carriage, and rudely attempted to thrust Howard aside from the door. It was Captain Winnans.

"I want to congratulate Dorothy," he said, in a thick, guttural voice, at the same time leaning heavily over Howard's arm, which barred the way.

Seeing that the fellow was intoxicated, Howard, with an exclamation of impatience, thrust him aside, the door was slammed, and they were quickly driven away.

Howard was pained to see that Dorothy had recognized Winnans, and had smiled for the first time upon seeing his bleary face at the carriage door. She had shown a desire to greet him. He felt thankful that no one else had seen this. He was certain, too, that she recognized his drunken condition, which made it all the harder for him to conceal his chagrin and mortification.

As the carriage drove away Dorothy turned to Howard with flushed face and venomous eyes, and exclaimed:

"Am I to understand that my marriage to you is to give you the privilege of insulting my friends? You were entirely too rude to Captain Winnans!"

Although taken by surprise with this unexpected defense of the uncouth intruder, Howard kept his head admirably, saying to her gently: "Dorothy, you are my wife now, and it is my duty to protect you from insult; Captain Winnans was in an unfit condition to speak to you. I had no intention of appearing unduly rude."

Captain Winnans stood looking after the carriage and muttering to himself. He seemed perceptibly sobered by his recent rebuff. Turning, he walked aimlessly into the church again and mingled with the groups gossiping about the wedding.

"She was beautiful, wasn't she?" said one enthusiast.

"Yes," replied another; "but she could not have felt happy; she never smiled once during the whole ceremony."

"I don't believe I ever did see a smiling bride, come to think about it," was another remark.

"Wasn't she proud and haughty, though?" whispered one who had been impressed with Dorothy's austere manner.

"Say, girls," and a vivacious little gossip nearly lost her breath trying to tell what she had just heard, "I just now heard Mrs. Bell say that Miss Blake was in love with some army captain, and her mother was so opposed to him she made her marry Mr. Stafford in order to break the thing off."

"Don't you believe any such stuff," quickly responded one. "Dorothy Blake could not be made to do anything she didn't want to do, not even by her mother. Besides, you are greatly mistaken if you think Mr. Stafford could be so easily fooled. If that were true, I wouldn't like to be in Mrs. Stafford's shoes when he found out the truth about it."

"I had just remarked," said one of the first gossips, "that she couldn't be much in love; I'll wager a handful of diamonds there's more truth than poetry in the story, and that she is still in love with her captain. Mr. Stafford would be good enough for me, though; wasn't he handsome?"

Captain Winnans stood sullenly listening to this desultory chatter, stupidly staring at one group, and then another, then with a disgusted shrug of his shoulders and a cynical smile, he remarked as he turned and walked out: "What damn fools all women are, anyway!"

It was a morning wedding, and an elaborate wed-

ding breakfast was served at Sherry's to a large number of Marchmont and New York friends. At five o'clock the same day the bridal couple was to sail for a three months' trip abroad.

Captain Winnans, undaunted, made his way down to the steamer, determined, if possible, to have a word with Dorothy. But there he encountered Mrs. Blake and Aunt Margaret, and their frigid reception somewhat dampened his ardor. While they did manage to keep him from communicating with Dorothy, still he hovered about till he got her attention, and Howard saw, with a sad and angry heart, as the steamer drew away from the wharf, Winnans frantically wafting kisses to Dorothy, and she covertly returning his farewell salute in like manner.

This first act of disloyalty on the part of his wife stung his pride, and though it long rankled in his breast, he tried manfully to forget and to believe it merely due to the excitement of the occasion. Nevertheless he had long been accustomed to analyzing acts for motives, and he could read the hidden meaning of jest or gesture as few men could. He could not deceive himself: Dorothy's sentiment was not quenched by her marriage, and now, after it was too late, he realized how little he had respected the judgment of his sagacious old aunt. The seeds of doubt took root and grew rapidly. It was but a matter of time when someone would have to partake of the bitter fruits; perhaps it would be himself.

### CHAPTER III

LATE in January Howard and Dorothy returned from abroad, made their home with Aunt Margaret Kidder, and at once plunged into the social whirl. To the relief of those most interested, in all outward appearances they were a happy and congenial couple. They quickly assumed leadership, and were discussed as the most promising pair of that season.

All the important dances, dinners, receptions, operas, and other social functions and fol-de-rols were considered partial if not total failures if they were not indorsed by the patronage of the Stalfords. Their set seemed to express its joy that the match had unexpectedly turned out well by making them a fad.

"It's a long string without a frazzled end," was Mrs. Parker's oft-repeated comment, and she would shake her head wisely.

Ere long a little bit of gossip trickled through the net of the censor and was being whispered about. It was that Howard was having a most unpleasant time with Dorothy, who had developed all sorts of ugly traits. She had developed an abnormal appetite for alcoholic drinks, and taken regularly to cigarettes, habits contracted while associating with Captain Winnans, as it was later learned. Moreover, it was said, she had become so stubborn, headstrong, and willful, no one could control her. Howard and Aunt Margaret had their hands full to

conceal the very unhappy condition, but in some manner they admirably deceived the public as to Dorothy's misdeeds.

Six months had passed, and preparations for opening the summer season were under way. It was apparent that Marchmont would be gayer than ever before, from the innumerable entertainments planned by the younger set, which was knocking down Aunt Margaret's safety-gates a bit. Quite an unusual number of smart house parties promised to bring to the social colony a lot of new people from Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and other places.

Dorothy was to reside with Mrs. Kidder instead of with her mother, because of the better facilities for entertaining afforded by the former's large house. She and Mrs. Kidder were to go to Marchmont a couple of weeks in advance of Howard, who had some important law cases to dispose of.

It was a Monday morning, and Howard, instead of going early to his office, as was his custom, had remained at home in his library, where he was engrossed in some law books, when he heard the door-bell ring. Paying no particular attention to the matter, it not being a proper hour for callers, he merely noticed that the butler admitted someone to the reception-room. In a few minutes, however, he heard the swish and rustle of petticoats, and heard Dorothy greet the caller with more than usual cordiality. Glancing at the clock on the mantel he observed the hour to be a quarter past nine, and he smiled at the thought that for the first time since

they were married, to his recollection, she was out of her boudoir before twelve o'clock.

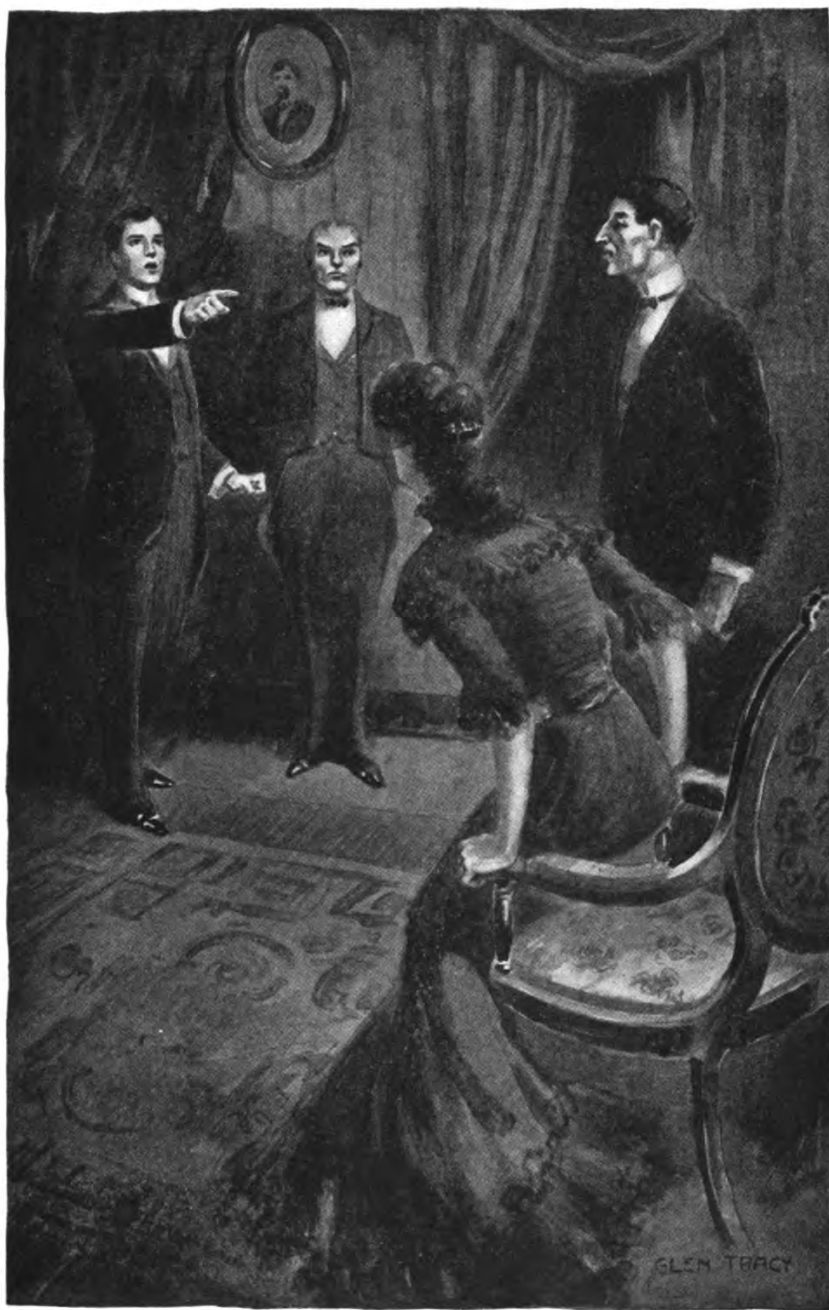
Suddenly a chill was sent trickling down his spine; he distinctly heard the husky, guttural voice of Captain Winnans. The old feeling of distrust returned. He only had to reach forth his hand and push aside the hangings to command a full view of the double parlors; this he did, and saw Winnans almost rudely attempting to embrace Dorothy, and, to his horror, she was half reclining in his arms and only faintly and laughingly pretending to repulse his advances.

His first impulse was to take from the drawer by his side the weapon which rested there and kill the impudent fellow, but upon sober second thought he struck a bell which brought the butler.

In the few moments these thoughts flashed through his mind. It was, he knew, humiliating his wife in the presence of a servant, but it was far better to do this than to tolerate this insult both to him and his wife from this insolent scoundrel. It would be evident enough to the servant that the hour intimated a rendezvous. She had placed herself in the embarrassing position, therefore she must suffer the consequences. Her prompt response signified that she had expected this early call. His duty was plain, and he did not shirk it on quibbles.

Stepping to the door of the reception-room, where the two were now seated in quite close and confidential proximity, Howard in an angry tone said to the butler:

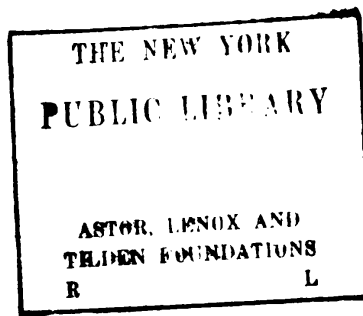
"Show this man to the door, and consider your-



“Show this man to the door!”

FACING 36





self discharged the moment you permit him to again enter here."

There was real danger in his commanding attitude and cold, hard voice, and Winnans stepped lively toward the door, which closed after him with a savage click which said plainly that Judson, the butler, was not going to lose his position if he could help it.

After the butler had discreetly disappeared Howard turned to Dorothy and said: "Do you wish to say anything in your own defense?"

"Yes," she exclaimed angrily; "I want to say that you ordered Captain Winnans out of the house without any reason. You showed yourself to be anything but a gentleman in your conduct toward him. What was he doing that caused you to do this brutal thing?"

"I was there when you greeted him," and Howard pointed through the parlors to the library.

"I would have been a cowardly cur had I not ordered him out. Although you are my wife, I say to you now, in order that it may never again be a subject for us to discuss, have a care how you defend this disreputable scoundrel against me. He cannot come into my house and sully my honor and insult me, even with your permission. I will not permit you to continue a friendship with a man with his reputation."

"I will hear no more," she cried; "this is cruel! I will not endure it; I am going to my mother and tell her of your abuse; I will leave you for good and all; I hate you, anyway!"

"Stop!" demanded Howard. "You will hear what I have to say in full, if I must force you to remain. You are my wife, and if you are viciously wayward I have the legal right to restrain you, and I will if it becomes necessary." There was a menace in his voice which compelled Dorothy to drop into a chair in affright. She shrunk down in a heap, burying her face in her hands.

Then in a milder tone Howard continued:

"Dorothy, before we were married I was warned that I would have trouble with you about this man. I defended you against the imputation because I had confidence in you. I chose you from all the young women of our set as the one whom I might cherish and love as a life companion. I paid you the highest tribute an honorable man can pay to a worthy woman by marrying you, giving you my love, fortune, and confidence. In doing so I believed you would shield and protect my honor as your own—as well as your good name and fair reputation. In order that you may not deceive yourself, I inform you that I am aware you have been disloyal to my trust and confidence from the moment we left the altar."

Dorothy raised her head, her face ashen white, and looked searchingly at Howard, as though trying to read in his face all that he knew about her. She was deeply worried and acted guilty, betraying the guilt that fears discovery.

Howard was quick to notice this, and it filled him with both anger and sorrow. Continuing, he said:

"Your intrigue with this despicable wretch dates

from the time when you saw him standing, with bleared and eager eyes, at the carriage door when we left the church; you upbraided me then for preventing him in the only way possible from forcing his drunken presence upon you. He waved you signals of love as our bridal steamer left the dock, and although you were not aware that I and others saw it, you passionately returned his salute with wafted kisses.

“Could you have had any love or respect for me, your husband of but a few hours, in view of this disloyal act?

“You were in constant communication with him during our travels abroad, writing him passionate epistles, in which you vowed eternal love for him and hatred for me, your husband of a few days; and now you have the unqualified audacity to appoint a rendezvous with this creature in my own house, to insult me with his vile attentions to you.

“As your husband I have the right to protect you, even from yourself; and I have the right to resent the intrusion into my house of a brutish scoundrel who has no other motive but to degrade and disgrace you and sully my honor.

“I will not sink my manhood, even to prevent an open scandal, by longer condoning these offenses against decency. A gentleman must be a man; I could not be such were I to close my eyes to these things—his insults to me, and his persistent attentions to you. If you must choose between us, I shall accept your leaving this house at this time as meaning you have chosen him, and you can never again

enter it as the wife of my respect. I will protect you from the jeers of the world for the sake of the good names you would so ruthlessly sully.

"Now, this is the crisis of your life, therefore think well, and speak frankly; much depends upon what you say; but remember this, I will, under no circumstances, permit you to again recognize this man; for you to attempt to do so, or to make any defense of him, will be at your own peril."

He paused. He had spoken truly; it was a crisis in Dorothy's life, and she paid the penalty of having inherited her father's stubborn nature. Her eyes were wide open to her own faults. Already she had been seriously criticised for her conduct with Captain Winnans. She knew public opinion would be in favor of Howard; nevertheless, she could not humble her pride sufficiently to save herself from certain calamity.

She had recovered her composure while Howard was talking, and when she spoke her fierce nature asserted itself viciously. Rising and stamping her foot angrily, she said:

"You need not preach your sermon to me; I am going home to my mother; I don't care a rap what you say or think. I shall do as I choose with regard to Captain Winnans. He has always been good and kind to me, and I will not be otherwise to him." With this, she flounced out of the room.

Howard Stafford was a proud man; he dreaded the consequences of an open rupture and separation more on his Aunt Margaret's account than his own; nevertheless it stung his pride deeply to have this

ugly thing occur so soon after his much-heralded wedding.

But he was as sensible as he was proud. His pride was only that of candid self-respect. He was wholly unselfish and scrupulously just to others. Back of this was a strong, healthy, logical mind which could not be swerved from what he considered his line of duty. His own conscience was the censor of his conduct toward others as well as to himself. He was little influenced by fads and fancies. He laughed at the foibles of fashion, adopting only those things which seemed to him proper and beneficial to his physical or mental welfare, without being wholly selfish.

He felt that concerning Dorothy he was now face to face with that which necessitated action in his own defense, inasmuch as she had spurned the protection which, by virtue of his legal relations to her, he had a right to assume over her.

He was too far advanced in life to make heavy sacrifices for purely sentimental reasons. The facts in his possession were quite sufficient to convince him there was some definite understanding between Dorothy and Winnans, and this wounded his pride and self-respect mortally. There was but one construction to be put upon her actions; she was indifferent about remaining with him, if not really glad of the opportunity for a separation. The world, however, did not know this.

Knowing her natural weakness, however, Howard still found in his heart a feeling of sorrow and sympathy for her which was almost love. While

he was not a man to compromise with a situation so fraught with danger to his future peace and happiness on merely sentimental grounds, now that the break had come he felt the old sympathy well up to fill his heart with anguish. He was tortured with the fear that perhaps Dorothy did not have the mental capacity to fully appreciate the gravity of her position. It seemed possible that she might not comprehend the enormity of her offense against him and really believed him unjust, irrational, and unnecessarily harsh with her. At the same time, he had to view the matter in the light of reason and justice to himself. It was then he felt bitter toward her that she should insult him by continuing her friendship with a man recognized by all of their mutual acquaintances as a dissolute cad.

He could not comprehend how a woman of her refined training and dainty nature could even tolerate the presence of this rum-soaked wretch. All the other girls of her set avoided him, for in addition to his brutally bad manners, the odor of liquor and cigarettes was always about him.

Howard's heart was torn with conflicting emotions as he impatiently paced the library, now swearing he could never forgive the insults his wife had heaped upon him, and then softening toward her with a feeling that he should condone her weakness, forgive her indifference toward him, and ask her to remain the wife of his bosom. It was a hard and trying position, and one fraught with grave dangers.

As was his wont in times of serious trouble, he

sought the wise counsel of Aunt Margaret. Surely she could tell him what was best to be done in this trying dilemma.

He briefly told her all the facts. "Now, auntie," he said, "advise me what to do. I have a peculiar sentiment for Dorothy which I cannot suppress, yet at the same time I have an equally persistent loathing for her. These conflicting sentiments are driving me mad. I know she is not a deep-thinking woman, therefore I fear I may do her injustice; yet when I think of the horrible insults offered me by that profligate Winnans, and know that she defends him against my natural resentment, why, I hate her."

"Right there," said Aunt Margaret, "is the essence of the whole thing. The sentiment you have is not love, it is sympathy, inspired by your innate love of justice, coupled with the natural sorrow a brave and just adversary always feels for those weaker than themselves. It is no fault of yours that she is a fool. It does not follow that you should sacrifice yourself because she is one. Under the circumstances I would not advise you to make much concession. However, it will do no particular harm to give her one more chance, and this will alleviate your fears and finally acquit your conscience of any injustice. If she should spurn your generosity, your duty is done and your misplaced sympathy will disappear with the conviction that you have dealt justly by her. But, Howard, be careful; make no concession which will appear to condone the offense offered you by both Dorothy and Winnans;



moreover, should she consent to remain with you, let it be with the distinct promise on her part never again to speak to this man, in your presence or elsewhere.

"Make no sacrifice of honor to repair this breach; you are wholly in the right, therefore you should dictate the terms of surrender. Women, as a rule, are weak, Howard; you have found Dorothy no exception to the rule, therefore, as of the sterner sex, be generous and give her the chance. You have my whole confidence, my boy; I know you would pass through fire to do justice to Dorothy, or anyone else."

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart, my beloved aunt. You have lightened my burden immensely," exclaimed Howard, as he kissed her cheek affectionately.

"One other point, Howard," continued Mrs. Kidder. "When you are absolutely certain that Dorothy is disloyal to you, send her away from you quickly, for a woman once disloyal will not scruple to be so whenever inclination and opportunity offer. She can never be trusted again. This is the penalty a woman must pay for departing from the well-defined path of respectability.

"A woman who, after marriage, is willing to accept the caresses of a former lover is worse than a harlot, because her sin involves others than herself. Station in life cannot alter this; all women are in one class when judged by self-respect and decency."

Howard bowed and returned to the library, where he remained in deep meditation. He felt

creeping into his mind a horrible dread that Dorothy might possibly have gone deeper in sin with Winnans than he knew. However, he had mentally resolved to give her the benefit of the doubt, when he heard the rustle of silken skirts, and before she noticed his presence Dorothy was within the room. For a single minute his heart beat faster; could it be possible that she was seeking him there? He was not kept long in suspense. The surprise of thus suddenly coming upon her husband in his dejected attitude naturally startled her and she paused for a single moment; it was not in her nature to retreat. Passing to a music rack, she began to gather some sheets of music which she called her own. She gave no indication of regret nor sign of repentance, but rather was more defiant than when she left him. Howard knew though that were her very life at stake her attitude would be one of stubborn defiance; it was this accursed trait which now stood as a barrier between them.

"Are you really going, Dorothy?" asked Howard, rising and moving toward her, his voice betraying deep emotion.

She paused in surprise, swallowed once or twice, as though suppressing strange feelings of her own, then snapped her teeth together and compressed her lips, at the same time tossing her head as though greatly annoyed by the interruption.

"Do not go, Dorothy," pleaded Howard gently, as he drew near her. "Let us not separate if we can avoid it; surely we can come to some understanding, and save ourselves and our friends and

relatives the mortification which such action must bring to all of us.

"I married you, my dear girl, because I loved you; I still love you. I want you to forget, and remain here with me. You should not feel angry because I resent that which seems to be stealing you away from me. You must forgive me if I appear to act too harshly. I mean it all for your good as well as my own.

"Could you believe me a man worthy of your respect did I not resent the trespass of another in my own home? Think of it for a moment from that point of view. Of course if you have no tender sentiment for me, and regret having married me, I will release you; but let us understand each other and protect our good names. I prefer to have you remain my wife, but if it be your wish to separate from me, I will abide by your decision in the matter, but I do not want to think you have left me because—because you want to be a bad woman with this Winnans."

Oh, why did he utter these last words? Dorothy had listened with open mouth and flushed cheeks. She did not know how to meet this wholly unexpected assault upon her heart. It was a new and startling experience. Neither of them was demonstrative in giving away to any sort of emotion, therefore she had listened to Howard's impassioned appeal in bewilderment. When a woman is confused she does strange things, and had she not been awakened by Howard's accusing words she might have softened sufficiently to listen to reason.

The last fatal sentence changed her whole attitude; the flush fled from her cheeks; her lips were hard set, and she was Dorothy again. Howard had lost.

In her heart she knew that he was wholly sincere; while his speech might be influenced by emotion and excitement, nevertheless he was speaking from the very depth of his soul, and would abide by any contract between them based upon this declaration.

But the moment he assailed Captain Winnans all of her anger and resentment returned. A less stubborn and more sentimental woman would have hesitated to offend one so eloquently pleading for her love and forgiveness, especially when she herself was clearly the offending party. But Dorothy Blake was born an unusually stubborn and unreasoning creature.

In her confusion and anger she did the most cruel and effective thing she could possibly have done had she really desired a final separation.

"Go to Captain Winnans," she said, "and apologize to him for the numerous insults you have offered him; if he can forgive you, perhaps I may."

A blow in the face by Captain Winnans himself could not have been more painful to Howard's sensitive nature. He sprang toward her like an enraged tiger. He was in a dangerous mood now.

"You inspire murder in me. You are a woman, but go, and go quickly," and he pointed commandingly at the library door.

This hurt Dorothy, for they were the first cruel words he had ever aimed directly at her, and she

well knew he meant every word he had spoken. She knew now that she must go forever; there could be nothing gained by hesitating; all the pleading in the world would not cause him to relent. He had rendered a verdict, and she must abide by it.

An hour later she entered Mrs. Kidder's carriage for the last time, and was driven to the railway station, there to take the train for Marchmont.

Fortunately there was no one in the car whom she knew, therefore she had ample time and opportunity to think over her situation. She carefully reviewed all that had taken place, and she was actually frightened to find not an error on Howard's part. On the contrary, he seemed to have been justified and consistent in his every act, while she was as clearly inconsistent and wrong.

She wept quietly as the train carried her away from certainty and into—what? She felt herself gliding away from her moorings, with no rescuing hand in sight. She well knew she would miss Howard, whose presence always seemed such a protection, and there were many times when she felt the security of this protection. She would not miss Aunt Margaret, because they had never been upon very intimate terms. But there was a more important matter to think of—her own mother. She would side with Howard and against her, which would be most humiliating.

All the while she seemed to see in the distance, like the evil genius in the clouds, the hand of Winans beckoning her further away. There seemed now no alternative but to follow the dismal path

which stretched before her, for she had had some ugly ideas in her mind.

Howard had always been studiously kind and gentle to her until that eventful morning, notwithstanding she had been a most provoking companion. She reluctantly admitted that he was justified in resenting Captain Winnans' attentions to her. She realized, after it was too late, that she was the victim of her own stubborn nature and the author of her own just punishment; the whole extent of her fate she could not forecast, because she had no definite plans for the future.

Her mother, to whom she had telegraphed, met her at the station. A stingy little kiss was the greeting between mother and daughter—Dorothy had been a most trying and troublesome daughter. The mother was suspicious, and Dorothy, knowing that her mother fairly doted on Howard, dreaded to tell her the truth. She did not mention it on the way home, being determined not to discuss it till she had worked herself into her usual state of defiance—a condition most cruel to others and harmful to herself.

"Why did you take such a sudden notion to come home, my dear?" asked Mrs. Blake, when they arrived at home.

"Oh, it is so wretchedly dull in the city just now one feels stupid there. I would rather be here," was Dorothy's inconsistent answer, for Marchmont at this time was almost deserted.

The alert mother, knowing there was some trouble, kept her counsel.

## CHAPTER IV

THE morning after Dorothy's arrival at Marchmont, while at the breakfast table, Mrs. Blake said to her:

"I am sorry you did not wait for a few days, my dear; I was coming into the city to do some shopping, and you could have assisted me, but I will not trouble you to return there. I shall run down on the ten-thirty express myself and return to-morrow evening. I shall remain overnight with Mrs. Kidder."

This announcement sent a cold shudder down Dorothy's spine; her face visibly paled, and without speaking a word she arose from the breakfast table and hurried to her room. She foresaw the lamentable consequences of this proposed visit to Mrs. Kidder at this critical time. She was as undecided as ever regarding her own course, and she would have much preferred that her mother remain in Marchmont for a few days in ignorance of the true state of affairs.

She was afraid to ask her mother not to go to Mrs. Kidder's; that would at once intimate something was wrong and would be a tacit admission on her part that she was guilty of something she desired to conceal. Mrs. Blake was a just and sensible woman, and, moreover, very fond of Howard. Dorothy knew without further explanation that her

mother had no other mission in the city than to ascertain why her daughter had suddenly come to Marchmont. She felt deeply offended that her mother, under any circumstances, should side against her, yet she knew that to be just Mrs. Blake could not do otherwise. Her mother could be most firm and severe when necessity required it.

A half hour later, when ready to start for the depot, Mrs. Blake went to Dorothy's room to inquire if there was anything she might do for her while in the city. The door to Dorothy's boudoir was ajar, and without hesitation she entered.

Horrors! Could her eyes deceive her?

Dorothy was lying upon the sofa, her feet cocked, a half-empty cocktail glass in front of her, and a partially smoked cigarette between her dainty lips, while a volume of tobacco smoke pillared above her almost to the ceiling.

Upon seeing her mother's horror-stricken face in the door she sprang to her feet, exclaiming, "Mother! I thought you had gone," and she attempted to conceal the smoking cigarette by crushing it in her hand, and the cocktail by interposing her body between it and Mrs. Blake.

"Dorothy!" exclaimed her mother, as she placed her hands over her face. "And you are my daughter!"

"Why, mother," faltered Dorothy, in much confusion, and with an effort to explain; "this is quite the fashion now. All the smart people do it, don't you know?"

"It is not the fashion in this house, and never



shall be," indignantly exclaimed Mrs. Blake, and with a look of scorn she turned and went down the stair.

Dorothy was thoroughly frightened. Running to the stair she called, "Mother!" but it was too late. The front door was slammed, and through her window she saw the carriage driven away.

She had never seen such a look on her mother's face before; she was truly in anguish now, and stood wringing her hands as the carriage passed from view.

"I am drifting—drifting!" she wailed. "Even my mother is offended and ashamed of me. Oh! what am I doing? I know I am in the wrong; Howard did right to reprove me. It must be Captain Winnans' influence over me. He taught me to drink; he taught me to smoke—yes, he taught me every bad thing I know. But lots of the other girls do these things, why not I?"

"No, that is not sufficient excuse. Because others do bad things is no reason why I should; yet I cannot break them off; they are vile, depraved habits, which I have not the strength to conquer. But what can I do? I can never face Howard and acknowledge that I am in the wrong and am sorry and ask his forgiveness. I believe I would rather die than to apologize to anyone. It seems I am doomed."

Thus the weak and deluded woman bemoaned her own faults and condemned herself, at the same time admitting her inability to correct her errors or to confess them to others.

As she stood looking out of the window a horseman turned into the grounds, and she recognized Captain Winnans. She was in no humor to see him at this time and she hastily instructed the servant to say she was not at home.

From behind her curtain she watched him ride slowly away, occasionally glancing back toward the window, where many times before he had seen her waving adieu to him.

The human mind is a curious and selfish thing. As Dorothy watched Captain Winnans she was pleased to picture to her mind that he was dejected and unhappy at not being able to see her, and she herself was correspondingly sad and sorry for him, though so far as she knew, he might have been cursing, which would have been more true to his nature.

"I would have seen him, but it would have been dangerous," she said.

She longed for someone to whom she could pour out her soul. Captain Winnans was the very person to whom she would feel impelled to tell those things which she did not care to confess to him at this time. Therefore it was best to let him go. If she should tell him all that had happened between Howard and herself she would be wholly in his power. She still hoped something might happen to enable her to see her way better. As it was, she was drifting, with Winnans always before her.

For hours she remained in her boudoir, thinking and writing. She had written and destroyed a basketful of letters, some addressed to Howard, some

to Aunt Margaret, and one to her mother, all acknowledging that she was in the wrong and asking forgiveness.

All of these letters she had torn to pieces and cast into her basket—all but the one addressed to her own dear, gentle, patient mother, whom she had that day so sadly offended. She was pondering over this letter when the doorbell rang, and she heard the voice of Mamie Baird, her closest and most confidential friend, the one to whom she confided all her innermost secrets.

Hurrying to the top of the stairway, she said, "Come right up, Mamie," then hastily concealed the letter in her writing desk.

The storm-clouds were gathering thick and fast about Dorothy, and Captain Winnans and Mamie Baird were the evil geniuses therein.

She had resisted the one, but the other she could not. She needed someone badly at that moment into whose willing ears she could pour her distressing story; someone who would sympathize with her, whether she were right or wrong—such a person was Mamie Baird.

Mamie threw her arms about Dorothy and kissed her vehemently, the very act which would break the delicate thread which held her undecided.

"My!" exclaimed Mamie, "what a tantrum you must be in to be destroying so many letters! I received your telegram, dear, and should have come over this morning, but I had promised to go horseback riding with Captain Winnans and Lieutenant Fenton. Captain Winnans said he would ride up

here and say howdy do; he returned saying you were not at home."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Dorothy, "but I really could not see him, much as it pained me to send him away. I do hope he is not offended. Mother went in to the city this morning, to return to-morrow; I'm here alone. Can you not come over and spend the night with me, Mamie? Please do; I have so much to tell you."

"Oh, that is bully!" exclaimed Mamie. "Father and mother are both in New York, and you will come to my house. Captain Winnans and Lieutenant Fenton will dine with us this evening. You can trust our servants better than yours, and no one will be wise to our frolic. What do you say, dear?"

The thread snapped and Dorothy was at sea again without a rudder. She accepted Mamie's invitation, and it was a night long remembered by these two desperate young women.

Instead of going directly to Mamie's home early in the evening, they got in touch with Captain Winnans and his friend, and taking a closed carriage at Winnans' suggestion, they drove to a place three miles out of Marchmont, known as "Black Nan's," a roadhouse of questionable and exclusive character.

There they had an elaborate dinner, cooked by Black Nan, and served by themselves. Plenty of wine and other intoxicants came with it.

Mamie had been to this place before, but it was strange to Dorothy, and she was much surprised to

be introduced into a well-furnished suite of rooms in the extreme back portion of the building, the secret quarters of Captain Winnans. Lieutenant Fenton was Winnans' guest.

They spent the evening there in a half-intoxicated revel, and excepting Black Nan, they were absolutely alone.

At two o'clock in the morning they returned to Mamie's home, to find themselves in a most embarrassing position.

Mrs. Blake, after an hour's conversation with Mrs. Kidder and Howard, changed her plans. Howard's story regarding Dorothy had filled her with grief and alarm, and she determined to at once start for her home, notwithstanding Mrs. Kidder's urgent request that she remain over till morning. Taking the afternoon train to Marchmont, she arrived there at eight o'clock. Upon being informed that Dorothy was at the Baird home, she decided to go after her. She knew that Mr. and Mrs. Baird were in New York City; moreover, she knew that Captain Winnans was in Marchmont.

Arriving at the Baird house she asked for Mamie. The butler, who knew Mrs. Blake well, innocently informed her that Miss Baird had said when she left that she would remain for the night at Mrs. Blake's home.

Here was a pretty dilemma! Each young woman, in order to shield the other, had purposely deceived the old and trusted servants of these respectable families and started on some questionable and perhaps dangerous adventure.

"Who accompanied them?" asked Mrs. Blake, concealing as best she could her anxiety.

"No one was with them when they left here, ma'am, but I had to go to the drug store for some polishing-oil, and I saw a carriage pass, and in it was Miss Dorothy, Miss Mamie, and Captain Winnans and another man," replied the butler.

"They left no other word with you as to where they were going?" anxiously inquired Mrs. Blake.

"No," said the butler.

"Very well, tell them when they return I was here." Then she went to her own home, much grieved and worried.

Mrs. Blake had had a wholesome disregard for the dissipated Winnans before Howard had told her his story, and this escapade, coming right on top of the story, was quite sufficient to alarm any mother at all interested in the welfare and safety of her daughter. She felt deeply concerned about Dorothy, for the quarrel between Dorothy and Howard was serious enough to have prevented any ordinary woman from so promptly indulging in such a frivolous and *risqué* affair.

At ten, eleven, twelve and one o'clock, she telephoned, asking if the party had returned, and her heart grew heavier as each time the brief answer, "No," came over the 'phone.

When at two o'clock the party did enter the Baird house, they were all in an intoxicated condition, yet both young women had the presence of mind to inquire if anyone had called for them. Upon being informed of Mrs. Blake's return and

persistent inquiry, there was consternation; this possibility had not entered their minds.

Dorothy at once went to the telephone, and calling up her mother, told her they had just returned from a long moonlight horseback ride. She did not know that the butler had seen them drive away in a carriage and had so informed Mrs. Blake.

"Will tell you all about it to-morrow, mother," said Dorothy, as she hung up the receiver.

Immediately the bell again rang, and the message was for Dorothy. "Oh, fudge!" she exclaimed as she went to the telephone.

"Is Captain Winnans there?" was the brief question from her mother.

"Yes, he is," was Dorothy's defiant reply.

"I will send Jeffords for you at once, and if you do not come immediately home with him you need not come to-morrow morning. If that Winnans dares to come with you I will have him horse-whipped within an inch of his life," and click went the receiver at the other end.

Only a few times in her life had Dorothy acknowledged that she was in fear of her mother; this was one of the occasions. This last challenge sobered her considerably. "I shall have to go home," she said reluctantly, and prepared to start.

It was plain to see that Dorothy was in trouble. A silence followed.

"I will accompany you," said Captain Winnans.

Dorothy whispered something to him which made him swear and change his mind.

In a short time sleepy old Jeffords was at the

door, and Dorothy went with him. He did not see the others. When it was known that Dorothy must go they had adopted drastic measures in an attempt to sober her sufficiently to deceive her mother, but disastrous results attended their efforts, and by the time she had arrived at her own door she was in a hopeless state of collapse.

Mrs. Blake was waiting, having remained up all evening in her state of uneasiness.

"Where have you been, Dorothy?" she asked; but poor Dorothy was totally unable to intelligently talk; seeing which, with a motion of disgust Mrs. Blake bade Jeffords assist her to her room, as he had done many times for her father before his death.

Her mother took her into her room, where she fell across her dainty couch. For a moment Mrs. Blake hesitated, then shaking her head she muttered, "Remorse and shame come when they awaken in the morning with a splitting headache, and find their clothing on," and she left the room without calling the maid, who thought Dorothy was at the home of Mamie Baird.

The next morning the maid came to Mrs. Blake's room and told her that Dorothy was very ill.

"I am ill myself," replied Mrs. Blake. "I cannot go to her."

An hour later the maid came to say that Dorothy was much worse and it might be well to send for the family doctor.

"Very well, call the doctor," answered Mrs. Blake; the maid was both surprised and disturbed



at Mrs. Blake's indifference to Dorothy's condition. Shortly thereafter the doctor was in the house. Going to Dorothy's room he found her in a most wretched condition. Her mental state, coupled with the intoxication, had produced an alarming collapse; she was truly a sick woman—already in a raving fever.

The doctor, after giving some hurried instructions to the now thoroughly frightened maid, sought Mrs. Blake. Upon being ushered into her boudoir he was astonished to find her a wrinkled old woman, whereas a few days previous he had seen her bright and cheerful and in a state of perfect health. Her hair, then a beautiful steel gray, was now a muddy white. Her usually plump, ruddy face had collapsed, and now hung in deep folds and wrinkles, and her eyes were sunken and dull.

"Why, Mrs. Blake," he exclaimed, "what is all this mystery? What has happened?"

Mrs. Blake pointed to Dorothy's room. The old doctor had already diagnosed the wayward daughter's case. Having long been the physician of her father, who was notoriously dissipated, it did not surprise him that Dorothy should have an hereditary taint and predisposition in the same direction. While Dorothy was critically ill, his medicines would calm her fever and gradually win her back to rosy health; but no medicine could ever again restore Mrs. Blake to her former healthy condition. There was a permanent mental lesion in her case that was incurable.

The physician who had for so many years faith-

fully watched over this family had been a silent witness of its gradual decay, and he saw that the end was not far off. He had heard all of the rumors regarding Dorothy, and knew the truth of some of the more persistent and vicious of them.

His own faithful head was bowed in sorrow as he looked upon the patient mother, who had stood the brunt of it all. There was a tremor in his voice when he asked of Mrs. Blake, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Not a thing, doctor, thank you," was the reply, and he knew she spoke the truth.

"I will have a trained nurse here in a few hours, Mrs. Blake, to take charge of Dorothy," he said as he bowed himself out. She betrayed not the slightest interest.

At the door he met Jeffords, the butler, who gave him such of the facts as he knew.

"Too bad, too bad," murmured the doctor, as he passed out. In a moment he returned to give orders that no one should be allowed to see either Mrs. Blake or Dorothy till he returned with the nurse.

About noon Mamie Baird telephoned, but she was informed that both Dorothy and Mrs. Blake were quite ill, and could see no one.

Later in the day the doctor returned with a trained nurse, who took Dorothy wholly in charge, with instructions also to watch over Mrs. Blake.

## CHAPTER V

WHEN Dorothy left New York Howard was in a rage, storming about like a madman, cursing the day he ever met her. Never before in his life had he thus lost control of himself.

When at last he could talk rationally with his Aunt Margaret, they went carefully about making the best of a bad state of affairs.

They had renewed their conversation the next morning when a telegram was handed in announcing the coming that day of Mrs. Blake. This was unpleasant news, for it brought a new complication into the case.

They were sore puzzled to know just what to say to Dorothy's mother, notwithstanding the very confidential friendship existing between them, but at last it was decided best to tell her the simple truth.

Upon Mrs. Blake's arrival she was made comfortable, then taken to the privacy of the library for a confidential talk.

Howard had always, since his engagement with Dorothy, called Mrs. Blake mother, and a most congenial and friendly confidence existed between the mother and her son-in-law, of whom she was justly proud.

Mrs. Blake was keen to open the talk, and did not wait for explanations.

"Why did Dorothy take such a sudden notion to

come to Marchmont, Howard?" was her opening question.

Howard was pacing the floor with his hands deep in his pockets, which as usual signified a perturbed mind. He stopped by Mrs. Blake's chair, placed his hand affectionately upon her shoulder, and said:

"Mother, this is a much more serious matter than you think. Dorothy has left me not to return, and even though she, herself, should ask to do so, I cannot humiliate myself to permit it."

"Why, Howard!" exclaimed Mrs. Blake, "is it as bad as that? Do not say so," and she wrung her hands in anguish.

"Now, mother, it is important that you do not get excited, for I have prepared a case against Dorothy which I want you and Aunt Margaret to pass upon." With this he unlocked his secretary and drew a large portfolio therefrom.

He read, first, a carefully made statement of the Captain Winnans affair at the church door on the morning of the wedding. "This," he said, "annoyed me; I forgave it on the grounds of excitement."

He then took up another sheet upon which he had entered every little shade of evidence of bad faith on Dorothy's part, at the time she and Winnans exchanged confidences at the pier.

"This," he said, "made me very sad, for at that time I loved Dorothy, was proud of her, and felt certain that our trip would so endear us to each other that we should be ever happy upon returning and taking our position here. This parting

act had put in my heart that cutting grain, a doubt of her sincerity; I did forgive, but could not forget it.

"I could easily forgive the numerous annoyances of the voyage, for most travelers are ill-natured on a steamship. Love does not thrive there; it is fiction to say so; Cupid looks most disreputable on board a steamer during a rough voyage. Love usually banks his fires upon getting aboard ship.

"Upon arriving in London we went to the Hotel Cecil. After being there one week, one day I entered Dorothy's boudoir for some purpose, and found lying upon her writing desk this unfinished letter, written upon the hotel stationery." Then Howard produced the letter.

MY OWN DARLING FRANK:

We are here, I and *it*. Oh, how sad I was to leave you standing there upon the dock all alone! I wanted to take you in my arms, darling; I could have jumped overboard at that moment to come back to you——

Well, I am in for it. He is kind and good to me all the time, denies me nothing, giving me no chance to tell him how I loathe and despise him.

What a fool I was to obey my mother and marry him! But never fear, my dearest Frank; upon my return we will make up for lost time. You must be wholly true to me.

We are——

Here the letter abruptly ended, as though interrupted suddenly. Dorothy had forgotten, in her careless way, to conceal or destroy the fatal sheet.

"This necessarily angered me," said Howard, "because it fully corroborated my suspicions previously aroused. It has subsequently become doubly strong, because she has apparently done all that she promised in the letter since returning here, although it never reached Winnans.

"She never once betrayed to me that she had missed the letter. I, knowing full well now that Dorothy had for some reason married me under false pretenses, concealed from her my grief, sorrow, shame, and humiliation. How I accomplished this I never could understand, for my whole trip was one of torture. It reminded me of the time I was playing football on the Harvard team, when at about the middle of the game I had two ribs stove in, yet I finished the game. The torture I endured was beyond description, but I held out to the end without a whimper to betray my condition, and I did not faint at the end of the game, although I was kept in the hospital for two weeks.

"One pain was as cruel as the other, mother.

"Upon our return here our trouble increased. Dorothy was always as sweet as cream in public, but ever had a cruel, stinging word for me in private; she never approved of anything I did. When I desired to have her do something, I found it necessary to vehemently oppose it myself, then she would take a sudden determination to do it, and nothing could change her mind.

"I then discovered that she secretly imbibed the most poisonous liquors."

He reached for a small paper bag and emptied its

contents upon the library table. "Talk about refined impudence! Examine these cigarette stumps, and these," and he laid out a row of half a dozen unsmoked cigarettes. "Look on the wrapper, 'From F. W. to D. B.' Either these cigarettes were given to Dorothy before our wedding, or else this infernal scoundrel, Winnans, has the gall of a devil.

"Now, mother, this is quite sufficient; this insults me, but wait.

"That which outrages me, and offends me beyond all further endurance, occurred yesterday. It was the culmination of the whole thing. You are aware that, of all men whom Dorothy formerly called her friends, I most loathe and detest this Captain Winnans, a drunken, dissolute fellow, without self-respect or respect for either man or woman.

"Yesterday morning, by the merest accident, I caught Dorothy and him in an intrigue, right here in my own house at the unheard of hour of nine o'clock."

"Intrigue! What do you mean, Howard?" exclaimed Mrs. Blake in alarm.

Then Howard explained all that had occurred the day before.

At this moment the doorbell rang, and the butler appeared with a note in his hand.

"The bearer said this must be given to no one but Mrs. Stafford personally," said the butler, as he handed it to Howard, who, without hesitating, took it and opened it.

"Who brought this?" asked Howard of the butler.

"A man in an automobile," replied the butler.

"I will see him here; bring him in here," said Howard.

A strapping fellow appeared at the library door holding a cap and a big pair of goggles in his hand.

"I presume this is the bill for the automobile used by Mrs. Stafford and Captain Winnans day before yesterday, but isn't it rather high for so short a trip?" asked Howard, in an affable tone of voice, making the charge the point of dispute.

"Yes, but they kept it for five hours, sir," replied the chauffeur.

"Did you act as chauffeur?" asked Howard.

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

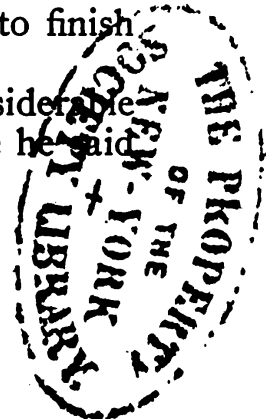
"Who ordered the automobile?" was next asked.

"Captain Winnans came to the garage, and I drove him to Thirty-fourth Street and Broadway and took in a lady," said the man.

"Do you know Mrs. Stafford by sight?" asked Howard.

"No, but Captain Winnans called the lady Mrs. Stafford once, but after that he called her Dot, so I thought it was the Mrs. Stafford I was to see here; he said the bill was to be presented here to Mrs. Stafford," continued the man, who seemed to understand the situation now, and wanted to finish the matter up quickly.

"This Captain Winnans owes us considerable money, and when he came for this machine he said





it was all right, and would be paid by Mrs. Stafford, otherwise he would not have been allowed to have it."

"Well," returned Howard, "I will pay you the bill, but do not allow this to happen again. Mrs. Stafford did not, herself, order the automobile; she has one of her own. There is five dollars additional for your frankness; now, will you be good enough to give me your name? I have the name of your garage here on the bill. I may need a good strong man like you some day myself."

"Thank you, sir," said the man, and pulling from his pocket a greasy lot of cards bearing the name of his employers, he wrote his name and address on the corner of one, handed it to Howard, and left the room.

The women looked inquiringly at Howard.

"Well," said Howard, "I knew no more about this matter than you yourselves until I questioned the man, but this bill corroborates his statement. 'For automobile service, five hours at five dollars an hour, twenty-five dollars.' The evidence seems to multiply.

"Now, mother, you have heard the story. I am not willing to stifle my manhood and condone these grave offenses against all decency, and take Dorothy back. There is no law, of God or man, that should require this sacrifice of self-respect, but I am willing, for your sake, and for the sake of my dear aunt, to make any reasonable arrangements whereby an open scandal may be averted."

Both women were quietly weeping. There was

no room for doubt or argument in the case; all were too agitated to talk further about it.

Mrs. Blake arose, and placing her arms about Howard, kissed him on the forehead and said, "You have my whole confidence and sympathy, Howard, I will go back to Marchmont at once and write you."

She was full of anger toward Dorothy because she had knowingly and willfully disgraced herself and her only relative, her mother, upon whom she had depended even for bread and clothing, until she married Howard.

Dorothy, thoroughly selfish, had never been deep enough to think of these things.

The awful discovery made by her mother, upon her unexpected return from the city, and the consequent calamity, had saved her from a chastisement which would probably have made her homeless. She was now tossing in a raving, raging fever, while the nervous strain upon her mother had made her an invalid for life.

Aunt Margaret had also saluted Howard and left him to himself. For many long hours he sat in the library, thinking, thinking, but without discovering any evidence to soften his feelings toward Dorothy.

He admitted he had some sort of lingering sentiment, mingled with his disgust and hatred, which he could not fully understand, but each time he attempted to turn it into sympathy or pity for Dorothy he was so overcome with a revulsion of bitter feeling for her and Winnans that he swore that he would think no more about them. He could never

even condone, much less forgive, the insults she had heaped upon him, why waste sympathy upon her?

Late in the afternoon he closed the case, and Dorothy was a widow, so far as the feelings of Howard Pemberton Stafford were concerned.

## CHAPTER VI

It was midsummer, and Marchmont was gayer than ever before. Many delightful visitors had contributed to the frivolities and festivities this season. Only a few had failed to take the high degree which ensured them a hearty welcome for the next season.

One young fellow, calling himself a count, had cut quite a dash among the younger hearts, but it was discovered early in the season that he was an impostor, and both he and the person who presented him found themselves standing outside the social gates thereafter. Aunt Margaret never passed upon counts and barons who were not properly supplied with letters of introduction. This "count" proved to be an apothecary's clerk on upper Broadway, New York.

Society had surely been good to Dorothy, who had fully recovered from her illness. The Stafford affair was not openly talked about, but it was generally known that an estrangement had taken place.

Dorothy had taken her usual place in the social whirl, but she was not the Dorothy of old; the fact of her being a married woman changed her position, giving her certain privileges which the young unmarried women, of course, did not have; nevertheless, she was a changed woman in her whole nature. She no longer resembled the blithe young girl who once added to the graces of the social set.

Only a few had the courage to criticise her for being seen frequently in the company of Captain Winnans, for his name was coupled with the estrangement between herself and Howard.

There was one secret, however, which was not public property. Mrs. Blake was a confirmed invalid and confined to her room; she had not spoken to Dorothy since the day she came from New York, after the harrowing interview with Howard and Aunt Margaret.

Mrs. Kidder had spent less than two weeks at Marchmont, and Howard had not been there once during the season.

George Hanford, Howard's law partner, was taking the latter's place at Marchmont, spending much of his time there, and becoming a great favorite.

In the latter part of August Mr. Hanford came to the city. After attending to the business in hand, he asked Howard to go to the Lawyers' Club and have luncheon with him. Seeking a secluded corner, they talked confidentially, being on excellent terms.

"Howard," said Hanford, "I believe you know I would not purposely say anything to hurt your feelings, or to offend you."

"Why, certainly not, George, say whatever is in your mind," was Howard's hearty reply.

"Well, it is this," continued Hanford, "all Marchmont knows that you and Dorothy are estranged. Gossip was generous early in the season, but now it is freely coupling Dorothy's name with

that Captain Winnans, and some very bad things are being said, not exactly in the open, but in an insidious, undermining way, which is much more dangerous. While Dorothy and Winnans have sense enough not to be seen often together in public, everybody in Marchmont knows they are almost constantly together, somewhere. It is a dirty scandal which is bound to break out before the season is over, and what I most fear is that your good name and reputation will be bandied about without any just cause. Dorothy seems quite brazen and indifferent to the inevitable consequences, then why not think of your reputation, apply for a divorce, which could be quickly and easily obtained, and put an end to this miserable farce before it develops into a real tragedy?"

Howard was very much touched, and he replied with a sad cadence in his voice, "No, George, not now; I will not do that, but I do thank you for the brotherly interest you take in the matter."

At last Howard Stafford's pride was stung to the very core. He was pitied by those whom he knew to be sincerely his friends. He was an object of pity! How humiliating! All of his life others had admitted his strength and superiority over petty things; but this was no petty thing. They were right; he was an object of pity; he needed such sympathy.

"No!" he mentally resolved, "I will not be a target for sympathy; I will assert my manhood if I must commit murder." He was seized with a desire to go to Marchmont; for what exact purpose

he could not say; but he would go and see what inspiration seized him there. One thing, he would confront Dorothy and Winnans in their perfidy and seek a quarrel, that he might kill the scoundrel who had wrecked his and her life.

The following day he took the early morning train for Marchmont, not announcing his intentions to anyone, not even to his Aunt Margaret. He had before starting slipped into his pocket the pistol which had long rested in the drawer in the library; then hesitating, he took it out and looked at it. "No," he said, "this would prove premeditation, and I will not take it," and he replaced it in the drawer.

Arriving at Marchmont, he went straight to the Blake home, where Jeffords, with noticeable alarm and agitation, admitted him.

"Mrs. Blake is worse," he said, "and Mrs. Stafford is horseback riding, to return very soon."

Howard stepped inside and said to Jeffords: "Do not announce me. I will await the return of Mrs. Stafford." Then he went into the library, which was situated back of the parlors.

It was a warm day, and the windows and doors were open; screen doors were at the front.

Jeffords anticipated some sort of trouble, and remained close at hand.

In a short time footsteps and low laughter were heard on the veranda; the screen doors were opened, and Dorothy, accompanied by Captain Winnans, entered the hall, and then the parlor.

Howard did not stand on ceremony. He was

looking for trouble, and was in no mood to be polite to anyone at that moment.

He stepped to the door, which commanded a view of the parlors, and saw Winnans embracing Dorothy. Winnans did not see him, but Dorothy did. With a little suppressed scream she struggled frantically to disengage herself from Winnans' arms, but the willing villain, thinking her struggles were merely playful, held her all the tighter.

In three or four bounds Howard was at their side. As Winnans faced him he struck him one tremendous blow full in the face, which sent him reeling across the room. As he straightened up Howard struck him again, felling him in a heap upon the floor, with blood streaming from nose and mouth; then in his rage he stamped him into total insensibility.

Turning to Dorothy, who had shrunk, speechless, into a corner of the room, he said, with the dangerous laugh of a maniac, "Ha, ha, you creature; being a woman I cannot punish you in the same manner; I leave you to attend your lovely hero," and he slammed the screen door and left the house.

It was a most fortunate thing for Howard that Dr. Vail had just been summoned to see Mrs. Blake, who had had one of her sinking spells; he had come very near killing Winnans.

It was some hours before Winnans could be taken in an ambulance to the depot and sent to a New York hospital. He was fearfully punished about the face, four ribs were broken, and many other bruises and contusions covered his body.



Word went round Marchmont the next morning that Captain Winnans had been thrown from his horse, and was so badly injured it was necessary to send him to the hospital; but old Jeffords, who had gotten his fighting blood stirred, winked his eye, went through an imitation knock-down, and said: "Since when did Mrs. Blake turn her parlor into a stable?"

Howard, having accomplished the object of his hasty trip to Marchmont, returned home and told his Aunt Margaret all that had happened.

For once, it looked as though Aunt Margaret would have her hands full to prevent a scandal; she was much worried over the matter, yet she did not chide Howard for what he had done; she simply said nothing, which worried Howard a bit.

They learned the next day that Winnans had been seriously hurt, and that he had been taken to a New York hospital.

Howard was much worked up over the matter. One minute he raved because he had not killed Winnans, and the next he deplored the fact of his having so far forgotten his dignity as to deliberately go looking for a broil with actual murder in his heart. He was too heartily ashamed to talk about it with his aunt, yet it was essential for him to do so.

Two days passed after the incident at Marchmont, when Aunt Margaret received a pitiful letter from Mrs. Blake. She had learned the facts, and wanted to tell Howard and his aunt that Captain Winnans had entered her house without her knowledge or consent, and in the letter she also confessed

that she had not spoken to Dorothy since the day she last returned from New York; moreover, she would never probably again be able to leave her bed. They had been dear friends, and Mrs. Kidder wept over the sad letter. She never would again tolerate the mention of Dorothy's name.

When Howard came she handed him the letter, saying, "I want to go away from here for a while, my boy. All this is wearing me out.

"I have thought this thing all over; I was so shocked when you told me you had actually had a personal encounter with this bad fellow, I could not talk about it then; but, Howard, I want to say to you now that no man with any self-respect and not a coward could have done otherwise; I heartily approve of your course, and now that Dorothy is wholly impossible, the quicker you get her off your hands the better for all concerned; let her go to the eternal bow-wows with this degenerate if she wants to, but I want to get out of it."

"I feel the same way, auntie," replied Howard. "I was just going to suggest a trip abroad where we could forget these disagreeable things for a while. By the time we return this affair will be forgotten, and I will quietly secure a divorce; I have ample grounds."

"That is exactly what I should like, Howard," exclaimed his aunt.

"Very well, the main point is settled; we shall go to Europe as soon as we can possibly get ready," said Howard enthusiastically. "Now let me do all the planning of the trip; you think it over and

let me know if there are any business matters you want me to attend to before you go."

"There is one thing, Howard. I must have a suitable woman as a traveling companion; this will also give you more freedom. I will not take with me any of the Marchmont girls. I prefer a young woman; they are much more cheerful than old women."

"Well, let's see," replied Howard thoughtfully, "to save my soul I cannot think of a suitable person. Let's think it over."

Two days passed, and Howard had given no further thought to the matter of a suitable traveling companion for his aunt.

He had about closed all the matters which would need personal attention, and had given strict orders that no one was to see him now on business. His law partner, George Hanford, had taken in hand all business which would come direct to Howard.

He was sitting in his own private office carefully reviewing his affairs to see if he had forgotten anything. In an hour he would go, not to return again to his office until just before sailing; and then, only to see that the last detail was arranged for his absence.

Just then he heard the voice of Hanford in the outer office say: "I am very sorry, madam, but Mr. Stafford is preparing to leave for Europe, and cannot see anyone; all of his affairs, personal and otherwise, are wholly in my hands; therefore, it would be useless for you to see him personally."

"Yes, but I have some personal letters of intro-

duction which I was to place only in his hands, and I do not care to deliver them to his private secretary." Hanford winced, and Howard laughed inwardly as he heard this:

"I may surely deliver these letters to him, and then, if he turns the matter over to you I shall feel better."

It was a sweet, gentle, pleading, female voice which presented this strong argument, and while Hanford hesitated Howard cautiously looked through the half-opened door and saw something to startle him.

It was a good and wholesome sight. A plump figure dressed in a plain, well-made black suit and wearing a mourning veil.

The pleading attitude was that of a child with a face like a big rosy apple, turned coquettishly up into that of the tall, lank Hanford. No one, with any heart at all, could resist such an appeal, and seeing Hanford's embarrassing position, Howard came to his relief by saying, "Allow the lady to come in, Mr. Hanford."

There was no indecision or embarrassment on the part of the attractive little caller; she went quickly through the office door.

Neither Howard nor Mr. Hanford could refrain from laughter when she turned her good-natured face toward Hanford, without even looking at Howard, and said with the air of a pretty pouting child, "Oh! that bad man wasn't going to let me see you." Then with becoming confusion she hurriedly apologized for "being so rude and per-

sistent." "But," she said, "I just had to get to you, Mr. Stafford."

"Well, I don't see how anyone could very well refuse you anything, if you will pardon me for beginning our acquaintance with a respectful compliment," was Howard's gallant reply.

"I'm glad you said that," innocently exclaimed the charming little creature, "for I was afraid maybe you wouldn't want to do what I came for. I have heard it said that lawyers detest widows as clients, and I am a widow, Mr. Stafford. But don't you worry, I won't give you any trouble."

For a long time thereafter, though, she troubled his heart as it had never been troubled before.

There was a soul-piercing simplicity in this speech, sufficient to put any man in sympathy with her, and Howard was no exception. She was already giving him trouble, not purposely perhaps, nevertheless there was something tugging at his heart—sympathy, maybe.

She had thrown back her heavy mourning-veil, revealing the most beautiful face and round white neck Howard had ever seen, and a wealth of reddish-brown hair. Black was remarkably becoming to her.

Howard could not resist examining her every feature; her plump, rosy cheeks, full of life; frank, dancing, laughing, grayish-blue eyes; a pair of cherry-red lips, between which were seen when she laughed the most beautiful, even white teeth.

She was not roguish, for with all of her cunning makeup she was strong. She was simply a per-

fectly beautiful young woman, not yet in her full prime.

Howard Pemberton Stafford was, for once in his professional career, staggered before he knew the nature of the case.

"This young woman," he thought, "either needs a guardian, or else she is extremely dangerous, for she is a most fascinating creature. If hers is a jury case I have it won right now, and I will take her case no matter what its nature." He had forgotten all about his trip to Europe.

Assuming a more dignified attitude—he found it very difficult to be dignified in her presence—he said, in a friendly and affable manner: "What is the nature of the business that brings you to me, Mrs.—eh, Mrs.——"

"Oh, I nearly forgot to tell you who I am," she said, as with quiet dignity she drew from a little silver card case a card and handed it to him.

"Mrs. John Elliott Pelham," it read in very proper type.

"Pelham! Pelham!" mused Howard, "seem to remember that name."

"I am a Hoosier," she said, and Howard was enraptured with the inverted Cupid's bow formed by her beautiful mouth when she laughed, just like the sweet, innocent child she was.

"I am from Pemberton, Indiana," and she smiled again that ravishing smile.

"Pemberton!" echoed Howard. "Why that's my middle name, Pemberton."

"Yes, I know," quickly responded the little

widow, "I know all about you; Pemberton, Indiana, was named after your Uncle Abel Pemberton; he was a Methodist minister; I sing in the dear old church in which he used to preach. There is a memorial tablet about him right under the organ loft.

"I can remember the verse that is on it:

*"In memory of the beloved founder of this church, Abel Pemberton, who lived and died in Christ. Born at Boston, May, 1814, and died at Pemberton, 1884, at the ripe age of 70 years. The world is better for his having lived, may his soul rest in eternal bliss with God."*

"I committed it to memory the Sunday before I left home, but here I am taking up your time with a lot of foolish talk, and you trying to get off to Europe. I beg your pardon, Mr. Pemberton—Mr. Stafford, I mean. I will hurry and tell you what brought me here."

Diving into quite a capacious bag she drew forth a package of legal papers tied up in ribbons, with an envelope slipped beneath the fastening, and addressed:

*"Mr. Howard Pemberton Stafford,  
Personal and Private."*

Howard attempted to untie the knot in the ribbon, but could not manage it.

The pretty widow took the papers out of his hand with the remark, "The man never lived who

could thread a needle or untie a knot." With two or three nimble movements of her pretty fingers she spread the papers out upon the table with a satisfied little "There." While Howard made a superficial glance at the papers she wound the slender ribbon about her chubby fingers, and slipped the circlet it made over the head of a small iron pig with his back filled with bristles for cleaning pens which stood upon the desk.

Howard could not refrain longer from laughing.

"You are certainly the most cheerful widow I have ever seen," he said, as he looked at the beriboned pig.

She flushed a bit and looked him calmly in the eyes as she said, "I was always so; I could not be otherwise; I am sick when I am not cheerful and happy. Very small things make me very happy sometimes, and only big things can make me unhappy for more than a whole day. I may go to sleep unhappy, but I forget all about it in the night and am happy again in the morning."

Howard sighed and hastily drew from the envelope the letter it contained.

"Well!" he exclaimed, and he read it aloud:

To Howard Pemberton Stafford, Esq., New York.

MY DEAR OLD SCHOOLMATE:—You will be more than surprised to receive this letter from me, and mayhap you have long ago forgotten me. Well, you see I have not forgotten you. Inasmuch as this will not be delivered to you excepting in the——

Howard paused and glanced at the little woman



in black. Two big tears were standing ready to tumble down the ruddy cheeks, but she said softly, "Go on."

Howard continued gently:

—event of my death, this letter introduces to you the only angel on earth.

The head of brown hair went down upon the desk, and Howard did not read more of the letter aloud, but when he had finished he arose from his chair, fumbled about his law books for a time, but he did not seem to find what he wanted.

"Forgive me, Mr. Stafford, but I could not help it," murmured the little widow with a final gurgle, which finished in a hysterical little laugh in spite of her tears.

"Never mind," said Howard, "I understand; some time you may tell me the story," and he gave the plump hand a gentle, reassuring pat.

"Now, to business," he continued, with more composure and dignity. "I am more than pleased to tell you that I recognize your husband as an old schoolmate, although at first I didn't remember the full name.

"He has conferred upon me the honor of closing up some legal matters which he had begun in your favor, and these papers cover the case. I will take the case in hand for you, Mrs. Pelham, although it may embarrass me somewhat so to do because of the arrangements I have made to accompany my aunt on an extended trip abroad. I will take the papers home with me and will look

them over fully to-night, then I will be able to form some idea of the merits of the case. Will you come here promptly to-morrow at eleven o'clock?"

"Yes, I will be here, Mr. Stafford, thank you," she said.

"By the way," said Howard as he rose, "where are you stopping? Are you quite comfortably situated?"

"Yes, thank you," she replied. "While I am in a boarding-house on Thirty-eighth Street, I find it very comfortable; I think that is much more respectable than a hotel, don't you?" and the innocent face looked inquiringly up into that of Howard, "and, besides, it is cheaper."

Howard nodded assent and sighed again, as he ushered her toward the door.

"Good-afternoon, Mrs. Pelham," he said.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Stafford," was the sweet response.

"George!" called Howard as the outer door closed.

"Yes, Howard, what is it?" and Hanford entered Howard's private office.

"Did you notice that little woman much?" asked Howard.

"I noticed she was very cunning and pretty," replied his law partner.

"I prophesy," continued Howard, "that that bewitching creature will do something great before she is much older. The man who would not sympathize with her should be killed for a brute, that is certain. I have taken her case."

"Taken her case! What is the nature of it?" queried George.

"Claim against an estate. Will tell you all about it to-morrow," replied Howard, hurriedly gathering up the papers and rushing to the door, hoping, doubtless, to get one more glimpse of the fair widow, but she was gone.

He went directly home, and after dinner he asked his aunt to sit and talk to him in the library while he looked over some legal documents.

"I have a queer case here, auntie," said Howard, as they were seated. "To-day there came into my office undoubtedly the most fascinating little widow I ever saw. Oh! What's this? Here is a letter which I did not see. Perhaps this will be interesting." He broke the seal and read:

To Howard Pemberton Stafford, Esq., of law firm  
Stafford, Hanford & Deal, New York.

DEAR SIR:—I beg of you to give this communication your most serious consideration. It will be presented to you by one of the most worthy of my little flock, who seeks your advice in some legal matters.

Mrs. Pelham is the most important member of my choir, and we hope she may not be detained long alone in a great city.

It may be a boresome story to a busy lawyer, but I feel it my duty to tell you something of Mrs. Pelham's sad life, hoping it may induce you to take a special interest in her case, and that you may feel justified in inquiring regarding her safety and comfort while in New York.

She is the daughter of one of the oldest and best families here, and is a charming, cultured, and refined

woman, although but a child in worldly experience. It has been my pleasure to have christened her, and I have watched her grow into splendid womanhood.

Two years ago John E. Pelham came here, a splendid fellow he was, too, and began the practice of law. He met Eleanor Kilpatrick (Mrs. Pelham), they fell in love, and were to have been married early in the last spring.

In the disaster which occurred in this town last January, in which several persons were killed and injured by the collapse of the office building in which Mr. Pelham's office was located, he was so badly injured that he never left his bed afterward. Loyal little Eleanor married him on his deathbed, becoming his wife and widow within an hour.

The Kilpatrick family discovered that they were joint heirs in an English estate, and Pelham undertook to recover it for them. Just before he died he called me to his bedside and told me that the case had been carried to a point where it was absolutely certain that Eleanor, to whom the mother's claim had been assigned, would receive as her share 20,000 pounds sterling, but he felt that his end was near, therefore it was important to secure the services of an honorable and conscientious lawyer to take it in hand after his death, secure the legacy, and not charge an exorbitant fee for his services.

He then mentioned you as the one to whom he should like to entrust the interests of Eleanor.

With this in view, he carefully arranged all the papers and wrote a letter to accompany them, all of which were to be delivered to you by Eleanor herself after his death.

Eleanor and the papers will tell you the balance.

Now, Mr. Stafford, I am told this town is named

after your kinsman, Abel Pemberton. I knew him well. A better man than he never lived.

A flock of good people came here with him; Eleanor Kilpatrick is a bud off this good old stock, and one of our angels; therefore do by her as you would anyone to do by your own sister or daughter, if you are blessed with either.

I am pastor of Abel Pemberton's old church. His eloquent sermons and Eleanor Kilpatrick's sweet songs have sanctified every chink and corner of it.

Now, I commend to your care our beloved Eleanor; return her safely to us.

My best prayers are with you.

Sincerely yours,

JAMES BENSON OVERMAN.

"Why, Howard!" exclaimed Mrs. Kidder, "that letter actually sounds spooky. You say this woman came to your office? What is she like?"

"Abel Pemberton was my eldest brother. There was a break in our family caused by a difference of religious opinion; Abel turned shouting Methodist and went to the West many, many years ago; he never returned, but died there.

"Do tell me all about the fairy princess, or angel, or whatever she may be."

"I cannot describe her in few words, auntie," enthusiastically declared Howard, "excepting that she is more than charming, a great deal more than this letter conveys.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, bounding to his feet, "I have it, an inspiration; she is undoubtedly respectable, and I should say from her good language and well-bred manners she is a refined, educated

woman. She has a snug fortune awaiting her in England; her presence there would greatly facilitate her coming into possession of her own. Why not investigate her carefully and see if she would not make you a good traveling companion?"

"Well, now, that is not a bad suggestion; but, Howard, you seem unusually enthusiastic over her; I advise you to be cautious. Beauty is a dangerous qualification sometimes in a traveling companion, especially where there is a love-hungry man in the party," said Mrs. Kidder.

"Oh, don't let that alarm you, auntie," said Howard, anxious to disabuse her mind of any thought of special interest on his part.

"Very well, Howard, I am interested," said Mrs. Kidder musingly. "Where may she be investigated, as you put it?"

"Really I am unexpectedly vindicated. I certainly cannot tell you where she is domiciled, somewhere on Thirty-eighth Street in a boarding-house, and there are an even million boarding-houses on that particular street."

"In a boarding-house!" exclaimed Mrs. Kidder.

"She is by no means a rich woman at the present time, auntie," explained Howard.

"Oh, I don't suppose that is any reflection upon her respectability," was Aunt Margaret's reply. "Get the address, and if convenient come home early to-morrow afternoon, and we will make a call upon your fair *dulcinée*."

"She comes to my office to-morrow at eleven

o'clock," Howard said. "Would you prefer to see her there?"

"Not at all, not at all," said Mrs. Kidder. "We may gain a better knowledge of her by catching her unprepared. You intimate that you want her to be at home at four o'clock in order that you may reach her by messenger, for business reasons; I know it is not quite fair, but the end will justify the means, so there, no protest."

Mrs. Kidder now left Howard alone with the legal papers, which he carefully studied for an hour, then placing them in his pocket with a chuckle, remarked: "Well, the young maiden widow is worth a hundred thousand dollars anyway, and this case is all ready to close up. I told auntie no falsehood; it will save six months' time for Mrs. Pelham to go immediately to London. I do hope she will please Aunt Margaret; she certainly is a charmer. It will be fine if Aunt Margaret finds her acceptable and takes her with us."

"Don't be hasty, Howard; you are entirely too enthusiastic about this case, considering that you are a respectable married man."

Howard almost leaped into the air. He had been soliloquizing aloud, and his aunt, returning to the room for her book, did not consider it a crime to let him finish his soliloquy before making her presence known.

"Oh, you frightened me dreadfully, auntie. Now please don't misunderstand my interest in this—this—case. Mrs. Pelham is but a child in nature and experience. If you are going to tease me, I

must send you off to bed," and Howard put his arm about Mrs. Kidder's shoulders and walked her toward the door.

"All the more lovable and dangerous," said wise Aunt Margaret, yet she gave a good-natured chuckle as she left the room.



## CHAPTER VII

THE next morning Howard was at his office quite early.

George Hanford was something of a sign-reader himself and smiled indulgently at Howard for showing impatience for the hour of eleven to arrive, or rather for the coming of the little client with whom he had an engagement at that lagging hour.

Promptly on the stroke of eleven the plump figure in black was ushered in.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Pelham." "Good-morning, Mr. Stafford," were the cheerful greetings.

Howard extended his hand, saying: "I have examined the papers and wish to congratulate you; you are worth a hundred thousand dollars—I came near saying millions, and I don't believe I would have been wide of the mark."

"Oh, I am so glad!" exclaimed Mrs. Pelham. "Now mother may have a new Christmas gown, and our church can be repaired, and have a new organ. Our pastor, Mr. Overman, will be so pleased."

Howard had again removed the stiff-backed chair and pushed up the comfortable big leather one, in which the little widow was almost lost when she seated herself in it, her feet not touching the floor by several inches.

"How old a man is your pastor?" he anxiously asked as he carelessly pushed a cushion beneath her dangling feet.

"He is at least sixty," replied Mrs. Pelham, "but you would hardly think him over forty, he is so athletic and well preserved."

"Married?" was Howard's next question, as he pretended to look over a letter.

"Oh, yes; Mrs. Overman is only forty, a splendid woman she is, too," was the little widow's enthusiastic response.

Howard's sigh of relief almost shook the windows, then assuming an air of great business importance, he said:

"Now, Mrs. Pelham, I have carefully gone through these papers and I find, to my surprise, the case has been conducted to a point of virtual completion, it only requiring your presence in London to immediately secure for you 20,000 pounds sterling, or \$100,000. That is a snug little fortune. Your signature is all that is necessary, but your presence will save a lot of red tape about identification, etc."

"It would be better were it in the moon," moaned Mrs. Pelham, "I could at least look at it there, for I cannot go to London, Mr. Stafford."

"Why not?" demanded Howard.

"Why, I haven't the means," she responded. "Our pastor even loaned me the money with which to come here. He did say that, were it actually necessary, he would mortgage his house for three hundred dollars and lend me that much, but before

I would allow him to do such a thing I would abandon the case."

Howard looked at her charming, though half-dejected face as she told him this, then smiling in a reassuring way, said:

"Never mind that; it is a part of a law firm's business to take some risks in cases of this kind. We will advance all the preliminary expenses in order to close the case quickly. This is customary, so you need not let it give you any anxiety."

"Thank you, Mr. Stafford, what shall I take with me to bring the money back in, and when shall I start?"

Howard nearly fell out of his chair at this, and laughed heartily.

"Please tell me what I am to do, then," continued the little widow. "Ugh! it scares me to think about it. Why, I couldn't go away over there alone, anyway; couldn't they send it to me at Pemberton, by express?"

In fact, this was a most sensible proposition, but it did not suit the plans Howard was forming.

"We will see what is best to be done," said Howard thoughtfully, "but perhaps it will be less embarrassing to you than you think."

He was afraid of offending this keen little person, for beneath her innocent exterior was a native acumen to be reckoned with. She knew by instinct what seemed right and wrong.

Nevertheless, Howard decided to force matters and declare himself dictator before she had time to deliberate.

"You will have to prepare yourself to look smart and proper; how much money have you?" he asked almost fiercely.

"I have my return ticket to Pemberton, twenty-one dollars, and some postage stamps," responded Mrs. Pelham, with her rosy lips parted, and staring at him innocently.

"What clothing have you with you?" continued Howard bluntly. He no longer seemed so gentle and kind-hearted.

"Only the dress I have on," she answered, in a low, scared voice. Her questioner, despite his gruff manner, was much affected, and had he dared he would have taken her in his strong arms and assured her of a safe future. "Well, now I'm the lawyer in this case, and there is a hundred thousand dollars at stake; just think of it, what a lot of money; therefore, you must do as I say, for it will very materially help your case," and Howard strode up and down the office with his hands deep in his pockets.

"What has my clothing to do with the case, Mr. Stafford?" meekly ventured the now thoroughly disturbed little woman; and the tears came into her eyes.

"Well, I'll tell you," said he, coming close to her and assuming a confidential air. "These queer English people will never let go of money which must come over to this country unless they are afraid of offending prominent Americans, so we shall have to use a little strategy. I think I can see where I can connect our case with some impor-

tant names and push it right through, and this makes it necessary that you have a little more elaborate outfit of clothing. I am something of an expert in these matters, and I am going shopping with you in order to save time and embarrassment."

"Why, Mr. Stafford!" exclaimed Mrs. Pelham, "must they examine the texture of my gown and the style of my hat and the color of my shoes to identify my signature? You said all it needed was my signature. I think it would be easier to identify me as I am, and as everyone knows me, than to disguise me with a lot of new toggery which everyone knows I cannot afford."

Howard was somewhat nonplussed, but he persisted.

"You need not feel alarmed at what I am saying to you. Within twenty-four hours you will fully understand, and we shall all laugh together, but just now you must do as I say and ask no questions. Your good old pastor has placed you under my care and you are safe. Will you keep a secret and help me to put you in good hands to make the trip to London?"

"Indeed I will," she replied; "I am not afraid of you. You tell me to jump off the big bridge, and I'll do it."

"No, we will not jump to-day," said Howard, as he reached for his hat and cane. "Come with me, now."

They left the office building, hailed a cab, and Howard directed the cabman to drive to Wanamaker's.

"Now, I'll tell you the secret," Howard said as the cab turned along the granite street. "I have some friends who are going abroad and I am going to ask them to chaperon you, see? But they are fashionable people and will expect you to be quite stylish, so I am going to help you select some things which will put you right. It is your money we are spending; I know best what you need, therefore you mustn't get scared at prices or the amount I spend."

"Suppose we do not get the fortune, Mr. Stafford, how am I to repay you?" anxiously inquired the little lady.

"Oh, my firm takes the case on a contingent fee and takes all the risks. We feel certain of success or we would not do this," was Howard's plausible reply.

"Mr. Stafford, if I permit you to do this, and then fail to get the legacy, what excuse could I make to my mother and our good pastor?" She was getting serious.

"Why, er—why, you can save the gown you have on, and—well, throw the others away if you don't want them," was the man-like, blundering answer.

"I never thought of that; nevertheless I would still be deeply indebted to you and could never repay you. Do you think I should place myself in that attitude?" she asked of him.

Howard was in a dilemma. In his enthusiasm and eager desire to assist his bright and sunny little client he was wholly forgetting that a good

woman's instinct for self-preservation is often more developed than her external manners.

Eleanor Kilpatrick was a child, it was true; a sweet, innocent child-woman; but she had this womanly instinct strongly developed. Mr. Stafford's enthusiasm overstepped the bounds of propriety and she knew it. She liked him, and would not allow him to do anything to hurt his own case. She trusted him, but she was not going to weave about herself complications which might be difficult of explanation in the future.

She felt quite certain that his real motive, though with the best of intentions, in desiring to improve her wardrobe, was that he was ashamed to introduce her to his society friends as she was. This wounded her pride. She was not seeking such expensive and embarrassing introductions. Yet she knew that he was desirous of making her appear well in the eyes of someone else, and she was woman enough to know why.

The cab stopped at the Broadway entrance to the great Wanamaker store and they alighted. Howard paid the cabman and discharged him. There was a troubled look on the little widow's face, and she was thinking earnestly. She did not want to go into the store, neither did she want to risk offending Howard.

Suddenly she espied the Vienna Café, across on the corner, and an inspiration seized her. "Oh, there is a nice-looking place over there; let us go there and get some luncheon first, and talk some more."

"I think you would prefer the Wanamaker restaurant in the store; it is very much superior to this cheap place," suggested Howard.

"No, I have heard of the Vienna Café; I should like to go there. The one at the Chicago World's Fair was great, but this is the original one, isn't it?" she persisted.

Howard looked at her cautiously. There was a farawayness in her speech which seemed to say, "I don't want to go in Wanamaker's just yet."

It was rather imprudent for him to be seen in a public place like this with an attractive young woman, especially at this particular time, when everyone knew that he and Dorothy were separated. None of his society friends would see him while inside the café, but some might see them going in or coming out.

However, he made up his mind quickly. He was in the adventure honestly, and would go to any extreme to bring it to a successful issue. He was not ashamed to be seen with the little widow. She was a genteel-looking woman, her only "fault" being that she was entirely too pretty and girlish.

"Very well, Mrs. Pelham," acquiesced Howard; "we will go in there and try it anyway, even if it chokes us."

"Why, Mr. Stafford, is it as bad as that?" she exclaimed, but never halted.

"That was only a joke, Mrs. Pelham," laughingly replied Howard. "It is doubtless a very nice, clean place."

They did find it an extremely clean place, and

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finding a cozy corner, Howard gave a simple order; then raising his head, looked straight into the eyes of the little widow, and began a frank explanation of his plans.

"Mrs. Pelham," he said, "I am going to tell you the whole truth, then if you think I am not justified in what I have done I want to beg of you in advance to forgive me, for I had only your good in view.

"Before I begin to explain I want to assure you of my deep and sincere respect. In saying what I am about to tell you I am violating a tacit promise to my aunt, but I believe I am justified, because I cannot take any undue advantage of you knowingly."

Mrs. Pelham's eyes opened wide in wonderment, for she could not guess what was coming.

Howard continued: "You came into my office, and your wonderful good nature, and, pardon my presumption, your fresh, innocent beauty, caused me to forget other important arrangements and to take a personal interest in your case, not from sordid motives, but because of a respectful liking and sympathy for you.

"My aunt, Margaret Kidder, and myself had completed all arrangements to sail for Europe in a few days, and among other things, we had to decide upon a traveling companion for her. She had informed me that she did not wish to invite any of our social acquaintances, because she wanted to wholly rest from social matters, and anyone of these would expect more or less social recognition from people

in Europe, and thus involve consequent responsibilities.

"We had decided upon no one when last evening I took home with me the papers in your case. I found in the package the unopened letter written by your good pastor, which had previously escaped my notice.

"It was a beautiful letter, and I took the liberty of reading it to my aunt. It made a profound impression on both of us, and I am going to say frankly to you that if you had my interest and sympathy at first, after having read this letter, in which your pastor said you were the good angel of Pemberton, our hearts went out to you in earnest; both my aunt and myself are now your firm friends."

More and more touched, Mrs. Pelham was now gazing intently at the untasted food, which had been placed before them, but which neither essayed to eat.

"Well," said Howard, "the natural outcome was that you were to be asked to go abroad with us as Mrs. Kidder's traveling companion. She would necessarily have to have someone, you know. She pays all her traveling expenses anyway, so it would be imposing no new obligation upon her, and it will relieve you from making the very hard and embarrassing trip alone, for that is how you would have to go otherwise.

"And now I will tell you the secret of my proposition to go shopping with you. Aunt Margaret is a society leader and a stickler for fine etiquette and correct manners. It was she who proposed that we

visit you at your boarding-house, purposely coming unannounced, in order that she might see you exactly as you are, don't you know.

"Auntie had no mean motive, not at all, for there is no dearer, better woman living; but you know in this case there was much personal comfort at stake, and she wanted to get at real facts.

"Now, Mrs. Pelham, I implore you to not be offended at anything I say to you. I greatly desire that you accompany my aunt for your mutual good. She is, despite her age, a charming and lovely woman, and I feel perfectly safe in commending you to her, for your sunny nature is what she most needs.

"I know how critical women are with each other. Every woman naturally wants to be at her best when under the scrutiny of another, therefore I desired to offset what seemed to be an unfair advantage we were to take of you this afternoon. I was seized with the foolish idea of going shopping with you, so that you might look your best, not that you are lacking in good appearance as you are, for to me you seem just right.

"But I fear you misunderstand my motives, and doubtless you despise, mistrust, and hate me," and he looked gloomily at the *fleur de lis* which he was diligently digging out of the table linen with his oyster fork.

Mrs. Pelham's face was flushed and her eyes were dull.

"No," she said, "I do not hate nor mistrust you," and her thoughts seemed to be far away.

Howard could not read her mind. Suddenly she looked him straight in the face and asked: "Are you a married man?"

The question was so plump and startling that Howard colored to his hair, then turned pale. "Why," he stammered, "what a funny question to ask me just at this point! Yes—why, of course I am married."

"Well, what would Mrs. Stafford say if she knew that her husband was driving around the stores buying gowns and things for a Hoosier widow?" was the shot that put Howard in distress.

"Suppose," continued the little pessimist, "that while you were admiring the fit or color of this or that she should suddenly step up and ask for an introduction; wouldn't that be an embarrassing thing for you?"

"I should say it would," replied Howard.

"Then how do you think I would feel about it?" asked the inquisitor.

"Oh, say no more, Mrs. Pelham," said Howard impatiently.

"Please let me ask you some more questions," she laughed. "I like to, because I am going to put you straight."

Howard had to look good-natured at this artless request, and with a little uneasy laugh he said: "As a rule, I am the one to ask questions, but it seems I am crowded into the witness box to testify against myself, so fire away," and he leaned defiantly back in his chair.

"My husband was a lawyer, you know," she said,

then suddenly she lowered her head to conceal her eyes for a moment; she had most forgotten.

"Mr. Stafford, I like and trust you. Now, do you only want me to go to Europe as a companion to your aunt, whom you say you love so much?" and she looked him squarely in the face.

"A little more than that," he said; "I can close your case there by your being present, and avoid red tape, which would keep you out of your money for six months at least. I am going to Europe anyway, and I do want you to go as my aunt's companion. It would be foolish for you to throw any obstacle in the way of an opportunity which relieves you of all the responsibilities and risk of traveling alone. I will suggest nothing more to embarrass you."

"Is your wife going with you?" was the next shock she gave him in the way of a question.

"I might as well tell you now as any time, Mrs. Peuham, that my wife and I are estranged; she is now with her mother, and, as far as I know, quite comfortable, happy, and contented. So there, please ask me no more questions about her," he pleaded.

"I only want to get this all right, Mr. Stafford," she said. "I am not going to be the innocent cause of getting you in trouble if I can help it. Now, about the gowns. Evidently I impressed you favorably in this humble costume, and I am not going to deceive your aunt. If she approves of me thus, I can dress to please her, and you, later; then I will be sure that both of you like me. If she does not accept me as I now am, then I will not go. I shall

take my case out of your hands to relieve you of embarrassment and give it to some other law firm."

Howard Stafford had been married to one stubborn woman, but she only stamped her foot in a rage and said cutting things to him; argument or logic she knew nothing about. Here was a different kind of woman, one that could logically silence him, for she only spoke the truth, emphatically the truth, which he had to admit. There was common sense in all she said.

For a moment he surveyed her with a very confident and friendly smile, then he said gently: "You will please my aunt just as you are, and I am going to keep your case in hand. You will mistrust me no more," and he offered her his hand, which she took in a gingerly sort of way, or rather put her own into his, blushing rosy red and hanging her head.

"There now, be perfectly comfortable and happy; I will not annoy you by trying to dress you like a Christmas doll. I will put you in a cab and send you to your home. At four o'clock look your best, for you will have callers, but don't give me away to my aunt," and he arose. She looked gratefully at him, and said, "I thank you."

He took her to the cab, asked the number of her boarding-house on Thirty-eighth Street, and directed the cabman to drive there, first handing him the fare. This was the best day's work he had done in a long time.

Howard hastened to his own home to have a hurried talk with his aunt and prepare the way for

her meeting the little widow in her humble apartment and her single black gown. He was thoroughly infatuated with the pretty Hoosier widow, and he had to admit it, although he hardly dared realize it. His morning's experience heightened his respect for her greatly. She was a real lady.

"She's a deuced self-respecting little person," he mused to himself. "I hope auntie will find no particular fault with her—she's an awfully nice little body. Her manners are excellent, her wit exceptional, and yet with it all there is the most charming simplicity and child-like nature. She would look stunning in good clothes."

Thus he soliloquized until he reached the Madison Avenue mansion. His aunt was awaiting his coming. They had an hour before them, and Howard determined to enlist his aunt's sympathies in favor of the charming widow.

"Well, auntie," he began, "I had my second inning with the little Hoosier to-day, and I think considerably better of her. She is a devilishly self-respecting little lady, and is a stickler for the conventionalities. After a thorough and careful examination of the papers this morning with Hanford it is evident that she is worth \$100,000; but do you know, when I suggested the possibilities of her having to go to London, it just took her one minute to say, 'That depends upon what our pastor says'; and when I added that in the event of her going she would have to be provided with a presentable wardrobe she had a fit, and said, 'Where am I to get the money even to go abroad, let alone for a

wardrobe?' I told her it was the duty of our firm to make her an advance to cover these expenses, and she replied, 'I will have to consult my pastor about that also.' Positively, I think that all-important pastor has taken her case on a contingent fee; if she wins, he gets a new organ for the church, so she says."

"Howard, it seems to me you are taking unusual interest in this case, are you not?" was his Aunt Margaret's comment.

"Well, of course, after the traveling companion idea I thought it best to kind of draw her out and view her from all points. While she is a real good-looking woman, she is by no means too well-dressed, and it is fortunate you are going to see her at her worst. I rather approve of our stepping in upon her, although it seems mean to thus take advantage of her. Every woman likes to look her best when being inspected for her own fortune and advantage. If you approve of her as she is, and I am quite sure you will, then we can make her quite an attractive traveling companion. She talks beautifully, using exquisite language, and she is the daintiest little eater——"

"Eater! Howard Stafford, did you say eater?" exclaimed his aunt. "What did you see her eat, pray tell me? Have you gone clean daffy over this—this Hoosier widow?"

Howard groaned within himself. If his Aunt Margaret became jealous of the Hoosier widow, the jig was up.

"Oh!" he laughed; "yes, I was put in quite an



awkward position and I took the bull right by the horns; in fact, after I had done it I was rather glad, for you may tell more about the refinement of people by their mode of eating than by any other thing they do. I asked her to return in half an hour, when Mr. Hanford would have gone through the papers, and she said, 'I'm a perfect stranger here, Mr. Stafford; where can I go near here for a little luncheon?' I could hardly do otherwise than ask her out to luncheon, and where do you suppose we went? To the Vienna Café, just opposite Wanamaker's. Ha, ha!"

Aunt Margaret smiled knowingly, and coldly remarked: "I am more than ever anxious to see this little Hoosier widow."

At twenty minutes of four Mrs. Kidder's comfortable victoria was at the door, and she and Howard started to make the all-important call at the boarding-house in Thirty-eighth Street where the Hoosier widow was stopping.

In a few minutes they were at the door of one of the many high-stooped, red sandstone houses which line Thirty-eighth Street west of Fifth Avenue, at one time the swellest residential section of New York.

As the slovenly negro servant opened the door for them there came from the parlor the most beautiful strains of music—a magnificent soprano voice was singing, and the visitors were spellbound with the wonderful perfection of the tones. Howard looked wisely at his aunt, and they motioned to the servant to wait until the song was ended.

Then they were ushered into the parlor and in the presence of the little Hoosier widow.

"We heard and enjoyed your singing immensely," said Howard enthusiastically. "Allow me to introduce my aunt, Mrs. Margaret Kidder, Mrs. Pelham."

The widow blushed and acknowledged the introduction in a very modest and becoming manner, as she asked them to be seated.

"I feel very grateful, Mrs. Kidder, that you have taken this interest in me. I have been almost afraid to venture out of the house, being a total stranger here, and I have been quite lonesome."

"Haven't you been out in the city to see what there is to be seen by visitors?" asked Mrs. Kidder.

"Oh, no," was the reply, "only to go to Mr. Stafford's office twice, and then the noise and confusion actually scared and bewildered me. You know I am a Hoosier; there are not even street cars or electric lights in the little town, Pemberton, from where I came." Howard could have hugged her.

"Well, that is interesting, to be sure; then where did you learn to sing?" asked Mrs. Kidder in surprise.

"It came natural; my mother sang before me; then Mrs. Bacon came to Pemberton, and I took a few lessons from her. I learned the rest singing in the choir. You know I sing in the same old church where Mr. Stafford's uncle, the Reverend Abel Pemberton, used to preach.

"I went to Chicago and stayed three months, and the school sent me back home because they

were afraid of spoiling my voice while so young. I was eighteen, and I was to wait till I was twenty and then return, but I did not. All the professors said I had a wonderfully good natural voice, but that it was growing, whatever that meant; I just went right on in the church and let it grow."

And thus she chattered on in the most simple and child-like way, winning Mrs. Kidder completely in less than half an hour.

Howard was inwardly chuckling to see this crafty old society leader, his Aunt Margaret, thus warming up to the Hoosier widow.

Presently Mrs. Kidder said: "Mrs. Pelham, my nephew tells me you are quite certain to come into a snug little fortune very soon."

"I'm awfully glad, too," cooed Mrs. Pelham. "I have so many things I can do with it; I'm going to fix the house more comfortable for mother and buy her some new clothing. We are quite poor now. My poor mother is sixty and not very strong. Then I am going to repair the church and put in a new heater and a new organ. Then, there are some very worthy poor in Pemberton."

Mrs. Kidder smiled benignly as she said: "You have certainly chosen worthy objects for your charities. I am delighted to hear you speak thus."

"Thank you, Mrs. Kidder. There are no millionaires in Pemberton; I will be the richest person there, and I'm going to make the best of it. I have had to be economical so long it has become a habit, so you see I can make the income from my money go a long ways."

Mrs. Kidder laughed again. This was a new kind of person to her, accustomed as she was to the worldly and wayward young society creatures in her social set. She could not help comparing this bright, healthy-minded young woman with Dorothy, with Mamie Baird, and others of their kind. Moreover, she hastily speculated upon the flutter she would create in Marchmont when, polished up a bit and properly gowned, this charming young lady could be introduced. Her magnificent voice would promptly sing her way into Marchmont hearts and homes.

"Now, Mrs. Pelham," she said, "I am going to tell you the principal object of our visit to you, and if I seem a little frank you will, I am sure, know that I am so for your good and mine.

"It so happens that my nephew and I have planned a trip abroad, and we were somewhat puzzled about a suitable traveling companion for myself. My nephew told me of you and the very excellent letters you brought with you, also that it would greatly improve your chances of an early adjustment of your case by going to England. Therefore I suggested that we take you under my chaperonage, if everything proved satisfactory upon our considering the matter in committee of the whole. What do you think of such an arrangement?"

"What would my duties be, Mrs. Kidder?" innocently inquired Mrs. Pelham.

"Duties?" ejaculated Mrs. Kidder. "You will have only the duty of making yourself an agreeable traveling companion, that is all. I will take a faith-

ful maid with us who can take care of all our wants. I might want you to read a little for me, and sing. You will travel as my equal, not as a servant."

"I read and speak French," volunteered Mrs. Pelham, "and I sing in Italian."

Both Howard and his aunt looked surprised.

"You have had a very good education for your opportunities," suggested Mrs. Kidder.

"My mother and our dear pastor were my teachers, and they were both highly educated persons," said Mrs. Pelham, with pretty dignity.

"Well, to get right down to the facts about our going abroad," continued Mrs. Kidder. "Howard informs me that his law firm is justified in advancing you the necessary money to prepare for this trip. Of course, as my companion your traveling expenses will be paid by me. This will make the amount you will need comparatively small. I am going to assume the expense of outfitting you myself, and this will prevent anyone from knowing that it was necessary for you to have an advance. I would feel much hurt if you offer any scruples about my doing this; you may repay me upon receiving your money from the legacy, if you insist."

"Suppose some hitch should come to prevent my getting my money; how could I repay you?" asked Mrs. Pelham.

"My child, I am a rich woman, with no one to leave my fortune to but my nephew here. Is it unreasonable for me to say that, should such an event arise, the pleasure and comfort you could be to me would more than repay me. The world

would be none the wiser, and no one would be hurt. I am sure you are a sensible, reasonable woman."

"Our pastor said when I left home that should it be necessary he would scrape together and lend me three hundred dollars; would that be enough?" she said.

"If you accepted this loan from your pastor and went over there, and from any cause failed to receive this legacy, how would you repay so large a sum to him?" asked Mrs. Kidder.

"Oh, I never thought of that," exclaimed Mrs. Pelham.

Continuing her advantage, Mrs. Kidder said: "It certainly would be more reasonable to accept a loan from people with ample means to whom you can be of great service at the very time you are expending it, than to draw upon a poor clergyman who probably needs every dollar of his own money."

This struck home, and Mrs. Pelham at once said: "Very well, Mrs. Kidder, I am wholly at your service and command; do with me whatsoever you will and I will be happy and contented."

"Said like a good, obedient child," exclaimed Mrs. Kidder.

Howard had been walking about the parlor, pretending to examine some quaint old prints on the wall, but not one word of the conversation had escaped his ears. As Mrs. Kidder made this last remark he stopped by the side of Mrs. Pelham and said: "That makes my case much easier; I can now go abroad with a certainty of enjoying my trip with two such charming women to scold me.

Ha, ha!" The ladies both smiled, and Mrs. Kidder said with mock vehemence: "Yes, and I'll wager we'll have many occasions for so doing; men are such hard creatures to manage, don't you think so, Mrs. Pelham?"

"I have had very limited experience with men, Mrs. Kidder," replied the little widow, "but those whom I have met have always been kind to me."

"Oh, well, you are such an attractive little person, I don't blame them," said Mrs. Kidder, and Mrs. Pelham blushed scarlet, while Howard laughingly said: "Now, will you be good?"

"I have a big house over on Madison Avenue with no one in it but myself and my faithful old servants; Howard lives at his club most of the time, and it is most awfully lonesome. Now, I want you to bundle right up this afternoon and come over there, because we will more than have our hands full to get ready in time for sailing day," went on Mrs. Kidder.

Howard was thunderstruck. Could it be possible his awfully particular Aunt Margaret was fixing matters for his interests, or was she afraid the widow would feel uncomfortable in knowing he was a member of the household? He finally concluded the latter was the case. He had not lived at his club in two years, but had been a most important member of the Kidder family, of aunt and nephew.

When Mrs. Kidder finished the little widow said: "I have paid a week's board here and have been here only four days."

"That is all right," replied Mrs. Kidder in a re-

assuring tone. "Let the poor boarding-house keeper benefit by the forfeiture. In one hour I will send the carriage for you."

Thus Eleanor, for from this day Mrs. Kidder called her by this name, at once became a member of the family, and a new era started. The sun commenced to shine in that old mansion again, and its grand old rooms echoed to the sweet music of Eleanor's voice. The servants all smiled and wagged their heads approvingly at everything the newcomer said.

In ten days all was in readiness to sail. Mrs. Kidder had a long telephone conversation with Mrs. Blake, who was still confined to her room, in which sad good-byes were exchanged, and she heard the sobs of her lifelong friend as she hung up the receiver.



## CHAPTER VIII

THE cause of the unusual sensations experienced by Howard Stafford as the great steamer drew away from the dock on the day of sailing was a secret of his own.

Aunt Margaret and her petite traveling companion had gone direct to their staterooms, while Howard remained where he could see everyone coming aboard. "This is my real honeymoon trip," he said to himself, "and I want to know what kind of people we are going to have aboard."

Not a soul, so they believed, but Mrs. Kidder and himself knew that the little Hoosier widow would accompany them abroad. George Hanford shared the secret, and he was to spend much time in Marchmont to keep in close touch with matters there.

Howard made no pretense of concealing the truth from himself. He was deeply, madly in love with his delightful client, but he wisely refrained from letting this secret escape from his own heart. Eleanor could not long remain ignorant of it, but no matter what her sentiments might be, he knew she would sacrifice all her personal feelings before she would betray Mrs. Kidder or embarrass him, and thus he had before him the delightful task of winning this sweet little woman in a way that

would require much diplomacy and a rare *finesse*. It was a most delicate undertaking, yet it put him on his mettle as never before.

He was fired with an ambition to make this brown-haired, bird-throated Hoosier widow known in the world, and he longed to provide and watch over the cage in which she would flutter. How tender and careful he would always be toward her that her bright plumage might never be ruffled or her wonderful good nature be disturbed!

Thus he allowed his happy spirits to run riot and his imagination to soar, as the tugs and tows screamed and dodged out of the way of the big liner. "Ha, ha!" he laughed. "They are all afraid of her; she reminds me of Aunt Margaret in a tantrum."

Looking at the little tug wheezing and snorting and straining at the hawser, as it dragged the great leviathan toward the sea, he thought, "How human! I can almost hear it say, 'You lazy old lubber, quit your lounging and rolling and come on here.'"

Then the hawser would whip the water frantically to recover the tautness, by which it controlled the direction of the monster.

"Cupid dragging a big hulking clod to his fate," said a soft voice at his elbow, and suddenly awaking from his reverie, his heart throbbed with delight when he found at his side the Hoosier widow.

"Mrs. Kidder insisted that it was my duty to come up here and watch the getting away of the steamer. She said the sight is a part of the education of travel, but that she had seen it so often her-

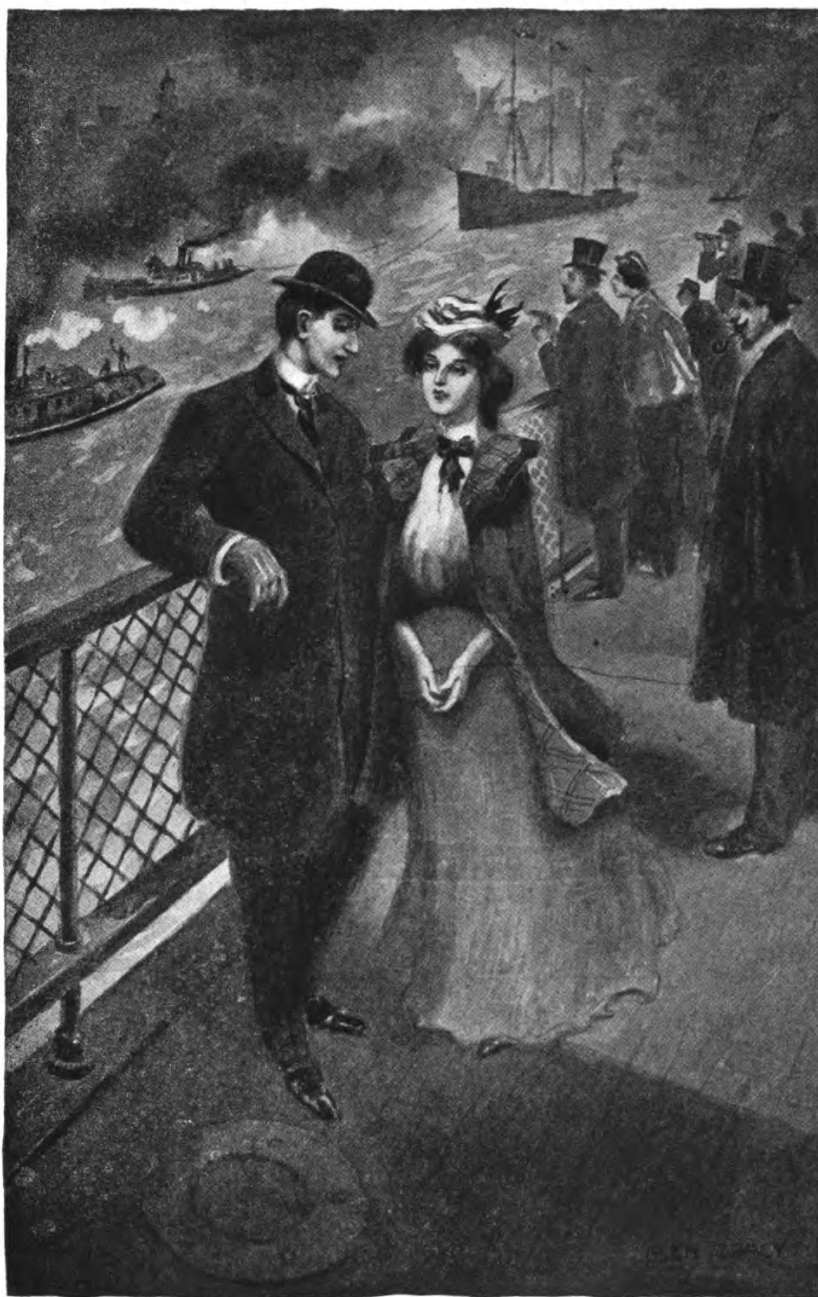
self it was no longer interesting. Did I do right, Mr. Stafford?" and the sweet, dutiful child-nature again shone out of her frank eyes, as she looked anxiously up into his face.

"Whatever Aunt Margaret tells you to do is right, Eleanor," said Howard. It was the first time he had called her by that name, and it seemed so natural it was not at all resented, but they exchanged friendly smiles and Eleanor flushed just a little. They both felt light-hearted and as if they had left fear behind upon leaving the dock.

"But, my little maid, you cannot stay out here this way; this air is both damp and raw. Come, I will go down with you and get your coat, and I want to see if auntie is settled and all right; then we will come back and I will point out the sights to you."

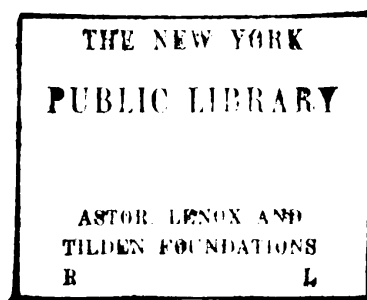
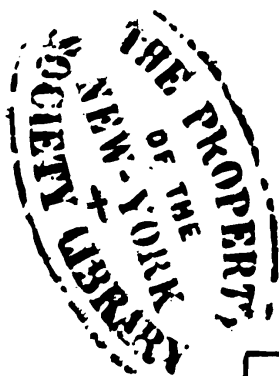
The tragedy, or comedy, of second love was begun, and both actors were willing to follow the guiding hand of fate.

Eleanor was now virtually Howard's ward, being a confidential client sent to him by a friend and by her pastor. He was determined not to abuse this confidence in any way which would be harmful to her. Furthermore, she was confidential companion to his only close relative, his Aunt Margaret Kidder. He was a man of the world, with a thorough knowledge of human nature; therefore he well knew the snares into which innocent and unsuspecting people may fall while traveling, especially when they have enemies. Eleanor could have no enemies, but he himself had some who



“Are you a good sailor?”

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would like to stab him in the back. He must ever be on the alert.

They hurried, like two eager children, down to Aunt Margaret's stateroom, and found that important personage already propped up in her berth, not to leave it until they reached the other side, as was her usual custom. She said there was a streak of "bear" in her which always manifested itself when she went abroad, so she "hibernated" during the trip across the ocean.

She said this "rest cure" was so beneficial that she believed it would be wise to pass a law sending everybody to jail for one week in the year on general principles. They would not only forget their troubles, but would enjoy the world so much more when released. She declared that when she attempted to go on deck she always experienced the same feeling she had when, for the first time, she tried to frolic about on a waxed ballroom floor—she was scared and foolish.

After seeing Aunt Margaret safely put away, Howard helped Eleanor get into her seagoing coat, and laughing and frolicking, they again went on deck.

He tucked her up under his strong arm and they were very happy. "Are you a good sailor?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," she declared; "I have been out on Lake Michigan, and I never felt sick."

"Well," exclaimed Howard, "if you can travel on the Great Lakes and not get seasick, you have nothing to fear, for they are about the limit; yet

there is no more beautiful water trip in the world than that by steamer from Cleveland to Duluth."

Then he pointed out the places of interest to the enthusiastic little traveler, who was too enraptured to do more than gasp an occasional "Oh, my!" "Splendid!" and finally, "I feel like I am leaving the world."

She was like a happy, playful child with a lot of new toys. They were all so good she did not know which to use first. She was seeing so much of life in so short a time it was difficult for her to determine just how she should act. All the world was pouring goodies into her lap.

Never once during the voyage did these two enraptured people miss a meal at the table or fail to appear on deck when the weather permitted.

"If I ever own a private yacht," declared Howard, "I shall go to Pemberton, Indiana, for my sailors."

"You might not find enough Hoosier widows there for your needs," laughingly responded Eleanor; "you would better go to Salt Lake City."

When the weather was very bad Eleanor would play the piano and sing, in which case Howard was not the only audience; to listen to the melody of the songs many a sick fellow passenger took chances on this one luxury and poked a head out.

They would play checkers and dominoes by the hour with scarcely a word. Oh, but these were sweet days!

"She is indeed an angel, auntie," declared Howard, before the trip was ended.

"Be careful, Howard Stafford; I love her myself," was all Aunt Margaret would say.

At last they reached gloomy old London. Aunt Margaret was herself again, and she immediately took her children in hand.

"Now, girls and boys," she said, "I want this nonsensical love-making to stop; I won't have it." All of which greatly shocked and embarrassed Eleanor, and Aunt Margaret took her into her arms, saying quite gently, "I don't want to *see* any more of it," with an emphasis on the "see." Howard winked and Eleanor blushed.

It was too late. All the disaffected wives in Mormondom could not stop the impact of Howard's tremendous onslaught upon Eleanor's heart; she herself seemed perfectly helpless—but happy, although Howard had not actually said one word of love to her.

Oh! but that magic touch of the arm; that gentle tucking-in of the coat or robe on windy days; the occasional stroking back of the truant brown hair, and the thousand other cunning tricks of Cupid! Some time in the future two very worthy hearts would be extremely happy, or sad beyond words to express. They were full of joy and enthusiasm now, and each had hidden away, deep down in the heart, as a squirrel hides away his winter's supply of acorns, the hundred or more sweet morsels which would bring back the most pleasing memories of this voyage.

"We have actually walked from New York to Liverpool," declared Eleanor upon leaving the



steamer, recalling the many hours she and Howard had paced the deck during the voyage.

"Now, Eleanor, how did you enjoy the strange experience of crossing the ocean for the first time?" asked Aunt Margaret.

Before Eleanor could reply, Howard shouted: "It was one joyous jag, auntie."

"Howard, pray speak only when you are spoken to; you are getting wholly beyond my control," said Mrs. Kidder. "Eleanor, I asked you how you liked the trip, not this boisterous fellow."

"I enjoyed it immensely, Mrs. Kidder," responded Eleanor, with a shy glance at Howard.

"Have you two been in mischief?" asked Mrs. Kidder severely. "You are keeping something from me, I know. Don't you let me catch you getting too fond of each other; I want no scandals on my hands during this trip. Do you understand?" But this was like trying to put out a fire by throwing oil upon it.

"Yes, auntie, we understand. We won't let you catch us," laughed Howard.

"If he gets very bad I will run and tell you," said Eleanor.

They were a jolly lot, these three.

Mrs. Kidder began to call Eleanor "dear," while Eleanor called Mrs. Kidder "Aunt Margaret," and Mr. Stafford "Howard." Mrs. Pelham was "Eleanor" to Howard, and they were thoroughly confidential companions.

They did London by 'bus and hansom cab, allow-

ing nothing of interest to escape them. Howard did not forget to take care of Eleanor's legal matters, and things were shaping for a prompt settlement. They spent three weeks in London and were, daily, expecting to close matters and get off to the continent.

The younger people had almost driven Aunt Margaret to a sanitarium. "This life is too strenuous for me," she declared each evening. With the dangerous relaxation of her watchfulness, Howard and Eleanor frequently dined alone together, went to concert, opera, and theater, and were very chummy.

One afternoon Howard came plunging into their apartment waving a piece of paper in his hand. Drawing three chairs close together he placed Aunt Margaret in one, Eleanor in another, and he sat between them. Then, without warning, he placed an arm around the neck of each, drew all three of their heads close together, and said:

"Listen! 'Pay to Howard Pemberton Stafford 21,560 pounds sterling.' My dears, the plunder is actually deposited in the Bank of England and this check transfers the account to this little Hoosier widow, \$107,800.

"Now, Eleanor," he said, without disengaging his arm, "it strikes me I should be paid something on account of my fee," and he placed his cheek close to her own.

Eleanor's face was scarlet as she looked beseechingly at Aunt Margaret. She could not rudely dis-

engage herself or resent Howard's apparent rudeness, therefore she waited for Aunt Margaret to come to her relief.

Mrs. Kidder took Howard by the hair and exclaimed: "Howard Stafford, you are incorrigible. How dare you! I'll turn you out of the room, instantly, if you don't behave."

"Please, auntie," pleaded Howard, "just one little one."

"Just one little one, then, under the joyful circumstances," said Mrs. Kidder, and he drew Eleanor's face around to his own and said gently, "May I, Eleanor?" She closed her eyes and he kissed her on her lips. Arising, he stood near them as Eleanor slid down upon the floor and hid her face in Aunt Margaret's lap. That dear old soul placed her two hands caressingly over the brown hair as though to shield the pretty head, and glaring at Howard said, "You brute!"

Eleanor was a country-bred girl with a sweet moral training, which few young women receive in this rapid period. She had a splendid conception of friendship. It meant to her confidence and companionship such as she had enjoyed at home. Her associations with Howard had aroused no morbid sentiment, but the seeds of a deep and lasting love had been implanted in both their hearts to blossom later. Her only experience now was that she was enjoying a great frolic and having a jolly time of it.

Howard's enforced kiss was like a hold-up, and she knew it. It was not the blissful kiss stolen by

a pilfering lover. It was the experimental kiss of opportunity, taken at the muzzle of circumstance, which seemed to give justification, and might mean any sort of strong passion.

It was too late to correct the mistake now, it would only make matters worse to attempt it, therefore, thoroughly ashamed, and sorry for his impetuosity, Howard said, with artificial gayety, "Now, I will run down and see the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street and transfer the account to Eleanor," then he hastened from the room, sick at heart. He felt that he had implanted in Eleanor's mind the seed of distrust.

"Come, my sweet child," said Mrs. Kidder with the greatest affection; "you need not feel ashamed. Howard is like a big brother to you and feels so glad to know that you are now an independent woman. You must forgive his rudeness, and my forgetfulness. I love you both dearly, as though you were my own children."

Eleanor arose, quietly placed her arms about Aunt Margaret, kissed her on the forehead and slipped into her own room.

Mrs. Kidder had been a peacemaker all her life. She had arbitrated many a heart-breaking rupture between friends, therefore she was wise in the diplomacy of such affairs, yet she realized the delicacy of the situation in this case.

She was as much in love with the *petite* Hoosier widow as Howard himself, and secretly hoped that circumstances might soon shape themselves so Howard could ask her to become his wife. She

well knew that he was passionately and desperately in love with her.

At this critical period it was very possible for him to frighten and disgust a sensitive nature like Eleanor's and retard indefinitely, if not wholly destroy, the possibility of her becoming sufficiently fond of him to wish to marry him. She was a very young and unsophisticated woman, and was now independent and able to choose a husband who was nearer her own age. It was the fear of spoiling Howard's chances that worried Aunt Margaret.

Howard could not honorably love Eleanor so long as he was encumbered by Dorothy, and his aunt felt certain she could trust him not to compromise her beloved little companion. It was just now essential to establish in Eleanor's mind the same implicit confidence.

This embarrassing episode of the kiss she knew to be one of those freaky, foolish things which men do when much in love. It mortified her greatly to think she, herself, had encouraged it, instead of boxing Howard's ears and sending him about his business.

For two hours she wrestled with the matter, then she rapped on Eleanor's door. Eleanor promptly opened the door and stood before Mrs. Kidder, with a white face and downcast eyes.

"Come here, dear," she said, and drew Eleanor to a seat. "Now, my dear little girl, let us have a heart to heart talk. You know how fond I am of Howard and how much confidence I have in his

honor and his manly integrity. I should like to ask you a question which you will consider well before answering. Then I want you to answer it just as though I were your own mother. Will you do this?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Kidder," responded Eleanor. She knew from Mrs. Kidder's tone that something important was about to occur.

"Mrs. Kidder! Why, Eleanor, do you feel offended with me?" exclaimed Mrs. Kidder.

"Oh, no; pardon me, Aunt Margaret," quickly explained Eleanor; "it was only your serious words which made me say Mrs. Kidder; I could not be offended with you. Next to my mother, I love you best of any person in the world."

"That makes me feel better," softly laughed Mrs. Kidder, then continuing, she said:

"With the wholesome surroundings of your youth, I can understand how sacred and delicate your ideas of love would be, and it is to fortify you against the useless hurts and stings of things which you do not fully comprehend, because they have never fallen within your line of experience, that I desire to advise you now. I admire your sweet sense of modesty more than I can now tell you. It is old-fashioned in smart society, and is even called provincial by certain irreverent people who court the brazen, but, my dear child, to me innate morality and modesty are jewels with which none others can be compared; with these jewels well guarded you are safe against all dangers to your good reputation and character.

“Now, the question which I want to ask you is this: If you knew positively that Howard has for you a deep and sincere respect, wholly independent of other sentiments, almost equal to reverence, and that he would guard you as a sister until such time as he might be free to regard you with some other feeling and tell you so, would you then put out of your heart all fear and doubt and be to us the happy child that you have heretofore been?”

Taking Mrs. Kidder's hand affectionately and confidentially in her own, Eleanor looked earnestly up into her face and said: “Aunt Margaret, I cannot thank you too much for your kindness to me. I am only a crude country girl, to be sure, and know little of worldly things. Of course, I have read love stories and all that, but I never knew much about men. My mother and my pastor have been my sole advisers regarding matters of the heart, and I am happy in the belief that they knew and taught me aright. Nevertheless, I am a full-grown woman, and long for the love of a strong, honorable man; such a man was my husband of one hour. He was my first love and misfortune took him away from me.

“Both my mother and my pastor were wise enough to come to my relief at the time when my grief could have been extremely hurtful to me. They convinced me that it was useless to grieve, and I schooled myself to forget till the sunshine came into my soul again, which it soon did. I forgot, so it did not hurt any more. But the desire to have someone, all my own, to pet me and love

me, became stronger than ever. There was no one whom I knew to fill the want. I had an ideal.

"Now, Aunt Margaret, put yourself in my place while I confess what I should have ever kept sacred, had not this crisis arisen. Condemn me if you will and send me back home, to my sweet little Hoosier village, there to sing my soul, my heart and my life away, dreaming of the brief delights I have derived from being with you, and Mr. Stafford, these few weeks, or else forgive me and let me stay with you for a while longer.

"Mr. Stafford has been so good and kind to me I necessarily had to like him from the very beginning. He is a man whom any love-hungry woman could adore. He was so tender and careful in his attentions to me I could not help knowing that his actions meant more than brotherly solicitude, yet I could not resist; it was so sweet. Until to-day he has never, by word or act, overstepped propriety, and I found myself growing fonder each day of him, always keeping in view the fact that he, too, was perhaps heart-hungry, yet, owing to his being still a married man his honor forbade his going too far. How I did adore this trait—it was the foundation stone of my whole sentiment for him. Not once did I desire to break down the saving barrier it formed between us. I wanted to maintain a position which would command the same high respect from him for his honorable conduct toward me engendered in my mind for him.

"I feel now that this barrier has been broken and I have forever lost the gentle respect he for-



merly had for me. Forgive me, Aunt Margaret, when I confess to you that were he free, and did I dare, I should, under his tender care, quickly love him fondly, notwithstanding our brief acquaintance. I know you hate me for this bold confession, but it is better I should tell the truth now, for I do not want to be the cause of trouble or heartache to anyone, and especially you who have been so good to me.

"To-day my dream was dashed; there seemed something about his action which was not as before. I do not know why, but his insisting that I let him kiss me seemed to carry a story of the moment instead of the future; my dream was of the eternal future.

"So you see I am not a prude. Perhaps you think me a brazen, designing person; I am not that, either. It was not that the mere kiss gave me serious offense; that would have been childish and foolish, under the circumstances; but I was suddenly overcome with a fear that I was the one who had permitted the barrier to fall, and by this act I had lost his wholesome respect which I so cherished; if I permitted him to kiss me once without protest it would mean again, and often, and I would soon lose my own self-respect; such familiarity would soon destroy the very reason for our liking each other.

"I knew this familiarity was wrong. He could not respect me if I allowed him such privileges under all circumstances. It breaks my heart to see my beautiful castle fall," and Eleanor burst into a fit

of weeping as she again buried her head in Aunt Margaret's lap.

That soft-hearted old lady was not sobbing, but the big tears of love and sympathy were on her cheeks, and as she affectionately stroked the brown head a good, healthy, happy smile tumbled the tears off on to Eleanor's hair.

"Weep them all out, you little darling," said Aunt Margaret. "You won't need them any more and there is no use of your carrying a sprinkling pot full of tears about with you. Have you a handkerchief under there? There's no need of your spoiling this new kimona for me, either."

With a hysterical little laugh Eleanor looked up, and with the big tears literally wetting her whole face, she asked: "And you don't hate me?"

"No, my dear, I keep telling you I love you," replied Aunt Margaret.

"There! You have played baby long enough; jump up, I want to give you some important advice. I'm going to tell you something to make your heart jump—and I'm going to put you on your honor. Could you love Howard well enough to marry him if he were free, and should ask you?"

"Why, Aunt Margaret! would you want me to?" exclaimed Eleanor.

"Will you answer my question?" asked Aunt Margaret authoritatively.

"Yes, of course I will, but we have all known each other only a few weeks. How could you expect me to know all about it in that time? Maybe he wouldn't ask me, were he free. Wouldn't you

think me bold and immodest to say yes before I'm asked?" was Eleanor's evasive response.

"Come here, child," and sweet Aunt Margaret drew her close to her. "Now tell me without quibbling. Would you marry Howard Stafford to-morrow if he were free and should ask you?"

Eleanor leaned her head against Aunt Margaret's cheek and whispered, "Yes, Aunt Margaret, I would marry him to-day if I could. I love him better than I love my own life—now there," and she put her arm about the older woman's neck caressingly.

"Then kiss me," said Mrs. Kidder.

"There, now, my little lady, we are partners in this crime, therefore you must be sworn to secrecy. If you do one thing to let Howard know that we have an understanding you will spoil it all; do you see?"

"Howard loves you as passionately and as respectfully as an honorable man can love. He would defend your honor with his life, even against himself.

"You have not hurt yourself in his estimation; he misunderstood your resentment of his careless kiss and we shall leave him in this ignorance. It will teach him better manners next time. Now you may build all sorts of air-castles, if you want to; but under no circumstances must you permit an undue privilege on his part. You must never allow him to kiss or embrace you till you first come to me and tell me what he has been saying to you. You must not appear too easy of conquest. Doubtless,

sooner or later, before our journey is over, he will openly declare himself and ask you if you will marry him when he is free.

"It is sufficient for me to say to you, now, that he should have applied for a divorce from his wife, for which he has ample grounds, before coming away from the United States, and that he fully intends to do this upon his return. I most emphatically desire the step and I can assure you that there is no sentiment on either side to keep them together. They are both equally anxious for the separation, therefore acquit your conscience of any feeling that you might be doing her an injustice; you are doing her a favor and making me and Howard extremely happy.

"Now we are conspirators, and mum is the word. This is our family affair, and I am responsible for your doings, so be careful, without making yourselves too unhappy.

"I am not going down to dinner, which will give Howard a chance to ask you to dine alone with him, so he may make an humble apology. I leave it to your wit and wisdom as to how you treat him."

At this moment came a gentle rap on the door, and Mrs. Kidder said: "Come in." Eleanor started to run away, but Mrs. Kidder detained her as the door opened and Howard entered.

He strode across the floor after making a profound bow, and, with a strange formality, said: "Mrs. Pelham, I have the honor to present you with the evidence of your large account with the

Bank of England," and he handed her a small deposit book.

A cold chill ran down Eleanor's spine. "What if he meant this formality?" she thought. But a moment later the sunshine was in her heart.

"Eleanor," said Howard, "I have some most startling news to tell you. It seems that your claim only covered a small portion of what was really coming to you, and I have just finished a lengthy talk with the trustees, in which they agree to draw all papers at once, necessary to cover the case, and there seems no doubt about your receiving twice as much more. Here is an excellent demonstration of the value of your presence here; it is absolutely essential in this second case, and profits you \$200,000. It will necessitate our remaining here a couple of weeks longer, but it is certainly worth it. Now, isn't it time to think about dinner?"

"I'm awfully thankful to you, Mr. Stafford, for your careful and faithful work in my behalf. I wish I had some way of fully expressing my gratitude," said Eleanor. "It seems as if I have struck a whole constellation of lucky stars, sure enough. I really will be surfeited with wealth, if it continues to come in such big bunches."

Howard was close by her side. Leaning down, he took her hand, which she did not draw away, and whispered: "Forgive me, Eleanor, and I will be amply remunerated."

She tossed her head as she replied: "I'll think about it; send in your bill," but she pressed his hand just the same, and Howard was joyful.

"It's about time to think about dinner, isn't it, auntie?" Howard asked. "I'm as hungry as a laughing hyena. I'll eat somebody if you don't say yes."

"I will not go down to dinner, Howard; you and Eleanor have a nice dinner together and I will order something up here."

"All right, seven-thirty is the hour, Eleanor; will you do me the honor?" asked Howard.

"I will be prompt," replied Eleanor.

## CHAPTER IX

HOWARD had ordered a delightful dinner, reserving a small table in a secluded corner and instructing the head-waiter to decorate it tastefully with flowers. Then he arrayed himself in full evening dress and impatiently awaited the coming of Eleanor.

If no other sign had been given him, Eleanor's appearance, when she did come, was sufficient for him to know that she was anxious to please him; she was beautifully gowned and for the first time in full *décolleté*, wearing also a magnificent bunch of violets which he had sent to her.

Her beauty was marvelous, a sweet, rosy, dainty piece of lovely humanity, full of ravishing curves and dimples. "She looked good enough to eat, auntie," whispered Howard to Mrs. Kidder the next morning. He did not know that his aunt had said the same words while helping to make Eleanor "killingly pretty," as the latter put it.

"Allow me to compliment you, Eleanor, on your splendid appearance this evening," beamingly exclaimed Howard upon seeing her. "You are the most charming and beautiful woman I have ever seen in all my life."

Eleanor blushed rosy red, but was by no means embarrassed. She coquettishly extended her hand, saying: "You are trying to spoil me, Howard; I am

beginning to feel proud and vain as the result of your numerous compliments; curb your prodigality."

Howard was not the only one who thought her beautiful that evening. As they entered the dining-room a most audible murmur was heard throughout the large room, which was filled with the smartest people in the whole world.

When at last they reached their cozy corner Eleanor whispered, "Oh! I feel as if I were not correctly dressed. Are they all still gazing at me?" Howard laughed at her discomfiture.

"Do you know," she continued, "I never in all my life before even had my sleeves shorter than to my elbows in so public a place, and it makes me feel so funny."

"Just take a peep around the room," said Howard. "You will see so many others that you will feel more comfortable."

"Well! I should say so," exclaimed Eleanor, as she saw all about her the most extreme *décoletté* gowns. "If I looked like some of them I should feel as if I ought to send for a wrap."

Out of courtesy to Eleanor, who never partook of liquors or wines in any form, Howard himself abstained, and there was no fear of their conversation being unduly stimulated or false sentiments being uttered.

When they were fairly settled down to their repast and conversation, Howard began a systematic assault upon the heart of his charming companion by a series of tactful compliments, which she seemed in no wise inclined to resent. With this delightful



encouragement, he grew bolder and spoke quite freely and confidentially to her.

"Do you know," he said, "that you have one particular mark of good breeding which all people admire, because of its being so seldom displayed in noisy, mind-distracting places?"

"Do, pray, tell me what it is, that I may not inadvertently lose the precious treasure," responded Eleanor, with a becoming tone of self-depreciation.

"It is this," continued Howard. "As long as I have known you you have shown an unusual modesty in your demeanor, which at first I attributed to inexperience, but which I have recently discovered to be innate, as well as due to your excellent training. You will find it to be a universal habit for persons, especially young women, to always take conspicuous positions, if it is possible, in public dining-rooms, and from these vantage points they rudely, and very often impertinently, stare at the people coming into the room, even audibly commenting on them, as though the place were but a show. They seem to forget that all persons are entitled to at least decent, respectful treatment.

"This habit, Eleanor, is the worst form of rudeness and ill manners we have in society to-day. It is typical of the American *parvenu*. The rich Americans especially strive to make themselves conspicuous, mistaking notoriety for merited popularity. It is impossible for a thoroughly well-bred person to do or condone this. Men who are gentlemen do not approve of it. Of course, I do not mean the few men who themselves insult both women and

men in such places; they are neither men nor gentlemen, and they are not long tolerated in the best places, no matter who they may be. In recent years it has been the tendency to wholly suppress men who sit in these places and insult women by their impudent intrusion, ogling and commenting upon the patrons.

"But, what I started to say was this, whether a man is in love with a woman or not, or she with him, the nicest compliment she can pay to him in public is to show that she appreciates his company sufficiently not to go foraging about the room with her eyes eager for sensation or flirtation. It is vulgar, and suggests many bad things. It is delightful to be with you, Eleanor, because of your self-respect and respect for others."

Eleanor was thoughtful for a moment, then looking frankly into his face she said:

"Perhaps were I with someone not so interesting and entertaining as you, I might be tempted to do the same thing."

"I am deeply interested in you, Eleanor, and because I am, I have been rude enough myself to watch you some," said Howard. "My Aunt Margaret admits that she is the dullest and most uninteresting person at luncheon; she takes no offense at being told so. I have, more times than you know, seen you sitting with her, serenely speechless, when all of this noise and exciting chatter was going on, and I have yet to see you lose your composure or forget dignified deportment. If I dared, I would tell you how I adore you for your good manners."

Gentle, well-mannered people are scarce, therefore when beauty, sweetness of character, good breeding and good manners are all united in one individuality, it is the most charming and fascinating."

"I am deeply grateful for your good opinion of me, Mr. Stafford," murmured Eleanor, with down-cast eyes; she knew what was coming and was not going to prevent it.

"I have more than a good opinion for you, Eleanor," continued Howard, "but I am not going to forget my awkward predicament and put you in an embarrassing position. I am certain you have a higher regard for me than the mere respect due to our confidential associations; you have many times betrayed this to me—at least I have flattered myself in believing this to be true. Then I feel that I can be truthful and tell you the facts without giving you offense. Say that you have forgiven me for my rude conduct to-day, and tell me I may go on."

"Yes, I have forgiven you; go on," softly answered Eleanor, never raising her eyes.

"Thank you," said Howard eagerly; "I will make a clean breast of it. At the time when you first came into my office I was a most unhappy man, having made a most unfortunate marriage, I am compelled to say to you in my own defense, but contrary to my inclinations, to an unworthy woman."

"Do you know positively that this is true?" quickly asked Eleanor.

"I believe you think me a just man, Eleanor; it is positively true, without my going into details now," he replied.

Eleanor nodded.

"But you brought a ray of sunshine, and I have not seen an unhappy moment since, only when I felt a fear of having pained or offended you. I am so thoroughly imbued with the belief that some kind power purposely sent you to me that I am beginning to live in fear of losing you after having transacted for you this legal business. It was not my purpose to confess this to you while traveling, but to-day I was careless and I have suffered tortures since. I determined this afternoon to tell you all and know what to expect. I cannot honorably ask you to promise to be my wife until I am a free man, and I know it is base for me to declare my love for you under these circumstances, but we cannot stickle to niceties when we are so unfortunately involved. It is sufficient for me to say I have ample cause for divorce, and it was only because I desired to spare my dear Aunt Margaret and others the humiliation of such a scandal that prevented my getting a divorce ere this.

"Now, Eleanor," and Howard leaned forward, with flushed face and gleaming eyes, "I never knew what love was till I met you. I am old enough to know what I am saying. I never can love again if I lose you. I have been so happy with you constantly near me that the sun will cease to shine when you go away from me; I cannot let you go, Eleanor. All I ask of you is to say to me that you will keep your heart and your hand free until I am free. I will respect you and will not force my love upon you in the meantime.

"What word of hope have you for me? Please speak," he passionately exclaimed.

"Be happy till to-morrow and let me answer then," softly, wistfully, spoke Eleanor, betraying an emotion which plainly bespoke the stress of mind caused by Howard's declaration.

"Thank you! Thank you!" said Howard, and he attempted to slyly press her hand, but she snatched it away, tossed her head and her eyes snapped fire.

Howard could not understand the meaning of this strange action, attributing it to something he had said, or to his attempt to press her hand. In another moment, though, he knew with a vengeance.

"That man directly behind you is positively insulting!" Eleanor indignantly exclaimed. "He has tried to hear what you were saying and he has been smiling and smirking at me till I can stand it no longer. Just now he actually raised his glass as though drinking to me. He came in at that side door some time ago."

Howard turned to look at the fellow and came near falling out of his chair when he saw, seated at the table directly at his back, no less a person than the ubiquitous Captain Frank Winnans. His surprise was so great he actually forgot to frown, and fortunately he did not turn again until he had recovered his wits.

He said in a low tone: "Appear not to notice him more, and then see what happens."

Taking a small silver pencil from his pocket, he wrote on the back of the menu card: "Watch the

actions of the impudent fellow at the table behind me, and take such steps as you think proper." Handing the card to the waiter, he said, in a voice which would not reach Winnans' ears: "Go quickly to the head-waiter with this."

"Now, we will get even with him. When I tell you to do so, look at him to see what he is up to," and Howard kept his eyes on the alert for the chief waiter. Suddenly he said, "Look at him without moving and tell me what he does."

"He is holding up a card on which he has written something," replied Eleanor.

"That will do, don't look at him again," said Howard.

He had seen, standing just outside the restaurant door, the head-waiter, and the assistant manager, and he knew they had seen exactly what Eleanor had just described to him. That was sufficient.

In a few minutes the head-waiter came in and passed by Howard's table to the one occupied by Winnans, when the following conversation ensued:

"Can I get some attention from a waiter? I should like to order something to eat," said Winnans savagely.

To this the head-waiter responded in a low voice: "I have just been instructed by the management to request you to step into the gentlemen's café on the other side of the hall."

"Instructed by the management? What do you mean? Are you trying to insult me?" demanded Winnans, in a voice loud enough to attract the attention of many of the diners.

The head-waiter walked away, leaving him where he sat.

Five minutes passed and Winnans began to get restless. He was now ugly and muttering to himself.

Eleanor thought the man was either crazy or drunk, and fearing he might be dangerous, she kept a careful watch of him. He would put his teeth together and look at the back of Howard's head, then with a savage leer at Eleanor, he would mutter something which was clearly meant for a malediction against Howard.

He kept this up till she became nervous with fear and alarm. She noticed that two powerful-looking men had taken an adjoining table and were watching Winnans.

Directly he began snapping his fingers at the passing waiters and demanding to know why he was not served.

Again the head-waiter approached him and said: "You can have service in the gentlemen's café, if you will go there peacefully, but if we must use force to induce you to leave this room you will be turned over to an officer. Now take your choice quickly."

Winnans leaped to his feet with an oath, and demanded to know who had made any complaint against him. Instantly one of the men seated at the adjoining table grabbed him by the arm and said: "I made the complaint; come with me," and with the assistance of the other man they almost carried Winnans from the room amidst much con-

fusion. Several persons hastily left their tables, and the room also, in their excitement.

Howard cautioned Eleanor to show no excitement or interest. Not a soul in the room, excepting the head-waiter, knew that they had played any part in the affair.

"Well!" exclaimed Eleanor, drawing a deep breath, "that was a curious experience; you had just told me about the impudence of men who habitually ogle and stare at people, but I never dreamed that you meant anything like that."

"Ha, ha," softly laughed Howard, but he made no explanation. He had done some lightning calculating as to whether he should tell Eleanor who Winnans was, and had concluded that it could serve no good purpose, but might unduly alarm and frighten her. He was not at all comfortable with the knowledge that his arch enemy was near at hand, knowing he would go to any extreme to annoy or insult him.

The excitement had spoiled their dinner, and they hastily finished. Relinquishing their intended visit to the opera, they hastened to Aunt Margaret's little reception room, where Eleanor graphically described their adventure.

The next morning Howard sought his aunt and told her the facts about the matter of the evening before. They agreed not to let Eleanor know the truth.

Aunt Margaret was not at all happy at this bad news, and at once declared that they must leave London. A fifteen-day trip through Scotland, Ire-



land and Wales was planned and they took their immediate departure, leaving instructions at the hotel office that no one was to be informed as to where they had gone.

Eleanor had not kept faith with Aunt Margaret, for she had not told her of Howard's declaration. It was her secret now. It placed her wholly on safe grounds, for it fully corroborated Aunt Margaret's assurance that Howard loved her. She could now hold him at a safe and respectful distance until such time as he might be free to come and ask for her heart and hand, which she would promptly give.

The day following Howard's declaration he had found an opportunity and asked of Eleanor, "Will you make your temporary injunction permanent and bid me be happy always?"

She gave him her hand, and, with a sweet, reassuring smile, said: "Be happy till you are free," then she fled from him.

Howard kept his word. While he was ever faithful and tender in his care over both Eleanor and Aunt Margaret, one would have believed, from his actions, that the young woman was his sister, of whom he was exceedingly fond and proud.

Not a word of love passed between them, excepting the confidential wireless messages, which, unknown to them, Aunt Margaret often intercepted with a chuckle and a wise shake of the head.

They spent two delightful weeks on their trip, and then returned to London. Upon arriving at their hotel the manager, who knew both Howard and Mrs. Kidder very well, having formerly filled a

similar position in one of the great New York hotels which they frequently patronized, said to Howard that he wanted to see him on a matter of importance. Taking Howard to his private office, he drew from his desk an envelope containing some newspaper clippings, and handing them to Howard said: "Read these."

The first was a clipping from a well-known black-mailing sheet published in New York, which read:

Society will be shocked to learn the real truth of the estrangement between the head of a well-known law concern of New York and his haughty but beautiful wife, who has returned to her mother in Marchmont. It was passed about that incompatibility was the cause of all the trouble, but it now develops that the young lawyer, who is well known in all smart society circles, and who was, before his marriage, considered the leader and catch of aristocratic Marchmont, and who is even now a member of all the prominent New York clubs, has actually eloped with a charming young widow client, and they are now domiciled as husband and wife in a prominent London hotel.

The second was a clipping from a London morning the manager, he said: "I will think this matter over and will talk to you again about it before I get away. I believe it is my duty to resent this, but I shall take my time and do it so it will be of

value to the public." He determined to say nothing to Eleanor or his aunt about it, just yet, at least.

In his mail he had found a letter from the Chancery Court informing him that a meeting of all the interested parties would be held the next day, at ten o'clock, at which time Eleanor's claim would be settled in full. It was necessary for Eleanor herself to be present.

Feeling secure in her love, Howard determined not to again subject Eleanor to criticism, by dining or going about alone with her in public places while in London, therefore he asked his Aunt Margaret to accompany them to the court, on the plea that she might be interested in the proceedings and that they might need a witness who knew his client in the United States.

They found upon arriving at the court that the proceedings were but the formalities of handing over to the several counsels the shares belonging to the heirs they represented. It did not require more than thirty minutes.

"You are to be congratulated again," said Howard, as he handed Eleanor the evidence of her having received 40,000 pounds sterling more in the final settlement of the great Kilpatrick estate.

"It never rains but it pours," meekly answered little Eleanor. Both remembered the disaster which followed the delivery of the previous check, but she did give him a look of gratitude, which he considered an abnormally large fee for his services. Then, again, when they entered the carriage she gave his hand a gentle press.

They went directly to the Bank of England and put Eleanor's account in order, which gave her a balance there of more than 60,000 pounds sterling.

"You are a rich young widow and a most desirable catch for marriageable men," remarked Aunt Margaret.

"Does this wealth add greatly to my desirability?" innocently asked Eleanor.

"Well, it helps some," answered Aunt Margaret. "If you are here when the announcement of this settlement is made you will receive calls from more impecunious royalty than you can take care of. You can have your choice of half a hundred broken-down Dukes.

"Sweet lady this, and dear lady that, will come, send up their cards, and after telling you they are from beneath the shrubbery of the royal gardens, or live in the shadow of Windsor Castle, they will gravely suggest that your social standing would be greatly strengthened by having your name appear upon the list of prominent American donors to the fund for the 'lame soldiers' lounging place,' and a hundred other forms of social graft. "Oh, only a trifle of a hundred pounds or so will be quite sufficient."

"Are you joking, Aunt Margaret, or is this really true?" queried Eleanor.

"I'm in dead earnest," insisted Mrs. Kidder. "I'll wager you a box of gloves against a wisp-broom, which I need, that Lady Somebody will be waiting for you upon our return to the hotel."

"Why! can such things be possible?" exclaimed Eleanor, in astonishment.

"My dear," continued Mrs. Kidder, "the amounts wheedled out of American tourists by this scheme in London alone run into millions of dollars annually. The beggars of Europe add millions more, and then, when American travelers land in New York you can hear them yell clear out to Marchmont against paying twenty or fifty dollars duty on trunkloads of stuff they bring back with them, and swear they have nothing dutiable."

They decided to go to the Cecil for luncheon, to see what Americans were there, and this kept them out till four o'clock.

When they returned to their own hotel Aunt Margaret laughed heartily to find cards for herself and Eleanor bearing the name of Lady Eloise Clavering McTavish, Royal Gardens, London.

"She has just gone," said the clerk.

"Ha, ha, you are breaking into royalty, Eleanor," laughingly said Howard, as he looked at the card.

"I presume it would save time and trouble for me to forward her a check for her pet fund, in order to keep up the reputation of American generosity," said cunning little Eleanor loud enough for the clerk to hear, and her stock went up considerably, for this particular brand of royalty was a bore to all the smart hotels in London.

"Lady Eloise Clavering McTavish" called again, but was informed that the ladies were not "at home." She was evidently so busy with others she could not waste her time, so she called no more.

## CHAPTER X

Now the work was all done and play could begin. Every moment was a new and rare experience for the unsophisticated girl from Indiana. What a truly enjoyable thing it is to guide a willing and enthusiastic young mind, well balanced for understanding and appreciation, on a journey across the great ocean and into new countries, old to the guide but new to the initiate. It lends new interest to old sights, and fresh zest to the traveler going over familiar grounds. Scenes take on a new aspect when viewed to the accompanying music of laughter and gleeful expressions from an eager and enthusiastic young companion. If the companion be one we love, it is indeed delightful to take the lead and say: "Now, let us go here, or there. Oh! we must not miss this or that," and then with eager haste and greedy eyes seek out the curious and instructive.

This was Howard's sensation as he piloted Eleanor through Europe, never once forgetting his manners nor his plain duty. Before leaving London he had gone to his correspondents, a staid old law concern, and told them that it was very evident that the newspaper articles which the clerk had shown referred to him, and inasmuch as they had handled Eleanor's case for him, and knew all the facts, he desired that they take the matter in hand

and be watchful for future attacks of a similar nature, either in London or upon the continent. He himself would attend to the New York end of the despicable plot.

The following morning reference to the settlement of the estate, with the names of the beneficiaries and the lawyers engaged, appeared in all the London papers. Among these was the name Howard Pemberton Stafford, of Stafford, Hanford & Deal, New York, counsel for Mrs. Eleanor Kilpatrick, *et al.*, of Pemberton, Indiana, U. S. A., who received 60,000 pounds sterling.

Among the hotel notes of the morning papers, including the very paper which had printed the scurrilous article, there appeared the following:

Mrs. Margaret Kidder and her nephew, Mr. Howard Pemberton Stafford, are at Claridge's. Traveling with Mrs. Kidder is Mrs. John Elliott Pelham, of Pemberton, Indiana, in the United States.

Mr. Stafford is counsel for Mrs. Eleanor Kilpatrick in the settlement of the great Kilpatrick estate. Mrs. Pelham, who is the daughter of Mrs. Kilpatrick, resides in the town of Pemberton, which takes its name from Mr. Stafford's uncle.

In the settlement of the estate Mrs. Pelham, who is the assignee of her mother, received yesterday the last installment, making her share the snug sum of 60,000 pounds sterling.

The party will take a jaunt through the Continent before returning to America.

In all of the society columns, and the special society papers, appeared in substance the following:

Mrs. Margaret Kidder, Mrs. John Elliott Pelham, and Mrs. Kidder's nephew, Mr. Howard Stafford, all of New York, made a charming appearance at the opera Monday night. The party is at Claridge's.

Mrs. Pelham is traveling under the chaperonage of Mrs. Kidder. She is a beautiful young woman, and has just received a large fortune from the settlement of the Kilpatrick estate.

The London friends of dear Aunt Margaret Kidder will not feel kindly toward her for bringing her lovely ward over here to seize a fortune and run away without allowing London to even get a peep at her. Those who have seen Mrs. Pelham say she is a dream in peaches and cream.

Howard carefully preserved clippings of all these little notices and mailed copies of them to George Hanford, with instructions. His letter crossed one from Hanford which contained clippings of the former ugly article, and the statement that he had given conspicuous notices in the New York papers similar to those appearing in the London papers, showing, not particularly a coincidence, but that Howard had an astute and watchful partner looking out for his interests in New York.

Having thus offset the pernicious article, which had doubtless been inspired by Winnans before he left New York, Howard felt secure in continuing their journey, and they left London for Paris.

In the gay French capital they plunged into sight-seeing, shopping and amusements, which bid fair to put Aunt Margaret out of the running in short order.



"This is too strenuous for me; you will have to take chances without a chaperon or stay at home, for I cannot stand this pace," she would say, and then collapse.

When she was tired out she would say: "Now, children, you may run down to your dinner and enjoy the fun, frolic and fireworks. I know you will be good, so I will be responsible for you this evening. You need not think of me! rest, sweet rest, is wooing me."

On such occasions Howard and Eleanor would roam about some after dinner, seeing the smart places, or go to the delightful concerts, enjoying themselves like two children in fairy land.

"Isn't it bully to be in a place so big and boisterous that one knows nobody?" Howard often asked.

He was delighted to have Eleanor say: "Yes, when it is necessary to be in such boisterous places, but once is enough for me. I like the genteel and quiet. I prefer the sweet, classical music to this wild exciting strain. Everybody looks so irresponsible. This must be a very wicked city, this Paris."

Mrs. Kidder knew many of the aristocratic families of England and the continent, and took advantage of this to give Eleanor some polishing lessons in the requirements of smart, polite society. On various occasions she took her to receptions in London; and once Howard accompanied them. The next morning he said to his aunt: "Can a duck swim if you put it in the water?" and he laughed.

"She will do, Howard," was Mrs. Kidder's answer.

In Paris they attended a reception given by the United States ambassador, on whom they had promptly called upon their arrival in the city.

On this occasion Eleanor was fairly overwhelmed with attention; she was exceedingly well gowned and most attractive, and the ambassador, himself, was most attentive to her and to Mrs. Kidder.

Eleanor was an apt scholar, and more than surprised Mrs. Kidder with her elegant manners and becoming ease. The trifling errors she made counted for nothing, when compared with her naïve manners, sparkling wit and quick repartee.

In one of the smartest houses in London Mrs. Kidder, by accident, referred to Eleanor as the pretty "Hoosier widow." The dull-witted English did not understand this localism until it had been explained several times, then they would put up their monocles and say, as they stared at Eleanor: "'Oosier widow, quite clevah, don't-cher-no. Bah Jove! but she is deucedly pretty." She became generally spoken of as the "pretty 'Oosier widow."

There was nothing to cause Mrs. Kidder or Howard to blush in the conduct of the Hoosier widow. On the other hand, Howard begged his Aunt Margaret not to try any more experiments on Eleanor; there was now entirely too much attention paid her to suit him. Eleanor, being a sensible, level-headed woman, was also suited by this attitude of Howard's.

Howard was jealous, and Eleanor herself seemed

to find sufficient pleasure in the company of her two best friends.

They kept up a rapid pace in Paris. Aunt Margaret having, from sheer fatigue, again relaxed her vigilance, Howard and Eleanor were resuming their chummy habits and growing more reckless each day of the risk of encountering someone who might misconstrue their frank, friendly actions toward each other.

Howard did not say so, but the fact that no one could possibly know who Eleanor was, was an element of safety to them. Men are supposed to venture *risque* actions in Paris, yet it made him angry at himself to suggest that he could even think of using this shield. It seemed a reflection upon the character of the purest, sweetest woman he had ever known.

He would say to Eleanor: "Why must we sit and twirl our fingers because some people may choose to misconstrue our actions in public. They are just as liable to trump up some story if we do not appear in public, so we will enjoy ourselves while we may. There is but one Paris, and we cannot take it back to America with us; the French nation needs it in its game of pulling the shekels out of American pockets."

They unexpectedly bumped into one adventure, though, which nearly refuted Howard's argument.

One afternoon, when Aunt Margaret declared she would not move another step, Howard and Eleanor decided they would run over to a smart café for some tea and delightful little French cakes.

As they entered the tearoom three men were being seated. Espying Howard and Eleanor, one of the men arose, and in an insulting, half-drunken humor said: "Ha, ha! Here comes an American peach, and an American cad!" and, as Howard was directly at his elbow, the fellow reached out as though to make an assault upon him.

Without a moment's hesitation Howard, as quick as a flash, slapped the impudent fellow full upon the cheek with his gloved hand, leaving purple marks.

Fortunately for Howard one of the chief waiters had heard and witnessed the whole thing. He quickly pushed Howard forward with Eleanor, then turned and ordered the three men to immediately leave the room under pain of arrest.

Howard wisely passed into the adjoining room and escaped the uproar which ensued, for it became necessary to eject the obstreperous Winnans, for the insolent fellow was he.

After it was over the *maître d'hôtel* came to Howard and made obsequious apologies. Howard thanked him for his courteous protection and assured him there was no reason for his making an apology.

Eleanor had recognized Winnans as the same person who insulted her in London. She looked questioningly at Howard, who laughed uneasily, as he tried to reassure her that it was quite accidental they should again see the man. Nevertheless, he was not comfortable. It seemed quite probable that this inglorious captain would give them some seri-

ous trouble before they could rid themselves of his objectionable presence.

Eleanor was not so much of a child that she could not see, on this second occasion, there was some sort of recognition between Howard and Winnans. The promptness with which Howard had resented the insult seemed to intimate a rather keen desire to hit the fellow. Had it been an ordinary case, it would have been more like Howard to have turned the whole matter over to the head-waiter, for he was not usually a broiler.

They both begged Aunt Margaret to accompany them thereafter, but that social Kuropatkin began to prepare an orderly retreat, and two days later they started for Berlin.

Eleanor was amazed, puzzled, and in a high degree shocked at much she had seen in Paris. The impudence of the men and the brazenness of the women, with their paint and powder, disgusted her.

Making quite an exhaustive trip, taking in all the capitals of Continental Europe, they gradually migrated southward with the season.

It was January when they had their first view of Egypt, with human insects of every nationality creeping over her sleeping ruins. Ah! here was the heaven which pleased the romantic side of Eleanor; here she melted and awakened to the seductive ease of Oriental life and luxury. It pleased her immensely. None seemed to labor; all seemed to be playing.

Comfortable accommodations were secured at

Shepherd's in Cairo, and a whole month was spent in and about that romantic old city.

"I am expecting any morning to awake and find Cairo gone," said Eleanor one day as they sat on the veranda.

"Why?" asked Howard.

"Because everything and everybody seems to be eternally preparing to go somewhere," she explained.

They gathered enough Egyptian jewelry to stock an Oriental bazaar, including a basketful of imitation scarabs, tagged, "Cannot-be-distinguished-from-the-genuine."

Howard wanted to ship a mummy princess to Mrs. Parker to be entertained by Marchmont society, but Aunt Margaret wouldn't hear of such a thing. "The social position of this desiccated princess is not sufficiently vouched for," she said.

After a most delightful month at Cairo they joined a select party, chartered a private boat, and spent another month up the Nile, making an exhaustive study of the ancient ruins at Karnak and Assuan, even making an excursion into the interior above the upper falls of the Nile River.

We need not follow them back to Europe, as nothing of importance occurred to mar their happy travels. They remained for one whole month in Milan, Italy, in order that Eleanor might learn something of the musical spirit of Italy, and polish up a bit in the language, for she was passionately fond of the sweet Italian music. They could hardly get her away from the Bay of Naples when they

landed there, she was so enraptured with the music. The waters about the ship seemed a living, floating concert and opera.

At last the homeward journey was before them.

"Solitary confinement for me," said Aunt Margaret; "this is where I go to jail again."

"And I to heaven," said Howard.

"I have done nothing to justify imprisonment, and I am not worthy to go to heaven, therefore I presume I must stay here," wailed Eleanor, with a piteous little thrill in her voice.

"I'll go to either place with you, Eleanor," quickly responded Howard.

"Now, quit your foolishness. You people are actually getting spoony, in spite of my injunctions not to do so," scolded Aunt Margaret.

The trip across the ocean was one long, sweet dream to the lovers. There was not a soul on board who seemed to have the least curiosity as to what they did, and they never missed the opportunity to snuggle their deck chairs close together and enjoy the sweet sensation of perfect lovers' understanding. In spite of all this, Howard had not violated his promise not to again declare his love.

But fortune was not always to smile upon them, and they were destined to have some hard trials before reaching their goal.

The last night upon the water was beautiful, notwithstanding it was in early spring. The full moon looked as large as a "Ferris wheel." For a long time they walked, arm in arm, about the deck. Eleanor was snugly bundled up in a great Scotch

coat, and Howard likewise. Not a person could recognize them, as they softly laughed and talked, evidently thoroughly satisfied with themselves and their prospects. At last they curled up in the great comfortable steamer chairs.

"Do you realize this is the last night of our journey, Eleanor?" said Howard, with a sad cadence in his voice.

"Indeed I do, Howard," she replied.

"Oh, Eleanor," continued Howard, "I can never express to you the pleasure and the joy this trip has afforded me. I am very sad because of its ending: It is the first real pleasure I have ever known, and you, my little angel, have made it so. Tell me now, may I speak?"

"My heart yearns to tell you something. It will burst if you deny me this last opportunity. I have kept myself under restraint, Eleanor, because I wanted to prove to you that I held for you the deepest respect as well as love. Please, now, give me a respite, that my hungry soul may tell you how it craves some little token of your affection.

"I know, sweet woman, that you trust me, and you must understand that my feeling for you is one of reverence. Your every touch and act I have taken as promise of your confidence in me. Now, may I tell you of my eternal love for you, in spite of the temporary barrier between us? May I say to you, in the confidence of love, what I have planned in my mind? Speak, Eleanor; speak frankly, and if I am overstepping my honorable privileges I will stop."



Howard paused to give Eleanor time to gather her thoughts. He had taken her hand, which she did not withdraw.

Presently she raised her head, and in a voice without a quaver, said:

"Howard, I am young and inexperienced in matters of the heart. I once thought I loved a man, and with that belief I married him on his deathbed. With the aid of my mother, who is a wise and good woman, and the advice of my good old pastor, I forgot the sting and hurt which followed that first experience. Therefore, when I met you I was practically heart whole. Yet I always feel a pang of sorrow when I think of my early love, because my husband was a good, honest man. Necessarily my heart was awakened and my love unrequited. You are the first man who has spoken words of love to me since. It is like sweet music to me. You have the same strong, honorable nature as that of Mr. Pelham. You have been more than kind, good, and generous to me. I know you love me. Moreover, the same strong, honorable nature as that of Mr. spect from people of your own station in the world.

"I confess that I am hungry for love. I like to be petted and loved. Under all these circumstances, is it unreasonable or unnatural for me to say to you, even in view of your present embarrassing position, that your declaration of love is the sweetest and most welcome music I have ever heard? Is it immodest for me to tell you thus coolly and unexcitedly that for your love I can and do give you all

my heart and soul, and all the affection and passion that a naturally loving nature can bestow?

"I do give you these, Howard, and I will give you my hand when you are free to take me. Till then, respect me, love me as much as you will, but respect and protect me. We have restrained our love until now; we can do so till we wholly belong to each other. Then it will be all the sweeter.

"I have become a woman, Howard, under Aunt Margaret's tutelage. I am no longer the child who first entered your office. I know more now than you think I do. Aunt Margaret is our friend."

Howard listened patiently till Eleanor paused, then he said: "Sweet Eleanor, you astonish me; you have taken all the burden from my soul; you are a philosopher, and I did not know it. I do not want you to be a woman, though; I want you to remain just as I have always known you—a sweet baby girl, free from morbid thoughts and worries, so that your sunny nature may never cease to cast its sunshine into my heart and my life." He raised the soft little hand to his lips and held it there. She did not withdraw it.

"Will we seal this pact with one sweet kiss, Eleanor?"

"Yes, dear Howard, just one," she softly whispered, and for a single moment the two heads bent close together, and their eager lips met in one long, lingering kiss.

"Until death do us part," whispered Howard fervently, and they left the deck to go below.

Mrs. Kidder had often said to Eleanor in an enig-

matical way as she kissed her, "You are a rare woman, worthy of all you desire, and you shall have it." The only response she would vouchsafe to Eleanor's beseeching look of inquiry was a pinch on the cheek and a mysterious "Wait just a little while, my dear; true love is patient."

Now, she knew, a curious instinct told her, that Howard had answered the enigma. Aunt Margaret had been the counsel on both sides of the case, unprofessional though it was. It was easy for her to foresee the verdict.

## CHAPTER XI

It was a beautiful Sunday morning in June. The sun had that metallic luster with which it always shines in New York in the month of June. The parks were being dressed in their pretty summer frocks of flowers and tropical plants. The stingy little spots and strips on Madison Avenue had put off their appearance of well-worn splotches of green paint and assumed the more natural hue of living grass. Even the sparrows were scolding and fighting, like a lot of East Side urchins, for an opportunity to reach the green spots and cool their little breasts.

Howard, standing upon the stoop, was attracted by the antics of the sparrows. Two of them were fighting viciously, plucking beaks full of feathers out of each other, while a dozen others chattered around them.

"I should call the police," he laughingly said to himself. Then he soliloquized: "How human! Do they learn our habits, or we theirs? We are all birds, beasts, or fishes, with different degrees of mental development. The animal mind is one and the same force in all organic beings, only those beings called men are a little more highly developed by experience and environment. But they are no more acute or sensible in proportion to their position in

the animal scale and their opportunities than are these birds. They both fight for the soft snap which all cannot have."

Howard stood hesitating for a minute whether to go out into the sweet fresh day or remain quietly within doors. The gay sunshine decided for him. Stepping into the hall, he called: "Auntie, oh, auntie, my sleepy Aunt Margaret! This is a glorious day; it makes one feel like a two-year-old. Will you and Eleanor go driving with me in the park?"

"Ask Eleanor, my dear," was the reply, coming from some remote place above.

A movement at his elbow startled him. Turning quickly, he saw Eleanor, like a playful child, stealing up to startle him.

Making a quick motion, he caught her by the shoulders and pushed her back into the parlor, with the exclamation:

"You will scare me, will you, you little rogue?" and he playfully boxed her ears.

He took her hands in his, while his other arm rested lightly across her shoulders. Just for a moment they stood thus. She did not struggle. Slowly he withdrew his arm, raised the dear hands to his lips and kissed them softly. Like a deer she sprang away and went flying up the stairs. At the head of the stairs she was intercepted by Aunt Margaret.

"Now what mischief have you been in?" demanded Mrs. Kidder.

"He's trying to catch me," panted Eleanor.

Then hearing Howard's laugh in the hall below,

she scolded him. "We're safer out than in; we will ride with you, you highwayman," she said. "A breath of the blessed sunshine will do us all good."

But Howard had warmed up to the spirit of frolic, and he suddenly sprang up the stairway as they scampered into Aunt Margaret's room. Aunt Margaret was in a big chair, with Eleanor's face buried in her lap.

"Go away, you villain!" cried Mrs. Kidder, pushing Howard away.

"She frightened me nearly out of my wits, auntie, and I'm going to punish her," said Howard.

One burning cheek was half exposed, but Howard was not satisfied with a half offering. He gently turned the brown tresses until he could see one gleaming eye, then he leaned his head close down and whispered: "I love you, Eleanor dear; one kiss as a forfeit and I will tease you no more." The pretty head was turned, and he kissed her once on the rosy lips, then rising, he placed his arms about his Aunt Margaret's neck and kissed her again and again.

Eleanor raised her head with a roguish smile. Howard patted the brown hair and said, "Oh, it's great to be in love! Auntie, be ready soon; I will have the carriage at the door."

The carriage was soon at the door, and paying no attention to Eleanor's confusion, Howard handed the ladies into the wide-seated victoria, which afforded ample room for the three. Aunt Margaret occupied the middle seat.

It was an ideal day, and the park and Riverside

were thronged with smart equipages. Mrs. Kidder's was one of the smartest in New York.

Many friends who knew Mrs. Kidder and Howard familiarly gave them cordial greetings, then they asked each other, "Who was that beautiful, rosy girl with them?" No one seemed able to answer the question.

Little was said during the drive; all were deep in thought.

Howard and Eleanor no longer concealed their love for each other, and the occurrence that day had awakened Aunt Margaret to the dangerous situation.

She knew the great risk of permitting these youngsters to run wild. They were but human, and their residing under the same roof gave them a liberty which was very unusual. She knew her own responsibility in the matter. She had indorsed their love, and therefore must be responsible until they were safely off her hands.

It would be most serious for her should scandal occur, and Mrs. Kidder well knew that Dorothy and Winnans were ready at any moment to take advantage of any opportunity to injure them. She could be accused of a most unpardonable breach of trust should any malicious gossip assail Eleanor's character, and marriage thereafter with Howard would not wholly mend matters. So long as he was united to Dorothy the danger was imminent.

Mrs. Kidder had her beloved nephew's happiness at heart. He was a clean, conscientious man, and to be forced to combat a vicious scandal to win the

woman he loved so tenderly and devotedly would be, she knew, abhorrent to him. When aroused, Howard was a man of extreme passion, and for anyone to openly cast reflection on Eleanor's purity would probably lead to a deplorable tragedy. Moreover, she herself had learned to love Eleanor and to depend upon her companionship. When they returned to America she had prevailed upon the young woman to remain during the summer and enjoy a smart season at Marchmont. Both Eleanor's mother and the good old pastor in whom she placed so much confidence had been communicated with, and Eleanor was now as much her ward, so far as responsibility was concerned, as though legally consigned to her.

Both Howard and Eleanor noticed Aunt Margaret's troubled looks, but did not annoy her by questionings. Both felt that in the future their interests were mutual.

The delightful drive over, Aunt Margaret informed the lovers that after tea she desired them to come to her room. She had something important to discuss.

At this conference it was determined that Mrs. Kidder would immediately go to Marchmont, and accordingly an advance guard of servants was sent there the next day to open the house.

Mrs. Kidder realized the importance of clearing the way for Eleanor before any intimation should arise that she was available as a catch.

"I will take Eleanor with me," she said, "in order to show that she is under my protection. You



must take no steps toward a divorce until I have established her social position at Marchmont. You must remain here as though it were not your intention to come to Marchmont at all.

"With her accomplishments I can readily place her socially in a manner to protect her against any injurious gossip of Dorothy or Captain Winnans.

"As I see by the papers that Captain Winnans will arrive here by steamer next Saturday, I deem it wise to anticipate his arrival at Marchmont, where he will surely go."

Howard saw the wisdom of his aunt's arguments and promptly acquiesced in all her plans, and she and Eleanor prepared to leave town on Thursday.

The previous season at Marchmont had run late into the autumn, and many of the residents remained all winter. Each season had found a larger number of permanent residents, and quite a winter colony was already established.

June was one of the sweetest months of the season, and for this reason many of the Marchmont summer people were in their houses there before July.

Cards were sent out early in the month for a reception in honor of Mrs. John Elliott Pelham, to be given by Mrs. Kidder, in her very pretentious home.

All Marchmont was there but Dorothy Stafford and Mamie Baird, who, it was said, were visiting in Washington, and everyone pronounced Mrs. John Elliott Pelham a most charming and brilliant woman, and she was made gladly welcome. Many

delightful entertainments were planned for her at once.

Eleanor told Aunt Margaret she would sing the soul out of Marchmont, and she did before she left there.

Three weeks passed quickly by, with Aunt Margaret bubbling over with happiness. Eleanor had sung at a benefit given for a local charity, and words of praise and admiration came from every side. Nothing could shake her position now, because her place was more assured than that of Dorothy, or even of Mamie Baird, and no gossip could arise that would not refer to Dorothy. Therefore public opinion would say, "Oh, jealousy!" and let it pass at that.

Mrs. Baird, who was not like her daughter, followed the others' example, and cards were now out for a reception at her home, and as it was necessary for Mamie to be there she was summoned home.

For once Mrs. Kidder was wrong, when she predicted that Captain Winnans would go direct to Marchmont after landing, but, of course, at that time she did not know that Dorothy was away. Instead, he went to Washington.

Mrs. Kidder felicitated herself that Dorothy was not at Marchmont. It was the salvation of Eleanor, who by this start could now go under the wire an easy winner, nor matter what happened. On an even start the outcome might have been different.

Everyone had been told of the delightful trip abroad, and how Howard had done this, and how Eleanor had done that, until it would be next to

impossible to concoct any kind of a plausible story. Not one word was heard regarding the scurrilous article which had been published while they were in London.

Nevertheless, the tragic part of the whole matter was now to begin, and Eleanor and Howard were to go through the most harrowing experience of their lives. A series of coincidences, curious enough to tax the deepest student in occult science, seemed to follow and protect this couple.

By some mysterious way word had reached Dorothy that Eleanor was already a "success" in Marchmont, and therefore when Mamie was called home Dorothy decided to accompany her.

Right at this time occurred the first remarkable coincidence in Howard's favor. The firm of Stafford, Hanford & Deal was not what is known as criminal lawyers, but it had a reciprocal and strictly confidential arrangement with another concern which made a specialty of such cases, and the two firms employed between them a smart, keen detective, one Jodee.

The morning preceding the Baird reception at Marchmont Jodee, as was his custom, came in to report to Mr. Hanford a case in which they might be interested.

He had been employed to shadow a man who had embezzled a large sum of money in England and fled to this country, and three weeks before had taken up the case at the steamer and been constantly upon the criminal's trail.

Upon leaving the steamer the fellow had been met

by another man and conducted to a waiting carriage in which were two women. This carriage drove directly to the Twenty-third Street ferry of the Pennsylvania Railroad, where they crossed over and took the four-thirty Pennsylvania train to Washington, D. C.

Jodee had followed them, in Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, where they had been stopping at obscure hotels as married couples.

They assumed different names in each city, and a peculiar circumstance was that while they seemed to be amply supplied with money, in each place they left large unpaid hotel bills.

The night before they had left Washington on the midnight train, arriving in New York early that morning. Only the man under surveillance came with the women; the other chap remained in Washington.

As they left the train and were waiting to board the ferryboat, the man said: "Girls, it won't do for me to go to Marchmont with you, but I shall follow on the next train and will be fit and good for the frolic at Mamie's house to-morrow evening."

George Hanford could hardly restrain himself while this startling report was made.

"What was this man's name, Jodee?" he asked.

"Captain Frank Winnans," replied the detective.

"What did he call the women?" again asked Hanford.

"He called one Dot and the other Mame," said Jodee.

"Examine this bill, received this morning from

Baltimore. Do you recognize this name as the one under which this man and woman registered?" and Hanford handed Jodee a hotel bill to which a letter of instructions was attached.

"Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wellman. That's the name!" exclaimed Jodee.

"Now, Jodee," continued Hanford, "have you a good-looking dress suit?"

"Yes," replied Jodee.

"Then you be in Marchmont at noon to-morrow. I will give you a letter which you are to deliver to my servant at my apartment there. I will arrive by four o'clock and bring with me a 'John Doe' warrant for an emergency," and Hanford arose.

"I will be on hand, Mr. Hanford," said Jodee, as he left the office.

Hanford went direct to Howard's office. The latter was reading a letter which he had just received from his Aunt Margaret.

"Well," he laughed, as Hanford entered, "are you going to Mrs. Baird's reception at Marchmont to-morrow night?"

"Yes, I expect to be there," responded Hanford.

"I have a letter here from my Aunt Margaret," said Howard. "She says Dorothy and Mamie Baird will be back from Washington for the reception. They will necessarily meet the little Hoosier widow."

"My God! Howard, I dare not say what I came in here to tell you. No; surely there must be some mistake. It is utterly impossible," and Hanford paced the floor.

"Why don't you tell me?" demanded Howard. "What is it? I must know quickly," and he stood, with his hands upon the table, leaning eagerly toward Hanford.

"Well, it is best to have it out and done with," said Hanford, and he read to Howard Jodee's report and told him what he had done.

Howard turned as white as a sheet. He looked as though he would fall. Clutching the table, with his body swaying back and forth, he stared at Hanford for a moment, then straightening, he almost hissed: "A curse upon this scoundrel! I will kill him now. This is too much."

Suddenly he laughed, an ugly guttural laugh which startled Hanford.

"No," he exclaimed; "I forgot. I will not kill him. Where is Jodee?" He was calm and fierce now.

Hanford again told him that Jodee would be at the reception, with a "John Doe" warrant in his pocket.

"So will I be there; I will be needed," said Howard, every word a menace. "I will at once go and see what the nature of the embezzlement case is," he said, rushing for his hat. "I want to see what refined punishment can be applied to this chap. He has run his race."

Within an hour he returned with a satisfied air, and reported to Hanford that a more serious charge than beating a hotel would be preferred against Captain Winnans, and that two other men would be on hand to assist Jodee.

“ We must do all in our power not to let ourselves be identified in the case. Moreover, the keenest watch must be kept on Dorothy and Mamie that they may not have some insult to offer Mrs. Pelham. It is quite reasonable to believe that women of their stamp would not hesitate at anything they might decide to do.”

## CHAPTER XII

THE Bairds' was one of the most beautiful and spacious homes in Marchmont. They spent much time and money on the place, and as it was more desirable and comfortable to live there the year round, they gave up their old Fifth Avenue residence and remained at Marchmont, inducing many others to do the same.

It was a perfect summer night. Brilliantly lighted, the mansion looked in the dark green surroundings like a jewel with many gleaming and glittering facets. Smart equipages were dashing up to the imposing entrance, over which a great crescent of electric lights cast its steady gleam on laughing youth and beauty, staid old age and haughty pride, all resplendent with sparkling jewels and gorgeous gowns.

One thing could not be denied: the high social position of all who entered. No, not all, for two men entered at the same time about whom society might have wondered—Captain Winnans and Jodee.

The crunching, approaching and departing wheels on the bluestone drive, the slamming of carriage doors, the occasional angry exclamation of a raw coachman or footman, transported one in fancy to the entrance of the Metropolitan Opera House on a gala night.



Lines of carriages stood, verging away on every avenue, like the spokes in a vast wheel, with the brilliant entrance as the hub. Smart uniformed men kept perfect order, and good nature prevailed through all the clang and jangle of bringing social Marchmont to the shrine of Mrs. Baird.

If the outer view was noble and imposing, the inner splendor in its liveried pomp can well be imagined. Marchmont was noted for its beautiful women and handsome men, and the dear old mesdames, who queened it over both, were famous for their hospitality.

This was one of those occasions when society critically inspects the newcomers and débutantes, and notes who are perforce among the missing.

Notwithstanding Dorothy Stafford had been much talked about, Marchmont had dealt kindly with her, owing to her close connection with those truly essential to the colony. And there were many others who had likewise been gossiped about, Miss Baird herself among the number.

It seemed that these two particularly could not relinquish Captain Winnans, and inasmuch as this reception was in Mamie Baird's house, he was necessarily invited, although neither by birth nor breeding could he lay claim to being of this set.

George Hanford was there, and ever within close proximity was a suave, clean-cut, steely-eyed man whom no one seemed to know, but who had quietly attached himself to a couple of old maid sisters, who both entertained and bored him.

It was late when there came a sudden hush for

some seconds in the gay chatter of the surging crowds, and all necks were craned to see what the cause might be.

Just passing the receiving line was Aunt Margaret Kidder, whom all knew, and following her what looked like a dainty French doll, and no less a person than Howard Pemberton Stafford, who had at one time been the leader of all the gayeties, but who for many months had not been seen at Marchmont. He had been greatly missed, and it was quite startling to see him so suddenly return.

Stafford's hair, once a dark brown, was now sufficiently tinged with gray to give him a distinguished appearance. He was truly a well set-up, handsome fellow. His steel-blue eyes were fierce and strong this night; it looked as though he were more in quest of a joust with some other knight than for the trivialities of the smart set. Those who had formerly known his genial, generous nature were impressed with the feeling that he was a changed man.

A thrill of sympathy ran through that throng for Howard Stafford; the facts were public property.

Dorothy had shown no such change; on the contrary, she had been more than ever frivolous and indiscreet with Captain Winnans, the principal cause of the separation, as everyone knew.

"But who is the dainty little *bisque* doll?" was asked on every hand by those who had not met her. It was quite sufficient that she was under Aunt Margaret's wing to know that she was somebody.

Eleanor was a dream, the most beautiful creature ever seen in Marchmont. Everybody viewed her in

amazement, and Aunt Margaret was very proud of her. Her delight in her sponsorship was as eager as though Eleanor were a string of new pearls.

Howard discreetly broke away from them, and was kept busy shaking hands with old friends and answering their questions.

Interest in the "bisque," as some clever person had quite audibly named Eleanor, and which had gone all over the rooms, did not soon subside. Everybody wanted to be introduced.

"Who is she?"

"She certainly is pretty."

"She carries herself exceedingly well for so young a woman among strangers; it is usually a trying ordeal."

"But no one seems to know who she is," persistently put in a little busybody.

"Oh, I have heard of her as a protégée of Mrs. Kidder, a sort of distant relative or something like that," said a stout dame with a chain of real pearls half as large as ostrich eggs about her neck; "and under those circumstances I wouldn't advise anyone to adversely criticise her. Mrs. Kidder thinks the world and all of her, so it is said; took her abroad with her, and all that. Howard's law firm secured a large legacy for her, I believe, from some English estate. Howard has aged, hasn't he? I always thought he was in love with Dorothy. Too bad they cannot agree to live together." She was watching Howard plowing his way toward her.

"I'm so glad to see you, Howard, my dear!" she exclaimed, as he extended his hand to her.

"Aunt Jane Parker!" Although not related to him, Howard had called her Aunt Jane since boyhood. He grasped her hands cordially. Then a gay group surrounded them, interrupting the conversation with their hearty laughter.

"Howard, have you lost your heart to that little bisque doll your Aunt Margaret is so stingy about? She keeps her tied to her apron strings as though she were afraid somebody might eat her," said Mrs. Parker in an injured tone.

Howard's only reply was a squeeze of the hand.

"Well, you are as bad as Aunt Margaret," exclaimed Mrs. Parker. "You might introduce her to an old friend of the family like me."

"Why, Aunt Jane! hasn't she been introduced to you?" asked Howard, and he reached out and caught Eleanor as she was passing, drawing her over to where they were standing.

"Mrs. Parker," he said, "allow me to present to you Mrs. John Elliott Pelham, a very charming little Hoosier widow," and he flushed with pride.

Mrs. Parker reached out her left hand in a cordial, motherly way and grasped that of Eleanor, while she raised her massive gold lorgnette, which had seen service in President Buchanan's time, and looked Eleanor over, with the freedom of her seventy years, as she would have examined a piece of merchandise.

This minute examination being satisfactory, she said, "Widow, eh? Well, you certainly are pretty; I'll take you just as you are, my dear," then with a sigh, she added:

"Howard, why don't you introduce the old lady?" meaning Mrs. Kidder, who had turned aside to greet someone else.

Howard laughed heartily at this. They had been as sisters to each other for thirty years or more.

"I can see you any time," smiled Aunt Margaret at Mrs. Parker, "so you needn't feel so injured because I stopped a moment to speak to Mrs. Hilgrean, whom I have not seen for ages."

This had helped Eleanor to escape from an embarrassing situation, but it also temporarily separated her from the protecting presence of Mrs. Kidder.

Suddenly there came from a near-by group these ominous words:

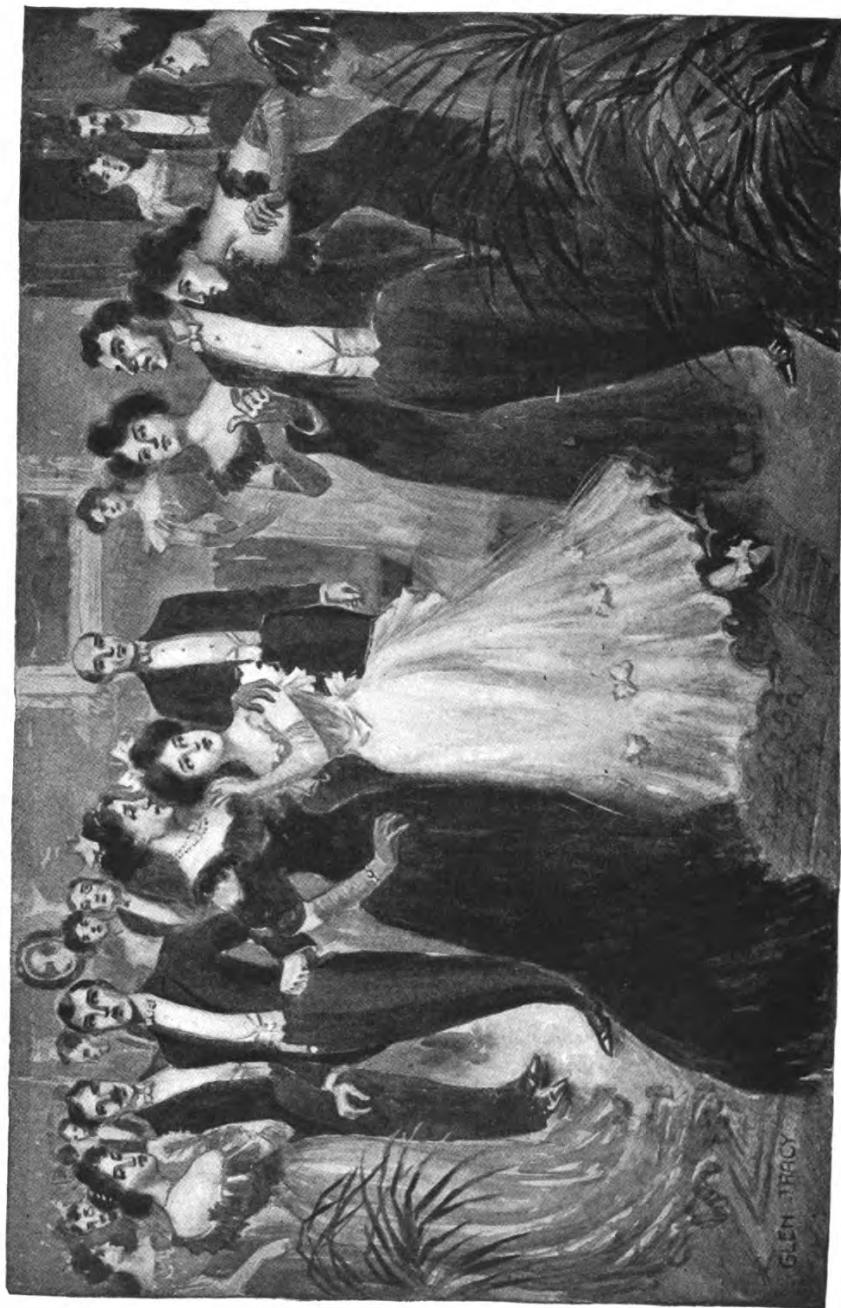
"By Jove! she's the identical woman whom I saw traveling through Europe with Howard Stafford."

Those who heard turned and saw Captain Winnans standing between Dorothy Stafford and Mamie Baird, and all of them were staring down at Eleanor, who recognized in Winnans the ruffian who had twice insulted her while abroad. It was he who had uttered the cruel words.

Dorothy glided forward with devilish eagerness and stood confronting Eleanor.

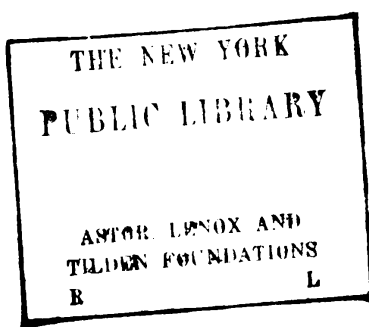
"Did you travel in Europe with my husband?" she demanded.

Eleanor was so taken back that not only could she make no reply, but shrunk like a frightened child into the protecting arms of Mrs. Kidder, who



“By Jove! she’s the identical woman.”

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had come to her, looking all the while askance at Dorothy, as though she expected to be assaulted.

Then a curious thing happened. Howard was confronting Captain Winnans, who stood defiantly glaring at him. Suddenly Howard made a menacing gesture, and the little steely man whom no one seemed to know stepped to Winnans' side, and, with a dexterous movement, quickly drew his arm down to his side, and an ominous click was heard by those standing near.

"I have a warrant for you, and you are handcuffed to me," he whispered to Winnans. "Do you want to come, or will you create a scene?"

For a moment Winnans hesitated, then he backed with Jodee to an outer room, where his top coat was waiting for him, and he was hurried into a carriage with two other men. Not a soul but those directly interested knew what had actually occurred.

Mrs. Kidder and Mrs. Parker both knew every person who had heard the cruel insinuation, and in ten minutes they were standing in a little side-room with the door closed.

Mrs. Dorothy Stafford was then called into the room.

"Dorothy," said Mrs. Kidder, "Mrs. Pelham is under my protection. She has been my daily companion since we left New York last autumn; I have been wholly responsible for her; I have introduced her to my best and oldest friends here in Marchmont, pledging my own social reputation for her, and therefore I take your insinuating question as a direct personal insult to me, as well as to Mrs.



Pelham. I am going to give you one single chance to apologize to both of us. That is all I have to say."

Dorothy straightened up defiantly and retorted, "I have the word of Captain Winnans that he saw this woman and my husband constantly together, and alone, throughout Europe, and I believe what he tells me. I have no apologies to make to Howard Stafford's mistress."

A horrified gasp went through the little gathering. They all knew Dorothy was only speaking in anger, but none were prepared for this awful charge.

Fortunately Eleanor was not in the room. She had fled to the dressing-room, and there nervously awaited the coming of Mrs. Kidder.

As Dorothy uttered the last words she turned to leave the room, but Howard, white with rage, confronted her.

"I will make you go down on your knees and apologize to Mrs. Pelham for this, 'Mrs. *Wellman*,'" he said.

Dorothy staggered under this blow and fled in alarm from the room. She was seen to rush to Mamie Baird, and with frightened eyes and white faces they talked excitedly for a few minutes, then hurriedly disappeared toward the dressing-room.

Mrs. Kidder turned to those who had heard Dorothy's rash words. "I hold myself responsible for Mrs. Pelham; she is as sweet and pure a woman as God ever made. I want you to stand by me, my friends."

"Why, this is awful! No one would believe Captain Winnans, especially under all the circumstances," volunteered Mrs. Belknap, Mrs. Baird's closest friend.

"Ah, such talk is absurd, Mrs. Kidder. Everybody knows that Mrs. Pelham traveled abroad with you and that is all the credential anybody needs. We are delighted to welcome her to Marchmont, and I am going to give her a rousing reception just as soon as it can be arranged." So spoke Mrs. Heckleman, the proudest and most conservative woman in the colony. It settled the question for good and all so far as good Marchmont society was concerned.

"Yes, my dears," said Mrs. Kidder, "you know how grateful I feel for your kind support, but I am going to turn on the searchlight of truth, so there can remain no question for suspicion, although Dorothy has her following, and they will whisper all sorts of slanderous stuff.

"Howard was the counsel for Mrs. Pelham's mother in the closing of a large English estate. Owing to the age and delicate health of Mrs. Kilpatrick, Mrs. Pelham's mother, Eleanor went to England as her representative.

"She was my constant companion, and a most lovable one at that. Whoever attempts to smirch her insults me; therefore this is my personal affair. I am going to clear her good name and punish Dorothy."

As might have been expected, the whole thing leaked out and was freely talked about the next

day. But what overshadowed this was the sensational morning news regarding the arrest, at the Baird reception, of Captain Winnans, on the serious charge of embezzlement.

There was another warrant in the possession of Jodee, calling for Winnans' arrest for swindling a Baltimore second-rate hotel out of several days' board for himself, wife, and two companions. This warrant was being held for future use.

Following the report of Jodee to Hanford revealing Winnans' escapades with Dorothy and Mamie Baird, Howard had held a conference with the law firm which, by coincidence, had been assigned both the embezzlement and the Baltimore cases.

A member of the firm had at once recognized Dorothy from Jodee's description, and had already considered the interests of Howard by swearing out the warrant in the embezzlement case, asking for the arrest of Winnans in advance of the "John Doe" warrant from Baltimore, although he admitted that he did not believe Winnans could be convicted in the first case.

"If," said he, "these Baltimore people get Winnans in hand they will expose the whole nasty mess."

The morning papers were unmerciful in their treatment of Winnans. He was done for.

A curious and tragic thing had followed Winnans' arrest by Jodee. As he was in evening clothes, Jodee suggested that he might go to his rooms for a change, but this he absolutely refused

to do. To the trained mind of the experienced detective this was equivalent to a confession that to do so would in some way incriminate him. Therefore, after placing him in the custody of the two deputies, with instructions to take him direct to New York, Jodee set about finding Winnans' stopping place; and, first, he lost no time in finding the cab that had brought him to the reception.

"Drive me to Captain Winnans' rooms and call for him in half an hour," commanded Jodee as he entered the cab. The door was slammed, and cabby, totally unconscious of intrigue, drove sleepily away.

Jodee was puzzled and suspicious to find himself being driven out into the country, yet he decided to wait and see just what would happen.

After a long drive the cab stopped in front of a two-story cottage standing some distance back from the highway and almost concealed by high lilac bushes and other shrubbery.

It seemed a bit risky for Jodee to go prowling about alone, but he was a brave fellow.

"Wait here a moment," he said to the sleepy driver, then he rapped on the door.

It was cautiously opened by an old negro woman. A slack chain fastened on the inside allowed only a crack to open, until it was known who desired admittance. The woman held a lighted lamp, turned low, and she peered out through the opening.

When she saw a man in evening clothes she opened the door without hesitation.

"Good-evening, auntie," said Jodee in a low

tone. "Captain Winnans sent me here to wait till he comes with a pair of pretty girls. Don't make any light; just send me to his room, where he said I would find something to drink and smoke."

It was so plausible that "Black Nan," for it was she, never suspected Jodee's ruse, but said:

"Come right along, sah."

"Wait a moment," whispered Jodee.

And going to the cab driver, he handed him a dollar, saying: "Drive back for Captain Winnans; go to the side door and wait for him. If he does not come out to you in half an hour you return here; don't fail. Do you understand?"

Cabby nodded and drove away, and Jodee passed into the house.

"Come this way, sah," said Black Nan, and she led him to a back stair, which went up to a narrow hall on the second floor. Off this hall, and in the back part of the house, a door opened into a large and elegantly furnished room.

"Heah you ah, sah. Dis am Cap'n Winnans' apa'tment. Go right in an' makes yo'se'f at home," and she placed the lamp upon the table and turned up the wick.

Looking critically at Jodee, the old negress chuckled. "Yah, yah. Yo' all is a good-lookin' chap; g'ess yo' gwine to have a good time heah dis night."

"Thank you, auntie," replied Jodee. "You look tired and sleepy, so you go on to bed. I'll sit here and nod. I can find everything I need. Good-night, if I don't see you later."

"My, but yo' is a polite gem'man. Cap'n Winnans ain't very polite sometimes. Good-night," and she went slowly down the stair.

Jodee carefully looked about the room and quickly located the telephone. He rang up Mrs. Baird's number and asked for Hanford, who was impatiently waiting for the call. Jodee described the way to find the place. That was all he wanted to know.

Then the detective began a rapid survey of the room. Opening a door he discovered an adjoining bedchamber, with a bathroom between them. In a closet he found a large traveling bag. Bringing it to the light he found it unlocked and quickly had it spread open. He found bundles of letters from innumerable women and addressed to different names, doubtless aliases of Winnans.

He smiled to notice that the initials of the names in every case corresponded with those on the bag, "F. W." Doubtless a precaution to lend plausibility where suspicion might be aroused at time of registering in overscrupulous hotels.

One package contained letters addressed, some to Mr. and some to Mrs. Frank Wellman, in care of the hotel in Baltimore where Winnans had jumped his board bill. These Jodee slipped into his pocket. Another packet contained letters addressed to Captain Frank Winnans at many points in Europe and the United States. These Jodee also confiscated.

There were some soiled ladies' lace handkerchiefs marked with the initials "D. B.," and one marked "M. B." There was a room key, 106, from the

same hotel; also a returned laundry list, upon which were listed both men's and women's articles. These Jodee took.

There were a pair of lady's white silk hose with "D. B." worked in pink silk, several pawn tickets, a small single-barreled pistol, and a flask half filled with liquor.

Three small diaries were held together by a strong rubber band. Jodee smiled as he found by hasty examination that one gave a graphic account of their doings in Baltimore and other places. Another was a record of Winnans' trip abroad.

Jodee had become so absorbed in his examination of the contents of the bag he did not hear the noise of the cab that stopped in front of the cottage. This suite of rooms was doubtless fitted up in this obscure rear of the house to conceal the revels going on there.

He nearly jumped out of the window when he heard voices in the hall.

Slamming the bag back into the closet, he barely had time to conceal other evidences of search, snatch a smoking cap from a near-by table, light a convenient cigarette, pick up a book and crawl deep down into a chair, when the door opened and Dorothy and Mamie Baird entered, still in evening gowns. Jodee had already identified them at the reception and pointed them out to Hanford as the two women whom he had seen traveling with Winnans and another chap.

In a mirror he could see every move they made. They did not know of Winnans' arrest, and upon

missing him they evidently started for this rendezvous, because of the importance of having a conference over the fact that Howard knew something about their masquerading under fictitious names in Baltimore.

As Jodee made no move, Dorothy exclaimed in an injured tone, "Well! I like your welcome."

As they reached a safe distance from the door Jodee sprang past them, slammed and locked it, and placed the key in his pocket.

"I am sorry to have to appear rude, ladies, but I am an officer of the law, and I have come here in an effort to save you from a dreadful scandal, if you will gracefully permit me to do so," and he made a respectful bow.

"Pray, who are you who takes so much interest in us that you knew we were coming here?" demanded Dorothy indignantly.

"I assure you you do me too great credit. I am not a mind reader; I had not the faintest idea you were coming here. I am in search of incriminating evidence," replied Jodee.

"Incriminating to whom?" demanded Dorothy, with fire flashing from her fine eyes. "Do I look or act like a criminal?"

"I am frank to say, my dear lady," said Jodee, "you cannot always go by looks. It is crime in some States for a person to suddenly depart from a hotel without the formality of paying his bill for board, laundry, and sundry other items.

"For instance, I have here a laundry slip belonging to a Baltimore hotel; it contains gentle-



men's and ladies' articles. A memorandum says the ladies' articles are marked with the initials 'D. B.' Now, the nonpayment of this bill would cause the person contracting it to be put down as a 'hotel beat,' and that means a criminal in the eyes of the law.

"It was too bad Captain Winnans could not have foreseen this and registered as Mr. Baker, or Mr. Banner, instead of Wellman. Why does he always select names which correspond with the marks upon his bag? Is he too stingy to buy a new one and leave it unmarked?" With this Jodee pulled the traveling bag out of the closet and pointed at the initials on its end.

Dorothy was now thoroughly aware of her compromising position. Should she be caught here it would be the end. She was a dangerous woman at this moment, and she quickly thought out a plan to outwit the detective.

"I do not understand your insulting insinuations," she said, "and I demand that you immediately open the door and allow us to pass out unmolested."

"One moment, please," said Jodee, and he raised the receiver of the telephone. "Give me the residence of Mrs. Baird," he said to the operator.

Dorothy gasped, and she and Mamie asked almost simultaneously, "What are you going to do?" But Jodee paid no heed.

Jodee was a careful man, but for once he made a mistake, which came near costing him his life. In his haste to return the bag to the closet the first

time he overlooked the small pistol which he had taken out of it and placed upon the table.

Dorothy Stafford was desperate and was ready to take long chances. Nothing was so offensive to her as being caught wrong, and nothing so impudent as for someone to say to her, "You shall not." As quick as a flash she grasped the situation as one fraught with deadly danger, for Jodee's actions told her that he held the key to the situation.

She was thinking furiously as she watched him, and the little pistol was directly in her line of vision. Like a cat she sprang forward, seized the weapon, leveled it with deliberate aim at Jodee and fired before he could fully realize what she was doing.

The bullet struck the receiver which he held at his ear and was deflected upward, making a long scalp wound. Passing out through the top of the smoking cap, it shot the eye out of a picture on the wall. This deflection alone did not save Jodee's life, for had the pistol been other than a single-shot one, Dorothy would surely have killed him, for she was now furious.

The shock to Jodee left him dazed for a moment, and in that moment he could have been hacked to pieces with Winnans' sword, which was lying across the table unsheathed. Dorothy had just espied it, and switching the pistol to her left hand she grasped the keen blade, ready for slaughter. At this critical moment the door was broken in with a crash, and Howard Stafford, George Hanford, and Mr. Baird, Mamie's father, rushed into the room.

It was a most tragic scene. Jodee leaned against the telephone, with the blood streaming down over his collar and dress shirt. Dorothy stood, like a Joan of Arc, pistol in one hand and saber in the other, her face white as chalk and her eyes gleaming like those of a maniac. She would have faced the devil at that moment. Mamie, never a courageous girl, was crouching in a corner of the room, frightened almost into a swoon.

Bringing the saber at charge, Dorothy aimed it directly at Howard's bosom and lunged forward, as she screamed, "Let me pass!"

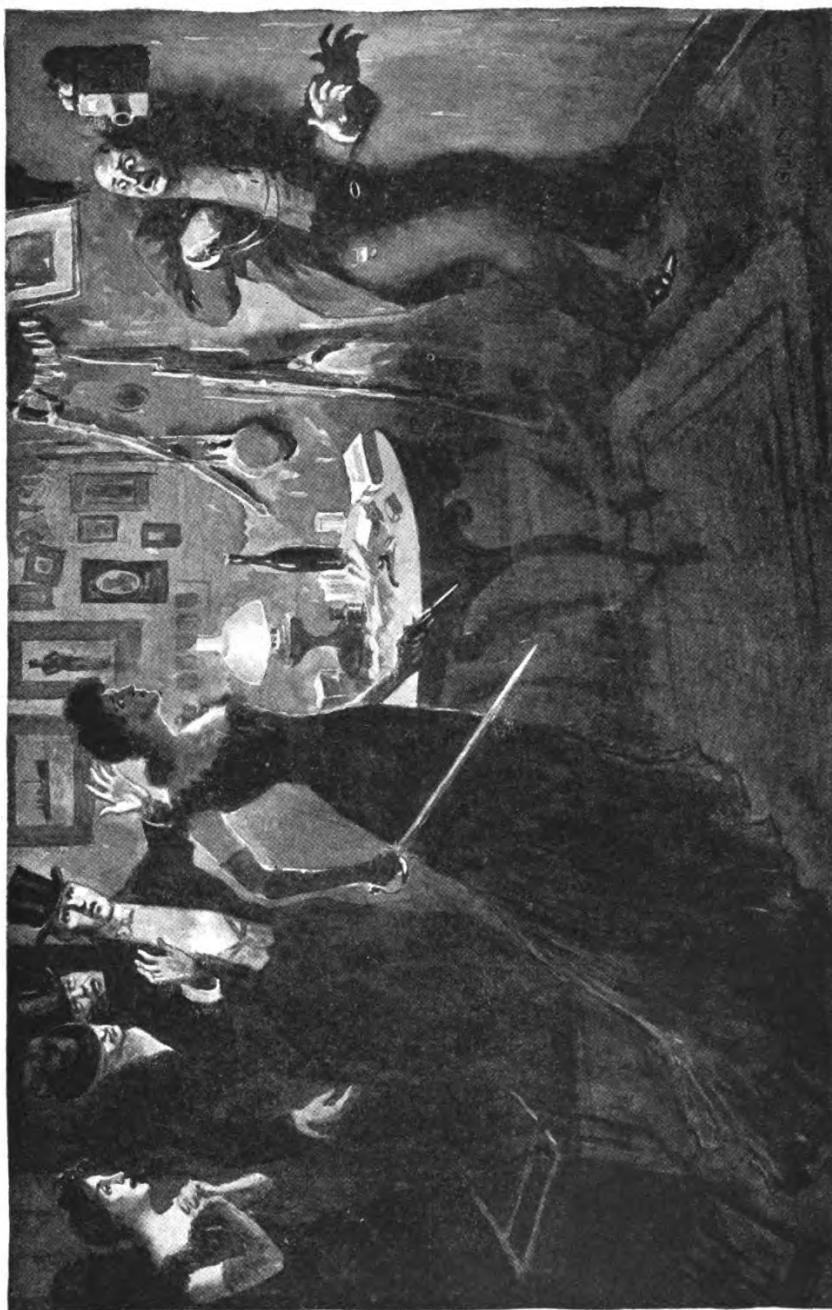
This one act disarmed her. Howard parried the thrust, and in the next moment had the weapons out of her hands and had her crushed down into a large leather chair. Her strength was expended and she had collapsed.

"So you would add murder to your other crimes, would you?" savagely exclaimed Howard.

Mr. Baird stood looking sorrowfully at Mamie, who had her face buried in her arms, weeping.

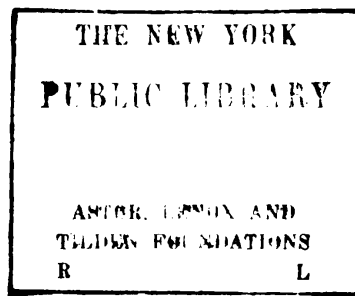
Hanford had gone to Jodee, who was still quite dazed from the shock of the bullet. A hasty examination showed it only to be a scalp wound, and it was carefully cleansed and bound up with a towel from Winnans' bathroom. Jodee laughed as he examined the hotel names, woven in the towels; quite a list of hotels were represented.

Howard stood near Dorothy, and as the other men came to him he said to her: "It is useless for me to waste my breath trying to shame you. You are a born criminal; your name and the reputation



“Dorothy stood like a Joan of Arc.”

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of others are as chaff to you; therefore I shall use only strictly legal means to prevent your harming anyone but yourself. If needs be, I will place you behind prison bars that you may not vent your devilish nature upon innocent people.

"You have assaulted an officer of the law in a house where your presence alone implies criminal intent. This officer is now here in the discharge of his duty, after having placed your companion in crime, Captain Winnans, under arrest. No doubt, you came here for the purpose of thwarting him in the discovery of evidence of a criminal nature against him, and perhaps yourself."

Jodee, weak from the considerable loss of blood, had now sunk into a chair. Pointing to him, Howard continued:

"In your zeal for that unmitigated scoundrel lover of yours you have probably murdered this officer."

"Arrest! Murder!" exclaimed Dorothy, raising her head. "Oh! what have I done? I am crazy, surely!"

There was an appeal in these few words which touched the hearts of those present. One word, one little intimation of regret or irresponsibility, took all of the rancor and anger away.

Howard seated himself at a desk and wrote a statement, reciting practically what had occurred, closing the statement with a confession that this place was the regular rendezvous or meeting place of Winnans and Dorothy.

He read the incriminating statement aloud, then

laying it before Dorothy, he said: "Sign, and a carriage waits at the door to take you to your home."

"Suppose I do not choose to sign it?" stubbornly asked Dorothy. She never could surrender gracefully.

"Then I shall not stand in the way of the law taking its course," coldly replied Howard.

Dorothy signed it. Then Howard, without consulting Mr. Baird, commanded Mamie to sign the paper also, which she meekly did, with a hand so trembly she could barely control it. Hanford, being a notary, verified it, and all the men but Howard added their names as witnesses.

At this point they heard a wail out in the hall. It was Black Nan.

"Oh, mah Lawd! Oh, mah good Lawd! Da's gwine to be a tragedy. I knows da sholy am; 'tain't no fault o' mine; Ise only de poh ole niggah w'at keeps de house foh Cap'n Winnans. No tell'n what he'll say when he heahs of all dese doin's." Thus she wailed as she walked the lower hall.

Howard called the frightened old woman upstairs and into the room, and when she saw the blood on Jodee's clothes she nearly fainted.

"Good Lawd, save me!" she groaned.

"You are Black Nan, are you?" asked Howard.

"Dat's de name w'at somebody give me," replied Nan.

"Well, Nan," said Howard, "I am going to leave Mr. Jodee here till I can send another man

to take charge of this house, and not a soul must be permitted to enter it, and you must not leave it. Do you understand? If you do the right thing no harm will come to you; but if you try to turn any trick it will be all up with you."

"All right, sah," said Nan, with a great sigh of relief.

Hanford saw Mr. Baird, Mamie, and Dorothy down to the carriage, the understanding being that both women were to be held virtual prisoners that night.

It was by this time early morn, and all evidence of the reception was gone upon their arrival at Mr. Baird's house.

Mrs. Baird knew that something serious was going on. Dorothy and Mamie had suddenly disappeared, and telephoning to Dorothy's home elicited the reply that they were not there. Then the message came which summoned Hanford and Howard, and Howard had asked Mr. Baird to accompany them, without the knowledge that they were also to find Mamie and Dorothy at Black Nan's.

Mrs. Baird had requested Mrs. Kidder to remain with her till her husband's return, and Eleanor was sent home alone.

At last the weary watchers heard a carriage arrive at the door, several persons alight, the door slam and the carriage drive away.

Mr. Baird, with head bowed, stepped in with Dorothy and Mamie, both looking dejected and ashamed.

Poor Mrs. Baird looked pitifully at Mamie for



a moment, then, upon seeing guilt of some sort in her attitude, turned her face to the wall and wept bitterly.

But not Aunt Margaret. She was a human cyclone.

Turning savagely upon Dorothy, she administered to her a terrible word chastisement.

"You ungrateful girl, all this is your doing! Your coarse, vulgar nature has ruined everybody with whom you have associated. You are not satisfied with having proven disloyal to the man who honored you by marrying you; it is not sufficient that you have killed your dear mother—no, you must go on trying to drag down into the mire with you all those decent, self-respecting people who have tried to befriend and save you from the hideous life you have been living with this drunken, dissolute wretch, Winnans, who is now, thank heaven, behind the bars. I, for one, will not hinder the law. I will not spare you. If you do not join your soldier lover in the Tombs it will be no fault of mine. At any rate, you will be put in a position where you will no longer have the opportunity of insulting me and mine."

Dorothy had sunk into a chair, with her hands over her face. For the first time, to the knowledge of anyone there, she wept, the great tears streaming from between her fingers; yet there were no sobs.

Was it remorse, sorrow and repentance, or was it vexation? None could tell. She did not resent Mrs. Kidder's awful arraignment.

Dorothy and Mamie were sent up to their rooms, and word was sent over to the Blake house that Dorothy would spend the night there, and at the same time the butler was secretly instructed to allow no one to leave the house that night without Mr. Baird's knowledge.

## CHAPTER XIII

THE next morning George Hanford called early at the Baird mansion and asked for Mr. and Mrs. Baird. Together they held a brief conference, then Dorothy was sent for.

Word came back that she was too ill to come down. Mrs. Baird went to her room and found her and Mamie lying in bed, drinking black coffee and smoking cigarettes. Mrs. Baird frowned, but did not say anything to indicate that she had noticed the smoking.

"Dorothy," she said, "be good enough to dress as quickly as possible and come downstairs. It is of vital importance for you to do so, take my word for it. If you display your stubborn nature this day you will deeply regret it. I will wait for you in the library." Giving no time for reply, Mrs. Baird left the room.

An hour later Dorothy, pale and nervous, entered the library. When she saw Mr. Hanford she hesitated.

"Come in, Dorothy," called Mrs. Baird, almost kindly.

"Mrs. Stafford," said Mr. Hanford, "I have come here on a most trying mission. As the law partner of Howard, you know it is in his interest that I am here.

"The first thing I wish to tell you is that Mr. Jodee is in the hospital in a precarious condition. It is feared that blood poisoning will set in, in which event you will be placed in an awful position. Everything possible, of course, will be done to prevent this, and we will guard you against exposure, providing you will show the right spirit in Howard's case.

"It is unnecessary for me to say that he desires an immediate and unprejudiced release from you, therefore the question is simply this: Do you willingly consent to an immediate divorce; the decree to go to him on statutory grounds, or will it be necessary to bring an action against you of a much more serious nature?

"You need not answer this now, providing you will accompany Mr. and Mrs. Baird to New York on the noon train and there meet, in the private chamber of Judge Eaton, all parties concerned. Your own family lawyer will, of course, be present to advise you."

"I will accompany Mr. and Mrs. Baird to New York," slowly replied Dorothy, in an absent-minded way.

At three o'clock that afternoon there were assembled in the private office of Judge Eaton, Howard Stafford, Dorothy, Mr. and Mrs. Baird and George Hanford. Judge Smith, the old lawyer of the Blake family, was telephoned for and in a few minutes joined them. It was apparent, from a casual glance, that there was no escape for Dorothy this time. All were sorrowfully against her but

Howard, and he felt uncompromisingly bitter towards her.

Dorothy realized her desolate and hopeless position, and she dropped heavily into a chair, with a look of deep dejection.

Howard walked coldly to her, and said: "I have prepared papers, asking to be divorced from you in a manner which will partially shield you from disgrace. Will you grant this decree without question, or will it be necessary for me to expose your recent compromising behavior with Captain Winnans?"

Dorothy glared at him for a second, then leaping to her feet, exclaimed: "How dare you insinuate that I am a criminal because Captain Winnans is accused? I have done nothing of which I am ashamed."

In a tone half contemptuous and half pitying, Howard replied:

"Your associations with Captain Winnans have been criminal. You could be arrested in an hour on a dozen specific charges; shall I read the evidence of this to these others present?"

Dorothy winced at this. She suddenly began to realize that there was too much against her not to be some very grave charges lain at her door; the best thing now was for her to get out of this awful situation at any sacrifice and away from this dangerous locality. What she most feared was that Jodee had secured much incriminating evidence against, not only Winnans, but against Mamie and herself. She was loyal to Mamie and would shield

her at all cost. She was no fool, this naturally depraved woman.

"What do you want of me?" she coldly asked of Howard, as composed now as she was formerly excited.

"I want you to read this document, carefully, before signing it and the other papers. Moreover, I want to inform you in advance that the net has been drawn and you cannot escape; we have all the direct evidence; nothing can save you but yourself. Winnans will go to State's prison. I am going to assume the herculean task of saving the good names and the reputations of those old families whom you have almost wrecked. I shall do this, if in its execution I must send you along with Winnans."

A visible shudder passed over Dorothy at these harsh words. In dumb despair, she raised her eyes to his face; surely this could not be Howard Stafford speaking.

Once his voice was gentle and sweet and his words kind, but now they were terrible. She never feared him before, but there was no merciful cadence in his voice, and she was afraid of him, more afraid than she ever had been of anyone.

"Now," continued the same merciless voice, "I will never advise you again, nor will I ever speak to you again if I can possibly avoid doing so."

With this he handed Dorothy a document covering several pages of legal cap, and bade her take the chair at the table from which he had risen. George

Hanford occupied the seat next to it and had before him several papers ready for signature.

As she eagerly read, Dorothy alternately paled and flushed. It recounted, fully, all her escapades with Captain Winnans, Mamie Baird, and one Lieutenant Fenton. It gave, in the minutest detail, the fictitious names used; the hotels where they stopped; the length of each stop, etc., etc. It named the hotels where they had "jumped the bills," and the amounts of these bills. It ended with a vivid account, in brief, of the attempted murder of Jodee by Dorothy, and the possibility of its proving fatal.

The story was so terse, yet complete, it dawned upon her mind with irresistible force that she was really and truly a criminal in the eyes of the law. There was no way of escape. If she signed this sorrowful confession she would admit her criminality. If she did not sign it her career was ended and the prison stared her in the face. Rather death than this.

No matter how bitter it was to give Howard his freedom without a fight, it were far better to do this than to have her own personal freedom actually taken from her.

She was thoroughly selfish at this critical moment. Her acknowledgment would necessarily mean the conviction of Winnans, but she did not hesitate on his account, though could she have seen a way to help him she doubtless would have done so, for he surely had some power over her.

After reading the paper she was weak and trem-

bling. Fearing a serious collapse, Hanford hastily placed a pen in her hand and showed her where to sign, and Dorothy affixed her signature to the document which made her a self-confessed criminal. Hanford had the document witnessed, and she well knew that she was now something worse than a widow. The formalities were completed, and Howard was actually a free man. He was no longer responsible for Dorothy's actions.

All the morning papers had published sensational accounts of Winnans' arrest at the grand reception given by Mrs. Baird. They stated that the charge upon which he was detained was embezzlement, but anyone would have thought, by the exaggerated accounts, that he had been caught snatching necklaces. It looked mighty bad for Winnans.

Briefly, the crime was this: Winnans, while abroad, induced several young Englishmen to form a pool for a stock gambling scheme to be run in New York; sixteen thousand dollars was the total amount subscribed. This money was turned over to Winnans. The peculiar thing about the transaction was that, by the contract which gave Winnans possession, the money actually became a gift instead of a trust, and the lawyers agreed that it would be next to impossible to obtain a conviction under the law. He began spending the money from the time of its coming into his possession, and it enabled him to frequent places where he could annoy and insult Howard.

Winnans then sent for his friend, Lieutenant Fenton, to come over to Paris as his guest, and it



was Fenton who was with him the afternoon he was ejected from the French café for insulting Howard.

Immediately upon the arrival in New York of Winnans and Fenton, Dorothy and Mamie joined them by previous arrangement, as definitely learned by letters found by Jodee, and went on their disgraceful debauch through the Eastern cities.

After the exciting incidents of the Baird function, Mrs. Kidder insisted that it were better for her and Eleanor to remain right in Marchmont and fight it out, and it was most fortunate that they did so, for all Marchmont had, by this time, discussed the ugly incident to a finish, and taken sides.

Very few, though, had the temerity to uphold Dorothy, and these scampered to cover when it was found that she and Mamie were unable to face the issue and had left Marchmont. It was virtual banishment.

When, in the midst of this, it was learned that Howard had been granted a decree of divorce, without resistance on Dorothy's part, it became apparent that the quicker she was dropped and forgotten the better. Her star had permanently set in the aristocratic colony which once delighted in heaping favors and compliments upon her.

Eleanor, sweet, meek and gentle Eleanor, was now greatly in demand. She at once became the pet and favorite of everyone. Even the younger set delighted in praising her; no one even mentioned that she had any faults.

The banishment of Dorothy and Mamie Baird greatly enhanced Eleanor's victory, and made her quite a little heroine.

Somehow or other, supposedly through the cabman, the doings at Black Nan's had, little by little, leaked out, and the arrest of Captain Winnans was attributed to the discovery there of incriminating evidence. Dorothy's and Mamie's names were coupled with this, and therefore the social atmosphere of Marchmont was quite cleared by the removal of these disturbing elements.

The wisdom and social power of Mrs. Kidder were vindicated, and Eleanor's social standing thoroughly established. Her last triumph before leaving Marchmont was the climax of Aunt Margaret's campaign.

A great charity event had been successfully executed, in which all Marchmont had participated. Hundreds of the smartest people in New York had paid tribute and lent charm to the function by their presence.

It was given at the home and beautiful park grounds of Mrs. Parker, who also contributed a band of music of thirty pieces from the best musical organization in New York.

With the aid of Mrs. Parker, Mrs. Kidder planned and executed a great *coup*. On the musical program appeared the announcement that a soprano, well known and beloved by all music lovers of Marchmont, had generously consented to appear and sing one solo on this charitable occasion. Everybody was on the *qui vive*, and as the program

was gradually reduced to this mysterious number, the people could hardly restrain their anxiety.

One strange thing occurred to make this clever maneuver on the part of Aunt Margaret doubly interesting. Dorothy and Mamie Baird returned and attended the fête; they were sufficiently discreet, though, to avoid being seen much together, and they remained as little in evidence as possible. They found to their chagrin that Aunt Margaret was now more than ever to the fore, and her charming protégée was the pet of the place.

The wide veranda on the front and corner of Mrs. Parker's house had been banked with palms and flowers and converted into a gorgeous music stand. There had been a short intermission, after which the great unknown was to appear and entrance the audience with song. The beautiful lawn had been converted into an auditorium, and this was now packed to suffocation. Everyone, even Howard, himself, believed that Mrs. Parker had secured the services of one of the great concert or opera singers, and would use her as the surprise.

As a curious fact, Eleanor had never sung in Marchmont in a public way, except on one small occasion, and it was due to this very scheme, planned by Aunt Margaret and Mrs. Parker early in the season. In the meantime she had worked diligently all summer long preparing for this event. This cultivation had rounded out her voice to ravishing perfection.

To say that Marchmont was surprised to see the little "bisque doll" appear in the presence of that

critical throng would be mild. Most of them had pictured her as suitable to dress up like a big doll and push around in a baby carriage. But here she stood, a picture to behold, and with an ease and composure which many a prima donna might have envied.

The audience was not prepared for this sort of shock, and, at first, did not seem to know just what to do. Suddenly it recovered and gave Eleanor a tremendous reception; she could not sing for at least five minutes for the applause.

In a secluded spot someone was heard to say with a bitter laugh: "For God's sake, Mamie, look there! and that is the soprano; what do you think of that for nerve?" It was Dorothy.

The leader raised his baton and the prelude was played. The sweet strains quited the people and attuned their souls to listen.

Eleanor's face changed wonderfully. A sweet, sad, far-away expression was there as she slowly drew her head back until her eyes seemed to be looking up into heaven. Then she fulfilled her promise to "sing the soul out of Marchmont." She flooded all those hearts with a sunny shower, which drenched their very souls.

A hundred anxious expressions had gone the rounds before she began to sing.

"Will she fail?"

"She looks composed."

"She is not nervous."

There was sympathy and hope in all this anxiety. What a joy sprang into every bosom as the first

notes came full, round, strong and ravishingly musical! It was the voice of an artist. It was a voice of marvelous pathos and sweetness. All these people had sat for hours listening to the grandest music which, it seemed, could be produced by the human voice, but nothing they had ever heard filled and satisfied them as this did.

They forgot the little "bisque doll" in the great singer; she was no longer a doll, a baby, to play with, pet and make over. She was something divine, something to worship. Could it be possible that such genius had lain dormant while the sweet possessor was knocking timidly at Society's door asking if she might come in and abide a while?

How small they felt when they thought how this beautiful child-woman must have known her secret powers to thrill them to the soul while she was being "investigated" and her eligibility as a social quantity was being carefully weighed by them, who now sat, with ravished senses, to feast upon her exquisite notes. She must have known that she could carry their strongest social bulwarks by assault and storm at her own sweet pleasure.

Howard was probably the most joyful person there. He had heard her sing many times, but not like that.

Mrs. Kidder wept for joy, holding Eleanor for a long time in her arms.

"Now I know what he meant when your good pastor said, 'Don't keep our angel away from us long,'" she whispered:

It was a great triumph for the little Hoosier

widow. She could now rest on her laurels and bide the time when she would be enthusiastically welcomed as Mrs. Howard Pemberton Stafford.

George Hanford had found Howard in a reverie and rudely awakened him with: "Don't let it escape, Howard, I'll take the case on a contingent," and then he laughed at his law partner's becoming confusion.

There was a choking sob in one secluded place, and Mamie Baird was seen to place her arm about Dorothy and lead her away.

Truly, "Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast." The surprise, the unexpected pathos and sympathy of that sweet voice had, secretly, worked a miracle. It had melted a heart of stone in Dorothy Blake's bosom. For a single moment she wanted to kneel, to kiss the hem of Eleanor's garment and ask her forgiveness; but only for a moment, for she was soon angry at herself for such a foolish display of sentiment on her part.

It was a regretful hour to them.

They had listened, themselves enchanted, to the songs of the gentle, innocent little woman they had purposely attempted to destroy. They had witnessed the breaking of tear strings, and had themselves wept.

Dorothy saw the enraptured Howard watching for Eleanor with the eagerness of a lover keeping a tryst. Now he had both her hands in his own, making no concealment of his extreme joy. He loved this other woman. He, once her kind and gentle husband.

With a deep sigh, Dorothy arose and said:

"Come, Mame, let's go away; all this annoys me; I could throttle that little doll."

Once in a while the dull Mamie had flashes of mental acumen. Dorothy's words, coupled with the shower of real tears, and the sighs, meant something unusual; she never wept from vexation, she never sighed or languished under an ordinary strain; on the contrary, she was marvelously strong and self-reliant.

Mamie was puzzled, but kept her thoughts to herself. Whether love or envy, it was evidently painful to Dorothy; she went, therefore, without protest. The time had been when both of these women were in the very midst of the gayest in Marchmont affairs, but now no one noticed their going. It was mortifying and painful.

## CHAPTER XIV

THE morning after the arrest of Captain Winnans, Howard went early to his office to prepare for the trying ordeal with Dorothy.

He examined minutely all the papers which had been drawn by Mr. Hanford in the divorce proceedings, in order to guard against any serious error or complication which might occur to delay matters. It required the most delicate work to prevent publicity. He was engaged at this task when Mr. Hanford came into his private office, and excitedly exclaimed:

"Well! here is a pretty mess. We have wholly avoided getting our names mixed up in this Winnans arrest, and his father, Colonel Winnans, is out here, wringing his hands and pleading to see you, to induce you—think of it,—you! to defend his son."

"The devil!" exclaimed Howard, springing to his feet and plunging his hands deep in his pockets. "George, this is the most awkward thing in this whole case. You know our relations with Colonel Winnans; we have long attended to his legal matters; it is natural now that he should come here. Send him in and I will talk with him."

"You certainly would not attempt to interest yourself in his case?" anxiously inquired Hanford.



"Well, hardly," replied Howard.

In a moment the poor old rheumatic father of Captain Winnans entered.

"Good-morning, Colonel; sit here," said Howard, as he helped him into the same comfortable leather chair in which the Hoosier widow had been seated upon her visits to the office.

"Good-morning, Mr. Stafford. You doubtless know my troubles; the papers are full of the disgraceful thing. My son, Frank, is under arrest on a serious charge and I have come to ask you to take his case and defend him," and the old man looked appealingly into Howard's face.

"What do you know about this case, Colonel?" asked Howard.

"I really know nothing about it, excepting what I read in the newspapers," responded Colonel Winnans. "He is accused of embezzling some funds entrusted to him in England. Frank always was careless in money matters. I do hope there is a mistake somewhere about it. I know my son has been a wild and wayward boy, but I cannot believe he is a thief. Oh, Mr. Stafford, I know you can save him from State's prison, if anyone can; I could not long survive his conviction," and the poor old man began to wring his hands and groan.

Howard seemed to be thinking deeply. Suddenly he said: "Colonel, I am deeply in sympathy with you, but there are circumstances which make it next to impossible for me to help you. If I should tell you that I positively know that your son is worse than a thief——"

"Oh! don't say that," appealed the anguished father.

"Listen to me," continued Howard. "If, as I say, I should tell you that your son is much worse than a thief, would you still have confidence in me to defend him in this one case?"

"I would have confidence in you under any and all circumstances," eagerly replied Colonel Winnans.

"Will you promise not to ask me to defend him in any other case?" asked Howard.

"I promise you anything if you will get him out of this scrape," he replied.

"Then," said Howard, "I will tell you under what conditions I will take the case. It will be necessary to keep him in the Tombs for at least four weeks, and this will appease those who desire to punish him. You must agree not to furnish bail for him during this time.

"In the trial his character will be fully revealed, and he will be utterly disgraced, but you must promise to keep absolutely secret, even from your son, that I have any interest in the defense. For this, I promise your son acquittal in this case, and, although he may be indicted in other cases, I will see they are not pressed for trial, provided he leaves, permanently, this part of the country. My only promise is that I will save him from Sing Sing in this case. Now, if these terms suit you I will immediately take the case in hand."

"Yes, Mr. Stafford," meekly assented the anxious father, "that will do; keep him out of the penitentiary, that is all I ask. I do not want the

finger of scorn pointed at me and have it said that my son is in the penitentiary."

As Howard ushered him out of his office Colonel Winnans turned and said:

"You are very generous, Mr. Stafford; I am now a poor man, as you know, but I shall find some way to repay you."

"Don't let that worry you," replied Howard.

When Colonel Winnans had gone Hanford came anxiously into Howard's room. The latter was pacing the floor with his hands thrust deep in his trousers pockets. Stopping short, he said: "George, what do you know about the real merits of this case?"

"I feel certain he cannot be convicted under the law," replied Hanford, "that is, on this embezzlement charge, but the Baltimore case is quite different. He can be indicted in Maryland and extradited from New York, and it would be a difficult matter to prevent his being convicted of a felony, but——"

"Yes, I understand," hurriedly interrupted Howard. "We must prevent that; what a horrible mess this whole thing is, to be sure."

"Why, you surely are not going to have anything to do with it, Howard?" exclaimed Hanford, in amazement.

"Yes, I am going to take the case," doggedly replied Howard. Then, noticing the pained and worried look upon his partner's face, he placed his hand upon his shoulder in a brotherly fashion, and said:

"George, I know you trust me; I have an ob-

ject in defending this criminal; and I want you to help me. You need not fear the consequences. I want to use this scamp as an object lesson for others of his ilk. His case will be a warning to society not to permit such vultures to hover about respectable communities to prey upon weak and susceptible young women. It requires drastic measures to convince some women of the great dangers they incur by taking up with irresponsible and unknown men. Therefore, I expect this object lesson to be of lasting benefit to this community. Moreover, I am, by this process, wholly and permanently ridding myself of this fellow Winnans."

"I understand now," rejoined Hanford. "Are you going to openly identify yourself with the case?"

"No," replied Howard. "We will put the matter into the hands of Brumback & Bates, and I will deliver the last argument for the defense. Give me all the facts in order that I may draw up a brief and prepare my argument. It will be four weeks before the case comes to trial. In the meantime Winnans will languish in jail."

Had Winnans known what was in store for him he probably would have preferred to plead guilty and go to Sing Sing. He had for some time been living like a prince on the money entrusted to him by confiding friends, and the hardship of being denied bail gave him a rare opportunity to ponder his many sins.

It was sickening, though, to see the daily contributions of books, periodicals, flowers and deli-

cacies which were sent to his cell by Dorothy and Mamie. They were foolish enough to think they could do this unknown to others.

"This is all the better, for it will be impossible for these women to remain away from the court room during the trial. This is exactly what I most desire," said Howard. He was freed from Dorothy, and he felt no responsibility for her. She could smother Winnans in roses so far as he cared, but he would sizzle and wilt the roses at the proper moment.

The time came for Winnans' trial. No member of the law firm of Stafford, Hanford & Deal was in attendance, much to the relief and satisfaction of the two heavily veiled women who daily took seats in a remote part of the court room and listened eagerly to the trial. One of the smartest law clerks was there, however, to report progress to Howard.

For three days the trial dragged along. Each day the aged father wearily crept into the court room and took his seat by his accused son. There he would sit, with bowed head, never changing his position.

At last the eventful fourth day came, when the arguments would be made and the case be given to the jury. By some mysterious means rumor had reached Marchmont that it would be interesting to be present on the closing of this case, and to the surprise of Winnans and the discomfiture of Dorothy and Mamie, the two veiled attendants, there appeared that day Mrs. Kidder, Mrs. Parker,

Mr. and Mrs. Baird and about a dozen others of the Marchmont colony.

Vain and egotistical, even in his disgrace, Winans believed they had come out of interest and sympathy for him, but there was no recognition on their part to bear this out.

The preliminary dry and uninteresting arguments had been made, and the defense had been given one hour in which to make the closing argument. It seemed some change was to be suddenly made in counsel, but this was finally agreed to among the lawyers.

There was a perceptible change for the better in the appearance of the accused, as the result of his sojourn in jail. He had been sober long enough for his skin to show a marked improvement. He was cleanly shaven and neatly dressed, and Aunt Margaret referred to this as a vindication of her oft-repeated theory that everybody should be sent to jail once a year on general principles.

Everybody believed that young Mr. Bates, who was both handsome and eloquent, would make the closing speech. But George Hanford, to the great surprise of all, stepped to the counsel table and placed thereon some law books.

A murmur went about the room. There was no telling what might happen next; Stafford, Hanford & Deal had not before figured in the case. All was quiet in anticipation; the air seemed full of mystery; the accused was puzzled and visibly uneasy. Even the weary father raised his head and looked questioningly about.

Suddenly there was an audible hubbub all over the court room as Howard Stafford came through a side door and stepped quickly to the counsel table. The accused half raised from his seat. The two veiled women, in their accustomed place, leaned forward, and one, in her excitement, raised her heavy veil; it was Dorothy, pale to chalky whiteness. She clutched the chair in front of her and stared with bulging eyes at Howard.

"What! he defending Captain Winnans? Impossible! the accused is doomed." She dropped back in her seat, more in a swoon than in her right senses.

"Order in the court!" and the gavel of the presiding judge fell with an ominous thud.

Howard began to speak slowly, deliberately and understandingly. His voice was hard as the law itself; his whole attitude could be described as steely. Not one moment's hesitation, not a quaver, could be noticed. The impression he made was terrible. He could have compelled the jury to do anything he desired, for he was the embodiment of law and justice. Even the Court gasped at what he said, but did not interrupt him; the prosecution looked at the jury and smiled. That body of men seemed to be seeing or hearing double; surely, things were getting mixed. They leaned forward in open-mouthed wonderment when Howard said:

"Your Honor, and Gentlemen of the Jury: I want you to understand I am not here to defend this man's character. I am here to defend him only in the interest of justice, founded upon actual law

with reference to the charges against the accused in the indictment under which he has been detained and prosecuted. Character, he has none. A meaner, more contemptible scoundrel never lived. He is neither honest nor honorable. He has violated every law of God and man. He has abused the confidence of his most intimate friends and associates. He has abused and disgraced his venerable father, whose condition and attitude is an eloquent appeal to the jury for clemency.

"He is now an outcast of society and a menace to the community. He has betrayed the most sacred trusts confided to him. He is totally depraved and wholly unworthy. Nevertheless, he cannot justly be convicted in this case because there is no law adequately covering it. It would be useless for you to bring in a verdict of guilty because it would not stand the test of law, as I will convince this honorable Court. More the pity that you cannot be true to your oath and convict."

Then, in terse yet ample reference, he fully showed that a conviction could not be had, and he asked that the case be taken from the jury, and the defendant dismissed.

The prosecution was amazed. The presiding judge sat up and rubbed his eyes, as though he had been asleep and dreaming. There was a hurried consultation between counsel, and it was at once seen that Howard had quickly, decisively and surely changed the whole aspect of the case. The judge asked a few short, curt questions of the lawyers of both sides, then, turning to the jury, he said:



"Gentlemen of the Jury: I authorize you to remain in your seats and render a verdict of acquittal in this case."

The prosecution offered no objections and Captain Winnans was a free man.

There were no words wasted in thanks, neither were there any congratulations. Not even Winnans' father congratulated him. But he was not wholly deserted; curious to relate, two women remained staunch and true to the last.

Dorothy and Mamie waited till the other women had gone, then they crept down the aisle of the court room, shook hands with Winnans, whispered to him some brief message and took their departure.

Before the prisoner could go entirely free some formalities were necessary. When these were through he stood alone, exceedingly forlorn and lonesome.

When, at last, he was pronounced free to walk out of the court room he seemed loth to go, not knowing just what was expected of him. Finally, he gathered his scattered thoughts and fled, precipitately, as though afraid that he might be detained again.

At a short distance away a carriage, with the curtains drawn, stood at the curb. The small trap window at the back was open and an eager face could be seen watching the front of the court building. Winnans quickly entered this carriage, was cordially greeted by two veiled women and driven rapidly away. Little did they dream that a keen-eyed man was behind the newspaper in the han-

som cab which had been standing further down the street and had seen every move they had made. This cab followed the carriage closely.

The moment it was seen that they were making for the Twenty-third Street ferry, cabby dashed ahead and deposited Jodee in advance of their arrival.

As Winnans, Dorothy and Mamie alighted from the carriage Jodee served all three with subpoenas, returnable the next morning at ten o'clock. Surprised and deeply chagrined, they knew not what to do, but Jodee said he thought by the next day at twelve o'clock they might go to Egypt together if they so desired, but that he had warrants for their arrest in his pocket if it became necessary to serve them in order to prevent their leaving New York.

"You cannot leave New York to-day, that is certain. There are some legal matters to be closed up before you leave this State. We desire to save you the unnecessary humiliation and consequent notoriety of arrest, and therefore I would advise you to seek some quiet hotel and remain under cover till the ordeal is over. It is possible you will not be needed, but you will be in easy communication if you are. I will frankly say to you, you are thoroughly shadowed and it will be useless for you to try to escape."

"We have that contemptible Howard Stafford to thank for this," scornfully exclaimed Dorothy.

"You also have him to thank that you are not in Sing Sing for attempted murder. You also have him to thank that Captain Winnans is not under

arrest with you and your friend there as accomplices for beating several hotels," said Jodee, with considerable asperity.

Dorothy looked askance at the speaker. It dawned upon her that Jodee was right, and she subsided quickly.

After talking together for a few minutes Winnans said:

"All right, old man, I will put the ladies in a cab and send them up to the Hotel H——. I will ride up with you, if you do not mind."

"That is satisfactory," answered Jodee. And as Dorothy and Mamie were entering their cab he made a quick signal to another man in a near-by vehicle, which followed close after that which contained the two women.

Captain Winnans stood for a moment, watching the disappearing cab. He had the same feeling of desertion and loneliness that he had felt in the court; he returned to Jodee, and, extending his hand, said:

"Old chap, you know your business. What would you have me do? I haven't a damn cent in my pocket, even for a night's lodging. I am all in. But, say! I'll kill that fellow, Stafford, if he did save me from the penitentiary. I believe his office boy could have done the same thing. I would rather spend ten years in Sing Sing than to again experience the half hour I spent listening to his argument. You were there, of course, and heard it? Well, wasn't that a foretaste of hell for any man?"

Jodee did not care to argue with Winnans, and

paying no attention to what he said, he remarked in a careless manner:

"I'm going over to Washington. If you want to you may go with me. I'll help you that much. You have friends there, probably, who will tide you over till you can get on your feet again. If you must have these women over there they can follow to-morrow. You can wire from there. My work is nearly done in this case, and I don't mind telling you that I am damned glad of it. What do you say?"

Winnans studied for a moment, then said:

"You are not half a bad fellow. I'll go you," and they made a run for the ferry boat and caught it as the chains rattled over the wheels which raised the gang-way. On the Jersey City side they took the Pennsylvania Railroad train for Washington, to arrive there at ten o'clock that night.

"I'll just wire the office where to reach me in Washington," said Jodee, and he sent two telegrams before going aboard the train.

One of these telegrams went to Howard's office, while the other instructed the Baltimore authorities that Winnans would be on the Congressional limited passing through Baltimore at nine o'clock.

It was a mean trick, but absolutely essential. Winnans never knew it, but its chief purpose was to save him and, at the same time, make conditions such that he could not again pass through Baltimore without the risk of arrest. Once in Washington he would have to stay there or else go around Maryland if he desired to avoid big risks.

Five hours later, as the train stopped in the Baltimore station, an officer walked into the smoking compartment and tapping Winnans on the shoulder, said:

"I have a warrant for your arrest; come with me."

Winnans was very much surprised, and looked about for Jodee, but he was not in sight. It was useless to parley with an officer, and he knew it. Therefore, with an air of deep chagrin he went along.

"I am not going to give you the worst of it," said the officer; "we will spend the night at a hotel, Captain."

"I thank you for that consideration. I have not experienced the comforts of a hotel for some weeks," and Winnans laughed bitterly.

Jodee had hastened from the train and to the telegraph office, where he wired to New York:

Party in custody, women at Hotel H——, room——.

He found a message from his assistant, who had followed Dorothy and Mamie, awaiting him, giving this information and the names under which they had registered. Jodee also send this message:

Mrs. Beal, room——, Hotel H——, New York.  
Am sorry could not face the music; have gone to Washington.  
FRANK.

"There," said he, "I guess that will cook Mrs. Dorothy Stafford up for a good humor to-morrow."

Ha, ha! she will come within an ace of swearing when she realizes her lover is a quitter, and her soldier a deserter. I guess the old ladies interested in separating these girls from the renegade will just about cough up a couple of centuries for this night's work. I'm thinking, though, this sport should be tucked away for a spell."

On the following morning a carriage drove up to the ladies' entrance of the Hotel H—— and a lady's card was sent up to Mrs. Beal. The name on the card sent a thrill of shame through both Dorothy and Mamie. It was Mrs. Baird.

In a short time the two women came down, heavily veiled, and closely followed by a bearded man who had never allowed them out of his sight excepting when in their room.

In the carriage with Mrs. Baird was the old family lawyer of the Blakes. Dorothy felt more ashamed in his presence than she would have felt before her own mother. They entered the carriage, and, as it drove away, the man with a beard made a memorandum in a little red book. His work was done.

The carriage drove direct to the office of the lawyer, where papers were drawn providing a limited income to Dorothy, and she was forbidden by her mother to again enter her home. The will of the father had left her wholly dependent upon Mrs. Blake, her mother. Her personal belongings were to be sent to her wherever she decided to make her abiding place.

When Dorothy realized that she was both home-

less and friendless it was pitiful to see her trying to keep back tears which could only be wrung from her by the most drastic measures. Finally, she broke down. As she drew her handkerchief from her reticule a telegram dropped, unnoticed by her, to the floor, but Mrs. Baird picked it up and read it. It was the one sent from Baltimore to Mrs. Beal by Jodee. Mrs. Baird gave Dorothy a pitying look, then slipped the paper into her own bag.

In view of Dorothy's deserted and lonely position, Mrs. Baird asked her to go abroad for a few weeks with her and Mamie, thus hoping to break up the intimacy between them and Captain Winnans. The girls were in a dangerous plight, and Mrs. Baird's offer was a god-send to them.

Thus, a colossal scandal, long smoldering, was at last ended as far as Howard Stafford, Mrs. Kidder and the little Hoosier widow were concerned.

A great sigh of relief went up when it was announced that Mrs. Baird, Dorothy and Mamie had sailed. It was gratifying to feel quite certain, too, that they got away before Winnans had time to communicate with Dorothy and reveal the trickery of Jodee. She sailed in the belief that Winnans was a deserter.

In Baltimore Winnans had his own peculiar experiences. Some mysterious influence was at work, apparently in his favor. He was detained in his hotel room until twelve o'clock the next day, when he was surprised to have a bell boy enter the room and say: "A gentleman in the office wishes to see you."

He was more surprised when he found that he was at liberty to walk out of the room unhindered, pass down the elevator and to the desk. At the desk the clerk handed him an envelope which contained a railroad ticket to Washington and a ten-dollar bill.

Answering Winnans' inquiring look, the clerk said:

"The gentleman could not wait and he left the note for you."

The captain took the cue and made a sprint for the first train out, and in less than two hours was standing at Pennsylvania Avenue and Sixth Street, Washington, wondering where to go and what to do.

He was sorely puzzled about getting in touch with Dorothy. It was at his suggestion she registered as Mrs. Beal, and he therefore sent her a long telegram at the Hotel H——, but Dorothy had already left the hotel, and while he waited for a reply was on the high seas.

She had not the slightest reason for doubting the genuineness of Jodee's telegram and felt more than piqued and hurt over it after her desperate loyalty to him while in prison.

It was a good way to make them both forget. They had drunk to the dregs the bitterness of publicity and wanted no more of it.



## CHAPTER XV

A SHORT time after Howard had secured his divorce he slipped to the little music room in Mrs. Kidder's Madison Avenue house, and spent an hour turning Eleanor's music. Sometimes he would get the sheets upside down in his absent-mindedness.

He praised her sweet voice, playfully chided her little willful ways, and she boxed his ears for being saucy. Finally, he leaned over her chair and asked:

"Eleanor dear, does my being a free man alter your feelings for me?"

"Indeed it does," declared Eleanor.

"For better or for worse?" asked Howard, eagerly.

"Guess," was the provoking reply.

"Then, I may tell you what I have so long desired to pour into your ears?" he continued gently.

"Yes, Howard, dear, although I surrender before the telling, you must not cheat me. Tell me your love and tell it sweetly; I long to hear it. I will listen as long as you want to talk to me. You do not think me unromantic and immodest, do you?" and the brown head leaned against his cheek.

He had drawn his own chair near, and placing his arm about her waist, he said:

"Now, my little Pemberton angel, I will begin my argument in the greatest case I have ever tried. If I win I will be the happiest and richest man in the world. The happiest, because I shall have you; that is quite sufficient. The richest, because you are the most precious jewel in the world, and you will be all the world to me besides.

"Sweet Eleanor, I love you because you are gentle; I love you because you are just; I love you because you are considerate for the rights and feelings of others; I love you because you are conscientiously pure of mind and person; I love you because you have the soul of an angel; I love you because, to me, you are the most beautiful woman in the world."

"There now!" exclaimed Eleanor, "that will do for a while; save some for a rainy day, for I love to be petted on rainy days.

"I love you, Howard dear, because you are good. Always be good, and very good to me, and I will love you just as much as you want me to, so there," and she placed her arms about his neck and pushed her cheek hard against his and held it there.

For quite a minute they remained thus in a state of ecstasy. Suddenly Eleanor reached out her hand and ran her fingers over the keys, saying: "I will tell you how I love you."

Before releasing her Howard drew her to him and kissed her sweet lips passionately; she did not decline the caress.

Then, turning to the piano, she sang as she had never sung before.

## ELEANOR'S LOVE SONG

I will love you in the morning,  
When the dew is on the rose,  
When sweet nature 'wakens  
From slumber and repose.  
I will love you when the rising sun  
With yellow paints the sky,  
When your heart is full of passion  
And the love is in your eye.

I will love you in the noontide  
When the sky is deepest blue,  
'Tis then that love is strongest,  
And noontide love is true.  
I will love you in the midday  
Beneath the gleaming sun,  
For love is ripened quickly  
Which in midday is begun.

I will love you in the evening  
When the sky is blushing red,  
When the flowers close their petals  
And sweet nature goes to bed.  
I will love you when the night comes  
And the day has spent its life  
'Tis then that I will love you best  
When I become your wife.

When Eleanor's song ended Howard was in raptures. Standing behind her, he entwined his arms about her neck, kissed her cheek, and exclaimed:

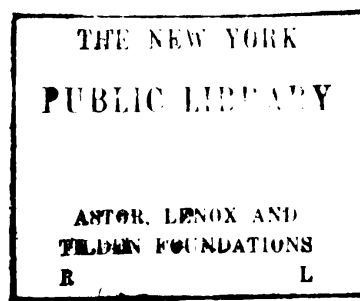
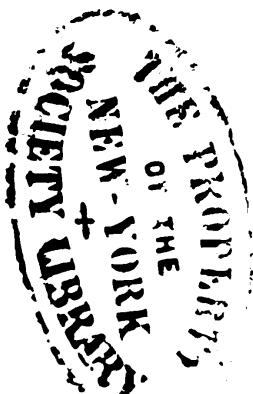
"And you will become my wife?"

"I should like to, if I were asked; you only told



“Shocking!”

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me you loved me; you didn't ask me to marry you," plaintively replied Eleanor.

Then Howard knelt on a stool, and said:

"Eleanor, dear, I ask you to become my wife, my companion, my chum, and we will love each other, as you say in your song, morning, noon, and night, and begin anew each morning."

"Howard, I am proud and happy to acknowledge my love for you. I will trust my future with you. Take me, and love me. That's all I need to make me happy.

"Don't be afraid you will ever offend me by too much affection—after we are married.

"Now, we are in love, and engaged, and I must run and tell Aunt Margaret all about it. I promised her that I would tell her when you proposed, and I always keep my word, with Aunt Margaret."

Howard laughed gleefully, and walked to the door with her, with his arm over her plump, soft shoulder. As he was about to let her go they stood, for a single moment, face to face; she was flushed and her eyes happy, and Howard was willing.

Just one sweet, fond embrace, that was all, but they were in the very midst of it when Aunt Margaret stepped into the room.

"Shocking!" she exclaimed, but her interruption only seemed to aggravate the case.

"Congratulate me, auntie," said Howard. "Eleanor, the dearest, sweetest, prettiest, and best woman in all the wide world, has just told me, in

the most poetical manner, that she loves me and will be my wife."

"Gracious! what a waste of words. Don't I know all of that about her? Besides, I heard her love song. I do congratulate both of you, my dears. I don't want you to be long about it, either. I'm hungry for a wedding."

"Poor old lady," said Howard; "she never gets anything to eat except at weddings."

"Howard Stafford, there isn't a spark of real sentiment in you," snapped Mrs. Kidder.

"My, auntie, but you are getting garrulous in your old age," teasingly replied Howard, as she left the room. But she was as eager and happy as the youngsters themselves.

"Bless her jolly old soul," said Howard affectionately.

Eleanor went to Mrs. Kidder in her own room. "I am so happy I want to cry," she exclaimed, and as she was gathered into Aunt Margaret's motherly bosom they both wept for very joy.

Oh, but those were sweet days which followed! Eleanor was like a happy child. The innocent smile which played pranks with her lips was there again, the smile which drew up the corners of the rosy mouth to form the inverted cupid's bow.

When Howard could steal the opportunity, when Aunt Margaret was not looking, he would softly caress Eleanor's cheek and kiss her. "Shocking!" was Mrs. Kidder's exclamation when she did catch them. The time was at hand when she well knew they must be separated; there was too much

of this for safety. They were growing, daily, bolder and more careless.

With this in view, Mrs. Kidder convened a council of war. It was on a beautiful Sunday afternoon when all the world seemed to be in love. They sat together in Aunt Margaret's own little reception room.

"Now, children," began Mrs. Kidder, "I'm not going to put up with your scandalous conduct any longer. You are getting entirely too spoony. I'm going to send Eleanor home."

This was heartrending news to Howard, who could not see the urgent necessity for such "cruelty to animals," as he put it.

But Aunt Margaret and Eleanor had talked it over.

"Well, you see, Howard," continued Aunt Margaret, "you've got to prepare sometime for your wedding, and it must be done exactly right.

"You must wed Eleanor at her home; that is the proper thing. She has her own fortune now, has been having a real good time of it, and she owes it to her mother and the fatherly pastor to go home and tell them all about it, and prepare for her wedding."

Howard listened quietly, not knowing he was the victim of a conspiracy between the two women. But he knew that his aunt was right.

He looked at innocent little Eleanor, who tried to appear as though she did not know all about it.

"What do you think of that cruel edict, my sweetheart?" asked Howard.



"I think banishment hard, but whatever auntie says is law," responded Eleanor in a dejected voice.

And so it was decided to send the little Hoosier widow home in a week.

That was a week of sunshine for Howard, and he did his best to make up for the time he would lose, but it grew dark and dismal as the day approached for Eleanor's going.

They had one final talk of great importance. Mrs. Kidder herself asked Eleanor if she wanted to live with her after her marriage.

"Oh, I wouldn't feel safe to live with this cannibal unless you were near," replied Eleanor. "You said you wanted to be my mother-in-law, and I want you to be, for my own dear old mother will always remain in Pemberton. I am going to arrange for her sister, my old maid aunt, who teaches school, to give up teaching and live permanently with mother. They love each other very much.

"I am afraid you will not like me, though, if I say I do not want to live in Marchmont. I cannot stand the life there; I am not accustomed to it. Can we not have a nice little summer home where we can see the great ocean, and where we do not see and hear so many carriages with men in blue, green, and purple coats, and so much brass? I hate brass, and I hate diamonds, and I hate chatter and noise, and confusion. I would much rather see a real good yard full of chickens than the foolish affectation of a dog show in Madison Square Garden.

"I think your city horse shows most stupid things, only intended as an excuse to gather to-

gether an equally stupid and boresome lot of rich people to strut about in swagger clothes. These things are too artificial. I like the green and the natural live things, without the ribbons on their necks. I imagine such people must serve their love in small portions, like ice cream."

Thus she rattled on until she became conscious that both Aunt Margaret and Howard were staring at her.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "have I said something amazing?" and she clasped her hands in alarm, as she looked first at one and then the other.

Howard laughed, a big, strong, hearty laugh, and looked at Mrs. Kidder in a manner which seemed to ask, "Now, what have you to say?"

Mrs. Kidder nodded her head wisely.

"Eleanor, you are worth your weight in gold. You shall have your home by the sea."

Howard simply said, "Be it cabin or castle, let me abide there with thee, my love, and I will be happy and satisfied."

"I feel so much better," sighed Eleanor.

It seemed a long time to wait, but the wedding day was set for the following Christmas.

Mrs. Kidder could not accompany Eleanor, and she thought it improper to allow Howard to go, but she surrendered to Eleanor her faithful old Martha, who was to care for her as a baby till she was ready to come back.

"I feel like I ought to get a baby carriage for this job," said Martha to the butler.

"Don't I wish I was goin' wid ye, though," said

Judson. "Where they raise thim kind must be a mighty nice place to live, I'm thinkin'."

Aunt Margaret wept copiously at Eleanor's departure. "We are sending their angel back to them, my darling, but, I hope, not to stay. God bless and prosper you, my child; you have made me so happy I shall long for the time when you come back to stay. Good-bye, dear, good-bye."

Sympathetic Eleanor could not restrain her own feelings, and the parting was tearful in the extreme. Howard accompanied her as far as Philadelphia, where he bade her an affectionate farewell, assuring her that he would come out to Pemberton and visit her. They promised to exchange letters daily.

Upon Eleanor's arrival in Pemberton she learned how well she had been provided for by Howard and Mrs. Kidder. She had actually been the victim of a colossal conspiracy.

Her mother, the good pastor, and her old maid aunt met her and Martha at the depot, where they nearly smothered her with embraces.

"You look just like a hifalutin city woman, El," said her aunt, as she turned her around. "My, but you do look fine! Don't you think so, pastor?"

"Eleanor always did look fine to me," enthusiastically replied the pastor.

The mother was so proud of her girl that she could not say much, but she took her arm, as much as to say, "Yes, but she belongs to me."

Eleanor was sweet and good to her mother, and while they gathered her luggage together she placed

her arm about her, and thus they slowly strolled toward home.

Every little while some villager would greet Eleanor cordially, and bid her welcome back home.

This home-coming was truly a touching experience for the little Hoosier widow. The life she had been living during several months seemed artificial by comparison with the realities about her. The plain people looked wholesome and good to her. The tinkle of the anvil in Mr. Doble's blacksmith shop was sweetest music to her ears. She stopped for a moment to see the sparks fly, as she had done hundreds of times when a child.

"Hello, there, my little gal!" called the hearty blacksmith as he espied Eleanor, and his red-hot bar and his hammer fell in a clatter as he came to the door to greet his little chum. "Why, gol darn it, how kin you expect us to keep this hur town a-goin' if you stay away frum it. But—ain't she purty?" and he made a black smudge on Eleanor's cheek with his big finger.

At the corner grocery she had to nibble the sun-dried peaches displayed at the door, when a scrubby little old man, with scraggy whiskers on his chin, put on his glasses and looked at her savagely for a minute.

She made a face at him.

Turning, Mr. Tingerly called to his son in the store, "John, charge Mrs. Kilpatrick with a peck of dried peaches; here's this kid of hers eating up all in sight." Then he gave Eleanor a welcome to awaken the neighborhood.

"My dear," he said, as she started away, "if you will only keep your sunny face in this town, I'll place a fresh tray full of candied California peaches out here every morning, and you can stuff your little self full of them."

Eleanor threw a kiss at the homely, good old man who had given her a sweet morsel nearly every morning of her life when she went to leave the order for groceries. He sighed and shook his head as he watched her graceful figure disappear. "This town is too small for that girl; she is good and pretty enough for a king's palace." Turning and seeing his son John in the door he said, "John, if you hadn't been so derved silly and ugly you might have married Eleanor yourself."

"I an't no king," growled John.

As they passed the little old jeweler's shop, where she once delighted to stand by the window and see Mr. Jones, with a big magnifying glass stuck in one eye, looking into the mysterious depths of a watch, she tapped on the window. The old man looked up and saluted her cordially.

Then they stepped into the village Post Office, which was located in Mrs. Schell's millinery shop. Mrs. Schell was both town milliner and post-mistress.

"Lord bless my soul! Where did you come from?" and Mrs. Schell held Eleanor off and looked at her. "That's a Paris hat you've got on; I can tell 'em as far as I can see 'em. I'm real glad to see you back, El'ner. Goin' to stay?"

"A while," said Eleanor.

Pastor Overman had caught up with them by the time they had reached the old church.

Eleanor stopped short. "Why, what have you been doing to the church, pastor?" she asked in surprise.

"Oh, just painting and fixing it up a bit," replied the pastor with a mysterious air.

Eleanor was thoughtful.

When they turned the corner and were only across the street from Mrs. Kilpatrick's house, Eleanor was more surprised than ever. The house was painted snow white and tastefully decorated with stone-colored trimming. A new fence had been placed about the commodious lot and painted to match the house. The yard was full of flowers and shrubs, and swinging beneath the maple trees, which had stood for years in the front yard, was a large and beautiful hammock.

Passing into the house there were more surprises. It was newly papered and carpeted and refurnished. In the sweet little white parlor was a splendid baby grand piano of the latest make.

The upper rooms had been considerably changed, two handsome tiled bathrooms being added.

"Mother! how did all this happen?" demanded Eleanor.

"Well, my dear daughter," said Mrs. Kilpatrick, "a little while ago a fine, handsome gentleman came here. He said he was Mr. Howard Stafford, the lawyer who had attended to getting the money in London for you. With him was another man. Mr. Stafford said he desired, for certain reasons,

to give you a great surprise when you returned home, and these improvements are the surprise," and Mrs. Kilpatrick looked at the pastor, and they both laughed.

"Did he mention the 'certain reasons'?" asked Eleanor, much troubled at what her mother had told her.

"Yes, my dear child; Mr. Stafford came out here to ask me if he could have you. He told me the whole story. The pastor was present, and after he told us and I had said yes, we drifted into the idea of fixing up the whole place as a pleasant surprise for you." With this, Mrs. Kilpatrick embraced Eleanor and congratulated her.

"He has left me nothing to do," wailed little Eleanor. "He has come out here and taken away my opportunity to shine as a philanthropist."

"Oh, no, you are quite mistaken," hastily exclaimed the pastor. "He has left the organ, and the poor and needy of the town, to you."

It proved not so bad, Eleanor's coming home, after all. Each day brought her a most ardent letter from Howard, and about every fifteen days he himself appeared in Pemberton.

On the second visit, and each trip thereafter, the telegraph operator tipped it off that "Eleanor's feller will be here to-morrow," until the whole town began to meet him at the train. It was both embarrassing and funny, until, finally, the novelty wore off, and Howard could greet nearly every man in town by his first name. They were most courteous and polite to him.

Eleanor and the pastor meanwhile were organizing a system of caring for the poor of Pemberton after she was gone.

These were busy days up to the time of the wedding—that eventful Christmas when Pemberton gave to Howard Stafford the most precious jewel in her treasury.

Other great things occurred on that day which they did not soon forget.



## CHAPTER XVI

HOWARD purchased, on Long Island, an old homestead formerly owned by one of his clients who had failed in business. It was a magnificent place, so situated that it would be a delightful, permanent home the year round. Much of his spare time was spent in putting the place in order to receive his fair young bride when they were ready to return to New York and settle down.

Here Eleanor could have the delights of country life, yet be within forty minutes of the opera.

Howard had superintended the finishing touches and was making a final survey of the grounds. A path through his woodland had long been used by the surrounding neighborhood for horseback riding. It was breaking up the ground considerably, and as Howard stood at the head of a long, steep incline contemplating the advisability of closing it to the public, he heard a scream, and saw below, and plunging directly up the path toward him, a horse whose rider, a woman, was frantically trying to stop him.

Hastily calculating that the long run up the incline would cause the horse to slacken his pace at about where he was standing, he braced himself and waited.

On came the furious animal, shaking his head and snorting like a wild thing, his mouth wide open

and great flakes of white foam flying back into the face of the rider, who had seen the man standing in the road and who, through terror or hope of what might come, screamed no more.

As the beast reached the place where Howard stood he quickly plunged forward and seized the reins.

The horse threw his head in the air, lunged sideways, and stopped suddenly, throwing the rider entirely over his head. She alighted with tremendous force at the foot of a tree, her head striking the root with a sickening thud.

When Howard disentangled himself and reached her side she was lying face downward, and as he attempted to raise her to a sitting position, her head fell forward limply as though the neck was broken.

As he looked at the bruised face he exclaimed in tones of deepest anguish:

"My God! Dorothy!"

Tenderly he placed her in as comfortable a position as possible, and hastened to a point where he could call the men from his grounds to come to his assistance.

They bore her limp form through the park, and to the house; then the nearest physician was telephoned for. In the twenty minutes before his arrival every means known to those present were applied toward restoring her to consciousness, but without avail.

About the same time the doctor arrived a light wagon drove into the grounds; in it were a groom and an elderly man, who seemed to be in charge.

A hasty examination by the doctor revealed that Dorothy was alive, but there was every indication that she was dangerously, if not fatally, hurt.

The elderly man explained that he was the proprietor of a small inn, a short distance away, and that Dorothy had been stopping there for about ten days. Each day she had ridden horseback, always alone, and had seemed thoroughly able to manage the animal she had been riding.

When the horse came galloping back to the stable riderless, they at once drove out in search of the lady.

"What is her name?" asked Howard.

"Miss Blake," was the reply.

"Do you know where her people may be communicated with?" asked Howard.

"Yes, a Mrs. and Miss Baird, of Marchmont, have called here to see her, and she talks to them, almost daily, over the telephone. They have but recently returned from abroad, I believe."

There were some little fluttering signs of returning consciousness. Howard did not want Dorothy to recognize him, so he said to the elderly man:

"Come into the house and I will give you blankets with which to make her comfortable while you remove her to your place. I would advise you to immediately communicate with her friends."

Then he left her in their care and went away to think.

"Why did she come here to be hurt and again break into my sympathy?" he soliloquized. "Oh, what is that strange feeling which seems to make

us all akin in adversity? I hated the very memory of this woman, yet, in her awful affliction, I weep in sympathy for her; I am full of sorrow and regret. Sooner or later she must learn, if she recovers, that it was I whom eccentric fate selected to play the part of rescuer; then what will she think or do?"

Thus he bemoaned the curious adventure, and deplored the fact that he was again, by some mysterious power, brought into intimate contact with the woman he had turned out of his heart and away from his hearthstone. It did not seem an easy matter to wholly divorce a wife after all.

After an hour they ventured to remove Dorothy to the inn.

Howard had returned to New York, but arranged with the physician to have a daily report of Dorothy's condition. Moreover, he left instructions that a bouquet of flowers should be sent over to the invalid each morning from his conservatories.

The physician's reports were of the gravest nature, and, finally, while Howard was again visiting his place, the old doctor drove over to say that there was no hope of the patient's recovery. She was rapidly failing.

"Mr. Stafford," he said, "I have recently learned who you are, and of your former relations to our patient. This is one of the sad things in a physician's labors. For several days she called for Howard, asking, pleading for forgiveness. It was Mrs. Baird who explained to me the meaning of her ravings—she does not know you are aware of her

sad condition. If, at the last, you should be sent for, go, my brother, and let this soul take its departure in peace. You will never regret it. Take my word for it."

This was the saddest, most sorrowful moment in Howard Stafford's life.

He now saw clearly the difference between love and sympathy. They are two entirely different passions. The one buoys up the heart, the other depresses it. The one is a joyous elation of the spirit, the other is a painful and generous sorrow or regret. He loved Eleanor. He sympathized with Dorothy. He wanted to sing with the thought of the one, and weep with the thought of the other.

Yes, it was a soul-harrowing duty, but, should he be called to come to the death-bed of his former wife, he would go. He was a man of intense feeling, and he wept, even now, as he pictured the face of her, white and cold in death, who had been only a source of continual annoyance and trouble to all those who so much wanted to love and befriend her.

The summons did come, within an hour after the doctor left him, and in a curious way.

He was pacing the veranda, deep in meditation, when a carriage drove up and Mrs. Baird stepped out.

"Howard," she said, and burst into tears.

Placing his arm about the waist of his devoted old friend he assisted her to a seat. For a few minutes she sobbed grievously. Finally, recovering her composure, she took Howard's hand and said:

"I know you will do me one last and great favor, Howard, won't you?"

"I know what you are going to ask of me, Mrs. Baird," said Howard. "The doctor has just gone. He told me all. Is it true the hour is so near?" and he barely suppressed a sob himself.

"Yes, Howard; she is perfectly rational and conscious of what must be, and she confidently awaits your coming. She says she knows you will come. She knows you were the one who tried to rescue her. She knows you have daily sent her flowers, and oh! it breaks my heart, she declares she will be so happy and contented if she may die with your words of forgiveness at the last moment," and again Mrs. Baird wept.

"Come," said Howard, "I will go and see Dorothy."

It was the legal Howard who said this, but it was the true, sentimental, affectionate man that inspired it.

Here was an ordeal to try the heart of a giant.

Driving to the inn, Howard waited in the little parlor till Dorothy could be prepared to receive him. The doctor was there, and he whispered to Howard, "Hurry."

Howard quickly passed into the sick room, where only Mrs. Baird remained with him.

It was a horrible moment. White as the driven snow, Dorothy's face lay upon the pillow; she had not recovered the use of the muscles which moved the head. Her neck was virtually broken by the fall.

Mrs. Baird led Howard to the bedside.

"Let me see your face, Howard," said the pale lips.

He took the cold hand, leaned over and kissed the forehead, and whispered, "Dorothy!"

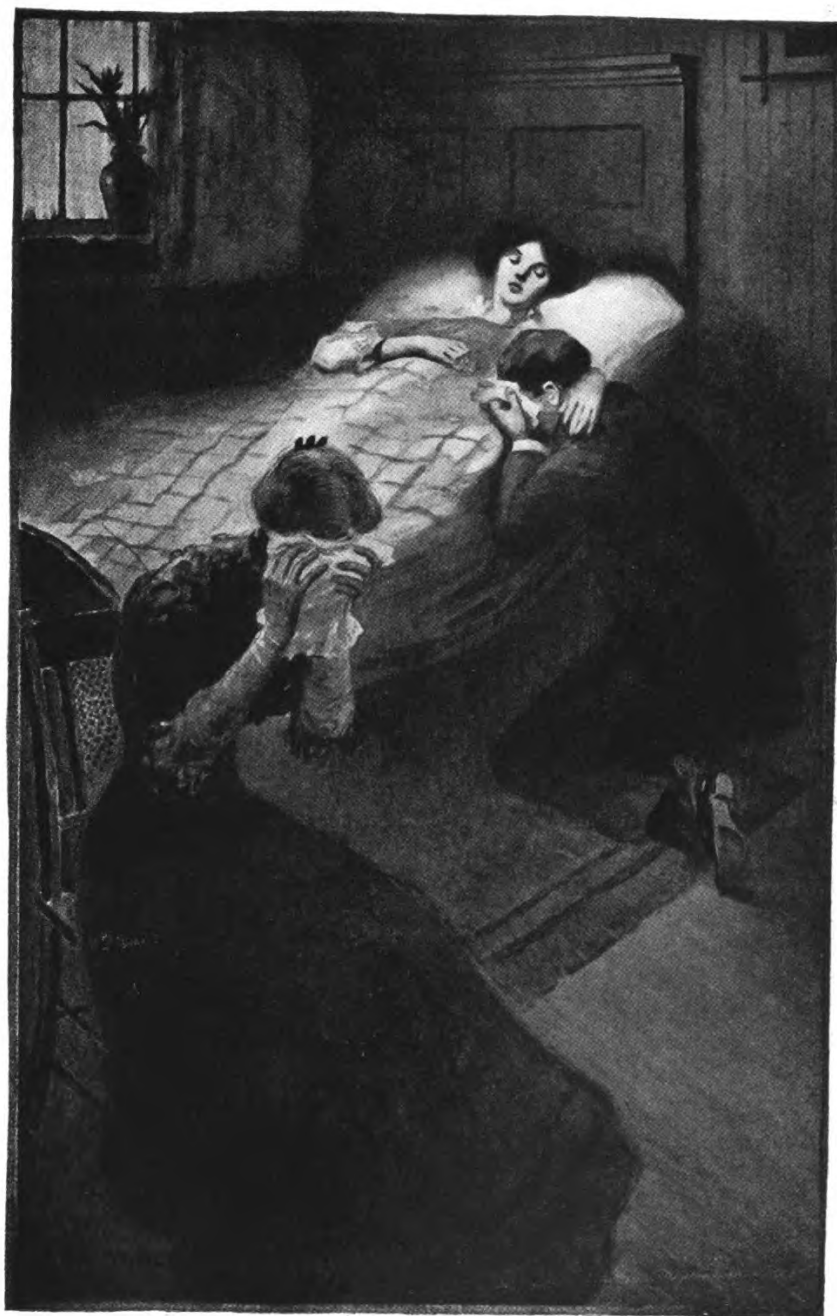
"Thank you, Howard; I am so happy!" she said, and the crystal tears of joy lay upon the wan cheeks as a peaceful smile settled over her face, and she went to sleep forever.

Howard's head sank upon the pillow and he relieved the awful pain in his heart by bitter weeping.

Then he went away. He did not return to New York for three days, but when he did he was a stronger, purer, better man. The tears of sympathy and sorrow for Dorothy brought a flood of sunshine into his soul with the sweet love he bore for Eleanor. It was the consciousness that he had done his duty as a man.

Dorothy was laid to her last rest by the side of her father, whom she so much resembled. In less than two months her mother followed her.

Shortly before her death Mrs. Blake had gone into Dorothy's room and looked sadly about. Going to the little desk where her daughter had kept her correspondence, she noted the disorder in which she had left it. The maid had not assumed authority to put it in order without instructions. Seating herself in its dainty gilded chair, which had so often held her child, the poor broken mother sadly picked over the confused heap of letters, invitations, and cards, without any particular aim or purpose,



"Let me see your face, Howard."

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until she espied, tucked away in an obscure corner, a sheet which was written upon but had not been folded. She carelessly drew it out and glanced at its heading. What a shock! It was the very letter which Dorothy had not destroyed on the eventful day following her flight from Howard, when Mamie Baird had called. The date proved this.

Dorothy's death had softened her mother somewhat; in fact, she would have gone to her daughter in her awful affliction could she have done so. As it was, it was arranged so they could converse by telephone, and Dorothy heard, in her own mother's voice, sweet words of forgiveness and a prayer for her soul.

Now, oh, now, what was this rising up to torment her? It was an accusing voice from the grave, for Dorothy was now gone from her.

With trembling hands she held the letter up and read it.

"DEAR MOTHER:

"My mother, who has always been so kind and generous to me, forgive me for all my wickedness. I know I am a most ungrateful and thankless daughter; I admit all of my faults, yet I am unable to conquer them. I do not know what to think or do. I sometimes think I am surely crazy. I cannot even try to avoid doing those things which I know to be most harmful to myself and annoying to you, and to others who have a right to expect better things of me.

"I know I have tried your patient nature beyond endurance. I cannot blame you for feeling so hurt with me, but it seems as though I would rather die

than be scolded or criticised for anything I may do. My nature rebels at being found fault with, even when I know I am in the wrong.

"Mother, I have thought long and earnestly over this, and I have concluded that I was born with my stubborn and perverse nature and there is no hope of altering it. The only thing I can do is to go away, far away, somewhere, that I may be free from certain influences which I am unable to resist.

"If you will forgive and encourage me, mother, I will try to do this—and try to do better."

Here the letter abruptly ended.

"Yes, my child," moaned heart-broken Mrs. Blake, "you were right; you have gone far, far away, and I hope to a purer and better world."

Gently folding the letter, she placed it in her bosom, where it was found when she, too, passed to the Great Beyond, perhaps to mingle her soul essence with Dorothy's.

Mrs. Baird was failing fast. Mamie grieved so much over the loss of Dorothy, who had been so loyal to her, that she took refuge in a convent, and her mother felt wholly deserted.

Mrs. Parker and Aunt Margaret felt their time would soon come, and began to put their houses in order for the dreaded day when one would go and the other be, for a while, left alone.

"Howard," said Aunt Margaret one day, "I'm going to have one more round before I wholly surrender; I'm going on your honeymoon trip with you, if you will let me."

"Why, auntie!" exclaimed Howard, "if I will

let you! The time will never be when your presence will not add happiness and joy to the lives of myself and Eleanor. You know how sincerely fond we both are of you. Of course you will go with us."

"Well, that is just like you, my dear. It does one good to prod you once in a while, so you will say these nice things," and Aunt Margaret patted his big shoulders, "but," she continued, "where are you going?"

"Ha, ha," laughed Howard. "I am going to write a book advising newly-married couples how, and where, to spend their honeymoons.

"I do not advise a trip which begins on the sea—sea-sickness is an antidote for love, and a sure poison for the romantic—that is, in most cases. I have always said that Cupid looks most disreputable on board ship. Cupid loves the sand and the sunshine, and we shall go where these are. I have been devising a trip which may be adopted by all future lovers in order that it may be syndicated and capitalized for the benefit of those who will strew flowers along the trail and beautify it for the thousands of careless and happy people who will patronize this highway for love's young dreamers. You are appointed as one of a committee of three to go over and inspect this rose-strewn road into fairyland. Do you accept or not? But you must. Speak quickly."

"Yes, count me in," laughingly replied Mrs. Kidder.

The weeks began to lag as Christmas approached,

until it seemed that time had stopped moving altogether; at last, however, the eventful week arrived.

Phenomenal things had been done in Pemberton since Eleanor returned there. The church choir of boys' voices had been reorganized and thoroughly drilled by their beloved leader, Eleanor. The former beginning of a village brass band had been increased to fifteen pieces and taken in hand by a Chicago bandmaster. This band was now playing creditable music, principally "ragtime," but good enough for political parades and as an escort to city bridegrooms who come to country towns to steal away pretty girls.

Eleanor, in addition to looking after her own personal preparations, kept a close supervision over the artistic and musical developments, therefore she was about the hardest worked person in town. A week in advance of Christmas she stopped all of her own efforts and devoted her time to rest.

Mrs. Kidder and Howard were to arrive in Pemberton Christmas morning at ten o'clock, and everything was ready for a lively reception to the bridegroom, who was now more or less friendly with everybody in the village. He had successfully floated an issue of water-works bonds for the town, also an electric light plant. This had given him quite a substantial standing with the business men.

At the anticipated hour Christmas morning the train stopped at Pemberton, and a splendid-looking man in a big fur-lined overcoat and silk hat alighted and very carefully assisted an old lady, who was also bundled up in furs, to the platform.

An obsequious, ruddy-faced man took charge of bags and baggage. It was Judson, who had his wish, that he might go "where they grow thim kind," gratified, for Howard had brought him along for emergencies. Judson had a motto, "Be careful what you wish for; you might git it."

It had snowed unceasingly for three days, and everything was wrapped in a white mantle, yet this Christmas morning was a crisp, snappy day, with the sun shining so brightly it seemed artificial.

A hundred people were at the depot waiting to escort the visitors to the home of Mrs. Kilpatrick. When they recognized the arrivals a hearty shout of greeting went up, and the committee appointed for that purpose stepped up and bade them welcome to Pemberton. They were snugly tucked into a big sleigh, drawn by four white horses, with jingling sleigh-bells. The village band took the lead and struck up "Hail to the Chief," and thus they marched to their destination. There the crowd dispersed.

The wedding took place at twelve o'clock, in a church packed to the walls. It would have done justice to New York. The little church was as handsome as it could be in its new furnishings and decorations. But that which perfected the whole was the choir of boys' voices. It was the most pathetic and musical thing that had ever stirred their hearts.

The good pastor, in his old-fashioned way, performed the marriage ceremony, and then, addressing Howard, said:

"Our brother, you have been given the most precious jewel we possessed. Sweet Eleanor Kilpatrick was our good angel, beloved by everybody; she has given to you herself and her love. Her equally beloved mother has entrusted her to your keeping, and now, on behalf of the people of Pemberton, the town which was founded by your kinsman, I give to you the dearest, best child we have ever raised. Take her, care for her, and love her tenderly, and the blessings of Pemberton and God will be ever with you."

Half the people in the church were weeping. At this juncture a handsome woman in a long white robe came down from the organ loft, followed by twelve bright, rosy cheeked boys, formed a circle about the pair, and in soulful melody bade them godspeed.

After the ceremony, a select party returned to Mrs. Kilpatrick's and sat down to a midday, Christmas, wedding dinner.

In the town hall long tables groaned under their burden of good things free to all who desired to partake. The village band was stationed at the entrance of the building, regaling the joyous crowds with music.

As the bridal party was to leave at two o'clock, the people were loth to go inside, even with the bribery of good things, fearing thereby they might miss the last view of their beloved Eleanor.

A great throng gathered at the depot and showered the departing lovers with rice furnished from the grocery store of Mr. Tingerly. "Every grain

is loaded with love, Eleanor," called the good-natured old grocer, and they were gone.

It was necessary for Howard to return to New York before they could start upon their real honeymoon trip.

Martha and Judson never got through telling of the entertainment they enjoyed out in Indiana. Their praise of the people of Pemberton always ended with something nice about Eleanor and her mother. He and faithful old Martha were to accompany the young couple on their wedding trip, and Howard had declared he would not tell them where they were going in order that every move might be a surprise.

This story could end here, but it would be incomplete did it not tell of the last tragic encounter between Howard and Captain Winnans, occurring, as it did, at the very end of their Southern travels. The reader may enjoy the trip, which was one continued round of pleasant surprises to Mrs. Kidder and the new Mrs. Howard Stafford, neither of whom had ever before been over the route. Moreover, it may tempt many other lovers to take the same enjoyable trip.



## CHAPTER XVII

It was snowing heavily in New York when our party left for the sunny South; therefore, when early the second morning they awoke to find themselves in a springtime climate, with the sun smiling at them from the eastern horizon, and the thrushes splitting their musical throats trying to tell them they were in the only Savannah, Georgia, a relief and relaxation came over them to make them forget all their troubles.

"This is good enough for me!" exclaimed Mrs. Kidder. "There is no more delightful climate in the world in December than may be found in Georgia. It will take a derrick to get me away from here."

That early morning drive, from the depot to the De Soto Hotel, was an experience not soon to be forgotten. The low, comfortable carriage, the joggy old horse, and the lazy "nigger," all seemed to be part and parcel of the sleepy town, with its ancient stuccoed houses, ivy-clad walls, and antique fountains. The neglected public squares and parks gave it the appearance of a place deserted.

The great trees were hanging full of the curious mourning-like moss which makes the whole country look weepy. One feels like stopping the passing stranger to ask who is dead; but it is neverthe-

less restful. The balmy air is enticing to the Northerner, accustomed to harsh, cutting winds.

Arriving at the modern tourist hotel, the De Soto, Howard registered, and said to the haughty clerk:

"I wired to you from New York regarding rooms."

The clerk gave a superficial glance toward a file of telegrams, and, without deigning to look at Howard, said in a monotonous sing-song:

"No-telegram-received-from-you."

Howard was patient. "Are you the chief clerk?"

At this "impertinent" question his lordship of the key-rack looked hurt, and began to look leisurely over the slips on the room-rack.

Drawing a card from his case, Howard motioned a bell boy to come to him. Giving him the card, he said, "Find Mr. ———, the manager, and give him this card." At this moment a gentlemanly, good-looking man stepped up and greeted Howard so cordially that the aforesaid knight of the key-rack turned with a jump. It was the manager.

"Your room clerk informs me that you did not receive my telegram from New York; that is rather curious, is it not?" said Howard.

"Nonsense," exclaimed the manager, "we not only received your telegram, but have your rooms ready for you, Mr. Stafford."

Howard smiled at the discomfiture of the stubborn clerk, who now looked thoroughly tame and sheepish, no doubt expecting him to resent his indifferent treatment upon registering.

They were conducted up to one of those strange, triangular rooms, with a large alcove, which, together with other adjoining rooms, had been assigned to them.

Here they spent two delightful weeks, finding ample to interest them in the antiquated place. They prowled about the streets picking up trinkets and curios to be shipped back to New York. They entered the tumble-down stucco houses, once the homes of Southern aristocracy and chivalry.

In one old high-ceilinged residence they found a negro woman washing clothes in the grand salon with a fresco above her head worth ten thousand dollars, while at the entrance stood crumbling four red sandstone pillars which bespoke a past grandeur of much importance. No one seemed to care for the historical value of things. It was of the practical present they thought.

They went slumming in "Yamacraw" and "Frogtown," to see the quaint and exclusive negro quarters.

Then came excursions to The Isle of Hope to see the terrapin farm; to Tibe Island, with its magnificent beach, and to Montgomery to catch hard-shell crabs.

Eleanor enjoyed these excursions immensely.

They made many trips out to Thunderbolt Bay, where they ate oysters and yellow-legged chickens. They prowled about the water and the rusty old shipping.

One interesting trip took them into the country,

where they saw the turpentine stills in operation, and the gathering of the precious rosin from the wounded pine trees.

With it all was mingled that gleeful joy which goes with a satisfying love. While Howard and Eleanor prowled, Aunt Margaret sat upon the great veranda which circled the hotel, and absorbed the soft sunshine till she was actually intoxicated with its invigorating influence.

"What a relief it is not to have to watch your children," she often said.

This was only the beginning of the joyous journey which all lovers should take at least once in life. It is all American and as satisfying as any other trip in the whole wide world.

From Savannah they went direct to Jacksonville. It was not so satisfying there. It was too commercial; therefore three days sufficed. On the morning of the fourth day they took the wheezy old steamboat for a trip up the amber-hued St. John's River, and how they did enjoy this quaint voyage up the murky stream!

Sometimes the boat would be almost stranded in mid-stream by the great floating beds of water-hyacinth.

From time to time a brief stop would be made at the most picturesque orange plantations or sleepy little villages, where would be dumped off sundry packages of groceries or other merchandise.

As they ascended higher up the river a negro stationed at the prow would sing out:

“ ‘Gaiter ‘head! ‘gaiter ‘head!’ ” meaning that an alligator had been sighted, and everyone would rush forward to see the creature in his native waters.

Mrs. Kidder was so comfortable and content she just sat in a big deck chair and smiled all the time, while Howard and Eleanor were romping about like two big children.

Everybody on the boat learned they were newly wedded, and they became the pets of all the other passengers, the old captain, as usual, making himself obnoxiously attentive.

Reaching the sun-soaked town of Sanford, they found they could be made comfortable for the night, so they remained there to catch the down trip of the boat the next morning as far as Palatka.

They made an interesting sail across the river from Sanford to Enterprise, where they were nicely entertained at the DuBarrie homestead.

Late the next day they arrived again at Palatka and engaged passage on the important little steamer to start the next morning for a trip up the crookedest river in the world, the dark and gloomy Ocklawaha. The mystery, the gloom, and the dark romance of this voyage could not soon be forgotten. It was like a sudden plunge from daylight into stygian darkness, from heaven into hell.

In the semi-daylight, one could sit upon the forward part of the upper deck and, with a little aid from the imagination, picture ghosts, ghouls, and goblins galore. Now the few glints of sunshine would be upon the prow, and a sudden bend would switch the sun around so it would be shining in ex-

actly the opposite direction. The turns, twists, and bends in the river actually made one dizzy.

"There should be a bottle at the other end of this river with a big cork in it so they can make use of this giant corkscrew," said Howard.

"The cork at the other end has already been drawn, you will find," said the captain.

The inevitable "'gaiter 'head! 'gaiter 'head!" was heard twenty-nine times in the day's trip, and the big, lazy alligators would slowly and reluctantly roll off the logs, sometimes so near the boat they could almost be touched with a walking-stick. "Old Captain Jim," the biggest and best-known "'gaiter" on the Ocklawaha, did not even wake up, but kept his seat.

This trip, while deeply interesting and entertaining, was one to make a little girl, who was afraid of ugly things, crave protection; therefore Eleanor took refuge between Howard and Aunt Margaret, and it was a day of sleepy rest, with an occasional awakening to view especially interesting points.

They had developed the most voracious appetites, and when eleven o'clock came, without visible signs of approaching refreshment, Howard began to move about. Seeking the fat, good-natured captain, he asked, in a persuasive sort of way, where they stopped "twenty minutes for luncheon?" The old "sea-dog" winked, chuckled, and said, "One of the punishments for taking this trip is starvation."

"How long does the punishment last?" asked Howard.

"It reaches the acute stage in about ten minutes," replied the captain. "But," he continued, "when you do eat, about one-thirty, you will be glad that you are good and hungry."

With this mysterious admonition he left Howard to guess the riddle.

In about ten minutes the first part of the riddle was answered. Upon turning a sharp bend in the river there appeared one of the most gorgeous and fascinating tropical scenes they had ever viewed. For the first time on the trip the bank rose up from the water edge, rolling back into high hummock land, and the beautiful, clear blue sky looked like a great mirror suspended above them. From the wharf to a point five hundred feet above, two rows of royal palm trees shaded a splendid road, be-decked on both sides with bright beds of flowers. At the crest of the ridge was a commodious snow-white house. The sixteen passengers were permitted to visit the home of the owner of this magnificent orange and lemon grove, and they enjoyed immensely the thirty minutes' rest from the vibration of the heaving and panting little steamer, with its twisted spine and battered ribs.

As they left the boat the captain stepped up to Howard and said in a low tone, "This is where the acute stage begins," and he pointed to a long pole, upon which were suspended a deer, two big bronze wild turkeys, a bunch of quail, a dozen squirrels, and a ham. Beneath, upon the ground, were a big basket of eggs, a basket of oranges, and a bunch of ripe yellow bananas, and innumerable vegetables.

Continuing, he said, "I want you, your bride, and your aunt to dine with me at half-past one o'clock."

Howard thanked him cordially, and, instead of joining the throng at once, he and Eleanor began to purchase the beautiful fans, baskets, screens, and numerous other things offered for sale by the native people on the wharf. These were stored away by the captain, to be shipped back to New York from Palatka.

Then they strolled up to the house on the hill to partake of a glass of orange juice or the cool milk of the cocoanut, which stayed their hunger.

Again the boat plunged into the labyrinthian darkness, snorting like a porpoise. It seemed as though it had recuperated its strength by the brief rest. All on board were now in the first throes of starvation. But at the hour of half-past one the steward of the boat, who was also chief waiter, systematically seated the people about a great dinner table.

The captain came to Howard and his party, and said, "This dinner is one of the features of this trip, and you will doubtless enjoy your meal best at the large table, where you can hear the jest and small-talk; but, if you prefer, we will dine in my private cabin."

"Oh, by all means, let it be at the great table," exclaimed Eleanor. "These are witty people, and I think it will be lots of fun."

Thereupon they took the four seats reserved for the captain and his guests.

It is worth while to mention the remarkable



menu. It was truly a novel experience to the travelers, as it had been to hundreds before them:

### MENU OF THE OCKLAWAHA STEAMER

	Caviar Canapes	
Olives	Radishes	Celery
	Vegetable Soup	
Roast Venison	Broiled Venison	Chops
Roast Wild Turkey	Squirrel Potpie	with Dumplings
Roast Quail	Broiled Quail	
Roast Lamb	Boiled Ham	
	Eggs in any style	
	Several Kinds of Vegetables	
	Orange Fritters	
Lettuce Salad	Tomatoes in any form	
Ice Cream	Cake	
Coffee	Tea	Milk
	Fruit	
	Cigars or Clay Pipes	

(This was the actual midday dinner served on this boat running up the Ocklawaha River at that time.)

Wine and beer could be had by those who desired them. The captain and Howard split a pint of champagne, but Aunt Margaret and Eleanor did not indulge.

If the wit and good humor of that occasion could have been preserved, it would have made an interesting book. It was the awakening, for soon after the dinner the boat, in a single bound, jumped out of the murky Ocklawaha into the crystal waters of Silver Springs River.

In this magnifying water could be seen the fishes, turtles, and water insects in their garden-like homes in the bottom of the river. A nickel piece could be dropped in the water and watched until it rested upon the white sandy bottom ninety feet below. For hours this furnished the most exciting amusement, but at last the great goal was reached—Silver Springs.

The snorting little monster butted its way against the silver-crested waves, which boiled and foamed about her prow, until she reached the wharf, where she was securely fastened.

Then the passengers had an opportunity to view one of the greatest phenomena of the world.

"Do you think she is corked up now?" asked Captain Coons of Howard.

It was a curious coincidence that the immortal Ponce de Leon should theorize that, somewhere in Florida, there was a spring of eternal youth, and this amazing and mysterious spring should actually exist in the interior. Ages previously, the aborigines had passed the word, by some mysterious means, back to the old world that this spring existed.

It is an awesome spectacle, fascinating to the imaginative, and of deep interest to the scientist.

But enough of the Ocklawaha.

Upon returning to Palatka, Howard forwarded all of the "trash," as Aunt Margaret chose to name it, to New York; then they took the train for St. Augustine, the oldest city in the United States.

Ah, here was a new inspiration. Quaint beyond

description; fascinating in its sunny brightness, and impressive in its historical aspect. Savannah was asleep. St. Augustine was wide awake.

It was too early in the season for the Ponce de Leon Hotel to be open, therefore they found comfort in the Spanish-looking Alcazar until the greater house threw open its magnificent portals to the waiting throngs.

Here were two weeks of sunny sensations. What with visiting the mysterious and gloomy old Fort Marion, going over to Anastasia Island to plunge into the surf, visiting the old slave mart, the ancient cathedral, old man Veder's museum and collection of rattle-snakes, and a hundred other interesting places, two weeks found them ready to migrate farther southward.

They shipped another cargo of "trash" to New York, from St. Augustine.

"That is what the first-timers always do," said Aunt Margaret disgustedly.

Howard now began to study his charts and maps. Evidently his Cupid's trail was going to take a short cut some place.

"Auntie," he said, "I have here some letters from several members of the New York clubs to one good-natured old chap who owns a place called New Smyrna on the Hillsboro River. I am told that the hunting, fishing, and bathing at this point cannot be excelled. It was my intention to visit this place, but I have a letter from my friend Millford saying that he has at Daytona, a few miles above New Smyrna, and directly at the inlet, a large

steam launch in perfect order and with his man in charge, which will accommodate eight people comfortably. It is equipped for cooking and sleeping in the most approved style. He offers it to me free of cost, let, or hindrance."

"Oh, that is great!" exclaimed Eleanor, clapping her hands like a delighted, happy child; "do let's take it."

"Well, my sweetheart, unless it burns or is stolen before we can take possession of it, we shall do that very thing," declared Howard. "We can ship our heavy baggage on to Palm Beach and leisurely run down the Hillsboro, Halifax, and Indian Rivers to Lake Worth and Palm Beach in our own private yacht."

"It seems all right to me," said Mrs. Kidder.

Acting accordingly, the third day thereafter found them at Daytona.

The *Lotus* was a beautiful little craft, with almost as good accommodations as they had enjoyed at the hotels. A trustworthy man of fifty was in charge. He had been notified direct that the boat had been offered to Howard, and he touched his cap respectfully and saluted him as captain.

This was the beginning of another round of pleasing experiences. Instead of immediately starting away, they tested the fishing at the inlet, and found it to be the best they had ever known. Sea bass weighing from seven to forty pounds were the chief catch, but they had a world of sport fishing for sharks in the shallow waters.

Eleanor hooked a two-hundred-pound shark, and

all hands took hold to land him, which they did in thirty-five minutes.

At one point they could catch nothing but sheeps-head, ranging in size from three to eight pounds. This was about the bridge which crossed the river near the inlet.

Daily they took their plunge in the splendid surf, and quite every day they had a regular rumpus with a half dozen porpoises, nearly as big as horses, which insisted on coming up into the river for a play and a romp. They always scared Eleanor half out of her wits as they came snorting and plunging along by the boat.

One of the novel things they experienced was their daily oyster bake. Great areas are covered with the small, clustering coon-oyster, a dozen or more growing together in a bunch. The banks, tree roots, and every projection were literally covered with them.

Digging a pit in the sand, they would build therein a hot fire of dry twigs, then lay the clusters of oysters thereon, to pop open, when they would be quickly plucked out of the shell and eaten. Nothing could possibly be more delicious and palatable.

From time to time, as they traversed the rivers, small mountains of oyster shells and fish bones were seen along the banks. Some of these were sixty to one hundred feet high. It was said that in pre-historic times the Indians would gather here by the thousands and have a feast of fish and oysters.

They now began to pass magnificent orange and

lemon groves, banana plantations, pineapple farms, vegetable and truck farms, and all that interests in this rich semi-tropical country. They frequently passed boats, similar to their own, always with joyous and happy people aboard.

They had many pleasant visits, occasionally meeting someone they knew. Everywhere they met a hearty welcome, replenishing their stock of provisions, from point to point, with the choicest of each place.

Howard would, occasionally, knock down two or three wild ducks during the day, and nearly every evening they would have some kind of game—squirrels abounded along the shores, and a run out on the dry ridges started up large numbers of yellow-breasted meadow larks which made excellent potpies. Once in a while a few quail could be popped over. At some points they found quantities of crabs. They could buy venison nearly everywhere, so they lived like royalty so far as food was concerned.

These were delightful days. Love grew strong and bold under the spell. Howard seldom did anything without his dear little companion and chum right by his side. This is the beginning which makes love enduring.

The odor of the orange blossoms, the fragrance of jessamine and the rose, and the romance of it all enthralled them. And the wonderful nights! They could sit at ten o'clock in the evening and write by the light of the moon. They could read books and newspapers by the full moon. They

were entranced by the southern sky at night, with its great bright stars, which seemed near enough to be plucked out of the blue heavens.

At last they entered the broad expanse of water called Lake Worth, between which and the ocean is the narrow strip of land which contains the magnificent Palm Beach and the exclusive homes of the rich.

They at once made a landing upon reaching Palm Beach and went directly to the Hotel Royal Poinciana. Here Howard found his baggage properly cared for, and a basketful of letters and newspapers.

He also found his friend Millford, already domiciled, and having a gay time.

Rooms had been reserved for them, and they were soon snugly nestled in the arms of the queen of winter resorts.

What a soothing, soul-nourishing life it was, living in this gorgeous flower garden. The waving plumes of the royal palms; the cocoanut palms with their clustering fruit; the hundred or more varieties of blooming shrub, and the flowers, made it a paradise—a place of bliss.

Oh, the sweet days spent here by our lovers seemed like one long pleasant dream. They were supremely happy, and so thoroughly in love they lost sight of people about them, strolling for miles and miles upon the hard, smooth beach, or plunging into the thickets of undergrowth in search of momentary adventure, and at all times stealing the sweet caresses which belong to earnest lovers.

Aunt Margaret made no complaint that she was left alone much of the time. She wanted to be.

Each morning they would arise quite early, have their breakfast and take Mrs. Kidder for her morning exercise to the end of the great pier and back. Then, sometimes, she would stop in the bathing casino for an hour, to watch Howard and Eleanor disport in the great pool, there being but few persons there at that time. They were thoroughly self-satisfied and selfish in their love, and avoided the crowds. Then Mrs. Kidder's day's work was done till evening, when they would have another stroll, just before or after dinner. Thus three weeks were spent quickly, every hour one of joy and bliss.

With some reluctance they left this beauty spot for Miami, another garden of Eden.

They found the Hotel Royal Palm almost a duplicate of the Royal Poinciana, but where Palm Beach was soft and restful to the eye, the glitter and glare at Miami was almost unbearable. It was not nearly so pleasing. One peculiarly annoying thing they found there were thousands of crows. Their incessant "caw, caw" was most tantalizing. They would come almost into the windows in search of food.

It was evident they would not remain there long, so they secured the services of "Alligator Jack" and, taking a launch, made that gloomy trip up the River Miami and into the dismal swamps of the Everglades. There they had the satisfaction of buying many beautiful things from the Seminole



Indians, who seldom come out of the Everglades. On their way back "Alligator Jack" pounced upon a ten-foot alligator, bound him and towed him back to Miami, where he was to stuff his hide and ship it to New York.

Only a few days sufficed at Miami, but it was the point where the steamer was taken for Nassau in the Bahama Islands, and a trip down the east coast would not be complete without taking a night ride over to Nassau and spending a week or ten days there.

The fishing at Miami was not so easy and convenient as at Palm Beach. It was on a much grander scale.

The great sport was fishing for king-fish, jew-fish and other large varieties. This required going outside of Biscayne Bay and into the open Atlantic, which sometimes was quite hazardous for small boats.

Howard secured a large auxiliary yacht with a good skipper in charge and went king-fishing.

They had a pleasant day and "struck" their school of king-fish promptly, catching forty-two fish, ranging in weight from seven to fifteen pounds. It was great sport to land a catch before a shark would swallow him, fish, hook, sinker and all, for several large sharks, from ten to fifteen feet long, followed in the wake of the vessel all the time.

When the catch of king-fish was made, Captain Benson took a ham skin and baited a hook, about twelve inches in length and the size of a good stiff walking stick, and attached to a rope about a half

inch in diameter. This he cast into the water and let the vessel run away from it. In less than ten minutes a three-hundred-pound shark was paying out the rope so rapidly it actually smoked as it passed over the windlass. Mr. Shark was finally brought up to the ship's side so he could be examined, and later released. His loyal little pilot clung beneath his fin and was turned loose with him.

This was the end of the work at Miami.

## CHAPTER XVIII

"I AM getting so fat and lazy lounging around here I cannot move a peg," said Aunt Margaret. "You will have to get a porter to take me down on a truck and check me as baggage," and they did take her to the landing in a rolling chair.

At five o'clock they were on board the snowy white steamship and headed for Nassau in the Bahama Islands.

As they glided out of Biscayne Bay they were treated to a magnificent view, with the great white hotel as the central figure. They experienced quite a rough and stormy passage, but as the greater part of it was spent in their cabins it did not count.

Aunt Margaret said: "It's a disgrace to only be in the lockup over night; no respectable burglar would think of such a thing. Just as one begins to settle down to a siege of the golly-woggles someone hammers on the door and orders you on land. It's like being put out of a hotel." And when she was shown an advertisement which said that it was only a thirteen-hour trip from Miami to Nassau, she declared the schedule was unlucky and that she would walk back, if it was not changed to twelve or fourteen hours instead of thirteen. Howard informed her that she was getting to be a garrulous old lady and that he would see the captain and ask

him to make her work her return passage at the pumps. The next morning, however, she duly apologized upon viewing the more than gorgeous sunrise, and declared she was glad to be alive to enjoy so rare a treat.

"Land in sight!" was the joyful cry which made all hearts light at this hour as the first wee palm was seen to sprout out of the sea and soon multiply into a dozen, a hundred, then whole lines of graceful trees penciled against the tinselled horizon.

What a picture for mortals to view! The great sun had barely climbed above the water line and the whole sky was splattered with vivid colors which were reflected in the sea.

The group of islands, now in bold relief, resembled a well-executed water-color picture. The tall, straight stems of the cocoanut trees and royal palms, with their spreading foliage, resembled umbrellas, under which, one might easily imagine, reclined the natives in their tropical ease and luxury. How Christopher Columbus and his tired crew must have rejoiced at this glorious sight!

The graceful sweep of the shore line was now visible, and the clean-cut gateway into the splendid harbor of Nassau could be seen. Carefully wending her way through the narrow strait, the steamer entered the snug harbor and picked her way daintily among the craft already at anchor.

It being a British port English shipping prevailed. Nevertheless, vessels of many nationalities were there. The picture was enhanced by two snow-white war vessels, a United States revenue cutter,

and at least a half dozen private yachts belonging to rich Americans.

"What do you think of this scene, auntie?" asked Howard.

"Quite sufficient to awaken the dead," responded Mrs. Kidder, as she watched a small boat filled with half-clad little negroes eagerly looking up at the passengers. Suddenly, Eleanor gave a little suppressed scream, upon seeing a similar lot of bronze cherubs dart like fishes, headfirst, into the clear waters, all heads pointing for the same objective point, a silver coin which one of the passengers had tossed into the water. It could be plainly seen, slowly sinking toward the bottom, which it never reached because one of the divers actually caught it out of the water with his mouth.

Then a shower of coins followed, and the spot was literally alive with spluttering, kicking and yelling pickaninnies, some poised ready for a dive, some in the air, having made their spring, and still others could be seen deep down in the water, all scrambling for the coveted bit of silver. In every position they were extremely graceful. They seemed to be able to live as well in the water as out.

Eleanor's ears were ravished by the sweet music which surrounded the ship in the bay at Naples; she was scared at Alexandria over the struggle for the removal of baggage, but at Nassau she was highly entertained by what she saw. In each instance, however, the main object was to wheedle money out of the tourists by playing upon the objective senses.

It was with difficulty they induced her to leave the boat, so engrossed was she in watching the strange new sights from the vantage point of the upper deck. Scores of pleasure craft were darting about, filled with happy, laughing people. They were white people, and therefore tourists, because practically the whole city of Nassau is composed of negroes as black as the ace of spades. Notwithstanding they are negroes, a sweeter-tempered community was never gathered together. All is good nature, peace and harmony. The life seems to be one of extreme ease and comfort.

Their light baggage having been examined (they had left their larger trunks at Miami), they clambered into one of those low, comfortable vehicles, made especially for Nassau, and were jogged up to the hotel, where Howard had cabled for rooms.

Ugh! It was utterly impossible. No use to attempt to describe it. It was the only hotel in the place, and it seemed as though the only alternative was to take up a domicile with some negro family, as did many others, or beg for return on the steamer leaving that day at five o'clock.—We are told that a beautiful hotel was subsequently erected there.

After having spent two hours in vain search of attractive quarters, they drove back to the landing with regretful hearts, for everything seemed so novel and attractive they greatly desired to remain.

Upon reaching the wharf Howard ventured to tell his woes to the Officer of the Port, Captain Bentley, a fine old Englishman. After listening patiently, he said:

"If you can get along with the plain rooms in my humble home I think we may prevail upon Mrs. Bentley to accommodate you."

"Indeed, we shall be ever grateful to you, for we do want to see more of this charming place," exclaimed Howard.

Again taking the rocking-chair carriages they drove to Captain Bentley's home, an old-fashioned place, most curious and picturesque. It was on one corner of the open square wherein the soldiers of the English barracks, which fronted on one side, had their daily drill. This was quite an interesting sight which they viewed from their windows.

Good-natured Mrs. Bentley cheerfully took them into the bosom of her family, assigning them to large, airy, comfortable rooms into which a flood of sunshine poured each morning. From the large windows could be had tantalizing glimpses of the bay, with all of its gorgeous colorings. It made one weep with sheer joy to view, for the first time, the gleaming waters with their rainbow tints, a picture too delicate to be imitated by the hand of the artist. The mere suggestion of fleecy clouds greatly enhanced the beauty of this aspect, as they scudded along, low in the sky, between the sun and the waters of the bay. Sheet after sheet, and wave after wave of brilliant hues, green, blue, yellow and brown, followed each other in panoramic splendor.

Eleanor had been pleased with the colorings of the waters at Genoa, Venice and Naples, but here she was bewildered, delighted, entranced.

"No wonder these people are happy!" she exclaimed. "No one could live in this paradise and be otherwise."

It was love-inspiring, it seemed so calm and peaceful. No dreaded Sirocco was here to mar the eternal summer.

She had felt extremely grateful to Mrs. Kidder and Howard for their kind attentions while abroad. She was truly under obligations to them on that occasion, but it was different now, quite so. She was a part of it. Their hearts also rejoiced equally with her own that this was true. They were happier, much happier, knowing they wholly possessed their sweet-tempered, joyous-natured little Eleanor.

Ah, but these were the sweetest days they had ever known. No cares, excepting the exquisite cares of love. No worries but the little trifles which keep the tourist alert and alive. What could possibly mar such bliss? Nothing. Nothing? Sometimes the lightning seems to flash from out a clear sky.

Captain Bentley, upon learning they would remain for a couple of weeks, or perhaps longer, if they found the sport sufficiently inviting, took it upon himself to secure for them, during the period of their sojourn, a smart young native, with one of the "go-easy" vehicles, who piloted them over the whole island. He also made suitable arrangements with another son of Ham, who owned a splendid little schooner, a glass-bottomed boat and all other paraphernalia for fishing, visiting the neighboring islands, and viewing the grand sea gardens. Howard had first call on his services.



Once settled they wasted no time. They spent the early morning driving about the curious old place, visiting the ancient Spanish forts, the plantations, where they saw in their native state the cocoanut, pineapple, the banana, and many other things which they could see nowhere else. Everywhere they were greeted with the sight and fragrance of flowers. They feasted upon the luscious sappadillo, guava and the forty other varieties of fruits grown upon this island.

In the early evening they prowled about the quaint places of the town itself, which is more than three hundred years old, studying the customs of the people and picking up curiosities.

In the early night they took in the entertainments devised to draw the odd shillings out of the pockets of the willing tourists; some of these were entertaining and some bare-faced fakes, even amusing in their simplicity.

One night scene, however, was no joke. It was the very wonderful phosphorescent lake, which was called by the natives "Fire-lake," and an appropriate name it was. This phenomenon is one of the greatest curiosities in the world, and alone is worth a trip to Nassau to see.

The night was as dark as the dusky guide himself. Upon arriving at the small lake, a body of water two hundred feet in diameter, they were seated in a flat-bottomed boat and gently pushed away from the landing. As the waves agitated the water a faint phosphorescent shimmer was observed upon the surface. Suddenly, there was a

splash, and the naked form of a ten-year-old native boy was seen to dart through the water, with long streams of fire following in his trail. It was truly amazing to watch the ribbons of flame streaming from his body and limbs as he made each stroke.

Then the boatman dipped in his oars, and the most beautiful pyrotechnic display resulted. Long strings of silver-white beads trickled down the edges and off the ends of the blades. Dipping the hands and allowing the water to escape through the fingers produced the appearance of emptying a handful of pearls or diamonds.

The fishes and insects, myriads of them, scampered away at the approach of the boat, leaving fine zigzag trails of fire as they sought seclusion in the grasses about the edges of the basin.

Aunt Margaret declared it was the spookiest thing she had ever seen, and that, in her opinion, it wasn't far from a very warm resort she had often heard of. Upon Howard's protesting that there was no actual heat in the water, she said: "You have to die to find out about the other, and doubtless this is a kind of spiritual fire which only a dead man can appreciate."

Then Howard explained that the phenomenon was due to myriads of animalculae in the water, and they agreed that whatever it might be they had profoundly enjoyed the novel sight.

The drive home that night was an enchanting experience. All was quiet, sweet and peaceful. Even the insects seemed to be asleep. It was truly

a time for rest and calm repose. Although they drove past where they knew there were many, not even the growl or bark of a wakeful or watchful dog broke the monotonous silence. It was the stillness of the mountain, or the solitude of the desert.

Before they left Nassau this dark drive was changed into a moonlit one, the like of which they had never seen before.

"It's our honey-moon, dear," Howard said to Eleanor on their first drive, alone, under the beams of the moon in Nassau.

Oh, these were sweet evenings, never to be forgotten! In the calmness of the soft summer night these lovers truly told, over and over again, their undying love for each other, pledging eternal confidence and loyalty. The exquisite joy of these hours, wholly alone with their love, utterly oblivious to all the world and the many troublesome people in it! If it could only last forever; if they might slip away over the great moon-kissed ocean, whose silver sheen drifted in upon the frothy waves which softly lapped the coral shores along which they gently glided.

Night after night, after Aunt Margaret was snugly tucked away, they took these delightful moonlight drives, to love and dream. Sometimes they would follow the winding by-ways, filling their souls with romance and their nostrils with fragrance. At other times they would creep along the sea-shore, to watch the fascinating play of the waters.

Were these delicious hours? Ask the lovers who

have experienced them; they, alone, can truthfully answer.

At last, the day came for visiting that feature of Nassau which distinguishes it above all similar places. There are sea-gardens elsewhere, but none like those at Nassau.

The surroundings, the depth of the water, the peculiar location with regard to the light, the easy access, all contribute to the sea-gardens of Nassau as a spectacular show for the ardent and enthusiastic tourist. The first peep into the dainty fairy-land amazes the spectator; the second look fascinates, and a prolonged study of the wonders of the deep is inspiring.

It was a perfect day when they sailed up the narrow channel between New Providence and "Hog Island." The air was soft and balmy, and as they dashed along over the tilting waves, filling their lungs with the fragrant air, their hearts expanded with joy and they were filled with that exquisite pleasure which comes with perfect contentment.

Occasionally the delicate spray, as though imbued with the playful mood, would reach over and caress their glowing cheeks only to arouse them to laughter.

Dick, their boatman (that was the only name by which they knew him), was as black as night, and was the champion diver as well as a cracking good sailor. He put the spray into many another joyous face that day, outsailing all of them.

Arriving at the long slender strip of land, known

as "Hog Island," Dick suddenly turned his little craft into a snug harbor and dropped his sail; then, by carefully working his way through the sharp coral formation, he made a landing upon a beach of hard, clean, white sand. This sheltering basin was circled about with graceful cocoanut palms laden with their clustering fruit, giving to the charming spot the touch of romance belonging to a dream of the tropics.

Dick had an assistant with him, a diminutive son of Pitch, whose agility outrivaled that of a monkey, for, placing his hands about the slender trunk of a cocoanut tree, he literally walked up the trunk flat-footed. When he reached the branches he selected certain of the nuts and dropped them to the soft sand below where they were seized by Dick, who, with a dexterous twist, opened them. They were in the delicious jelly state, about the consistency of a hard-boiled egg, the condition in which they are most relished there.

The glass-bottomed boat was put in order, the glass-bottomed buckets were gotten out, and all was in readiness to view the wonders of the deep; truly, a look into fairy-land.

The purpose of the glass was soon demonstrated. No matter how rough the sea, the water beneath the glass was like a mirror.

Being almost a child, both in years and experience, naturally Eleanor was most delighted, and betrayed the greatest enthusiasm. She preferred the bucket, because she could direct it to any point, independent of the boat.

Oh, the surprise of that first peep into fairy-land! The amazing novelty of it all fascinated them into silence at first, but this quickly gave way to exclamations of eager delight and surprise.

It was a mimic garden with every part dwarfed to a minute scale. The color scheme was something marvelous, in tints and hues which art cannot imitate. The whole consisted of an endless variety of delicate vegetation, silken and lacey in texture, and fantastical or exquisitely beautiful in form. The silver-white sand on the bottom was littered with tinted sea shells of great variety of shape and size. Half hidden among the foliage were imaginary fairy castles and palaces so perfect that it was difficult to believe that one was not actually viewing a highly colored picture of a scene filled with imposing buildings. Many of them seemed to have numerous windows, out of which peeped the eyes and noses of curious fishes and sea animals. Flitting about among the foliage were delicately tinted fishes, so dainty and birdlike it needed no special effort of the imagination to believe that they were, truly, more bird than fish.

It was interesting to note, too, that this animal life at the bottom of the sea also imitated the law of color prevalent with the birds of the land. Those which hovered near the bottom were mottled in their markings, blacks and browns prevailing, while those which frequented the more open places, where they could be more conspicuously seen, were marked in the gaudy coloring of the brightest tropical birds, their flowing, silky wings, finer in their

texture than the most delicate lace, poising them gracefully in the water. Some of the lower caste, which could be seen creeping about and hiding among the dark recesses, were actually hideous in form and color.

A great variety of sea-fans, white, blue, pink and yellow, could be seen waving gently to and fro, as though keeping the scene cool and in motion.

Here and there would rise the fantastical dome of an unusually large coral pagoda with its delicate tracings like the hieroglyphics on an Egyptian obelisk.

Star-fish, great and small, were everywhere, and many other wonderful things.

It could not all be seen at one time; many trips would be necessary, to do it full justice, therefore, upon Eleanor complaining that her neck was aching with looking through her ponderous telescope, it was decided to adjourn and come again another day.

Dick suggested that Eleanor select one of the pretty coral sea-fans and he would dive and get it for her. His record was forty feet. Howard lowered a line until the end of it touched the fan and it measured thirty feet. Dick, who was thinly clad in light cotton garments, plunged with a quick bound into the water, and while Eleanor intently watched him, he swam to the very fan she had selected and soon laid it at her feet in the boat. It was afterwards dried, packed and sent to New York, with other "trash."

It was said that no one had ever been able to

catch any of the strange and beautiful fish seen in the sea-gardens. Howard, however, decided to try it, and he began to experiment, with the result that, on the third day thereafter, he brought home nine varieties of the brightly painted little sea-birds. When placed upon one of Mrs. Bentley's tea-trays they looked as though painted thereon. The catch was turned over to a taxidermist, who preserved and mounted them, and Howard sent them to the National Museum at Washington, where they may probably be seen now.

After having exhausted the sea-gardens, as a means of amusement, they decided to visit "Hog Island," one of the rare treats of Nassau.

Taking the regular transports which plied between the two islands, they were quickly landed upon the white sand beach of the interesting resort. A shilling apiece entitled them to a multitude of dissipations. First, the ride to and from the island. Then, after arriving on the island they could eat as much as they could of the forty-two kinds of fruits grown there. Long tables stood under the trees laden with the fruits peeled and prepared for eating. Pitchers filled with the juice of the orange or the milk of the cocoanut were free for anyone to help himself.

Eleanor plucked, with her own hands, a large piece of fruit called the shattuck, and it was a refreshing feast, sufficient for the three.

To them, as to all others who came there, it seemed perfectly plain why the island was called "Hog Island"; everyone made a pig of himself



there. This was not, however, the case; the island was owned by a Mr. Haag.

Tiring of the feast, Howard suggested their walking across the island to the bathing beach. Upon learning that their shilling also entitled them to a plunge in the sea, and that good bathing suits could be had, Howard was soon in one, Eleanor not wishing to go into the water.

With the fragrant orange trees and innumerable flowering shrubs and their sweet odors hedging the sandy pathway, they trudged some hundred feet to the far shore of the island, where they came out from the sand dunes upon a magnificent strand of beautiful white sand, some three hundred feet wide at low tide. Like a boy, Howard plunged and tumbled about in it.

"Howard!" exclaimed Mrs. Kidder, "really, I'm ashamed of you." There were some two hundred people on the beach and in the water.

Finding a clean, dry sand pile, the ladies took a seat thereon and Howard struck out for the surf. He was a strong swimmer and at once started for deep water for a long swim.

For an eighth of a mile the water did not range in depth more than three to five feet, and there was no under-tow, therefore there was little risk to the bathers; so little danger, in fact, that only three life-guards were kept there. By some strange freak of fate that day, the life-boat was far out from the shore, an unusual thing, and it was towards this, fortunately, that Howard swam.

The boat contained two of the guards, while the

third one lay upon the sand not fifty feet from where the ladies were seated eagerly watching Howard in his course.

Eleanor, always uneasy when her lover was away from her side, seemed more than ever on the alert to-day. It was more instinct than anything else which caused her to spring to her feet and rush, screaming, to the water's edge.

Far out from shore Howard was gracefully riding the gently tossing waves, when Eleanor's keen and jealous eyes had seen two other men make a dash for him, and immediately there seemed to be a struggle going on between them.

Eleanor's ear caught what she interpreted as a cry of distress, causing her to give the startling alarm. Mrs. Kidder was greatly frightened at her behavior, and the shore guard, grasping his glass, leveled it for a moment at the three men. Suddenly he dropped the glasses, seized his battered megaphone, and calling to the men in the life-boat succeeded in directing their attention to the three men, who could now be plainly seen struggling desperately.

It seemed an eternity before the boat reached the spot, when one of the guards was seen to stand up and strike one of the men with an oar. They then forced all three to get into the boat, one having to be assisted, and pulled rapidly for the shore.

All the people on the beach crowded about the boat when it landed. It was plain that a tragedy had been enacted, or narrowly averted. Two of the men stepped out upon the sand, but the third, which

was Howard, had to be aided. Completely exhausted, he lay with his wet shoulders and head pillowed in Eleanor's lap.

Did that little lady faint? Not she. She was a fury. When she was certain that Howard was only exhausted she raised him to a sitting posture, then sprang to her feet, with the fire of a tigress in her eyes.

The two men stood between the guards. A small stream of blood was trickling down the face of one from a contusion on the forehead. It was the result of the blow from the oar in the hands of the rescuing guard. Moreover, it was Captain Winnans' unlucky head upon which it had fallen.

For a single moment Eleanor stood, like a tigress, gathering her strength for a spring. Pointing her finger at the now thoroughly subdued captain, she almost screamed: "You murderer! this is some more of your villainy; you shall suffer for this."

Under the stimulants given him, Howard had quickly revived and recovered his strength. Eleanor's voice brought him to his feet.

Taking her by the arm he drew her back to Aunt Margaret, then himself, confronted the culprits. What he said was of much greater significance to them than the angry words of an over-excited woman. He coldly said to the guards: "Be quite certain that you obtain all the facts regarding this matter. I will prefer criminal charges against these men. I will accompany you to the police headquarters and myself make the charge."

At this juncture a dignified gentleman stepped

up and said to Howard: "Allow me to present to you my card; I saw this affair and will appear as your witness, if you so desire."

Howard accepted the card with thanks, assuring him that he greatly appreciated his disinterested kindness.

The culprits were taken before a local magistrate and held until Howard could communicate with the Governor of the island.

Upon learning the criminal character of Winnans and Fenton, for that is who the companion proved to be, the authorities held them on large bail. It seemed certain that both would languish in jail for some time, for there was no intimation that anyone would come to their rescue with the required sum.

One way to tell a real criminal is by the cunning of his methods. Captain Winnans was such a criminal. He waited till that night, then some mysterious person signed the bail bonds and they were released.

The next morning when their case was called they did not respond. Bench warrants were issued and the cases postponed, but nowhere could they be found.

The authorities cabled to all points along the Florida coast, advising the authorities of these places to detain the refugees, should they be apprehended, but to no good purpose; they were never caught.

One year later an old man confessed to having helped in the escape. His story was that Winnans and Fenton were guests on an auxiliary yacht

owned by a rich young American who put up a cash deposit as bond, and that same night they sailed for the Florida coast, their destination being the inlet at New Smyrna. They reached there in safety, two weeks afterwards getting over into the interior of the State.

Howard left no effort untried to locate Winnans, finally getting a last report that he had met his fate in Australia, having been shot to death by a young English soldier over a game of cards.

Our story ends here. It is needless to follow our lovers farther, and there was no cloud remaining above the horizon of their lives to mar the peaceful enjoyment of a true and earnest love.

FINIS

