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# **FRIENDSHIP AND FOLLY**



**"THERE WAS A LITTLE BLACK SHAPE SITTING ON SOME LUGGAGE."**



# FRIENDSHIP AND FOLLY

A Novel

BY  
MARIA LOUISE POOL.  
AUTHOR OF  
"IN A DIKE SHANTY," "BOSS," ETC.



BOSTON  
L. C. PAGE AND COMPANY  
(INCORPORATED)  
1898



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# FRIENDSHIP AND FOLLY.

## CHAPTER I. AT SAVIN HILL.

There was one large wicker chair on the piazza, and in the chair sat a girl. It was a spacious piazza, the roof of which was supported by gnarled tree-trunks, the bark and the knots carefully preserved so as to look "rustic." The deep eaves drooped in a rustic manner also, and there were trumpet-vines and wistaria, and various other creeping things of the vegetable world, wandering about in a careful carelessness, like the hair of a woman when it is dressed most effectively.

The lawn swept down rather steeply and stopped suddenly against a thick stone wall that was covered with ivy.

On top of this wall, ruthlessly trampling back and forth on the leaves, was a small boy dressed in the fashion of a member of the navy. His blue pantaloons flapped very widely at the ankles, and were belted about him by a leather belt on which was the word "Vireo," in gilt letters; his brimless cap was tipped perilously on that part of his head where the warm affections used to be located in the days of phrenology. On this cap also appeared the word "Vireo," in gilt. This figure, outlined as it was against the bright blue of the sky, had the effect of not being more than about sixteen inches long. And in truth Leander Ffolliott was very small for his age, which was ten years and five months. He did not feel small, however; his mind might suitably have inhabited a giant's frame, so far as his estimation of himself and the Ffolliott family generally was concerned. But the rest of the family did not always agree with him in this estimation, and at such times of disagreement the boy was given to screaming and kicking until the air round about this summer residence resounded, and seemed actually to crackle and glimmer in sympathy with the mood of Leander. 16

Just now he had stopped in his trampling of the ivy leaves. He was standing with his legs wide apart, and was bending forward somewhat, stirring with a stick something on the top of the wall in front of him. His atom of a face was screwed up, his lips sticking out, 17

"Sis!" he suddenly shrieked; "I say, sis!"

The girl on the piazza stopped reading, and looked at the boy.

"What's the matter?" she called out.

"You just come here; you come here this minute! Stop readin' that nasty book, 'n' come along!"

"Carolyn, you'd better go," said a voice from the inner side of an open window; "if you don't he may be so tried with you that he'll fall off the wall. I've told him not to get on that wall, anyway."

The girl rose and turned her book down open upon her chair. Then she sauntered slowly along over the lawn, so slowly that her brother Leander stamped his foot and called to her to hurry, for he couldn't wait.

"You'd better hurry, Carolyn," said the gentle voice at the window; "I'm so afraid he may fall."

So the girl hastened, and in a moment was leaning against the wall and asking, without much interest:

"What is it, Lee? You do shriek so!"

Leander was now standing upright. He had put his foot, encased in yellow leather, hard down on the something he had been poking at. His freckled face was red, his eyes shining with excitement.

"By George!" he exclaimed; "you can't guess in a million years what I've found! No, not in ten million! I ain't picked it up yet. I wanted you to see me pick it up. Oh, thunderation! won't I just do what I darn please with the money? You bet! Fifty dollars! Cousin Rod owes me fifty dollars! I don't s'pose he'll be so mean as to say that ad. of his has run out 'n' he don't owe me anything. Do you think he'll be so mean as that, Caro? Say!" 18

At this thought Leander's face actually grew pale beneath tan and freckles.

The girl was not very much impressed as yet by her brother's excitement. She was used to seeing him excited.

"You know Rod wouldn't do anything mean," she replied, calmly. "But what are you talking about? Of course it can't be—"

"Yes, 'tis, too. And it's fifty dollars. Now you needn't go 'n' tell Rod he no need to pay it, 'cause 'twas one of the family. I won't stand it if you do! I—"

"Stop your gabble!" interrupted the girl, imperatively. "Lift up your foot."

She took hold of the boy's arm as she spoke. A certain spark had come into her eye.

The foot was withdrawn. In a cleft between the stones, where the ivy leaves had hidden it, lay a ring. It was turned so that the stone could but just be seen. 19

She extended her hand, but it was promptly twitched away by her brother.

"None er that!" he cried. "I ain't goin' to let you pick it up; then you'll be wantin' to share in the fifty dollars. You can't do that,—not by a long streak. Here she goes!"

He stooped and then held up a ring between his finger and thumb. The sun struck it, and made the engraved carbuncle shine dully red.

"That's the very critter!" exclaimed Leander, triumphantly.

"Let me take it," said the girl.

She spoke shortly, and in a way that made the boy turn and look at her curiously. But he obeyed instantly. He laid the ring in the palm of her hand, thrust his own hands into his pockets, and stood gazing down at his sister.

Carolyn Ffolliott looked at the trinket with narrowing eyes. Her lips were a trifle compressed.

"There ain't any mistake, is there?" the boy asked, at last, speaking anxiously. "That's the ring Rod lost, ain't it? Anyway, it's one exactly like it,—that red stone with something cut into it."

"There isn't the least chance of any mistake," was the answer. "Of course it's Rod's."

20

Carolyn gave back the ring.

"And I sh'll have the reward?"

"Of course."

The girl appeared to have lost all interest in the matter. She turned to go back to the piazza.

Leander made an extremely tight, hard, dingy fist of one hand, with the ring enclosed, and then he leaped down from the wall, landing so near to his sister that she staggered away from him.

"I wish you would behave respectably!" she cried.

"Pooh!" said Leander. He ranged up by her side and walked across the lawn with her towards the house.

He had now put the ring on his thumb and was holding it up in front of him, gazing at it. He was greatly surprised that his sister took no more notice of it. But you never knew what to expect of a girl. Anyway, she shouldn't have any of that money.

"I'll bet I know how the ring got there," he remarked, presently.

"How?"

"Why, you gaby you, the crow, of course. But I don't know how he got it. Flew into Rod's room sometime, I s'pose. If he thinks such an almighty lot of it, Rod better look out. I guess fifty dollars'd get a lunkin' lot of cannon crackers, don't you think, sis?"

21

"Yes," absently.

"But I better have some pin-wheels, 'n' Roman candles, don't you think?"

"Yes."

Leander turned, and peered up at his sister's face.

"You mad 'cause you didn't find it?" he asked.

"No."

"All right. I guess I'll get you 'n' marmer some kind of a present. I'll make marmer tell me what she'd like for 'bout fifty cents. Hi! marmer! I'll let you have three guesses 'bout what I've found—"

Here Leander slammed in through the wide screen door which opened from the piazza into the hall.

Leander's sister resumed her seat. She had taken up her book, and now sat looking at it in much the same attitude that had been hers when her brother called her. She could hear his shrill voice inside the house, as he told his mother of his find.

After a few moments Carolyn heard the clock in the hall strike ten. At about ten the mail for "Savin Hill," as their place was called, was brought over from the village.

22

But she continued to look intently down at her book for several minutes more. Then she rose slowly; she stood and gazed off across the lawn to where a sharp line of glitter showed between some savin-trees that had been left standing on the other side of the wall. These trees slanted south-westerly, as do most of the trees on the south shore of Massachusetts, being blown upon so much of their lives by the northeast wind.

That line of glitter was Massachusetts Bay. Across the girl's vision moved two or three sails; but she did not seem to see them. Her eyes showed that she was not thinking of what was before her.

Presently a clock somewhere in the house struck the half-hour after ten.

A servant came out on the piazza with some papers and letters in her hand. She hesitated, then came forward. "You told me to bring the mail out here, Miss Ffolliott," she said, as if in apology.

"So I did; thank you."

"Why, Carolyn!" exclaimed a middle-aged lady, hurrying by the servant, "isn't this odd about Rodney's ring?"

"Very," answered the girl. She held the papers in her hand and did not raise her eyes as she spoke.

23

"I do wonder what he'll say," went on her mother. "I do wonder if he still cares. How upset he was! And how curious that he should have lost the ring just before the engagement was broken! It did seem almost like a forerunner."

Mrs. Ffolliott held the trinket in her hand. Her son was standing beside her still, with his hands in his pockets. He was watching the ring somewhat as he would have watched it if his mother had been likely to devour it.

"You know Devil took it, of course," answered Carolyn, without raising her eyes. "There's no other way to account for its being in the wall there."

"It always seems so profane to speak of the crow in that way," murmured Mrs. Ffolliott.

Whereat her son frankly exclaimed, "Oh, marmer, don't be a jackass! That's the crow's name, you know."

"But he ought never to have been named in that way. I objected to it from the first."

"Pooh!"—this from Leander.

"I know," went on the lady, "that it was Rodney himself who named him, but—"

"Come, now, marmer," the boy interrupted, impatiently, "you always say that."

24

"Here's a letter from Prudence at last."

It was the girl who spoke, now looking up at her mother.

"Read it to me, dear," was the response. But it was some moments before the mother and son could finish the altercation now entered into as to who should have charge of the ring until such time as it could be returned to the owner.

Mrs. Ffolliott succeeded in gaining permission, Leander perceiving that the article would be safer in her care. But he cautioned her not to expect any share of the reward.

Then he walked out of sight to some region momentarily unknown to his parent, and peace reigned on the piazza.

Mrs. Ffolliott sat down in the chair and placidly waited.

Carolyn stood leaning against the wall of the house. The open letter hung from her hand.

"That new man hasn't brought back the veranda chairs since he swept here," now remarked Mrs. Ffolliott. "I wish you'd tell him—"

"Yes, I will, presently," replied the girl. "Shall I read this to you now? She's coming home."

"Coming home!"

25

"Yes. Here's what she says: 'My dear old fellow—'"

"Does she call you that?" interrupted Mrs. Ffolliott.

There was a slight smile on the girl's face as she answered:

"Yes; she seems to mean me."

"Oh, dear! Well, it's just like her. But then, anything is just like her. Go on, please."

"My dear old fellow," again began Carolyn, "I suppose there is stuff that martyrs are made of, but none of that stuff got into my make-up, so I don't mean ever to pose for that sort of thing. That is, never again; but I've been doing it for the last four weeks."

"You see, mamma would have me stay with her at Carlsbad. It has seemed as if I should die. And how horrid you would feel if you should have to tell people, "My dear cousin Prudence died at Carlsbad." Because, you see, they don't die at Carlsbad; they hustle off somewhere to die and be buried. And if I should give up the ghost here I should be thought quite odd. But I shouldn't care for that. Only I want to live, and I mean to. That's why I'm not going to stand it."

"There hasn't been a man here that it would pay to speak to, much less to look at. I might just as well have been a nurse. I shouldn't have been so bored, for if I had really been one that knowledge would have sort of upheld me,—at least I think it would."

26

"And mamma will have me with her when she takes the mud baths. I have to stay right there and see her step into the big tub of ground peat and sprudel water. And there are snakes in it; anyway, mamma feels just as if there were, and makes me feel so, which amounts to much the same thing, because if there were, they wouldn't be poisonous, you know. She sits up to her neck for half an hour. Black mud! Then a nurse comes and lifts out one arm; pours water over it. Then the other arm; pours water over it. Then mamma gradually rises and goes into a regular sprudel bath. I'm just pervading about as the dutiful daughter who is staying at Carlsbad with her mother. Every third day sprudel is omitted."

"Mamma has me with her when she goes to the springs to drink. Drinks six glasses; stops after each glass to walk one-quarter of an hour. We walk one solid hour before breakfast. I go with the procession of drinkers, with mamma on my arm. Oh, that procession of drinkers solemnly walking the time out!

27

"I always look to see if there are any new men. You know I must do something. And there always are some new ones. But they are watching themselves, their insides, you know, to see what the mud baths and the water are doing for them already. And I can tell you as a positive fact that a man who is watching to find what a mud bath has done to him is as uninteresting as a dummy. You try it and see, if you don't believe me.

"One day I did have a bit of a sensation. I was going along just as primmy as prim, with mamma on my arm, when I suddenly felt as if somebody were staring at me. So I turned my eyes, and there was Lord Maxwell gazing right at me. He was one of the procession of drinkers. He was limping. Perhaps he has rheumatism, or, rather, of course he has it, or he wouldn't be here.

"I wonder if I flushed. I couldn't positively tell. But I bowed, and he raised his hat, and his face grew red. But the procession kept right on. If I should see him, he wouldn't talk of anything but how many glasses he had to drink; he wouldn't, because it can't be done here in Carlsbad.

"Mamma converses a great deal about her food. For some reason she makes me listen, or pretend to listen. I know all about how she can eat bread, but no butter, and stewed fruits, and once in awhile an egg. You can skip this if you want to, but I can assure you I can't skip it; I have to take it three times a day, and sometimes in the night,—the talk about it, I mean. I have a bed in mamma's room, and I have to be wakened and told how mamma detests bread without butter; and she never did like eggs.

28

"I've borne the whole thing like an angel, I do believe; particularly since Lord Maxwell came. He hasn't been very interesting, but I was hoping all the time he would be. He still wears red neckties in the morning. He has gone now. He thought some other mud might do more for him than this mud. And I've told mamma that she positively must get along now with her maid and her nurse. And she's a lot better, anyway. And I'm going to start from Antwerp; and I shall alight at Savin Hill about as soon as you get this. And you must receive me with frantic delight. My love to Aunt Letitia, and to Leander, and to Devil; and millions of kisses to your own self. But I'll give them to you. I "don't nohow expect" that Rodney Lawrence is to be in Massachusetts this summer. But if he should be with you, kind remembrances to him. I saw a man a few weeks ago from New York who said that Mr. Lawrence was bound to make his mark. I don't suppose he cares for compliments any more.

29

"Ever your  
"PRUDENCE."

As Carolyn finished reading the letter she folded it carefully and stood there in silence.

Her mother drew a long breath. She contemplatively patted a bow of ribbon on her morning dress.

"That's just like Prudence Ffolliott," she said, at last.

"What is like her?"

"Why, starting off and coming home all in a moment like that."

"She has been abroad more than a year."

"Has she? Well, I've missed her unaccountably, but I must say I was relieved when she went. And now I shall be glad when she comes."

Carolyn turned her head and gazed at her mother for a moment. Then she smiled, slightly, as she said, "One is bound to miss Prue one way or the other."

Mrs. Ffolliott continued to smooth the bow of ribbon.

"And Rodney coming, too!" she exclaimed.

"That will make it interesting to all of us, don't you see?"

30

The girl made this remark a trifle satirically.

"And Leander has found the ring she gave him!"

The pronouns in this sentence were so indefinite in their reference that Carolyn smiled at them. But she did not take the trouble to reply. She knew her mother's manner of speaking.

Mrs. Ffolliott rose from her chair after a moment. She came to her daughter and put her hand on her arm as she asked, impressively:

"Can't you telegraph to Rodney not to come?"

At this instant something made the girl turn quickly. Her face flushed crimson. She uttered an exclamation, and ran forward to the open door.

On the other side of the screen there stood a man. He was tall, he was young, and at just this juncture he was laughing silently.

He hastily swung open the wire door and stepped on to the piazza. He put one arm about the elder woman and one about the younger, and kissed first one and then the other.

"Aunt Tishy," he said, "I reached that door just in time to hear you ask if I couldn't be telegraphed to not to

come. No, I can't be."

Mrs. Ffolliott was gazing with delight up at the young man's face. Carolyn stood looking at him demurely.

31

"Is the scarlet fever here, and are you afraid I'll take it?" he asked.

"Did you hear anything else we said?" she inquired.

"Not a word."

"It has happened so unfortunately," now began the elder lady. "But what are we going to do?"

"Mamma!" exclaimed Carolyn.

The young man began to be puzzled. A line came between his eyes.

"If you really want me to go—" he began.

"No; mamma is silly, that's all," said Carolyn, frankly.

"As if that were not enough!" Here Lawrence laughed, but the line did not leave his forehead.

"You'll have to tell him now, mamma," said the girl, "or he will really think we don't want him."

Mrs. Ffolliott hesitated. And as she hesitated a glitter grew quite decidedly in Lawrence's eyes. The Ffolliott home had always been his home, and though "Aunt Tishy" was not his aunt, but only a second cousin, she had been very kind to the boy whom she had persuaded her husband virtually to adopt when he had been left alone before he was ten years old.

32

"Yes, you will certainly have to tell me," he said; and he drew himself up a little as he spoke. "I thought," he went on, "when I overheard you speak of sending me a message, that you were going away somewhere; but if it's not convenient for you to have me—"

"Now it's you who are silly," Carolyn interrupted.

"You see," said Mrs. Ffolliott, "we have just heard from Prudence."

"Well?"

Lawrence knew that Carolyn was carefully refraining from looking at him, and this knowledge keenly exasperated him.

"I thought that—I didn't know but—"

Having proceeded thus far, Mrs. Ffolliott paused.

Lawrence laughed, not quite pleasantly.

"You thought that if a man was once a fool he was always a fool?" he asked.

"I don't know, I'm sure," the lady answered, helplessly. "Caro, you tell him."

"One would think you were going to cut off an arm or a leg," he said.

"It's all quite ridiculous," the girl began. "Prudence writes that she is tired of staying abroad, and she is coming here. What she says is that she may 'alight at Savin Hill at any moment.'"

33

Lawrence walked to one of the piazza pillars, and leaned against it.

"I suppose I must have been even more of a raving maniac about Prudence Ffolliott than I knew, and I knew I was the most infernal idiot that ever walked on the face of the globe," he said, looking at Carolyn. "At least I came to know it, you understand. But a man gets over a lot of things. You'll find there won't be a bit of melodrama or anything of the sort. You'll have to let me stay, if that's all you've got against my staying." Here the speaker laughed gaily.

"That's so nice, I'm sure," said the elder lady, comfortably; "and now we won't think anything more about it."

But Lawrence did not seem to hear her. He was still gazing, somewhat markedly, at the girl, who smiled a little constrainedly at him, as she said:

"It's very odd, but Leander has just found that ring that Prue gave you, and that you lost so unaccountably."

"Has he?" The young man closed his lips tightly for an instant. Then he laughed, and said, "In that case I must owe the boy fifty dollars. That's the reward I offered. I remember at the time I wanted to offer five hundred, but you told me, Caro, that the smaller sum would be just as effective."

34

Lawrence turned and walked across the veranda. Mrs. Ffolliott went into the house. The young man returned to Carolyn's side.

"It all seems a thousand years ago," he said. "I was wild—wild for her. I suppose I was somebody else; don't you think I was somebody else, Caro?"

"No. And it is not quite two years since then."

"How literal you are!"

"Am I?" she asked, smiling.

"Yes. And such a comfort to me. Caro, I'm going to kiss your hand."

He took both of the girl's hands, held them closely, then kissed them gently.

"I'm sorry you and Aunt Tishy seemed to think you must arrange so that I shouldn't see Prudence. It makes me appear such a weak fellow. Do you think I am a weak fellow, Caro?"

"No."

"Honest Indian?"

"Honest Indian."

"Oh, I'm glad of that. I find I am asking myself so many times if Caro thinks this or that of me. Perhaps you call that weak?" 35

But the girl only laughed at this remark.

Then they talked of a great many things, until Lawrence asked, suddenly, "Where did Leander find that ring?"

Carolyn told him.

"Odd! Of course it was Devil's work?"

"Yes. He took my gold thimble, you know."

The young man said, "I'm sure Lee won't let me off; he'll exact every penny. I would gladly have given all my possessions to get it back again when I lost it. But now—"

Here Lawrence paused. He was gazing persistently at his companion. But she did not seem to be aware of this gaze. She did not try to help him out with his sentence. She was standing in perfect quiet; she was not a nervous woman, and she could remain for several moments without moving.

It was six months since Lawrence had seen Carolyn. He was wondering if she had always impressed him as she impressed him now. If she had done so, he thought it was inexplicable that he should have forgotten.

But then, formerly, he had seen somebody else. That accounted for everything, of course.

At this fancy he smiled. 36

And he wished that carbuncle had not been found. It seemed awkward to have that turn up now when he had ceased to care for it. It was like a ghost stalking out of the past.

He took a step towards the door.

"I'm as dingy with heat and dust as a savage," he remarked. "I suppose I can have my old room?"

"Of course."

"All right, then. Do stay out here until I come down, Caro; will you?"

He advanced now towards her.

"Will you?"

"If mamma doesn't call me."

"Very well."

Lawrence went into the hall and to the foot of the stairs. With his hand on the post, he paused. He stood there an instant, then he turned back. He rejoined the girl on the piazza. She had walked to the railing and was leaning both hands upon it. Lawrence caught a glimpse of her profile, and his own face grew tender at sight of it.

"Where in the world have my eyes been?" he asked himself.

She turned quickly as he came through the door.

"I came back because I was afraid Aunt Tishy would call you," he said. 37

"Oh!"

"Yes."

Then the two stood in silence.

"You see, I wanted to ask you about that man person who was hanging around you when I was at home the last time."

"What man person?"

"No wonder you don't know. I ought to be more specific. I mean the Morgan fellow."

"Nothing about him that I know."

Lawrence flung back his shoulders. His eyes began to sparkle.

"All the better for me, then," he exclaimed. "Caro," he went on, more softly, "do you think you could possibly make up your mind to marry me?"

There was a moment's silence, during which the girl's eyes were drooped. She had not flushed; she had grown white.

"Could you do it?" he repeated, gently.

He bent and took her hand. She withdrew it.

"I'm sorry you've asked me this," she said.

To these words he made no reply. His face grew a trifle set.

"Because," she went on, hesitatingly,—"because I feel almost sure—at least I'm afraid—"

38

"Well?" He spoke peremptorily.

"I'm nearly certain that you don't know surely that—that you've stopped loving Prudence."

He burst into a laugh; but he stopped laughing directly. He took her hand again. "Is that all?" he asked.

"Yes; I think that's all. And that's quite enough. You see, I was here when you were in love with her; I know something about how you loved her. You did love her. And you can't have forgotten it in less than two years. Why, I couldn't forget such an experience in a lifetime. It must have been like—like fire sweeping over your heart."

"But a man comes to his senses; a man gets over everything, you know. And I've had my lesson."

Lawrence was speaking eagerly now. His whole face began to glow.

"If you could only say yes to me, dear Caro!" he went on. "If you feel hopeful that you could learn to love me, —tell me, do you think you could learn?"

She smiled, and Lawrence asked himself why he had never before particularly noticed her smile.

"I think I could learn," she said, at last.

"Then you are promised to me? Caro, say, 'Rodney, I am promised to you.'"

39

He had drawn her more closely.

"Say it."

"Rodney, I am promised to you."

"Thank you, dear little girl, thank you. We shall be as happy as the day is long. I begin to be happy already."

She looked up at him wistfully. Her features were not quite steady.

"Oh," she whispered, "I hope you haven't made a mistake!"

"I'm sure I've not."

He kissed her, but she shrank a little from him. She put her hand on his breast, and thrust him from her.

"If you find you have made a mistake," she said, solemnly, "remember you are not bound,—not bound one instant after you see how blind you've been."

"I am glad to be bound to you," he returned, as solemnly as she had spoken,—"grateful beyond words, Caro, as time will prove to you."

The girl suddenly took the man's hands, and held them fast, looking earnestly in his face as she did so.

Then she said, nearly in a whisper:

40

"Yes, I love you, Rodney."

But the instant she had uttered those words, she was aware that he had not spoken thus, and a scorching blush rose to her face, and burned there until she was almost suffocated with it.

"Bless you for that! Oh, you don't know how I bless you for that!" exclaimed Lawrence, quickly. "And I love you with a love that lasts,—that means something,—that takes hold on life."

He spoke fervently. He had his arm about Caro now. His eyes were shining.

It was at this moment that a small figure in a naval suit appeared on the outside of the piazza, at the farther end of it. This figure noiselessly vaulted over the railing, and as noiselessly came forward.

Within a few yards Leander paused, with his hands thrust to the very depths of his pockets, and his small legs wide apart. His eyes were what romance writers used to call "glued" to the two standing there. His mouth was stretched in an appreciative grin. Directly it changed from a grin to a round shape, and a shrill whistle was emitted from it.

The two started. Lawrence wheeled round, frowning. He subdued his first impulse, which was to take that atom and fling him over the railing.

41

Leander nodded amicably.

"How de do?" he inquired.



"I'm pretty well, thank ye," answered Lawrence.

The boy looked with a new and curious interest at his sister. "Was she in love?" he was asking himself. And he immediately put the question aloud:

"I say, sis, are you in love? Is that why you 'n' Rodney were huggin' so?"

"Hold your tongue," Lawrence promptly commanded.

"All right." Then, contemplatively, "I s'pose you 'n' sis are spoons, ain't you? That's what the new chambermaid 'n' the coachman are. He told me the other day that he 'n' she were spoons. They were huggin', too. And I asked him about it."

"I'll swear you asked him about it," responded Lawrence.

Then the young man made a diversion. He walked forward, and laid hold of Leander's shoulder.

"I heard you found a ring," he said.

The boy puckered his face, and gazed up at the face above him.

"You bet," he replied at last. "Prove property and pay for this advertisement, *and*—fork over the fifty dollars, 42 —that is, if you want her."

At this stage in the conversation, Leander's sister escaped to her own room, where she sat for a long time by the window, looking off on the bay.

Below she heard the murmur of voices, the shrill tones of her brother, and the deeper tones of Rodney.

She put her hand down to her belt. Her fingers touched something which rustled. She had thrust her cousin's letter into her belt. She now drew it out, and read it again. She read it as if it were written in a foreign language, and as if she were translating it word by word.

## CHAPTER II.

### A SLIGHT ACCIDENT.

When it is summer-time, and you are engaged to the most perfect man in the world, and you are at a lovely seaside cottage with him, and are boating, and playing tennis, and trying to play golf, and cycling, and it is a little too early for any of all those people who are going to visit you really to arrive,—when such conditions prevail, you don't expect time to drag.

And time did not drag with Carolyn Ffolliott,—it flew.

A week had gone when one day at breakfast Mrs. Ffolliott remarked that she had almost a good mind to worry.

Her daughter looked at her questioningly, and Leander, with his mouth full, said that "Marmer'd rather give a dollar any time than miss a worry."

But marmer took no notice of her son; she continued to gaze at Carolyn, with her brows wrinkled.

"Prudence, you know," she went on. "She said she might come any minute." 44

"I suppose she changed her mind."

"Perhaps. But I've been dreaming about her; I thought she was drowned, and when I told you, Caro, you laughed, and said it was a good thing. I was so shocked I—but, good heavens! Caro, what makes you look like that?"

"Like what?"

"Why, just as you did in my dream,—that same light in your eyes—"

"Mamma!" broke in the girl, angrily. But she did not say anything more.

At that moment a servant came into the room with a salver in her hand, and on the salver lay a yellow telegraph envelope.

Carolyn half rose from the table, then she sat down, for she saw the servant was coming to her.

To these people a telegram was little different from an ordinary note. Everybody telegraphed about everything. Notwithstanding this, the girl could not keep her hand quite steady as she tore open the cover.

Her mother watched her face; she was still thinking of her dream.

Immediately Carolyn began to smile. She read aloud: 45

"Please send your wheel over to station for 11.40 train.

"PRUDENCE FFOLLIOTT."

The elder woman stirred her coffee desperately. "She isn't drowned, then," she said.

"Apparently not, since she wants my wheel."

"Shall you send it?"

"Yes."

"Sha'n't you drive over to meet her?"

"No."

"Well," said the elder lady, forcibly, "I call it ridiculous, coming home from Europe on a bicycle! I don't see when she learned, either. I thought she had been giving her mother mud baths, and all that sort of thing, and being devoted and—and what not."

"As for that," responded Carolyn, "I don't know but Prue would be able to learn to ride a wheel in a mud bath itself."

"Bully for Prue!" cried Leander.

"My son!" said his mother, at which he grinned, but kindly refrained from repeating the remark.

Carolyn had risen from the table. She held the message crumpled in her hand.

"Sha'n't you meet her anyway?"

"How can I if I send my wheel?—but I have an idea that she doesn't care. I don't precisely know what she does mean, so I shall wait." 46

"I sha'n't wait," suddenly announced Leander. "I shall spin down there myself."

"And when is Rodney coming back, did you say?"

"Not until to-morrow."

Mrs. Ffolliott indulged in some remarks on the ways of young people at the present time, to which no reply was made.

So it happened that when the eleven-forty train steamed up to the little station, there were on the platform but two people, the agent and a small boy in a suit so close and abbreviated as to be almost no suit at all.

This boy was standing by his own wheel, and another bicycle leaned against the wall of the building.

Leander was scowling along the steps of every car, and saying to himself:

"I'll bet she hasn't come. Women never do anything right. I wanted to race her home."

Three men and a small girl had alighted. It was no use looking any more. There, the train was moving.

"Oh, thunder!" said the boy.

He was turning away, when something touched his shoulder, and somebody asked:

"Leander, why are you saying 'thunder?'"

He flung about quickly. He snatched off his atom of a cap and looked up at the tall girl beside him.

"Now, that's O. K.," he said, "and I'll race you home. How de do? You do look grand, though. And you can't ride a bike in *that* suit,—no more'n a bose."

"Can't I? We'll see. Let us kiss each other, Leander."

"All right. I ain't no objections."

The two kissed. Then Leander put on his cap.

Prudence Ffolliott was dressed with extreme plainness in a perfectly fitting suit of brown with a white hat, and she had on gloves like those which a few girls can find, and which most girls pass all their lives trying to find. And yet it might seem an easy matter to get rather loose brown gloves like these. She had a small leather bag in one hand.

She glanced up and down the platform. The train had sped away. The long waste of track lay desolate beneath the brilliant sun. The woods came up close on the other side of the rails. On this side a country road wound up a slight acclivity. There was one "open wagon," drawn by a sorrel horse, slowly ascending this hill. In the wagon sat three men very much crowded on the one seat. In the still air was a low, continuous sound.

Prudence listened; she sniffed the air.

"I hear the waves," she said. "The tide is coming in; and the wind is east."

"Yes," said Leander, "I should have gone perchin' if I hadn't come down here. And I might as well have gone, for you can't ride. Just look at all the pleats and pipes 'n' things on your skirt! It's too bad! And sis sent her bike down. You wired for it, you know."

"Yes," said the girl, "I know I wired for it. Wait for the transformation scene. How is Caro?"

"She's well enough," said the boy, shortly.

"And Aunt Letitia?"

"Well's ever."

"Any company yet?"

"Only Rodney."

It was an instant before the girl asked:

"Is Mr. Lawrence there?"

"Yep. 'N' he 'n' sis are such spoons that they ain't either of 'em any fun."

"Spoons, are they?" Prudence laughed slightly.

"Yep. 'N' I found Rod's ring, and marmer 'n' sis raised a most awful row 'bout my takin' the reward. They said it wasn't gentlemanly of me, bein' a friend and relation, to take it. Still they did let Rod give me two ten spots. But I didn't get marmer any present out of that, you bet!"

"What ring was it?"

While Prudence was talking she opened her bag and selected from its contents a leather strap.

Leander was so absorbed in watching her, and in wondering what she would do, that he did not hear her question.

He already began to have faith that she would be equal to any emergency,—that is, as nearly equal as anything feminine could be.

"What ring did you find?" she repeated.

As she spoke, she took a pair of white gloves from the bag, and extended them to the boy.

"Please hold them," she said. His little brown fingers closed over the gloves.

"Why," he answered, "that red stone, you know, with the head cut into it."

"Oh!"

She made no other remark for some time. The boy continued to watch her. He rather admired the deft way in which her hands removed something which made her belt slip from its place, and the next moment her skirt, which he had derided, dropped down to the floor of the platform, her jacket was flung off, and there Miss Ffolliott stood in a full bicycle suit of white flannel. It was then that Leander noticed that her shoes and hat were white, as he said, "to begin with." 50

He jumped up and down. "Hurray!" he cried, in his thin, sharp voice. "I guess you c'n do it."

"I guess I can," she answered. "Now I want to strap up this skirt, and we'll take it and the bag along. Are you good on a bike?" She turned and looked at her companion with a laugh in her eyes. She had just now so lithe and active an appearance that the boy wanted to clap his hands. She took the white gloves from him, and began to put them on.

"Good on a bike?" he repeated. "Well, you just wait. Are you good on one yourself? I ought to be; marmers says she's expectin' every minute to see me brought in with all my bones smashed. But I don't take headers nigh so often's I used to. Ready?"

Leander gallantly brought forward his sister's wheel, and held it. Within the station the agent was peering out from his window at the girl in white. He was shocked, but he was extremely interested, and he did not wink in his gaze until the boy and woman had wheeled out of sight along the lonely country road. 51

Leander immediately found that his small legs were called upon to do their utmost, but he kept on bravely. And he would not pant; he assumed an easy appearance. He even tried to whistle, but he had to give that up.

He glanced covertly at his companion. She sat up straight, and her figure showed very little movement.

Presently she asked, "Why didn't Caro come to meet me?"

"She kinder thought you didn't care to have her, as you sent for her wheel."

No answer. Then, "Perhaps she's gone somewhere with Mr. Lawrence."

"No, she ain't, either. Rodney's off just now—comin' back to-morrow. I say!"

"Well?"

"Slow up a bit. I can't stand this. I give in. I guess my legs ain't long enough. You're stunnin' on a bike. Caro's rather good, but—Hullo! what's that ahead, anyway? Let's put in 'n' get to it."

So they put in. In another moment they saw that the something was a man; then that he was lying flat on his face; then that it was Rodney Lawrence. It was the girl who discovered who it was. Instead of shrinking back a little, as Leander had done in spite of himself, when they found that it was a man lying there, Prudence forced her wheel up to the prostrate body, jumped off, and looked down at him. She stood perfectly still for an instant. Then she turned towards Leander. 52

"It's Rodney," she said, in a low voice.

"I don't believe it!" cried the boy.

He felt that it was impossible for Rodney to be hurt so that he would lie as stiff and dreadful as that. Some other man might be hurt thus, but not Rodney. With this rebellious disbelief in his fast-beating heart, Leander dismounted; he stood a little behind Prudence, and peered round her at the object on the ground.

"It is Rodney," repeated the girl.

Her face was quite white, and her eyelids, as she looked down, fluttered as if they would close over her eyes and thus shut out the sight of the senseless man. But she was calm enough as she turned to the boy.

She did not immediately speak. She glanced around the place. There was a wood on each side of the road. They might be there half a day, she knew, and no one would come along. It was not the main road, which itself was not much travelled. 53

She seemed to give up her intention of speaking. She pulled off a glove and knelt down in the gravel. She put out one hand, and gently turned the head so that the face was a little more visible. She shuddered as she did so. The vertical sun struck on a diamond on her hand, and made it send out sharp rays of light.

With a swift motion the girl turned the stone inward. Then she shuddered again. She rose.

"I'll go on to the first house," she said, "and get help."

"No, I'll go," exclaimed Leander, quickly, and in an unsteady voice.

"I can go in much less time than you could do the distance. You don't know how fast I can ride. It's almost three miles to the next house. Are you afraid to stay here and wait?"

The boy trembled and hesitated. Then he was ashamed to say he was afraid.

"I'll wait here," he said, huskily.

Prudence sprang on her wheel and started off. Leander watched her. For an instant he forgot everything else in admiration as he saw her whiz out of sight.

"By George!" he said to himself.

Then he looked back at that still figure. He braced himself up. He remembered that he was a boy instead of a girl.

He sat down on a stone by the wayside. He leaned his chin on his hands and stared at Rodney. Was that Rodney? If the man were dead, why, then it was not anybody; it was—oh, what was it?

And how could Rodney, so full of life and health and strength, be there so helpless?

A great many strange and solemn thoughts came to the boy's mind as he sat there.

And all the time he was listening for wheels, hoping that a carriage would come along.

The mosquitoes buzzed about his face and stung him unheeded.

He noticed that Rodney wore corduroys and leather leggings, and that a whip lay on the ground a few yards off. Leander went and picked up the whip, which he knew very well.

But how strange even the whip seemed! So Rodney had been riding; and he had come home sooner than he had been expected.

If he should be really dead, Leander supposed that his sister would mourn herself to death. He supposed his sister was in love with this long, still figure of a man. 55

All at once the little watcher felt the tears springing up and blinding him. He rubbed his fists into his eyes, but the tears would come. It was while he was doing this that he thought he heard a sound; as he could not distinguish what the sound was, he dared not take his hands from his face, and he dared not move.

Was it really a groan?

His curiosity overcame his terror. He looked at the man in the road. Lawrence had raised himself on his elbow, but he immediately sank back again.

Leander ran to him.

Lawrence gazed in a blind sort of way at the boy. Then he half smiled, and said, feebly, "I suppose you're dead too, Lee, and we're both in heaven."

"I ain't dead, for one," answered the boy. And then he sobbed outright in the intensity of his relief.

"Then perhaps I'm not."

A long silence, during which Lawrence stared rather stupidly at nothing, and Leander stared at him.

After a little the boy bethought himself to ask if he couldn't help. 56

"I don't know. I thought I'd wait until my mind cleared more."

He raised his head again.

"What's that?" he asked.

He was looking at a white glove that lay near him on the ground.

He dropped his head and slowly reached forth his hand till he grasped the glove.

"It's hers," was the answer.

"Hers? Caro's?" he asked, eagerly.

But as he spoke the faint odor of iris came to him from the bit of leather in his grasp. He knew that odor of iris; it had always been inseparable from anything belonging to Prudence Ffolliott.

"No," replied Leander; "it's Prue's."

Lawrence lay silent. His face was dull and clouded.

"Oh, I do wish I could do something!" exclaimed Leander. "She's gone on for help."

"Who's gone on?"

"Why, Prue, of course."

Lawrence lifted himself up on his elbow again.

"I had a nasty fall," he said. "I thought I was done for. Where's my horse?"

"I ain't seen any horse." 57

"It was one I was trying. Luckily, he'll go home to his own stable, and the stablemen won't break their hearts with anxiety."

The young man spoke quite like himself; and his face began to gain in color. He pressed his hand to his head. He laughed a little. "I must have a thick skull of my own," he said.

He turned and twisted, and then he rose to a sitting posture.

The glove had dropped to the ground. He looked down at it, made a slight motion as if he would take it, then turned away.

"I'm sorry I've made such a scene as this," he said. "It's unlucky that you should have happened along here now. You see I should have come to myself all right, and nobody been frightened. Give me a hand, Lee. There! The deuce! I can't do it, though!"

Lawrence sank back on the ground, and again lay quiet.

Leander could prevent himself from wringing his hands only by remembering that he was a boy. He recalled how in all the stories of adventure he had read the right person always had a bottle of whisky or brandy to produce at the right moment. But he had nothing. He hadn't even a string in his pocket. He "went in" for the lightest possible weight when on his wheel. 58

Thank fortune, there was Prue coming back. She had made good time, even to his anxious mind.

The girl's wheel glided up, and she alighted from it as swiftly as a bird would have done.

## CHAPTER III.

### "I WANT TO ASK YOU A QUESTION."

She bent down over Lawrence, who opened his eyes and looked at her.

"Oh!" she said, in a whisper. The thought which sprang swiftly into her mind was the thought of the last time she had seen this man. It was the time when she had told him that she had changed her mind about marrying him, and had decided to marry Lord Maxwell. But later, Lord Maxwell, for financial reasons and under parental influence, had also changed his mind, and had married somebody else. This was in Prudence's thought as she said, "Oh!" in a whisper.

"You see I'm not dead," remarked Lawrence, "only devilishly unlucky."

Prudence stood up erect.

"It quite relieves me to hear you say devilishly," she responded; "cheers my heart, indeed."

"But why?"

"Because men who are mortally hurt are more pious; if they wanted to say a bad word they would not do it. Thank you." 60

Lawrence smiled.

"I could cheer your heart still more," he answered, "for there are a lot of bad words just galloping to be said."

Prudence did not reply. She turned to Leander, and asked if Mr. Lawrence had been conversing like this, and had he been shamming when they had first found him.

At this Lawrence groaned. After a few moments the boy and woman assisted him to rise. He leaned heavily on them, but seemed to improve somewhat.

"I don't think you've done much more than break a few ribs and a collar-bone or so," said the girl, cheerfully.

"And p'raps concussed your brain a bit," added Leander, whose spirits were rising rapidly.

"There comes the cart," announced Prudence. "It hasn't any springs, but I didn't know but you were past minding springs. I did insist on a mattress being put in; only it isn't a mattress, but a feather bed."

Lawrence groaned again.

"That's right," she said; "don't suffer in silence."

It was not long now before the two men who came in the cart had assisted Lawrence into it. At first he refused to sit down on the feather bed. He caught a glimpse of Prudence's laughing face as she said, "If you don't, I shall think you're ungrateful for all we've done for you." 61

On this the young man sank down on the bed. "I've only been stunned," he said, morosely, "and you needn't make any more fuss about it."

"All right; have it your own way; but I insist on the ribs and the collar-bones. Now I'll go on and prepare the minds of your friends."

Before anything more could be said, Miss Ffolliott pedalled away.

Leander lifted his machine into the cart, and then placed himself between it and the feather bed. The horse started on his walk to Savin Hill.

As he started, Lawrence raised his head and looked back to the spot of ground where he had fallen. He saw something white lying there, and he knew that it was Miss Ffolliott's glove.

Miss Ffolliott herself rode swiftly along the shady, solitary road. She knew the way very well. She had ridden and driven here many times with the man who was lying there in the farm cart. He had been in love with her, —extravagantly, furiously, delightfully. She smiled as she remembered. Some men could make love so much more agreeably than others. She supposed that was a matter of temperament. 62

And he wasn't hurt very much, after all. And he and Caro were "spoons" now. She smiled more broadly.

"I always suspected that Caro cared," she thought, "and I was right. How funny it is! Well, I shall know precisely the state of the case in three seconds after I've seen them together. And I've come now."

She seemed to slide without propulsion along the road. She whistled two or three bars of a tune she had often whistled while she had sat beside her mother when the latter lady had been up to her neck in ground peat and sprudel water.

Sometimes the girl flung back her head and sniffed the air, much as a young colt sniffs when it has just been let out into a field after a long confinement.

But she did not relax her speed. It was not long before she turned into a better kept road, and here she saw ahead of her, and walking towards her, the figure of her cousin Carolyn, who began to hasten directly.

They fell on each other's necks, after the manner of girls, and kissed and hugged.

Then Prudence held her off, and examined her, smiling slightly all the while. 63

"Lee told me you were no good any more," she said, at last.

Then Caro blushed and blushed.

"I suppose you're happy?"

"Yes."

"Of course. Well, I've been to the mud baths of Carlsbad, and I'm not particularly happy. However, I congratulate you; and I won't be *de trop* any more than is absolutely necessary for the sake of appearances."

Prudence propelled her wheel with one hand; the other arm she put about her companion's waist, and so the two went out.

"Mr. Lawrence has returned," presently said Prudence.

"How do you know?" the other asked, quickly.

"Because we met him, Leander and I, on the Pine-wood road. Now if you scream I won't tell you anything more; and it really isn't anything to speak of, only he is on his way here now, and on a feather bed also, because they didn't have any mattresses. If it isn't ribs it's collar-bone,—what was it the Physiology used to call collar-bone?—and he's sane, and knew me, and wanted to swear, but wouldn't, much. So you see you needn't be alarmed a particle." 64

Carolyn had detached herself from her companion, and was gazing at her, her lips growing white, as she listened.

"His horse threw him," added Prudence, shortly.

"Threw him?"

"Yes," with still more impatience. "What else do you want me to say. Didn't I tell you he was on his way home, and that it was a feather bed only because I couldn't get a mattress? I did as well as I could."

Here Prudence gave a short laugh, and lightly kissed her companion's cheek.

Carolyn tried to appear calm. Her imagination had leaped to every dreadful thing. She wanted to turn her back on this girl, but, instead of doing that, she looked at her intently, and asked, steadily:

"Are you telling me the truth?"

"Absolutely. I don't think your precious young man is hurt much, only shaken up a bit."

The two girls were silent for a few moments. Carolyn had turned, and they were both walking back over the road, that they might the sooner meet the cart that was bringing Lawrence to Savin Hill.

"Providence made a great mistake in sending me to find your lover," at last said Prudence. "If Providence had wished to do the perfectly correct thing, you would have been on the Pine-wood road this morning. But then, when does Providence act quite up to the mark? I am tired of Providence myself." 65

Though Carolyn gazed at the speaker, she did not apparently hear her. Her eyes wandered off down the road.

After another short silence, Prudence spoke again.

"I hope there are people coming to the house this summer. I should go raving mad if I had only you and Rodney, and you two in love with each other."

The girl shrugged her shoulders, and shuddered. As there was no answer, she repeated:

"I suppose you are in love with each other, aren't you?"

"I suppose so," mechanically.

"That's what I thought. Are there people coming?"

"Oh, yes."

"Men?"

"A few."

"Ah, I revive! If you had had as much to do with sprudel water as I have, you would be as thankful as I am at the prospect of seeing some men who are not slyly feeling their pulse while they talk to you. You needn't look so curiously at me. It is strictly proper for a girl to like men, only it's very improper to acknowledge the liking. And when they begin to get in love—Oh, isn't that the head of the procession appearing? Yes. Now, Caro, run and throw yourself on your betrothed, and sing in a high soprano how thankful you are to see him yet again—again—a-g-a—in! You see, I've not forgotten my opera." 66

But Carolyn did not run. She walked slowly forward, her hands very cold, hanging inertly down, her lips pressed tightly together.

Of one thing she was sure,—that she would not make a scene. Yes, she would die rather than make a scene.

There was the bed, and there was Lawrence lounging upon it. Leander was standing rigidly straight, grasping the stakes of the cart. He shouted shrilly as he saw his sister. The old horse, which always stopped on any pretext whatever, stopped now, and drooped, as if he would lie down.



"I say, sis," said Leander, jumping from the tail of the cart, "don't you go and begin to cry, and all that stuff."

"I don't think your sister will cry, Leander," remarked Lawrence, with some dryness.

67

Carolyn came to the side of the cart. She said that she hoped Mr. Lawrence was not much hurt, and Mr. Lawrence replied that he should be all right in a few hours.

Then the horse was induced to start on. After a while they all reached the house, and Lawrence was helped to his room, while Leander volunteered to go on his wheel for the doctor.

In due time the doctor came, and pronounced that the young man would be as well as usual again in a few days.

The two girls were standing on the piazza, when this decision was announced to them by Mrs. Ffolliott.

Carolyn walked quickly to the nearest chair, and sat down. She fixed her eyes on that line of dazzling brightness which was the sea. But she saw nothing. Prudence sauntered to the railing, and leaned against it.

Presently Mrs. Ffolliott returned to the house, and the two were alone.

Prudence walked to a long chair near her cousin, and placed herself luxuriously in it. She still wore her bicycle suit. She crossed her legs, and, leaning forward, embraced her knees with her clasped hands.

68

"Got a smoke about you, Caro?" she asked.

"No. And I didn't know you had taken up smoking."

"No more I have. But my attitude, and the piazza, and a certain natural depravity in my own breast suggested the question. I think I shall try cigarettes. And one can have a truly divine thing in cigarette-cases now. And a woman's hand is peculiarly fitted to show jewels when holding a weed out—thus."

The speaker extended her left hand, while she seemed to puff smoke from her lips as she did so.

Carolyn smiled slightly, as she said:

"You are just the same, aren't you?"

"Of course. You didn't think I had met with a change, did you?"

"Hardly."

Carolyn clasped her hands, and gazed down at them. A cloud was on her face.

"You are not worrying about that great strapping fellow up-stairs, are you?" Prudence asked the question sharply.

"No."

"You didn't seem to feel much when you met him just now," remarked Prudence.

69

"I didn't want to make a scene," was the reply.

Prudence contemplated her companion for a moment in silence. Then she said that she had a bit of advice to offer; advice was easily given, and it never hurt any one, because no one ever followed it.

"What is it?"

"Don't be quite so self-controlled, or Rodney will begin to think you seem indifferent because you feel so. You know men are creatures who have no intuition, and who can't see the fraction of an inch below the surface. And though they say they don't like scenes, they do, when it's love for them that makes the scene. I don't charge you a cent for this information. I do wish I had a cigarette; I'd try it this very minute.

""'Twas off the blue Canary Isle  
I smoked my last cigar!""

Prudence sang in a deep bass that threatened to choke her. She grew red in the face, and did not try to go on any further with the song.

Carolyn glanced at her and laughed.

"Somehow," she said, "I believe I thought Carlsbad would make you over."

"You see I think I might have been made over if I had taken mud baths myself," was the reply; "but only seeing mamma take them didn't seem to have much effect,—only to bore me almost to death. Did you ever notice that, after you have been bored to extinction, and have escaped, you are liable to commit very nearly anything? You are so exhilarated, you know. Now I'm going to do something startling. I don't know yet whether I shall steal the Ffolliott silver, or—" here the girl paused to laugh—"or Carolyn Ffolliott's lover. For the first I might be put in jail; for the latter there's no punishment that I know."

70

Prudence leaned back now and clasped her hands over the top of her head.

"I do wish you wouldn't talk so!" Carolyn exclaimed.

"Why? It's fun to take out the stopper and let yourself bubble over."

"Prudence—"

"Ma'am?"

"I want to ask you something."

"Go right ahead. Questions cheerfully answered; estimates given upon application."

But Carolyn hesitated. Then she said that she wished her cousin would be serious.

"Serious! You don't call me gay, do you? Why, the solemnity that dribbled over me from mamma isn't washed off yet. It will take a whole summer, and several men in love with me at once, and fighting about me, to take away the melancholy that I acquired at Carlsbad." 71

As she finished speaking, Prudence rose, and stepped out on to the lawn. She ran across it and leaned on the wall at the end of it. Beyond lay the bay, flashing brightly in the sunlight; but her strong eyes did not blench as she gazed.

"Is that the *Vireo* in the sandy cove?" she asked.

"Yes."

"It's a little thing, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"I believe I could almost manage that myself."

"Yes."

Prudence turned towards her cousin, flung her head back, and laughed. A young man lying impatiently on a bed in a room on the second floor heard that laugh, and tossed his head on the pillow as he heard.

He inwardly compared the sound with Carolyn's musical gurgle when she was amused, and then said aloud that it was amazing that he had ever fancied that he had cared for Prudence Ffolliott. She must be out there by the wall. He raised himself on his elbow, but, though he could look through the window, he could see only the ocean and the sails on it, and the long trails of smoke from two steamers that were gliding away towards "the utmost purple rim." 72

That phrase came into his mind, and with it the memory of one evening, down on the beach, when Prudence had quoted that verse, and how her voice had sunk and thrilled as it pronounced the words and she had glanced up at him.

What an ass he had been! Well, he was thankful that was all over. It was incredible that he had been moved so by that woman. He was beyond all that now; and he was in love with the dearest girl in the world.

Prudence laughed again, and again Lawrence raised himself on his elbow, and once more saw nothing but the ocean and the sails. Then he turned with his back to the window, groaned by reason of his hurts, muttered something that sounded like "Damn it," and in a few moments fell asleep.

Prudence still remained by the wall, her arms upon it and her brilliant face towards the sea. And Carolyn still sat in her chair on the veranda. She was not looking at Massachusetts Bay, but at her cousin. She was wondering about her with an intensity that was almost painful. Among other things, she was trying to determine what it was in Prudence Ffolliott's face that made it interesting, and that gave it something very much more effective than beauty of feature. It was a mocking, flashing, melting, fiery, tender face; a face full of daring, of possibilities, and suggestions, and shadows, and brightnesses; and it was unscrupulous, and passionate, and cruel, and selfish, and— 73

Having thought of all these adjectives, Carolyn roused herself and smiled at her own folly, and told herself it was an impossible thing that any human countenance should be so contradictory. She recalled the story her own mirror told her. As for beauty, she possessed a share of that.

This thought strengthened and comforted her. She left her chair and joined her cousin by the wall. Prudence put her arm about Carolyn, and the two stood in silence a few moments. The water before them was vivid, shining green and blue and purple; and it was just ruffled by a gentle east wind that made the whole world seem a bright, joyous place to live in.

"How many times I've thought of just this place on the Savin Hill lawn, and just this outlook over the bay!"

Prudence spoke very gently, and sighed slightly as she spoke. 74

"Have you?"

"Indeed I have. What did you imagine I thought of in that dreadful hotel with mamma and the maid and the nurse and the peat and the water? I had to think of something. And I wondered if I should ever sail in the *Vireo*. And now I mean to sail in her the very first minute I can manage it. I got me the loveliest sailor hat in Paris, and a ribbon with 'Vireo' on it, and a yachting suit that looks as if it were made in Paradise. Yes, I sail the *Vireo* the salt seas over."

"I didn't know you went to Paris."

"I did. I wanted some clothing fit for mamma's daughter and your cousin to wear. And I've got it. You just wait and see. That's why I was a little late in coming across. Oh, how divine that color is beyond Long Ledge! Life is worth the living, isn't it, Caro dear? Yes, it is certainly a blessed thing to be alive. This world is a beautiful place. Yes, I must go out in the *Vireo* this very day, even if the wind isn't right for much of a sail."

Prudence leaned her head lightly on her companion's shoulder while she recited in a half-voice and with exquisite penetrating intonation:

75

"The day, so mild,  
Is Heaven's own child,  
With earth and ocean reconciled.  
The airs I feel  
Around me steal  
Are murmuring to the murmuring keel.

"Over the rail  
My hand I trail  
Within the shadow of the sail;  
A joy intense,  
The cooling sense  
Glides down my drowsy indolence.

"With dreamful eyes  
My spirit lies  
Where Summer sings and never dies.  
O'erweiled with vines,  
She glows and shines  
Among her future oil and wines."

As she finished the lines Prudence lifted her head and smiled at her companion.

That smile somehow made Carolyn's heart sick, it was so softly brilliant. She had a wild notion, for the instant, that a woman who could smile like that, and whose eyes melted like that, was a woman to fly from across the whole world.

"Prudence—" began Carolyn, as she had once before begun.

This time Prudence did not say, "Ma'am." She responded, "Yes," in a half whisper.

76

Carolyn stood up a little more erectly; she felt her hands growing cold. She went on:

"I've often wondered how you happened to engage yourself to Rodney Lawrence."

"I shouldn't think you'd wonder about that, when you've just been and done the same thing yourself," was the response.

"Now don't be flippant."

"No, I won't be. Go on."

"Well," Carolyn began again, "perhaps I ought to say that I wonder how, having engaged yourself to Rodney, you could jilt him for anybody else in the world."

"Not for Lord Maxwell?"

"Not for a thousand Lord Maxwells."

"One is quite enough, thank you. Well, if I did wrong, I was speedily punished. I jilted Mr. Lawrence for his lordship; his lordship jilted me for the brewer's daughter. I notice that brewers' daughters over in England get much more than their share of the male nobility."

"You said you wouldn't be flippant."

"So I did. Have you any more remarks to make?"

"Yes. I remark that I thought you were in love with Rodney."

77

There was now a short silence. Prudence was standing with her hands clasped among the vines on top of the wall in front of her.

"Did I seem so?" she asked.

"Yes."

Prudence turned still farther away as she answered:

"I was in love with him."

"Oh, Prudence, you are certainly unaccountable!" burst out Carolyn.

"That's just what I think myself."

As she spoke, the girl turned back towards her companion and laughed.

"Oh, yes, I was certainly in love with him. The sun rose and set in his eyes for me; I thought of him by day and dreamed of him by night; when he looked at me I felt my heart give one delightful throb and then go on as if it were beating to delicious music. He was never absent from me really; he—"

"That's quite enough," interrupted Carolyn, harshly; and she added, after a moment:

"I don't believe one word you have said."

"Why not?" Prudence lifted her eyebrows.

"Because if you had loved him like that you would not have thought of any one else."

78

"Pshaw! While the fever was on, you mean."

"Prudence, why won't you be serious?"

"Because you are serious enough for two,—yes, for a dozen."

Carolyn's face had been gradually growing white. She now walked away, following the wall and staring out towards the ocean.

Prudence leaned forward on the wall, her arms extended over the thick green of the creeper that covered the stones. There was some new light in her eyes, but it was not easy to tell what that light meant.

When Carolyn returned she met her gaze with frankness, and said:

"Caro, what is it you want to say to me? You haven't said it yet."

"No, I haven't. I'm trying to ask you a question."

"Go on."

But the other girl still seemed to find extreme difficulty in saying what was in her mind. Finally she asked:

"Are you going to try to win Rodney back to you?"

There was something deeply piteous in Carolyn's lovely face as she spoke; a pain, a hope and doubt which made the tears rise to the eyes of her companion. 79

"You dear little thing!" cried Prudence. "How ridiculous you are! I couldn't do it if I tried."

"Oh, I don't know," was the response. "I wish you hadn't come now. Mamma dreamed that you were drowned, and that I was glad of it. That was horrible. It frightened me. I remember how Rodney felt about you. It's useless to pretend that I don't remember, or that he is in love with me in that kind of a way. You'd find out all about it, and I may just as well tell you. I've loved him ever since I can remember; I suffered when you and he were engaged; but I meant to be reconciled to anything that would make him happy. You see, I want him to be happy, whatever happens—"

"You foolish thing!" here Prudence murmured. But the other did not seem to hear this exclamation. She went on:

"And if I didn't think he'd be happy with me I never would have said yes to him,—no, not for anything in the world. I know he has a strong affection for me, and I—" The tender voice faltered for an instant, then went on. "I love him beyond anything I can imagine in this world or the next. I suppose I am wicked, and an idolater, and all that, but it's the truth, and I can't help it. Now are you going to—are you going to be very, very kind to him? You know you almost broke his heart once, and now I think you might let him alone. Will you?" 80

Instead of replying immediately, Prudence hurriedly passed her hand over her eyes; then she said, lightly:

"I don't think you have any idea how much breaking a man's heart will bear, and 'brokenly live on.'"

She smiled as she made the quotation.

"You needn't answer me like that," said Carolyn. "I suppose men's hearts are something like the hearts of women, after all. But we won't discuss that. I want you to reply to me. I've talked so frankly to you because I thought on the whole I would do so. I was determined that there should be no misunderstanding. Now, what are you going to do?"

"Nothing."

"Do you mean it?" she asked, eagerly.

"Absolutely nothing,—save to look on, when I can't help it, at this beautiful drama of love—"

"And you are not going to flirt with Rodney?" Carolyn interrupted. 81

"No," the other said, firmly.

Carolyn drew a deep breath; then she laughed. "I know I've been talking in the most ridiculous way possible," she said; "but no matter. I had a desire to have you give me your promise, and you have. But you needn't think I don't know exactly how foolish I've been; because I do."

As Carolyn finished speaking she came to her cousin's side and took her hand for an instant. To her surprise, she found it as cold as her own, though the sun was shining hotly down upon the two.

"If I were a man," began Prudence, "and saw two girls like you and me, I shouldn't look at me, I should just go and fall in love with you."

"No; you wouldn't do any such thing; you'd think—oh, I know what you'd think. Oh, dear!" she partially turned towards the house, "is that Leander's voice? There's no one in the universe but a boy who can be in all places at once. I thought he had gone fishing. Leander," turning and speaking with some asperity, "I thought you had gone coddling."

"You must be a fool, then," promptly replied Leander, coming forward with his hands in his pockets. "I ain't goin' coddin' with the sun like this, 'n' the tide like this, 'n' late as this, I tell you. What you two been talkin' about?" He scanned the faces before him, squinting his eyes almost shut as he did so. "I declare, you look 82

exactly as if you'd been tellin' secrets. Have ye?"

"Yes, we have," answered Prudence.

Leander came yet nearer. He reached out one grimy hand and took hold of his sister's skirt and pulled it.

"Tell me," he said. "It's such good fun to have a secret. I know two of the cook's and one of that new chambermaid's."

"Then you know enough."

"No, I don't, either. I never tell on one if I promise, you know; but I scare 'em half to death sayin' I will tell if they don't do so and so, you know. There's the cook, now. She's got so she makes my kind of choc'late cake 'bout every day 'cause she thinks if she don't I'll tell marmer something she did one time when you were all gone."

Here the boy laughed, and danced a short shuffle on the close-cut grass.

"You're a low-bred little cad, then," said Carolyn, so sharply that she rather wondered at herself.

Leander stopped dancing. His face grew very red.

83

"You dasn't say that again!" he shouted. "I guess you wouldn't say such rotten, nasty things if Rodney was here. You're as sweet as California honey when he's round. And I ain't a cad. 'N' if I am, who's a better right? 'N' you're a cad's sister, then,—that's what you are!"

"Welcome diversion!" cried Prudence. "We were getting very tired of telling secrets. Where's that tame crow? I haven't seen him yet."

But the boy could not answer. His face seemed swelling, his sharp eyes were filling.

"Leander, I beg your pardon," hastily said his sister.

"I ain't a cad!" said the boy, in a shrill quaver. "Rodney told me I was real gentlemanly 'bout that reward." Then, with a sudden fury, "I hate you, Carolyn Ffolliott, 'n' you needn't beg my pardon."

Leander spun around, and hurried away. As he did so, a black speck appeared over the savin-trees.

84

## CHAPTER IV.

### "I REALLY OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN AN ACTRESS."

Carolyn called imperatively to her brother to come back. Immediately after her call, Mrs. Ffolliott appeared on the piazza.

"Caro," she said, remonstrantly, "what have you been saying to Leander?"

"I've been calling him a little cad."

"My dear! How could you? Now he'll be somewhere kicking and screaming, and probably doing himself an injury. How could you be so thoughtless?"

The girl made no reply; but Prudence ventured to suggest that if Leander was screaming at the present moment, he would be heard plainly in the part of the world where his mother and sister were standing.

Mrs. Ffolliott twisted her hands together. "Leander is so sensitive," she said, pathetically.

By this time, Carolyn had started forward to find her brother. But she paused, at her cousin's exclamation:

85

"Why, here's Devil now. And why has he a cord tied to his leg?"

The black speck that had sailed up over the savins gently descended and alighted in front of Prudence. It was a glossy black crow, that now immediately pulled up one foot, cocked its head on one side, and gazed knowingly at the girl, as she extended a finger towards it.

It looked at the finger, and drew back a little, as if it had said, "No, you don't!"

Prudence laughed. She was glad to laugh. She wanted to stretch up her arms in her relief. She had hardly known how great had been the tension upon her in these few moments with her cousin.

"You'd better tell Leander you're sorry," called Mrs. Ffolliott to her daughter; "and I wish you'd be a trifle more careful—"

Here she was interrupted by a whoop from somewhere,—reenter Leander at a full run.

"I say!" he yelled, "Devil's gnawed his cord. I was punishin' him. I say, sis, have you been 'n' done anything to him? Oh, there he is! He's got to catch it for this!"

The boy threw himself forward with his hands out to seize the cord that extended from the crow's leg over the wall and off to the top of the nearest tree. But, as the tips of his fingers touched the string, Devil gave a hoarse caw, and sailed off towards the water.

86

Leander shrieked out, "Oh, darn that Devil!" hit his toe on a bat he had left on the lawn, and fell forward with great force on his nose, which immediately began to bleed profusely.

Then there was running to and fro by the three women, and a demanding of lint, and alum, and this thing and that, by Mrs. Ffolliott. She looked with terror at the stream of blood that poured from that small nose.

As Carolyn had often said, her mother was frightened when Leander was well, fearing he might be ill, and when he was ill, being sure he was going to die.

As soon as Leander could speak, he demanded cobwebs. He said that cobwebs were to be stuffed into his nose, and he should immediately die if this remedy were not applied.

"Does he think we have our pockets full of cobwebs?" asked Prudence, in so light a tone that the boy, as he half lay in his mother's arms, kicked one leg violently in resentment, and said indistinctly that he wished Prue's nose bled worse 'n his.

87

"Thank you," sweetly responded Prue; "then we could bleed and die together, and there'd be no more worry about us."

This the boy also resented as savoring of mockery, and he kicked again. Mrs. Ffolliott was actually weeping by this time, lest her son should do himself an injury. She begged Prudence to be careful; she asked her not to speak again, for she might inadvertently say something that dear Leander might not like.

Upon this Prudence turned and walked away, but, at the end of the piazza, she paused to inform the group assembled that she was going to the barn, for she was positive she had once seen cobwebs in the roof of the hay-loft.

She did go to the stable, and climbed into the mow, but by the time she had reached the door by which hay was put in, she forgot all about Leander and his nasal hemorrhage. The door was open, and there was the sea but some rods away, with no intervening wall in front. The building stood on a bit of rising ground, and the girl looked on a short stretch of glittering sandy beach. She sat down on the threshold, her feet hanging out.

After she had gazed intently for a few moments, she exclaimed aloud:

88

"It's just the place for a soliloquy. Enter the heroine in a white cycling suit, having come for cobwebs. Why, yes, it was cobwebs I came for. But I'm not a cat, and I can't go up into the peak there after them. No doubt Leander will presently stop bleeding, and, if he doesn't, there are already more than enough boys in the world."

She glanced up into the roof, a half smile on her face. Then she resumed her gaze at the sea, swinging her

feet outside the door as she did so.

"I always did think soliloquies were great fun," she said, aloud, "particularly if it's the heroine who is doing the talking. Now, I suppose I'm the heroine at Savin Hill; if I'm not, I mean to be, somehow. It's always best to be the heroine if it's possible. A second fiddle has its uses, but it's pleasanter to be first fiddle. I should just like to ask what you expect of a girl who has been a Carlsbad nurse for months,—expect of her when she gets out, I mean. You expect some kind of a fling, don't you? Very well; all right; I don't think you'll be disappointed. Just wait until the folks begin to come here, and until I begin to wear my new frocks. Of course Rodney Lawrence can't be counted now. He's out of the running. He is going to marry Carolyn Ffolliott, and be adored all the rest of his life. At forty he'll be a fat, self-satisfied wretch. 89

"I hope there isn't anybody near enough to hear me."

She looked about the big chamber, which now had very little hay in it. She inhaled the air, which was odorous with the ocean smell and the fragrance of a thicket of wild roses which grew among the rocks in front of the barn and slightly to the left. Nowhere do wild roses grow more rankly, more beautifully, than on the New England coast; the keen salt wind seems to stimulate them to a greater loveliness.

She leaned back again upon the side frame of the door, and resumed her gaze at the sea. She had discontinued her monologue.

A sail came floating along around the point of rocks that guarded the northern side of the cove. It was a small craft, a tiny, sky-blue yacht, in which sat one man holding the tiller as he leaned back in a half-reclining position, his eyes scanning the shore, but scanning it lazily, and not as though he expected to see anything familiar. The wind was light and puffy, and sometimes the boat seemed as if it would stop, swinging slowly over the waveless water.

"I could manage a boat like that well enough," Prudence said to herself, "and it would be great fun, too. 90

"I heed not if  
My rippling skiff  
Float swift or slow from cliff to cliff;  
With dreamful eyes  
My spirit lies  
Under the walls of Paradise."

Having repeated the lines, she suddenly leaned forward and said, "Ah!" with a quick, keen interest.

The man in the boat was looking at her; he took off his cap and waved it.

He seemed to be a very tall, athletic person, wearing white trousers, a blue sack coat, and a white cap. He had thick, light hair very closely cut, long, light Dundreary whiskers, a smooth chin that was so markedly retreating that it apparently required courage to refrain from allowing it to be covered with a beard, prominent blue eyes, short upper lip, and extremely white teeth. This newcomer was sufficiently near the shore to permit all these items of personal appearance to be noted.

"May I land, Miss Ffolliott?" he called out.

"I don't know why not. But I'm not the owner of the beach here," she answered.

In response the man laughed. The next moment he had half reefed the single sail. He took the oars, and brought the boat crunching on the sand; he flung out the anchor, and then leaped after it, pressing it down with his foot. Then he stood up and looked at the door of the barn, where Prudence still sat in the same position. She had watched his movements, a half smile on her face, her eyes narrowed to two glittering lines. 91

"This is jolly good luck, isn't it?" he asked. Then he hastily added, "For me, I mean. When did you come?"

"This morning," she answered.

"Oh, I say, now," he continued, "isn't this jolly, though? Are you going to stay long?"

"All summer, if I feel like it."

"I say, now, are you really?"

"Not really, but apparently, you know. Really I shall be somewhere else."

The man laughed delightedly.

"May I come up there in that hay-loft? It is a hay-loft, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is a hay-loft; but it isn't mine, any more than the beach is mine."

"Then I shall come."

He ran up the steps two at a time. Miss Ffolliott shook hands with him without changing her position, save to reach forth a hand negligently. He sat down at the other side of the doorway. He looked out at the sea. 92

"Jolly kind of a prospect, isn't it?"

"Yes, if one likes salt water. How came you over here?"

"Came in the *Cephalonia*."

"When?"

"Two weeks ago."

"You look very well. Did the mud baths cure you?"

"I suppose so; anyway, something cured me. I'm as fit as a man need be."

"Why don't you say 'as right as a trivet?'"

"Didn't think of a trivet. Isn't it jolly to see you, though?"

"Thank you."

The two gave one full glance at each other, then Prudence laughed.

"Why do you laugh?" he asked, in an aggrieved tone.

"I don't know unless it's because your conversation sounds so familiar."

"Well, laugh if you feel like it: I know conversation isn't my strong point."

"I know it isn't."

"I say, you're not very polite."

"And you're not very polite to tell me I'm not polite," she retorted.

The man laughed again, and began, "I say, now—" when Prudence interrupted him.

"Don't tell me it's jolly to see me."

"No, I won't; but it is—"

"There, you are at it again!"

"Oh, I beg your pardon."

The newcomer threw his head back and laughed once more. His companion did not join him. She gazed at him with apparent seriousness. When he had ceased laughing, Prudence inquired:

"Did Lady Maxwell come over with you?"

Lord Maxwell's face grew more grave.

"Yes; we took the trip for her health. The doctors said a sea voyage would tone her up, so we came over here. And now they've sent her to the Sulphur Springs. I've just taken her there. Her mother's with her, you know, and her maid, and her mother's maid, and somehow it seemed as if I'd better take a run round over the States, you know."

"Is Lady Maxwell's health improved?"

"I can't exactly tell. Some days she seems better, and then she'll be all down; malaria, you know."

"No, I didn't know."

"Yes; had Roman fever once, so her mother says. Wasn't treated right. I say, is this what they call Massachusetts Bay?"

Lord Maxwell swept out his arm towards the water.

"Yes, that's what they call it."

The gentleman expatiated again upon the beauties of his surroundings; he assured his companion that she must have no end of a jolly time, and then asked, with some abruptness, "Any men here?"

"One now; but a prospect of more."

There was a brief silence after this question and answer. Then Lord Maxwell exclaimed, "I say—"

Prudence looked at him, a smile lurking about her lips and in her eyes.

"You're always laughing at me, Miss Ffolliott," he said, but his manner showed that the fact did not make him miserable.

"What were you going to say?" she inquired.

"Only that it isn't a bad hotel over yonder where I'm stopping, and if you'd let me come here and call now and then, I'd stay there a week or two. Is this your Aunt Ffolliott's place that you told me about,—that you called one of your homes?"

"Yes."

"Would she permit me to call?"

"Certainly. Any friend of mine would be welcome," with a little air of *hauteur* and distance.

"Oh, thanks. And now I suppose I must go."

He rose and looked down at her, as if he were hoping she would tell him not to go so soon. But she said nothing.



"I suppose you wheel?" glancing at her dress.

"Yes, of course."

"I might have known you would; so do I. Perhaps you'll let me take a spin with you?"

"Perhaps."

"And you like sailing as well as ever?"

"Yes."

"Then I hope you'll go out in this bit of a boat of mine; she's a real fine one; and I like something I can manage all myself, so I got a small one. You'll try her?"

"Perhaps."

"You don't seem very eager."

"Don't I?"

"No. And we're old friends, aren't we?"

He asked the question with a wistful frankness. Before she could answer it, he went on in some haste:

"I never knew whether to believe you really when you told me you forgave me. You said you understood precisely how I was situated, and that you didn't blame me, for you might have done the same thing. Do you remember?" 96

"Oh, yes, I remember all about everything. And I do forgive you."

"I'm so glad! And we are friends?"

"Yes, we are friends."

Prudence had risen to her feet now. Her eyes were raised to the face above her, and the man met a softly brilliant look that recalled the past vividly to him and made him think that he could not do better, since he must kill time some way, than to stay over at that seaside hotel, though he had been thinking a half-hour ago that he might as well move on. He was also telling himself that Prudence Ffolliott was more sensible than most girls; she understood how a "fellow might be obliged to do some things when he wanted to do other things;" this was the way Lord Maxwell put the case in his own mind. And she wasn't going to lay anything up.

He looked at her gratefully. What a fetching kind of a face she had! He didn't know whether there was a really pretty feature in it, but that didn't matter. It had been a devilish set of circumstances that had obliged him to break off with her; yes, a devilish set. He had done it as honorably as he could; but he had never liked to think of his behavior at that time. It was such an immense relief to know that she didn't bear malice. 97

"Well," he said, abruptly, "I'll go now. Good-by."

He held out his hand, and Prudence put her fingers in it for the briefest space of time.

He ran down the stable stairs and down the slope of beach.

As he lifted his anchor to fling it into his boat, a crow flew down between him and the anchor, cawing as it flew.

He started back with an exclamation.

"It's only Devil," called out the girl from the door, laughing gaily as she spoke.

"That's just what I thought it was," was the response.

Lord Maxwell gazed an instant after the bird, which flew up to where Prudence stood and perched on the threshold beside her, curving its black neck and looking down at the man.

Maxwell pushed out and spread his sail. At the bottom of all his thoughts concerning this meeting was a feeling of pique that, after all, Miss Ffolliott cared so little for his failure to marry her. But he ought to be glad of that. Did he want her sighing and dying for him? 98

He glanced up at the sail, which almost flapped, so light was the wind. He had stopped thinking of Prudence, and was now thinking of the woman he had married. His thoughts did not often linger upon that subject. He didn't know of any earthly reason why they should. But just now he remembered with exceeding distinctness that Miss Arabella Arkwright had a thick waist and thick fingers; that she had at first shown a very annoying inclination to call him "my lord," but, thank fortune, he had made her drop that; and he was quite sure that she no longer referred to him as "his lordship;" he was glad of that also. And she had greatly toned down in regard to her dress. There was no fault to find with her money, however. She had no end of it,—literally no end, Lord Maxwell was grateful to know. Even the payment of his debts had not appreciably lessened the amount.

It had been extremely jolly for the first six months for this nobleman to be aware that he had no creditors, and to have no fear that he should overdraw on his banker. But it was sadly true that even the novelty of having money enough for every whim began to be what he called "an old story." He could get used to that, but he couldn't quite get used to the fact that Arabella Arkwright was his wife. He knew she was not to blame for his having had to break with a woman he fancied, and who could amuse him, but he often caught himself 99

feeling as if she were to blame. At such moments Lord Maxwell fiercely reproved himself for a low-bred wretch. He was "not much for intellect," as he often said, but he thought he wanted to have the feelings of a gentleman, and to act like one.

Prudence Ffolliott resumed her seat in the door of the hay-mow. Devil remained beside her. The cord which Leander had tied to its leg still dangled from it. Occasionally the bird pecked at the string, but he had not yet succeeded in detaching it.

Now as he sat he would turn a bright eye towards his companion, looking as if he knew unutterable things about her, but would never tell them, never, never.

She extended her hand and touched the top of the bird's head with the tip of her finger.

"You and I know strange things, don't we, Devil?" she asked.

Devil turned his head this way and that. He hopped a few inches nearer.

"Do you care for Rodney Lawrence, Devil? Oh, you don't? Because he saved your life when you were just out of the shell; and he tamed you; and all you are you owe to him. You don't care if you do? All right. That's like a human being; that's ingratitude. And you stole his ring from him, did you? and hid it in the wall, and it wasn't found until he didn't care for it any more. No, he doesn't care now." 100

Prudence rose, and walked about over the hay-strewn floor. Her cheeks had grown red. Her eyes had sparks in them. Suddenly she put her hands together, then flung them out with a dramatic gesture. Then she smiled.

"I really ought to have been an actress," she said, looking at the crow, and speaking as if addressing it.

## CHAPTER V. BEING A CHAPERON.

Rodney Lawrence decided that he would not stay in his room more than twenty-four hours. Therefore on the following morning he essayed to dress himself, and was much disgusted to find that somehow his head was odd, and that a general stiffness and soreness made him feel as he fancied a man of eighty years must feel.

So he gave up the attempt. He donned a dressing-gown and put himself with some violence on a lounge near the window with a book in his hand. This he did for three consecutive days.

Company had arrived meantime. The young man heard talking and laughing and singing and piano and banjo playing in the house, and apparently all about him.

Once in the forenoon and once in the afternoon Mrs. Ffolliott paid him a short visit. She always told him she was glad to see he was improving, and always asked if he wouldn't like some calf's-foot jelly. 102

This morning, when she had made her customary visit, he had immediately volunteered this remark:

"Aunt Tishy, I don't want any calf's-foot jelly. I never did like it, and I don't like it now."

The lady had smiled in a somewhat vague manner as she patted the young man's cheek in response. Then she said that Rodney was so fond of his joke.

"I suppose you'll be down-stairs by to-morrow, won't you?" she asked; and this also was her customary question.

Lawrence made an impatient movement. He was fond of Aunt Tishy, but he often wished she were not quite so inconsequent.

"I shall be down as soon as I can, you may be sure of that," he answered. "Are the same people here?"

"Yes, but Mrs. Blair goes this afternoon. Good-by, Rodney dear. I'll send you up a fine dinner."

Then Mrs. Ffolliott walked towards the door. But the young man recalled her.

"Aunt Tishy, where's Leander? He's only been here twice, and he was on the wing then. He isn't entertaining Mrs. Blair and the rest, is he?"

"Oh, no." Here Mrs. Ffolliott smiled approbatively, as she often did when her son was mentioned. "Lee says he's in the chaperon business." 103

"The chaperon business? What on earth does he mean by that?" Lawrence tried to speak amiably.

"Why, he's been boating and cycling with Prudence and Lord Maxwell a good deal."

Lawrence instantly averted his eyes from his companion's face. His voice had a deeper note in it, though it sounded quite indifferent, as he said:

"I didn't know Lord Maxwell was here."

"Oh, yes; that is to say, he isn't here; he is over at the Seaview. He's stopping there, but he has been over here often."

"Oh, he has? And Lee is chaperoning Prudence, is he?"

"That's what he calls it; anyway, Prudence said of course she wasn't going out alone with Lord Maxwell. She said it would bore her to death to go alone with him."

"And so Leander goes to keep her from being bored to death?"

"Yes. She says Leander makes everything amusing."

"I wish, then, he'd come and amuse me. I don't have even Lord Maxwell." 104

"I'll tell Lee. You'll be sure to be down to-morrow, Rodney?"

So Mrs. Ffolliott swept out of the room. Lawrence turned again towards the window, magazine in hand. He seemed to read assiduously; he turned over the leaves regularly; his eyes ran along the lines scrupulously.

Presently there came a soft tap on the door. Lawrence's face brightened; he dropped the book on the floor and rose laboriously. He went to the door and opened it.

Carolyn stood there. She had on a hat and seemed in some haste. She carried a red rose in her hand.

Lawrence seized the hand eagerly. He drew her in and kissed her. She glanced back through the open door along the hall. She blushed delightfully.

"You're not afraid that some one will see me kiss you and thus know that you belong to me?" he asked, banteringly.

"It's too much like a chambermaid to be kissed in the hall," she answered, with a laugh.

"Oh, is it?"

"But I'm not afraid that people will think I belong to you; I'm—"

"You're what?" he asked.

"I'm proud to be yours."

Here she turned her face away and held up the rose to shield her.

"My darling!" he exclaimed. She glanced at him shyly. It was enchanting to see the lovely face so happy.

"Now I must go," she went on, after a moment. "They're waiting for me. Oh, I wish you were able to come to drive with us! You are truly much better?"

"Truly. I shall surely be out in a day or two. Stay one minute. Why didn't you tell me Lord Maxwell was over at Seaview?"

Carolyn flushed deeply, but she answered, promptly, "Because I thought I wouldn't recall anything disagreeable to you; and I know he must be disagreeable."

"Pshaw! What do I care about him? Why, Carolyn," his voice sinking to a tender intonation, "haven't I got you to think of, to live for, now? What more do I want, and what can hurt me so long as I have you?"

The young man's face was full of a feeling that accorded with his words.

"Carolyn!" called her mother from the lower hall.

106

"Let me see you once more to-day," whispered Lawrence, and then the girl ran down the stairs.

Lawrence hobbled back to his lounge again. He was thinking that he was the luckiest fellow in the world, and why shouldn't he and Carolyn be married in the very early fall, say the first day of September?

He was still thinking this, when a sharp, fine rat-tat on the door made him call out:

"Come in!"

Whereupon the door was opened and shut with great swiftness, and Leander Ffolliott advanced to the lounge.

He was dressed in his suit as a member of the United States Navy, the same habiliments which he wore when we first had the honor of meeting him. He once explained why he liked these "togs" better than anything else he had, better even than the much-abbreviated cycling-suit, in which he looked like a mere atom of humanity. These, he said, were regular trousers; they were not the "darn things that came only to his knees." It will be seen that he was already looking forward to pantaloons.

Leander paused near where Lawrence was lying. He had his hands in his pockets, of course, and he was jingling jackstones industriously.

107

"Well," he said, "how does it go?"

"It doesn't go at all," was the response. Then Lawrence held out his hand and said, "Shake, old fellow."

The boy extended a hand and grinned appreciatively.

"I s'pose you ain't goin' to be hauled up long?" he asked.

"I don't know. I hear you've got a job. How do you like it?"

"What?"

"Why, being a chaperon."

Leander laughed shortly. He sat down on the edge of a chair.

"I tell you, ain't Prue jolly?" he exclaimed.

"Do you find her so?"

"You bet I do! No end. So does the Britisher."

"The Britisher?"

"Yes, you know,—the lord fellow that's got eyes, but no chin to speak of. You've seen him, ain't you?"

"Never had that pleasure."

"That so? Thought you had. He's in plain sight here a lot."

"He hasn't been in plain sight much from this window," said Lawrence.

108

The boy looked at him keenly. "Got a pain?" he asked.

"No. Why?"

"You spoke so sharp. I s'pose you ache a good deal?"

"Some. Are you always with Maxwell when he comes?"

"Lordy! no, I ain't. In the evening, if he 'n' Prue are walkin' round in the garden, I ain't with 'em then. But I'm along if they ride horseback, or go in the boat,—the Britisher's boat, you know,—or wheelin', and so on. Prue says I make things more interestin'."

"Oh, you go to make things interesting?"

"That's about it."

Leander's shrewd little eyes would roam about the moor and then come back to the face of the man on the lounge. He now added, "But I guess I don't make things as interestin' as Prue does."

"I guess you don't."

"No, you bet. She's a one-er for that, ain't she?" he remarked, with animation.

"Yes, she is."

There was a short silence now, during which Leander took a set of jackstones from his right pocket and began a game on his knee, getting no farther, however, than "two-sers," as his knee was very small. 109

Lawrence watched him. He was amused and interested. There were many questions he might ask, but he would not interrogate the boy, save in a general way.

"The Britisher never wants to go back to his hotel," at last remarked Leander. "I don't see why he stays at a hotel if he doesn't want to stay. I say, do lords always have that sort of a chin?"

"I don't know."

"And when they come over here, do they always put their wives into some kind of sulphur springs?"

"I don't know."

"'Cause that's where his wife is, in sulphur springs, and it don't do her any good, either."

Lawrence burst into a laugh, and, after staring an instant, Leander joined him shrilly.

After that the conversation turned to other subjects. Leander gave a detailed account of how his nose was finally stopped from bleeding, and informed his friend that, though his mother was scared almost to death, he himself was not in the least alarmed. Having exhausted this subject, he went to the window and immediately cried out, "There's Devil! Do you know what I'm doin' when I ain't chaperonin'?" 110

No, Lawrence did not know.

"I'm teachin' Devil to carry letters,—just as if he were a carrier-dove, you know." Here he chuckled. "You oughter have heard Flora Blair sing, 'Oh, carry these lines to my lady-love!'"

Leander raised his voice to a high squeak and shut his eyes languishingly as he mimicked the singer. He opened them again and continued:

"She said 'twas an old song, and, oh, wasn't it lovely? Her singin' that made me think of havin' Devil learn, you know. I tie a teenty bit of paper on his leg, and then—oh, I'll tell you all about it some time. Prue's helpin' me. She says it may come handy when one of us is shut up in a dungeon, you know. Don't you think so?"

Lawrence nodded. His mind was hardly following the boy's words now. There was creeping upon him a dull sense of dissatisfaction, he knew not why.

Leander prattled on, the words sounding confusedly in the still room. At last Lawrence's ears caught the sentence, "For Caro wouldn't let Lord Maxwell have the *Vireo* and take us all down to the Point of Rocks. She was as silly as she could be, but she wouldn't give in. When I asked her afterwards, she said the *Vireo* shouldn't go out till you were able to sail her." 111

Lawrence inwardly called himself childish because of the warm glow that came to his heart as he heard.

"Bless her! bless her!" he said to himself. "She cares for me."

In two days more the young man was down-stairs. He still moved rather stiffly, but his face was radiant as he sat on the piazza with Carolyn.

"We're going to have a long morning all by ourselves," said the girl, but she had scarcely spoken when two people came strolling along in the shrubbery at the left of the lawn.

Lawrence did not suppress an exclamation of impatience when Prudence came in sight, followed by a tall man whom Lawrence had not seen.

Prudence hastened forward. She came to Lawrence and held out her hand, looking up at him with a warm glance of delight.

"Welcome, Mr. Lawrence, welcome!" she said, in a low voice.

"Thank you," he responded, somewhat coldly.

"And so you're really better?"

"Oh, I'm all right now. I suppose you have all been desolated by my absence." 112

Lawrence knew that these last words were in very poor taste, but an inexplicable bitterness in his heart made him say them. He tried immediately to laugh them off.

"Oh, yes," returned Prudence, "we have refrained from smiling, all of us, save Leander, who is a heartless wretch."

Then she introduced the two men to each other, and they bowed stiffly, and Lord Maxwell said it must be no end of a bore to be shut up in a room; he had tried it and he knew.

Having said thus much, his lordship turned markedly to Prue. "I say, let's see what's the matter with your wheel. You've forgotten all about it, you know."

As the two walked away, Lawrence avoided looking after them. He turned towards Carolyn, and saw that she had her eyes fixed upon Prue's retreating figure. There was a look of anxiety on her face.

"Oh, I do wish she wouldn't do so!" he exclaimed.

"Do what?"

"Why, go on so with Lord Maxwell. Of course everybody notices it."

"And his wife in sulphur springs," laughed Lawrence.

113

The girl glanced at him quickly, and then laughed.

"That's what Lee told me," Lawrence explained. Then he added, with some edge to his tone, "I suppose no one but an Englishman would have the courage to shave such a chin as he wears. Most of us poor men-folks would let a beard hide that. Why, it makes him look almost imbecile."

And again Lawrence had the unpleasant consciousness that he was speaking childishly.

Carolyn leaned a little towards her companion. She smiled charmingly, as she said, in a bantering tone, "Don't let us care anything about the Maxwell chin."

Then they both laughed.

It was an hour later in the day that Prudence, walking down towards the shore, came upon Lawrence, sitting on the ground, placidly smoking a cigar.

She was alone, and she paused irresolutely, as she saw him.

114

## CHAPTER VI. THE EVENING BEFORE.

Lawrence rose, and threw away his cigar.

"Where's Carolyn?" she asked, quickly.

"Called into the house. Where's Lord Maxwell?"

"Gone back to Seaview. It seems as if we ought to console each other, doesn't it?"

"Yes. But I won't even try to make Maxwell's place good."

"Thank fortune you can't!"

"Is that the way you speak of absent friends?"

Prudence deliberately sat down in the shade of the tree near where Lawrence had been sitting.

"Let us converse," she said.

The young man resumed his position.

"No," remarked Prudence, presently; "that isn't the way I speak of absent friends. I don't know that Lord Maxwell is a friend—"

"What is he, then, I should like to know?"

"Oh, well, perhaps you may call him 'first flirter' just now."

115

Here Prudence pulled a long blade of grass, and thoughtfully examined it.

"First flirter? Ugh!"

After this Lawrence kept silence, and the girl picked the grass to pieces. He glanced at her; he saw that her face was softening in a way he remembered. He thought he would rise and walk away; then it did not seem quite courteous to leave her so markedly.

"I hope you enjoy it," he said, finally.

"Sitting here with you? Oh, yes," she replied, in a gentle voice, but with a quizzical smile.

"No," he said, rather too forcibly; "flirting with Maxwell."

"I don't enjoy it at all," she remarked, plaintively.

"Then I'd be hanged if I'd do it!" he commented, emphatically. "I suppose he likes it, though."

"Rodney, please don't talk to me so."

Prudence suddenly lifted her eyes, and looked at Lawrence. Her whole face seemed to quiver for an instant with some uncontrollable emotion. Then she turned her head aside, and was silent.

Lawrence sat there rigid, waiting for the next words to be spoken. He did not intend to be the one to speak them; but after a moment he said, slowly forming his sentence: 116

"I think a friend would advise you not to keep up this apparent intimacy with Lord Maxwell."

Prudence laughed, as one laughs who will not weep.

"One must do something," she said.

She did not glance at him now, but he looked at her, boldly and insistently.

"What do you mean?" He put the inquiry authoritatively.

She turned still farther away. "Do you require everything to be explained?" she asked, in a voice just audible.

He hesitated. Then he answered, "I beg your pardon. I require nothing."

She seemed to be waiting that she might have herself more under control. At last she said, "I deserve that you should speak in that way to me."

Lawrence thrust his hands into the pockets of his loose coat. He could shut them fast there and no one would see them.

"Deserve?" he repeated. "I don't understand."

"Yes, you must understand."

The words were spoken softly and tremulously; but the head was still averted. Prudence now went on hurriedly, as if she could not speak fast enough, and as if she were saying something that had long been in her mind to be spoken. 117

"It must be right to tell you how I've suffered for my—my mistake—I could almost call it crime—of two years ago. I—I—oh, I have suffered!"

The voice ceased, and the speaker covered her face with her hands.

Lawrence felt his heart growing hot with the sudden access of crowding emotions. He gave the girl one look, which took in the graceful, well-remembered figure, as if it were then and there being stamped afresh on his mind.

"Before you married and were happy with the woman you love," Prudence now went on, quickly, "I wanted you to say you forgave me."

"I forgive you," he said, promptly, and with unnecessary distinctness.

Prudence raised her head. Her face was wet, her eyes large and full of light.

"I didn't mean to make a scene," she said, still more hurriedly. "I know you don't like scenes, and I don't like them myself. But I didn't expect ever to see you alone again, and, happening to meet you, I had to tell you that I couldn't live if you didn't forgive me. You do?"

"Yes."

118

"Give me your hand upon it."

Lawrence drew a hand from his pocket, and extended it, grasping closely the hand Prudence placed in it.

"It's a strong hand and true," she said, smiling; "Carolyn will be happy. And she deserves to be."

Prudence withdrew her hand immediately. The two sat in silence, both gazing straight ahead with a look in their eyes as if they saw nothing.

"You will be so much happier with Caro than you would have been with me." Prudence spoke quite cheerfully. "I don't suppose I would have been anything like a model wife, and Caro will be. She'll be always wanting you to be comfortable; while I—I shouldn't have been so thoughtful, I'm afraid; I should only have just—" She stopped abruptly.

Lawrence, with his face still straight ahead, repeated:

"Only have just—"

"Loved you,"—in a tone so penetrating and so sweet that the man who heard it looked like a stone man, in that he made no visible response. She went on directly, in a matter-of-fact way, "I mean, you know, if things had gone on as we once planned."

"If you had not jilted me."

119

"Yes." She hesitated, and then said, "But you just told me that you forgave me."

"So I do."

"You ought; for if I had not done that, you wouldn't now be engaged to Caro; and you'll be so happy with her."

Lawrence moved uneasily. He glanced about him indefinitely. It did not seem to him as if he could abruptly walk away from this girl.

"Are you very tired of me?" she unexpectedly inquired. "Do you want me to go up to the house and tell Caro you are waiting here?"

Here she laughed, the sound ringing out in the still air. But before he could reply, the girl had risen to her feet.

Lawrence rose quickly also. "Are you going?" he asked.

"I bore you so," she said. She was standing before him, her hands clasped and hanging down in front of her. Her face was turned to him, but her eyelids were drooped.

He gave a short laugh. He tried to speak, but his tongue blundered over the words. At last he said, constrainedly, "You speak that which is not." Then he tried to laugh again.

Prudence looked about her rapidly. She took a step nearer to her companion.

120

"It isn't in the least likely that we shall ever be alone together again," she said, in a half voice; "so why need we quarrel?"

"Why, indeed? I have forgiven you, and we are going to be friends. Isn't that our attitude towards each other?"

Prudence clasped her hands. "Oh, Rodney, you don't forgive me, and you don't like me any more!"

He stood silent, grimly looking at the woman before him.

"I can't go on with my life thinking you bear me ill-will,—I tell you I can't!" she said.

"But I don't bear you ill-will. If Lord Maxwell had not married some one else, do you think you would have experienced this access of repentance?"

The instant Lawrence had spoken thus he would have given much to be able to take back the words. But the sting of bitter memory, the recollection of past suffering, overwhelmed him.

Prudence turned so white that it almost seemed as if she would fall. But she did not fall; she stood up straight



and stiff. Even her lips appeared to be stiff, for she tried twice to speak before she said:

"Mr. Lawrence, will you give me that ring? Leander says you have it again."

121

For answer Lawrence put his thumb and finger in his waistcoat pocket, and drew forth a ring in which was set a large, dark red stone. He held out the trinket in silence, and laid it in the palm of the extended hand.

"I believe this is the end," he said, after a moment.

Her whole aspect changed in a flash. She smiled while she closed her fingers over the ring. She was glancing at some object behind Lawrence.

"It's not the end," she responded, in a low voice; "it's what I call the sequel." Then, louder, "I'm glad you've come, Caro, for I don't know what would have happened if we had been left to ourselves, Mr. Lawrence is that belligerent. We have quarrelled about everything we've mentioned."

Carolyn advanced along the path behind Lawrence, who, for the life of him, could not refrain from hesitating perceptibly before he turned. In the violence of the revulsion he could hardly breathe. What would Carolyn think of him if she saw his face, which he knew must tell her something, and which he was sure would tell the wrong thing? And how odd in him to hesitate.

There was Prudence strolling negligently away. Just now she reached a curve in the path. She paused and turned back. She waved her hand. She sang gaily: 122

"Oh, Love has been a villain  
Since the days of Troy and Helen,  
When he caused the death of Paris  
And of many, many more!"

"What good spirits Prudence has!" Carolyn exclaimed, as she reached her lover's side.

"Yes," he answered; then the eyes of the two met, and the girl drew back somewhat.

"Has anything happened?" she asked, in a whisper.

"Nothing,—nothing," he returned, and then added, violently, "I thank heaven that it's you who will be my wife, —you, you, Caro, and no one else!"

She shrank from him still more, but he caught her hands and insisted upon drawing her nearer. With her head on his shoulder she said, indistinctly:

"I hope, oh, I do hope, Rodney, that you are not making a mistake! You're sure, aren't you?"

"Sure? A thousand times sure," he replied, eagerly. "And why should we put off our marriage? You haven't any reason."

"Yes, I have; a very strong one."

123

"I doubt it; and I shall not consider it."

"I want you to be positive, sure beyond question, that you know your own mind."

"Ah!" came triumphantly from Lawrence, "then we'll be married to-morrow."

From that day the young man was possessed with the resolve that his marriage should not be deferred. And of course he won over Carolyn and her mother.

Really, there seemed no need of delay. The two had always known each other; they had sufficient means.

So the day was set for the first week in September. Lawrence came and went in the very highest spirits. They were to start on a long journey, going in the Cunard steamer that sailed on the afternoon of the day. "We will be gone two years at least," Lawrence said. "We'll go everywhere and see everything. Nobody will ever be as happy as we will be."

And Carolyn was quite sure that no one was ever as happy as she was then. She wrote a long letter to Prudence, who was in Newport with her mother, who had come back from Carlsbad. She told her every detail. There was to be no wedding party, only just the family present; mamma had insisted otherwise, but she and Rodney had overruled her; they would probably never be married again, and they wanted things their own way. Only Prue and her mother must come. 124

And so Prue and her mother came the day before, and were met by Lawrence, who was very thin, with black hollows under very brilliant eyes, and whose manner was full of spirit and gaiety.

"It is evident enough that Rodney is in love with you, my dear," said Prue's mother as she kissed her niece, "and you'll be happy ever after, of course; and that's the way things ought to be."

The marriage was to take place on the morrow. At eight o'clock on the night before, the family rose from the dinner-table. The two girls disappeared up the stairs. The mothers sat in the drawing-room over a fire of logs on the hearth, talking over, for the twentieth time, every detail of the next day. Had Caro really got everything in her trunks? Was she to have the right wraps on board ship?

Lawrence went out of the house. He lingered on the piazza. He lighted a match and looked at the barometer.

"Set fair," he said, aloud. He took off his hat and passed his hand over his forehead.

"That's good," he went on, still aloud; "I'm glad it's set fair. Caro ought to have everything fair; and I shall have fair weather, too, if I'm with her. There was never a luckier fellow in the world than I am." 125

He kept his hat off. He looked up at the sparkling heavens as he said, reverently:

"Pray God I may make her as happy as she deserves to be!"

He went on down the path that led towards the water, not minding much which way he was going. There was a brisk southwest wind blowing, though it was not cool; rather there was a softness in the air, which was full of the noise of insects.

All at once the young man turned with a distinct purpose towards the bay. He had thought of the *Vireo*, which lay moored at the wharf in the inlet.

"I'll go out for an hour in her," he thought. He hastened across the field, and in a few moments was going down the slope of the shore.

It was not a clear night, for clouds swept up from the south and hastened over the sky, so that the stars shone out only intermittently in the deep blue-black of the heavens. This was a wind to drive the *Vireo* at a fine pace over the bay.

Lawrence was impatient to be off. As he unfastened the rope from the post on the wharf, something came pell-mell down the beach, clattering over the shingle and up to his side. 126

"Oh, I say!" cried Leander, "is that you? I didn't know but it was some scamp goin' to steal the *Vireo*."

"Did you think you could help it?" asked Lawrence, as he flung down the rope.

"You bet. Goin' out?"

"Yes. Why aren't you in bed?"

"Bed? Ain't you green? Guess I'll go with you." And Leander prepared to clamber on board.

But Lawrence was not in a mood to hear the boy's chatter. He reached forward and took hold of Lee's jacket collar, lifting him back on to the wharf.

"I'd rather be alone," he explained; "and Aunt Tishy'd be sure to worry about you."

As he spoke he leaped into the boat and began to push it off from the planks.

Contrary to Lawrence's expectation, Leander submitted calmly, not to say hilariously. He was heard to dance about on the wharf, and to laugh.

"Goin' alone, are you? All right; go it. If you want any chaperonin' done, just send a cable message; money back if you're not suited. Ta-ta! Be good!"

Leander sat down on the wharf and drew his knees up to his chin. In this position he pulled out of his pocket two cigarettes which he had that day taken from Lawrence's case. Then he took a match from another pocket and "lighted up," puffing so fast that he soon began to choke. 127

Meanwhile, Lawrence, with the facility of custom, and notwithstanding the darkness, had put up the sail, and the boat skimmed swiftly out over the water.

There was a tiny cabin, a place only made for shelter in a storm. At the entrance of this cabin now a voice asked:

"Is that you, Lee? How did you get the sail up without my help?"



**"I BORE YOU SO,' SHE SAID."**



## CHAPTER VII.

### "A BLESSED CHANCE."

When Lawrence heard that voice his hand suddenly slackened on the rope and the sail almost swung loose. The boat wavered, then with a quick firmness his grasp on the tiller and rope strengthened, and the craft gathered herself and darted forward, the water splashing away from her sides, the wind humming.

Lawrence did not turn his head, and at first he did not speak. The sail and the darkness shielded him.

"I thought I heard talking," went on the voice, "but the wind blew so I couldn't be sure. I hope no one knows about our lark. It would spoil the fun; besides, they'd worry."

Silence again. The boat gained in speed as it left the shelter of the land.

Was it a moment or was it a half-hour that passed before the voice said, sharply:

"Leander!"

"It's not Leander," was the just audible answer.

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To this there was no response for so long a time that Lawrence almost began to think that his sense of hearing had played him false. Had he really heard anything? He made a great effort to become calmer. He had pulled the sail taut and fastened it. He now stood perfectly still, with the tiller in his hand. The boat was heeling over as she went on, the water hissing past her. He took note that the sky seemed to be clearing; the stars were brighter.

He remembered that Leander and Prudence used to go out in the *Vireo* sometimes by themselves, for Prudence, as Carolyn often said, was better than most skippers, and Lee made a good second officer.

After awhile Lawrence knew that Prudence had left the cabin; he knew that she was standing close to him, steadying herself by the mast.

"Sit down," he said, with authority.

She obeyed, placing herself in the stern-seat near where he stood. In a moment he sat down beside her. He wondered if he should think to hold the tiller, his surprise was so great.

"Did you know I was here?" she asked.

"No. I felt a sudden wish to take a sail. I came down here; I met Leander at the wharf; I wouldn't let him go."

"You wanted to be alone?"

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"Yes," he said, with hesitation.

A silence, and then Prudence exclaimed, "Oh, how strange this is!"

"Yes."

Lawrence spoke mechanically. Presently he asked, "Shall I put the boat about?"

"I think you might better."

"Yes; of course we'll go back directly."

Another silence. Lawrence made no movement to turn. Then he coldly suggested that, now they were out, they might as well run across the bay. To this there was no reply.

After awhile Prudence asked softly, leaning near, that she might be heard, "I hope you're not too unhappy because you happen to be with me; are you?"

"No."

"You know I'm not to blame. You know I didn't plan it."

"I know that."

The boat went on. Neither of the two spoke for a long time. Then Lawrence put a question. "Are you miserable?"

"No."

"And yet I'm not Lord Maxwell."

"Oh, please don't!"

"Prudence, give me your hand."

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The girl's hand, cold as an icicle, was reached towards him, and was instantly crushed in his. He must still hold the tiller with his other hand, must still think of his boat.

"Prudence—"he hesitated.

He heard her whisper, "Rodney—"

Then he cried, "Why did you do such a damnable thing? Why? Why? We might have been two years man and

wife."

At first she made no reply. He felt her shiver, then draw nearer to him.

The wind drove a blast towards them, and then all at once grew more gentle.

"I was mad to do it," she said, "and now I am punished,—punished cruelly,—and I shall suffer all my life. But you're going to be happy. I'm glad of that."

There were pauses between her sentences.

"Shall you be glad to have me happy with some one else?"

His voice had fallen to the cadence she remembered so well.

"Anything,—anything,—so that you are happy."

She spoke passionately, and she sobbed heavily after her words.

Lawrence drew himself away, as if by command of something outside of himself. Then quickly he came nearer. He put his free arm about her and kissed her; he kissed her again and again, her lips responding to his caress, touching his own as they had done—ah, how long ago was it? It seemed as if time had been annihilated and he was back to that day when she had said she loved him. And how he had loved her!—as the cataract rushes over the cliff; the old trite comparison was the true one. At the meeting of their lips the torrent rushed over his soul again. What did anything matter, so that he had her again? Her arms were about his neck, her face was against his. He heard her say, "Dearest," in the same tone in which she had first spoken it to him, more than two years ago,—the tone he had tried to forget. 132

"We are not to blame," she said. "We didn't try to meet. It was a blessed chance,—oh, a blessed chance! And now we have met, how can we part?"

She hung upon him. She seemed to have flung from her all the self-control which she knew so well how to maintain.

It was as if her love had mastered all else; Lawrence felt it to be thus. It was love for him, he felt, that was stronger than everything besides. This conviction went to his head; it made him long to forget the present, that was not hers, in that past which had been hers. 133

And how strange, how unaccountable, that he should have found her in the boat. Was it a blessed chance?

Another and a wilder rush of wind; a black cloud just overhead sent down a dash of wind, which ceased as suddenly as it began.

It seemed to Lawrence that he had great presence of mind because he continued to keep control of the rudder. He tried to think as well as to feel, but his quick-coursing blood prevented thought.

How could he ever have believed for one moment that he loved Carolyn? Why, his whole heart belonged to this woman who was clinging to him as if it would be death to her to be put away.

He wished to speak, to say something that he ought to say, but his voice stopped in his throat.

The *Vireo* flashed by a dark body that had a light shining at its bows,—some ship swinging at anchor. Vaguely Lawrence heard a man on the deck above him shout out something, he could not distinguish what.

He and Prudence were flying through space—together. Then, still vaguely, and with a threatening horror, he thought of that picture of Francesca and her lover flying always through trackless air, never stopping, gulfs below them, infinitude above them. They had supped full of love, and now— 134

"Dearest!"

It was the voice of Prudence saying that word again. Lawrence wished to rouse himself to some sense of duty; but duty appeared to be something indefinite and very far away; and then perhaps he had been cherishing some old-fashioned, mistaken sense of what was duty. If that was so—

"Are you going to turn towards the shore?"

Prudence asked the question as if she were speaking of a thing impossible to do. She was looking at him with eyes whose beauty and deep, seductive power he could perceive through the dusk.

He held her still closer.

"Do you tell me to turn?" he murmured.

He knew that she hesitated; he felt a slight shudder go through her frame. Her very hesitation spurred him.

"If you tell me to turn," he said, in the same half-tone, close to her cheek, "I shall obey. But you will not tell me."

Silence. The spray from the waves sprinkled over the two. Far ahead, but growing brighter, a line of lights showed where the north shore curved.

Prudence pressed still nearer to him. 135

"God forgive me!" she cried; "but I can't ask you to go back."

"And if we go on now, we shall not part again?" He spoke rapidly; there was a note of desperation in his

words which she perceived.

"Go on," she said; "we will never part again."

She kissed his lips lightly, then put her head on his breast.

"God forgive us! God forgive us!" Lawrence also cried; and he added, as he held his burden tightly, "I can't let you go. No, not if heaven and hell tried to part us. Now you are mine."

But not all the intoxication of that moment could prevent the picture of Carolyn's face from coming suddenly and clearly before Lawrence as he spoke. That once it came, then vanished.

It was several moments before Prudence lifted her head and looked about her.

The north shore had approached still nearer,—so near that her strong eyes could see bonfires on the beach, and children feeding the flames, and cottages behind, lighted up by the flickering brilliance.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"I don't know. Wherever you say. Somewhere where there's a clergyman who will marry us?"

"Yes. And we must make some definite plan."

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"You make the plan."

"I will try. As for me, I'd like to go on like this for days, driven by the warm wind between ocean and sky, and with no one but you,—no one but you." She repeated the words in a tone just loud enough for him to hear. "You love me, then?"

"Love you? Do I not prove it?" he asked.

"Yes, yes," she cried, in that intense tone which seems the voice of passion itself; "and as for me—oh, I will also prove to you how happy you make me."

A short time after Lawrence rose; he trimmed the sail. He looked at his watch; it was ten o'clock. The breeze was abating, and he succeeded in keeping the match-flame ablaze as he examined the dial.

"If the wind holds on at all," he said, "we can make Salem, or some of those towns."

"Why not Boston?" asked Prudence, who deftly helped her companion with the sail, or steered while he worked.

He glanced towards her. They had lighted a lantern and fastened it in the bows. Its rays fell on the girl's face. It was radiantly, excitedly pale; the soft luminousness of it might make a man forget many things.

"And the *Scythia* sails to-morrow," she said.

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She spoke after thought; she feared her words would hurt, but she had already roughly arranged her plan.

It was the *Scythia* in which Lawrence had engaged passage for himself and wife.

Prudence knew that he grew white, that he shut his lips tightly; but she also felt sure that the plan would soon present itself to him as the most feasible. Lawrence would go abroad with his wife; only his wife would not be Carolyn Ffolliott, but Prudence Ffolliott.

In that case all arrangements were already perfected. How could she have done better if she had known Rodney was coming down to the boat that night? She was striving with all her powers to think clearly and to the point.

She turned towards her companion and looked at him pleadingly, gently, and yet with power. Her face showed love, utter love; and it was that love which he could not resist.

"Let it be the *Scythia*," he said, shortly. Then, with tender violence, "Prudence, do you guess how I must love you? Do you guess what you must be to me? Good heavens! I don't know myself!"

Before the girl could reply, in a lull of the decreasing wind, some indefinite, curious sound was heard in the bit of a cabin.

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Lawrence started nervously. "What can that be?" he asked, sharply.

"Rodney," she said, persuasively, "don't let's be superstitious. That must be Devil."

"That crow? Is he on board?"

"Yes; Leander brought him, for fun, he said; he wanted to find out if Devil had any sea-legs. The crow perched on the back of a chair and seemed to go to sleep. I suppose he has wakened now."

"I don't know what we shall do with him."

"Let him loose before we leave the boat."

"But Aunt Letitia—they are attached to him."

"He will find his way home. Don't you know Lee has been drilling him,—taking him away and letting him go back, and tying a note to his leg? You need not fear; Devil knows enough."

At this moment the crow appeared in the narrow doorway, a ray of light striking him and bringing out his

form in a curious, uncanny way. He made a harsh noise, lifting one foot as he did so, and looking first at Lawrence and then at Prudence.

The girl held out her hand and exclaimed:

"Oh, you dear Devil, what are you thinking when you look like that?"

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Her light tone relieved the tension which both had been feeling. The crow hopped forward towards Prudence's hand.

"What if we tie a note to him?" she asked. "Don't you think we might do that?"

Before Lawrence could reply, there was a loud shout close to them and above them—a sound of men swearing—a blow on the *Vireo*—a rush of black waters—another sound as of the coming together of heaven and earth—in the midst of it all a strange cry from the crow.

Lawrence had caught Prudence in his arms.

Presently he came to his senses and knew clearly that he was in the water, that Prudence was floating easily on his arm, that the *Vireo* had been run into and perhaps destroyed.

"Prudence," he said, quickly, "I'm sure they'll pick us up."

"Yes," she answered, quite calmly, "I'm sure they will."

It was a coastwise steamer, and almost immediately they saw her black bulk a few rods away; and then a light fell on the water from a boat near, and a man shouted. Lawrence raised his own voice in reply.

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## CHAPTER VIII. ON BOARD THE SCYTHIA.

The two were lifted into the boat. They were shivering in the wind, but their eyes were on fire with the excitement of the last two hours.

"Don't take us to that steamer," said Lawrence to one of the men who was rowing; "put us on board something that will carry us to the land. We must be in Boston to-morrow. Must,—do you hear?"

The young man spoke imperatively. He was possessed by an imperious longing to get to a clergyman, that he and Prudence might be married directly; and they must embark on the *Scythia*. That was the one feasible thing to do,—the one thing now to which he would bend all his energies. He was burning to get to the shore. He thought he could almost attempt to swim there,—anything, rather than the perplexities and delays which would come if they were obliged to go on board that coastwise steamer.

"I can't do it, you know. I can't do it," answered the man, "'less we happen to come upon somethin'. There's the steamer hove to 'n' waitin'. No, I don't see how it can be done." 141

Lawrence was fuming. How was he going to bear any delays? It was as if the very air he breathed were poisoning him until he could leave America behind him. He had a fancy that if America were only far away, there would be no clouds over his sky.

"What's that?" hurriedly asked Prudence, interrupting the man, who was again saying that "it couldn't be done, nohow."

A tug was coming puffing and panting along, a little thing, dirty and reeling in a reckless way over the water, with three men in it, all of them, by the light of their lantern, gripping pipes between their teeth.

"Hullo!" shouted Lawrence, leaning forward. "Fifty dollars if you'll take two passengers up to Boston to-night."

"Hey?"

Steam was shut off, and the two crafts came alongside each other. Lawrence repeated his offer.

"Why, there's a woman!" was the response. "We can't take no woman; no 'commydations, no nothin'."

He replaced his pipe in his mouth and then said, "I don't s'pose she could stand it." 142

"I sha'n't mind," said Prudence, quickly. "Rodney, we'll go aboard."

As she rose, a little black shape, forlorn and draggled, came fluttering from somewhere in the rowboat and alighted on the girl's shoulder. Her first impulse was to push the crow from its resting-place, but she restrained that impulse, and the bird maintained its position when she stepped into the tug, for she assumed that the master of it would take them to Boston.

So in ten minutes from the time they had been picked up the two were steaming towards the city. One of the men had brought forward an old coat, which he offered to Lawrence, suggesting that he "wrap it around his wife."

Prudence appeared not to hear the words, but she drew the garment closely about her and tried not to shiver. Lawrence sat near her; he put his arm about her and held her to him. Often he turned and looked down at her face, upon which the lamp shone. At those moments he told himself that he could not live without her; that he had been insane to think he could do so.

The little craft rolled and spun over the bay, puffing, and reeking with odors of oil; sometimes sliding down into black water as it came upon the wash of a big vessel; but always it held on its way, and in an hour the lights of Boston began to show plainly, as the craft moved in and out among the shipping in the harbor. 143

"I wish that crow had not come," exclaimed Lawrence once, when a hoarse murmur from behind Prudence came to his ear.

Prudence smiled rallyingly.

"Are you going to be superstitious?" she asked.

"No; but that crow is a link with Savin Hill. I want to forget that I was ever there."

The girl made a movement nearer her lover.

"I will help you to forget," she said, with a glance, "or"—and she drew herself up slightly—"there is yet time to go back. Leander knows it was by accident we were on the *Vireo*. We can take a train from Boston out to Savin Hill, tell them about our accident, and all will be as before. You will return to your old life, and I,—God help me!—I return to mine, in which I must never think of you. It is not too late, Rodney. Choose."

As she spoke, Prudence held herself aloof, looking at Lawrence. The crow crept out from behind her and hopped on to her knee, cocking his sharp eye up at Lawrence and making a chuckling noise as it did so. 144

"I have chosen," he answered, in a whisper, "and I would not go back. Do you think I could leave you,—you? No, not though I were to go through even more dishonor to gain you."

The crow chuckled again. A dark flush rose to the young man's forehead.

"I will throw him into the sea!" he cried, in a smothered voice.

But Prudence stroked the bird's head with her finger.

"No," she said; "we will send him back to Savin Hill when it is daylight. He will go. And shall I tie a note for Aunt Tishy to his leg?"

"No," was the answer. "I don't know yet that I want to send any word. Dear, let us cast the past behind us. Don't let us refer to it. We begin to-night a new life. Oh, surely love will atone, my darling,—my darling!"

"If you are only sure you will be happy." She was gazing up at him.

"Sure!" A tender fury was in his voice. "Prudence, it is paradise to be with you."

So they sat beside each other in the dirty little tug, and murmured the extravagant words which are not half enough extravagant, because no words have ever been made which do much more than hint at any height of emotion, be it what emotion it may. 145

In Boston the two took a carriage at the wharf. Lawrence parted from his companion in the public parlor of a quiet hotel at the South End. He explained briefly how they came to be in such a plight, and the matron of the house furnished Prudence with some garments until her own should be dry. Once in her room, the girl called for pen and ink and paper.

"If Rodney will not write to them, I must," she thought.

Sitting at the table beneath the gas-jet, Prudence's face showed pallid and weary, but there was an invincible light in her eyes, a crimson on her lips, that spoke of something besides fatigue.

The crow was perched on the back of a chair near her. He had drawn one foot up in his feathers and closed his eyes.

Prudence held her pen in her hand and looked at Devil. Then she laughed slightly as she said, aloud, "We made an odd group, didn't we, Devil? No wonder the clerk stared. A drenched man and woman and a crow arriving at eleven o'clock at night, with no luggage.

"Will you go back to Savin Hill in the morning, Devil? As for me, I will never go back. How could I? And Rodney shall be happy. Oh, yes, he shall be happy; for I love him." 146

She put the pen to the paper; she wrote, "Dear Aunt Letitia," then her hand stopped. She sat looking forward; there was a beautiful light upon her face.

A clock struck somewhere in the building; it struck twelve. The girl roused herself and looked down at the paper before her.

"After all," she thought, "why should I write? How they will hate me! Let Rodney tell them what he chooses."

She walked about the room for a few moments. She tried to lie down on the couch, but she could not remain quiet. A fire of memory, and hope, and a strange, indefinite fear were in her heart. Her pulses beat so heavily it was out of the question to try to rest.

It seemed to Prudence that she recalled every word she had ever said to Carolyn Ffolliott. Plainest of all she remembered how she had promised not to try to win Rodney back to her. What a ridiculous promise! Could any one expect such a promise to be kept? Absurd!

Prudence walked about the room again. She supposed it would be morning sometime. Sometime the hour would strike when she and her lover would be on the ocean and beyond recall. 147

It was a strange thing that she could so clearly remember Carolyn's honest eyes when she had asked for that promise.

Prudence shook herself impatiently. Then she tried once more to write the note to her aunt. But she could not do it. She tore the paper across and flung it into the grate; after this she began to walk again. The crow got down on the floor and hopped along behind her, sometimes pecking at the carpet. She turned to him in a kind of fury. She was wishing she had the courage to wring his neck. But she would make him go back in the morning. She could not have him with her. How bright his eyes were! Now, as she gazed at him, she fancied his eyes said:

"You're a liar! You're a liar!"

Thank fortune, he could not speak. She would surely kill him if he could speak. But she had never killed anything yet, and it must be rather a dreadful thing to do. Still, of course, it could be done. Anything could be done.

When it came to be three o'clock the girl was so exhausted that she laid herself on the bed and pulled the clothes up about her. As her fingers touched her throat she shuddered, thinking of how she could stop the crow's breath. She had left the light burning, and she now lifted her head and glanced about. Yes, there was Devil on the back of a chair near the fire. She smiled. 148

"It is like Poe's raven," she murmured. "Perhaps he will say 'nevermore' to me."

Then she resolutely shut her eyes, and was asleep directly.

A few hours later, in the bright sunlight of a lovely September morning, Prudence scoffed at her fancies of the darkness.

She was dressed in her own clothes, and was waiting for Lawrence. She had drunk a cup of strong coffee, and had been walking in the little park near the hotel. No one was out, apparently, save servants and market-men, and then a man or woman hurrying by with a satchel to catch a train.

The crow had gone with Prudence. She had permitted him to go, hoping he would spread his wings and fly away. But no; he hopped sedately behind her, and when she turned he blinked up at her mildly. Once she took him in her hand, and flung him up in the air, for that was the way she and Leander had taught him to fly off home. Now Devil flapped his wings obstinately, then alighted on the ground near her.

Two or three children stopped to gaze at him. Prudence asked a boy if he would like to have a tame crow, but he promptly answered that his cat would eat it. 149

Thus it happened that when the *Scythia* left the wharf that day, near a certain man and woman, who stood together on deck, there was a little black shape sitting on some luggage. One of the hands began to take up the bags.

"Hullo! Where sh'll I stow the bird?" he called out.

Lawrence turned, and his face darkened. But a hand was laid softly on his arm.

"Dear," said his wife's voice, "let us call the crow our mascot. Surely you can't blame him because he won't forsake us."

Then Prudence promised the man that she would pay him well if he would take care of Devil during the voyage.

She glanced laughingly at her companion.

"I couldn't give him away, he wouldn't leave us, and I can't kill him."

Lawrence's face cleared. He put his hand over the hand on his arm. "Nothing matters," he said, in an undertone, "so long as we are together."

## CHAPTER IX.

### "COLD PORRIDGE HOT AGAIN."

A small boy in a blue navy suit was running up the beach. The wind was blowing against him as he ran, and he frequently stumbled; but he didn't mind the stumbles. He was chuckling to himself, and, when he burst into the room, where his mother sat with her sister, his chuckle became a noisy laugh.

"Don't laugh so loud, Lee," said Prudence's mother, holding up her hand. "I think I'm going to have a headache."

But Leander did not stop his laugh in the least. He came up to the hearth between the two women, and stood in front of the fire; for there was a low fire,—"to cheer her up," Mrs. Ffolliott had said.

"I tell you, marmer," he exclaimed, "here's a go!"

Before he could further explain his remark the door opened again and Carolyn entered. She went up to her mother and sat down on a footstool by her, leaning on her lap.

"I wanted to be with you, mamma, this last evening," she said.

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Mrs. Ffolliott felt her eyes fill, but she spoke cheerfully.

"Where's Prue?" she asked. She stroked her daughter's hair.

"Oh, she went out half an hour ago," was the reply. "She said she was so nervous she couldn't stay in the house; besides, she had an engagement with Leander. What are you here for, Lee?" She looked in surprise at her brother.

"What you here for, yourself?" was the immediate response. Then the boy resumed his laugh. "Won't there be a lammin' s'prise on the *Vireo*?" he exclaimed. "I hope he'll think she's a ghost. But I got cheated out of my sail all the same, 'n' the wind's just whizzin' good."

Leander glanced at his sister, and cried out, "What you lookin' at me so for?"

"Is there any reason why I shouldn't look at you?" she asked, calmly.

"No; only you needn't eat me."

Carolyn turned her eyes towards the fire and remained silent. A red spot came quickly to each cheek; yet she could hardly have explained why her face should burn. And what was Lee talking about? Why wasn't he in his bed long ago if he wasn't with Prue?

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"It's too windy for you to go sailing," said the boy's mother.

"Is it? You bet 'tain't, then. And they'll have a first-class breeze. The *V'll* go, I tell you."

"Who's gone?"

Mrs. Ffolliott put the question with little interest, but she saw that her son wished to talk on the subject, therefore he must be allowed to do so.

"Why, Rodney 'n' Prue. 'N' the joke of it is that Rodney didn't know anybody was aboard, 'n' all the time there was Prue in the cabin; 'n' Devil was there, too. Rod came rushin' down, 'n' I was goin' to get in, too, 'n' he said no, he wanted to go alone. 'N' so I let him; 'n' I bet he'll be frightened out of his boots, when Prue walks out. If she's bright, 'n' she is, she'll come a ghost, or somethin', on him. She could do that splendid. Couldn't she do a ghost splendid, Caro?"

"Yes," said Caro.

Caro's mother glanced at her smilingly; the affair was a good joke to her also; and how funny Lee had made it. Then she glanced again in a startled way. She leaned over and drew her daughter to her, but the girl would not lean against her.

"Carolyn," cried her mother, in a sharp voice, "what is it? There's something dreadful in your eyes! It is like what I dreamed about you when you wished Prudence was drowned. You remember?"

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Carolyn drew herself up. She put a hand over her eyes for an instant.

"Mother," she said, reproachfully, "how can you be so foolish? And you must have a very vivid imagination to-night. There's nothing dreadful in my face, is there, Aunt Ellen?"

Prudence's mother smiled languidly and replied that Letitia was full of notions this evening.

A strong rush of wind came shrieking about the house; a puff of smoke leaped out of the chimney across the hearth.

"Bully time for a spin in the *Vireo*," remarked Leander. "It was kinder mean that Rodney didn't let me go. Do you s'pose he's found out yet that Prue's on board, Caro?"

The boy was rubbing his smarting eyes as he spoke. His sister had now risen; she was standing by the hearth, with one hand on the mantel. She was telling herself that the first involuntary movement of her heart had been mean and disloyal, and she had thrust that emotion from her. Did she distrust the man to whom she gave herself? And Rodney did not know Prudence was on board. How ridiculous, nay, how dishonoring to her

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own soul had been that involuntary distrust!

"Do you s'pose he's found it out yet, Caro?" persisted Leander.

"I don't know, I'm sure—yes, of course. How the wind does blow!" Another gust came sweeping down from the land.

"Yes, bully. I say, you ain't afraid, are you, sis? They both know how to sail the *Vi*. I wonder how far they'll go?"

"Don't talk so much, Lee; you confuse me."

Carolyn deliberately walked away from the hearth and to the door that led into the hall.

"You're not going out, are you?" asked her mother.

"Yes; I want to go."

"How can you? Why, it's a real September gale."

But Carolyn opened the door and went into the hall. She was followed by her brother, who flung open the outer door and ran out ahead. The two walked around to the south side of the house, where the wind swept in full force. But Carolyn was aware, in spite of her anxiety, that she had no real cause to fear for the safety of those on the *Vireo*, since they knew how to manage a sailboat. The wind was off shore; if it drove the boat, it would drive it out to sea. She herself had been out more than once in a wind like this. It was the return which was not so easy, or rather the return required a longer time.

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"Let's go down to the wharf," suggested Leander; and his sister was glad to go. The wind hastened their steps. They stood a few moments on the narrow planking. The water was black before them; the tide was coming in, but the waves were flattened by the southerly wind.

"'Twas mean of Rodney not to let me go," Leander repeated. This grievance seemed to grow upon him. "But he'll find he isn't alone, for all that," he chuckled.

Carolyn was thinking one thought over and over:

"To-morrow we shall have left Prudence,—to-morrow we shall have left Prudence."

Then she suddenly stopped that iteration by telling herself that it was true that Rodney no longer cared for Prudence. Had he not shown plainly enough that he had recovered from that infatuation? Was it an infatuation? How often we like to call the love which is not offered us, or which we do not quite understand, by that term!

"And to-morrow we shall be far away. I will make him happy. Surely, surely, God will let me make him happy."

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The girl turned back towards the house. And now the wind seemed trying to take her up bodily and fling her into the sea.

Leander struggled on beside her, talking, talking. She wished his tongue might be still for one moment.

At last he dropped a little behind by the path which led to the stable. He shrieked after his sister that he was going to see if his ducks had got loose.

Carolyn walked on, her body bent forward to meet the gale. Thus walking she came suddenly upon a man who was hurrying in an opposite direction.

He drew back, uttering an exclamation, and taking off his hat as he did so.

Neither could see the other at first in the darkness.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," he said. "Is it Miss Ffolliott?"

"It is Carolyn Ffolliott," was the answer; "and you are Lord Maxwell?"

"Yes;" and then the gentleman hesitated.

Even in the dusk, and notwithstanding her preoccupation, Carolyn had the impression that Lord Maxwell was under some unusual excitement.

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"May I walk back to the house with you?"

Without waiting for her reply, Lord Maxwell turned, and the two went on.

"Miss Prudence Ffolliott is here?"

There was a certain intensity in his voice which added to the girl's emotion.

"Yes—no," she answered, in some confusion; "she is staying here, as you know, but just now is out in the *Vireo*."

"When will she be in?" He put the question quickly.

"I don't know."

Having given this answer, Carolyn expected the man to leave her immediately; but he did not. He kept on beside her until they reached the piazza, where hung a lamp. By the light of this lamp Carolyn saw his face. She restrained any manifestation of her surprise, but she asked, quietly, "Are you ill, Lord Maxwell?"

"No, thank you, no."

He moved restlessly as he stood. His face was flushed to a deep red; his prominent eyes had a strange fire in them. Carolyn's instant thought was that he had dined, and had also drunk more than was usual with him.

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She was silent for an instant, then she said, "Won't you come into the house and see mamma?"

He moved again.

"No, no," he said, hastily. "You are very good, but I can't, really I can't. I say, now," he added, abruptly, "it's too confounded beastly that Miss Prudence is gone, you know."

Yes, he had certainly been drinking too much. Carolyn drew herself up a little. She wondered how long he would stay.

"I've had a telegram,—Sulphur Springs, you know. Lady Maxwell worse,—not likely to live."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!"

"Eh? Oh, yes, of course,—sorry, you know."

The speaker pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and passed it over his face.

"It isn't the least likely she'll live," he said, huskily. "I'm going to take the next train, you know; but I had time to come over here. I wanted devilishly to see your cousin,—oh, I beg pardon, I wanted very much to see her, you know. We're old friends and all that, you know. When did you think she'll be back?"

"I don't know."

"Hope she didn't go alone; dev—I mean, hard wind, you know. Is she alone?"

159

"No."

"Who's with her?"

"Mr. Lawrence."

Carolyn spoke with the utmost coldness, but she answered promptly.

"Lawrence? Damn him! What's he—"

"Lord Maxwell!"

"Oh, I beg pardon,—ten thousand times, I'm sure. Do forgive me! You see, Thorbury—know Sir Charles Thorbury?—has just come over, and he and two or three of us have been dining. And if I take a drop more'n usual it plays the dev—it goes to my head. Beastly shame! Do forgive me! But I know what I'm about well enough; I want to see the other Miss Ffolliott. I'd give a thousand pounds to see her 'fore I start."

Lord Maxwell drew out his watch and held it beneath the lamp.

"Jove! I've got to go this very minute! But you tell her, won't you, Miss Ffolliott, that Lady Maxwell's very ill,—not expected to live,—Sulphur Springs no good, after all. Good-by. Wish you joy,—wish you joy. Forgot 'bout your marriage. Good-by."

Carolyn did not speak, and he walked away,—walked with perfect steadiness, though he had talked thus. In fact, he was as much affected by his sudden news as by his champagne.

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Carolyn remained a few moments where he had left her. She was thinking that if Lady Maxwell died, then surely this time Prudence would herself become Lady Maxwell. But how could her cousin consent to pass her life with a man like that. Good-natured? Yes, perhaps, but a mere animal? Then the girl caught herself comparing the Englishman with Rodney Lawrence. She always compared every man with Lawrence, much to the advantage of the latter.

After a few moments Carolyn returned to the house. She walked restlessly up the stairs, and then into the tower which overlooked the ocean. She opened the window next the water and leaned out of it; the warm air swept over her as it rocked the tower. How dark it was! And to-morrow she was to be married.

At that moment it seemed to her that she would never see Rodney again,—that on this night all life, that was really life, would stop for her.

She roused herself quickly from such morbid fancyings.

The rack of cloud was rushing over the heavens, the stars shining now and then between the dark masses. Carolyn's gaze was fastened on the sea, which lay black and strangely still beneath the wind; but a southerly wind was like a calming hand on the water of this part of the bay.

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"There is not the least danger,—not the very least," she said, aloud. "They know how to manage a boat. Rodney will only go a little way. In an hour or two they will be back."

So the girl resolved not to yield to any such imaginings. She hastened down to the room where her mother and aunt still sat over the smouldering fire on the hearth. She walked calmly up to her mother's side and resumed her place on the footstool by her.

"Have they come home yet?" asked Prudence's mother.

"No; it's hardly time."

"There's one consolation," said the elder lady, "nothing ever happens to Prue; she'll do the strangest things, and nothing ever happens to her. We needn't worry in the least."

"No, not in the least," responded Carolyn.

She sat at her mother's feet and watched the ashes gather over the coals on the hearth. The women talked fitfully, and the girl tried to listen to what they said. One of them recalled how nervous she had been when her own wedding-day had been set. She said that, though she never doubted her lover in the least, she had a dreadful conviction that something would happen to keep him from coming to be married. Here the speaker laughed as she went on: 162

"My father said that if I had such an opinion as that of Leander Ffolliott I'd better never marry him, even if he did come."

"But he was there,—he was not a minute late?" asked Carolyn, with uncontrollable interest.

Her mother smiled at her, as she answered, complacently, "He was early; of course he was early. But why do you look so pale, Caro?"

Carolyn had no time to answer, for Leander came plunging into the room fresh from the pen where he kept his fowls. He announced that the wind was going down, and that it was time for "Rod 'n' Prue" to be back. He was besought by his mother to go to bed, but refused utterly, saying that he was going to sit up for Prue.

He threw himself down on the rug before the fire, and in less than five minutes was asleep.

The three women sat on. Occasionally Prudence's mother inhaled the odor from her vinaigrette and made some insignificant remark. She was evidently trying to keep awake. At last, when the clock struck eleven, she rose and said that she must try to be fresh for the next day, and that Prue was very thoughtless to stay out so long. 163

Thus Carolyn and her mother and the sleeping boy were left in the room. The girl went herself and brought more wood, which she placed carefully on the coals, as carefully as if her own fate depended upon the sticks igniting. Presently the flames curled up about the fuel, licking the bark, with a purple light at the edges.

Mrs. Ffolliott leaned back and dozed a little; Carolyn gazed steadily at the fire. After awhile the clock struck twelve.

The wind had subsided now, save for an occasional long-drawn moan about the house.

Mrs. Ffolliott sat up straight. She tried to look as if she had not been asleep.

"Really," she exclaimed, "I must say that they are very thoughtless, very thoughtless, indeed. I wonder at them."

Carolyn made no reply. She did not change her position in the least. She sat with her arm across her mother's lap, her face towards the hearth.

"Yes," Mrs. Ffolliott repeated; "I do wonder at them. Are you going to sit up any longer, Caro?" 164

"Just a little while longer," was the answer, in a quiet voice; "but you go, mother; you'll need the rest."

"No, no; I'll stay with you."

The speaker drew the afghan more closely over the boy asleep on the hearth. Then she put her head against the back of the chair and again fell asleep.

When she had breathed heavily for a time, Caro carefully withdrew from her position beside her and walked noiselessly to the window. She flung aside the curtain and looked out. A heavy rack of cloud was in the east and south, but above the stars shone clearly.

Carolyn stood with her hands pressed closely on her breast, gazing up at the heavens where the stars glittered.

"I must keep still,—still," was her only coherent thought.

At last she began to walk towards the door, going noiselessly, lest she waken the sleepers. Silently she opened the door, and silently she closed it. She lingered a brief space, leaning against the wall and listening.

"They may be coming now," she was thinking. She bent her head forward. Had she heard steps and voices? 165

No, she had heard nothing; it was her own fancy. Her temples were throbbing so that she could not hear plainly.

She went on to the outer door. This had been locked and bolted. But she turned the key and drew back the bolt. When she stepped without she actually gasped in the intensity of her excitement. But she moved quietly, her lips held tightly together, her eyes gleaming, her face colorless.

Once outside the door, she stepped off the piazza and began to run. She ran at the full speed of which she was capable; but, curiously, she did not run towards the shore, but down the carriage-drive that led to the public highway. Once on the road, she did not slacken her pace until she was so breathless that she must pause. Then she stood still in the middle of the road, panting, but conscious of a certain relief from the tension that had been upon her as she had sat by her mother's side.

"I could not have kept still one moment longer,—no, not one instant."

She spoke loudly into the silence of the night. A low wind sobbed through some birches near her. It was only a low wind now; all violence had gone out of it. 166

When Carolyn looked back upon this night, she always recalled precisely how the wind sounded in the birches as she stood in the road, struggling for breath after her run. There was a damp perfume of rose-geranium clinging to her skirts, for she had trampled upon a shrub of geranium as she had once swerved from the path.

She tried not to listen, but she could not help straining forward to hear something, though she was fully aware that she had come away from the shore. She was also fully aware that by this time Lawrence and his companion could easily have returned; that is, if they had gone a few miles only, as was to be expected.

They had gone farther. What was Prudence saying to Rodney? What the tone of her voice? What the glance of her eyes in the dusk?

"What? What?"

Carolyn shouted out that word. She was almost beside herself, and, knowing this, she shrank back as she heard her own voice call thus into the darkness.

"I must be still,—still," she said, again. "If I give way, I cannot tell what I shall do."

A pause, during which she listened. Then she said, with a terrible vindictiveness: 167

"I hate her! hate her! hate her!"

There was a wild satisfaction in shouting this to the night.

"But how foolish I am!"

She pushed her hair back from her face, and was startled to feel how burning hot her cheeks felt to her cold hands.

Soon she turned and walked homeward,—walked soberly, as if she were thinking calmly of a subject indifferent to her. She went in at the door, which had been open, and softly entered the room she had just left.

Her mother wakened and raised her head.

"They've come, haven't they?" she asked.

"No."

"Oh, well," she said, comfortably, "I suppose they went farther than they intended; but it was very thoughtless of them,—very; and I shall tell them so. Don't you think we might better go to bed, Caro dear?"

"You go, mamma; do go," was the girl's response.

"Oh, no, not without you." Mrs. Ffolliott leaned forward in her chair, looking into the fire. "What curious things one will dream," she said, with a smile. "I must have been asleep, for I wakened trying to think of the last two lines—do tell me, Caro: 168

"Cold porridge hot again,  
That loved I never—

"What is the rest? It's so annoying, a little thing like that. Can't you tell me?"

The girl stood behind her mother's chair, and repeated, softly:

"Old love renewed again,  
That loved I ever."



## CHAPTER X. THE PASSENGER LIST.

All days and all nights pass, therefore this night passed. The first light of morning came palely in at the windows upon the two women who were still by the hearth. But Leander, when half awake, had been kind enough to yield to his mother's entreaties at about two in the morning, and had allowed her to lead him to his room.

After that hour Mrs. Ffolliott had not slept. She grew more and more alarmed. She fidgeted about from door to window, to the piazza, to the grounds. But Carolyn did not accompany her; she sat by the fire, sometimes shivering as she crouched forward. Every few moments she repeated to herself the lines her mother had brought to her memory:

"Old love renewed again,  
That loved I ever."

It was one of the clearest, loveliest mornings of September.

"They are drowned; perhaps their bodies will be washed ashore. Oh, my poor Caro!" Thus Mrs. Ffolliott, embracing her daughter when she came in from the piazza. She continued at intervals to say, "They are drowned! They are drowned!" 170

The servants rose and began gaily the duties of Miss Carolyn's wedding-day, but directly they also were enveloped in the gloom. Prudence's mother had an attack of hysteria as soon as she came into the breakfast-room, and it was Carolyn who led her back to her own chamber. It was Carolyn who organized what search was possible, and who sent out messages to towns along the shore. She did it persistently and nervelessly, her face coldly set, her voice clear and even.

Her mother looked at her in helpless wonder; her aunt repeated again and again that she wished she had as little feeling as Caro, but then too much feeling had always been her curse. Caro must "take after" the Ffolliotts.

On the morning of the third day Carolyn sent word to her mother that she would not be down to breakfast; she thought she must have taken cold, and she did not wish anything sent up. So her mother presently appeared in her daughter's room.

"It isn't a cold, it's a fever," the elder woman exclaimed, as she looked in the girl's face. 171

"Oh, no," said Carolyn; "I'm not so lucky as that; it's only heroines who have brain fevers and die in such circumstances; and I'm not a heroine."

She spoke the truth in part. She only had a lingering, low fever, from which she began to recover when the weather became frosty.

It was when Carolyn was able to walk out upon the piazza that her mother told her that parts of the *Vireo* had been found and identified unmistakably; they had been washed ashore a few miles down the coast.

"It's no use hoping any longer," she said.

"I don't hope; I haven't hoped from the very first," was the answer.

There was something so strange in the girl's tone that her mother looked at her in a kind of terror.

Carolyn, closely wrapped, was sitting in the sunlight on the veranda.

"I don't know what you mean," said Mrs. Ffolliott, feebly. "I'm sure I had the strongest hope for several days. It seemed to me they *must* have been saved somehow; and Rodney was such a good swimmer."

"So was Prudence a good swimmer," said Carolyn.

"Yes, she was. But I don't see what happened to the boat; they were—" 172

"Mother," said Carolyn, wearily, "don't go on talking like that."

"No, no," the mother said, soothingly, but in a perplexed voice; "I won't say anything. We have to bear whatever Providence sends upon us."

Carolyn suddenly sat upright in her chair. "Do we?" she asked, fiercely. Then she made an effort to restrain her words. She sank back again upon the seat. "They are not drowned," she said, calmly, as if merely asserting an evident fact.

Mrs. Ffolliott came close to her daughter and gently stroked her forehead.

"There, there," she said, as if speaking to a child; "we won't talk about it." Then she added, as an afterthought, "But I've ordered the mourning."

"The mourning!"

Again Carolyn sat upright. This time she laughed. At that laugh the mother drew back a little.

"I tell you they are not drowned," the girl repeated.

"Then where are they?"

"What does it matter where they are? They are together."

"Carolyn!"

"Yes, together."

"Poor child! Don't let's talk of this any longer. When you are stronger, your mind will be stronger, and you won't have these fancies." 173

Carolyn did not reply to these words. She lay silently in her chair, gazing off to the line where the horizon met the ocean.

She was thinking, suddenly, that it was here on the piazza that she had been sitting when Leander had found the ring that Prudence had given to Rodney; and then Rodney had come and had asked her, Carolyn Ffolliott, to be his wife.

Well, it was all over. But she would not put on black because her lover was faithless.

As the weeks went on, nothing more was heard of the two who went out in the *Vireo* that night; that is, nothing was heard by the people at Savin Hill. But they went nowhere, and saw only a very few friends; and as the season grew on towards winter they saw fewer and fewer. The neighbors had gone back to their city homes. Prudence's mother had left them for the South.

Flurries of snow began sometimes to hide the ocean from the girl, who sat often at her chamber window. Then came three or four perfect days in November, the Indian summer. It was on one of these days that Mrs. Ffolliott entered the room where her daughter sat by the hearth. Carolyn was reading, or seemed to be reading. She held a book in her hand nearly always when she was not at work. 174

Mrs. Ffolliott had a copy of a Boston daily paper, and the paper fluttered and rustled in her hand as she came forward nervously.

"Carolyn," she said, in a high voice, "you just read that; you might as well read it first at last. The strange part of it is that we haven't seen it before. Of course other folks have seen it. And they wouldn't tell us. I call that unkind. I happened upon this paper in a waste-basket. It had never been unfolded. I don't know what we've done to have such a thing happen to us. I'm glad you held out about not putting on black. How ridiculous we should have looked, going around in black!"

While she talked Mrs. Ffolliott held the paper beyond her daughter's reach, though the latter extended her hand for it.

"Let me see it," said Carolyn, authoritatively.

The mother hesitated an instant, then she put the paper on the girl's lap and pointed to the list of passengers on the *Scythia*.

"Mr. and Mrs. Rodney Lawrence," Carolyn read, then she read again. She heard her mother saying:

"It's the same steamer and the same date that you were going with him." 175

Mrs. Ffolliott was not thinking of grammar as she spoke.

Carolyn looked up, a hard light in her eyes.

"Only he married Prudence instead of me," she said. "It was a fine plan, wasn't it? No one could have made a better. Of course people hated to tell us. Oh!"

She dropped the paper and clasped her hands. In a moment the hard look had left her face. Her lips quivered as she said, "He always loved her; he never loved me. No, he never loved me. Do you suppose he'll be happy with her?"

"I'm sure I hope not," was the angry reply, "and I don't see how it's possible, either. The scoundrel! The ungrateful wretch!"

"Oh, mamma!"

"You don't mean to say you're going to defend him, Carolyn Ffolliott!"

"No, no," she said, in a low voice that trembled piteously; "but I can't stop loving him because he doesn't love me. You see, mamma, I've got to love him. Oh, I wish I hadn't! I wish I could thrust him out of my mind!"

"Got to love him!" cried Mrs. Ffolliott. "Carolyn, I'm ashamed of you. I thought you had more spirit. Are you going to whine in this way? Why, I'll—I'll have you shut up! Do you think I'd have gone on like this if your father had served me so?" 176

The girl did not answer. She was sitting motionless, with her hands lying inertly in her lap.

Mrs. Ffolliott, in the suddenness of this discovery, hardly knew what she did. She grasped her daughter's shoulder and shook it.

"Have some pride!" she exclaimed.

But Carolyn did not resent the words or the touch. She was staring straight in front of her mother, a nerveless droop to her mouth, a touching despair in her whole aspect.

"You are not going to go about wearing the willow, are you? Oh, the scamp! The villain!"

The sharp voice echoed in the place.

Carolyn now tried to rise. She turned indignantly to her mother, her eyes flashing.

"If you call him such names I'll leave the house," she said, firmly.

"Good heavens! She defends him! The vile—"

"Mother!"

"Carolyn!"

The girl asserted herself. She spoke with dignity. "You are speaking of the man who was to be my husband; please remember that. And I love him; remember that also. By accident he met that—that—" her voice sharpened—"he met Prudence. She, of course, tempted him; she would tempt an angel from heaven. And he loved her. It was all a mistake, his thinking he cared for me,—that is, to marry me. Now we've got to bear it. Prudence—but no," coldly, "why should I talk of her?" 177

"You defend him!" Mrs. Ffolliott cried, with hysterical repetition. "That a child of mine should—"

"Mother!" said the girl again, "we won't talk of this."

"Not talk of this insult!—this—I say he's a scamp, and he shall never come into my house again!"

"He will probably never try. We shall never see him again. And he won't be happy with her. Oh, I want him to be happy, whatever happens!"

Carolyn said the last words as if she did not know she was not alone. Her face at that moment had a look of such fervid loveliness that her mother involuntarily turned away as if from something sacred.



**"LET ME SEE IT,' SAID CAROLYN."**



## CHAPTER XI.

### A KNOCK-DOWN BLOW.

After this Carolyn refused to talk of Lawrence or Prudence. She immediately decided to go back to their city house and go on with the winter precisely as usual.

Mrs. Ffolliott made two remarks, and then dropped the subject. One of these remarks was, "I can't tell how thankful I am that we didn't put on black, though I should have done it if you hadn't stopped us, I must say." The other was, "If your father had been living, Caro, things wouldn't have happened like this;" though how Carolyn's father would have prevented these things from happening was not explained.

The girl and her mother went everywhere and received the same as usual. After their five hundred friends had looked at Caro in great but partially concealed curiosity as to "how she took it," they all tried to act as if nothing had happened, and most of them conceded that it was wise of Miss Ffolliott to go right on with her ordinary life. 179

Some of them remarked, "But there is a curious look about her eyes, isn't there? I suppose she really cared for that man."

One afternoon in January, while Carolyn was in her own room, her furs still on, for she had just come in from a walk, a servant brought her a card. As she read "Lord Maxwell" on the pasteboard, her face changed. She hesitated an instant, then she said, "I will go down."

The gentleman was standing by the hearth; a thick yellow beard covered his chin, and this change so improved his appearance that Carolyn was surprised almost into doubting his identity.

"It's so good of you to see me," he began, "so awfully good, you know."

She held out her hand. She was trying not to be agitated. It seemed to her that she was very weak because at sight of this Englishman her pulses began to flutter. She sat down on one side of the hearth; he continued standing. He laughed slightly, and said he believed he was getting nervous; he'd rather stand; no, on the whole he'd sit. So he sat down also.

"I say, Miss Ffolliott," he spoke hurriedly, "I hope you'll pardon me for calling, you know. I was going to be in town, and I hunted up your address. Is—is your cousin, Miss Prudence, with you?" 180

"No."

Carolyn found it at first a simple impossibility to add more. The very strength of her wish to give the information concerning her cousin in a matter-of-fact way prevented her from doing so.

Lord Maxwell leaned forward with his hands on his knees. His large, prominent eyes were fixed on the fire.

"You were anxious about Lady Maxwell when I saw you last," now said Carolyn.

"Yes; I remember. She died; yes, she died, you know." The gentleman sat up straight. "We did everything we could, but it wasn't any use. I didn't feel like going back to England. Her mother went. I've been out to the Rockies; been hunting no end,—big game, you know; but, somehow, I didn't care much. My wife was a good woman, Miss Ffolliott."

Carolyn made an inarticulate murmur in response.

"Yes," he went on, "I came right here. Thought I'd call and see old friends, you know. Made sure you could tell me where Miss Prudence Ffolliott is. Can you?"

"No." And again the girl found it almost impossible to go on. But this time she did continue: "Prudence married Mr. Rodney Lawrence, Lord Maxwell. They never came back that night. I wonder you had not heard?" 181

The young man rose to his feet, but immediately sat down again. His face grew red, and then pale. He opened his lips to speak, and presently said, "Haven't seen a paper; haven't heard any news. By Jove!"

The exclamation came harshly,—so harshly that he immediately begged pardon.

He sat gazing intently into the fire. It was really painful to witness his struggle towards composure. As for Carolyn, she was wondering now at her own calmness. She was thinking, "He loves her, too."

Then she fell to wondering what Prudence would think and feel when she knew that now, by her own act, she had missed a brilliant marriage, for the second time had missed a peerage. But below everything in her mind was the keen, insistent question, "Why do they love her so?"

Lord Maxwell evidently tried to rouse himself. He looked at the girl opposite; something in her face made his eyes grow dim. He wanted to speak; his thoughts groped for words that should express—what? His mind was in a painful confusion; he hated to suffer as he was suffering now. And this girl who was looking at him,—how kind she was!—and, by Jove, she had just been going to marry Lawrence! He had forgotten that at first. What a cursed muddle it all was! Had she cared, too? But women were so strange, and proud, and—All at once Maxwell was pouring out hurried words, having a confidence that this girl would not scorn him, would be kind, and he must speak to some one; a man couldn't hold his peace when such a thing as this had happened. And he had been sure that Prudence would engage herself to him, and they would be married as soon as it was respectable. Hadn't she jilted Lawrence for him? Hadn't she—but what had he done himself? And now he wondered if she had loved Lawrence all the time; but surely she had loved him, Maxwell, when—He wanted 182

to swear again.

"Here I've been thinking of her every minute," he burst out,—“thinking of her when I ought to have remembered my wife. But I didn't care; I didn't care for anything but to get a smile from Prudence. Damn it! Oh, do forgive me, Miss Ffolliott! A man doesn't know what he's saying. And when Lady Maxwell died, I wouldn't write; I was bound I'd wait till I came back here, you know; I resolved on that,—kind of penance, and that sort of thing, and—”

183

"It was too late, Lord Maxwell," interrupted Carolyn, coldly, "already too late before you had joined your wife."

"Was it?" Maxwell was now walking about the room, his hands in his pockets. "I'll wager ten to one you think I'm a fool to care so, and so I am. But what's a fellow to do? I tell you I'm hard hit,—devilishly hard hit,—beg pardon."

"Men seem to be fools about Prudence Ffolliott," remarked Carolyn; "she seems to be that kind of a woman."

Though she spoke in a very quiet voice, hearing her own tones made her shrink from herself in a contemptuous surprise. Had she fallen so low as to allow herself to speak thus? She would have given much to recall her sentence. She drew herself up with some haughtiness as she added, "Please forget that I used such words. Naturally I don't like to think of my cousin. I will say to you, Lord Maxwell, that you are not the only one who has suffered by reason of that woman."

Carolyn succeeded in pronouncing the words "that woman" in an entirely neutral tone. Having done so, she immediately fell to despising herself for having said them at all. They seemed to her far beneath her own ideal of what she ought to be. In the sudden stress of her penitence and pain she leaned forward and made a gesture for her companion to stop in his walk.

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"Lord Maxwell," she said, tremulously, "I don't mean to bear malice, or to judge. How am I to know the strength of temptation which besets somebody else? I am always praying to be forgiven. The seeing that you suffer—yes, it must be that—makes me talk to you in this way, though I don't know you much,—though—”

Her voice trembled into silence. Her eyes, dim with tears, were lowered. Lord Maxwell seized her hand; he held it fast in both his own for an instant.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "you're a good woman! I wish I'd known a woman like you years ago. I did have a sister, but she died; somehow a fellow can't get on if he doesn't have a good sister, or know some woman like you."

He paused and dropped her hand. Two tears fell from his eyes to his cheeks. He took out his handkerchief and openly wiped them away.

"I'm a regular donkey, don't you know?" he said; "but you can't tell what it is to me to see a woman like you. I knew there must be such women somewhere; and I've had such a load of things on my mind lately. And I've been wishing I'd tried more to make my wife have a better time; but I couldn't get Prudence out of my mind no way. Fact is, she bewitched me. And I counted on finding her now, and—and—well, you see, hearing she's married was a regular knock-down blow,—took the stiffening right out of me. So I've been and behaved like a baby,—and I an Englishman!"

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Here the speaker smiled in a doleful manner. Then he turned towards the door. "I believe I'll go now; might as well. Good-by, Miss Ffolliott."

He turned back again, shook hands, and then walked out of the room.

Carolyn remained in her chair by the fire. She leaned her head back and closed her eyes. Her features gradually became as calm as if they did not belong to a being who could be happy, and who could also suffer.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### "DON'T BE CRUEL TO ME."

"Did you bring my wrap,—the gray velvet?"

The man addressed slightly raised his arm to draw attention to the fact that he was carrying a garment.

"Oh, thanks. Is there anywhere to go this morning?"

"I thought we were to sit somewhere in the old fort. You signified a wish to that effect."

"Did I? If I've signified a wish, do let's carry it into effect. We will sit on the water-battery, then; though I've noticed that only lovers sit there."

The man made no reply. The two walked across the Plaza, mounted the sea-wall, and were presently established on the battery, apparently absorbed in gazing across the Matanzas River out towards the open sea.

"Shall we play we are lovers?" asked Prudence, after awhile, turning to her husband with a smile.

"I'm afraid the attempt will be too great a strain upon you," answered Lawrence; but he smiled back, and leaned a trifle nearer his companion. 187

She turned her eyes away immediately, and seemed to drop the idea of playing at lovers.

Lawrence's figure stiffened slightly as it withdrew; but he said nothing until he took a cigar-case from his pocket. Then he remarked:

"I'm so glad you don't object to smoking."

"But it seems coarse to go beyond cigarettes," she answered.

"Does it? Then you are not coarse yet."

"Thank fortune, no. I wonder if Leander has learned to chew tobacco."

No reply. Lawrence smoked slowly, gazing intently at a large yacht that was just entering the river.

"Four months is a tremendous while, isn't it?" Prudence put up her hand to yawn behind it as she spoke.

"That depends," said Lawrence, gravely.

"On what, for instance?"

"On the degree in which you are bored."

"Ah! Well, there's something in that, Rodney. But tell me truly, how long does it seem to you since we were married?"

"Precisely four months and three days and a half." 188

"You are nothing if not accurate, dear."

She put up her hand and yawned again.

"Accuracy is something," he returned.

He was holding his cigar in his hand now, and looking down at the red tip with the utmost apparent interest.

After a short silence, Prudence said, "I wish you happened to have a cigarette about you, Rodney."

"I have. Your case is in my pocket."

She held out her hand. "Give me one, then. I didn't know this water-battery was so deadly dull."

Lawrence made no movement to accede to her demand. He flung away his own half-burnt cigar.

"Give me one, please."

"No. I prefer that you shouldn't smoke here in public."

"Oh!"

Her eyes narrowed as she looked at her husband; then she burst into a light laugh, and turned to look again at the river. Lawrence glanced at her, then he, too, gazed at the water.

A little shallop shot into sight close to the battery. It was rowed by a man who looked up and saw the two. He lifted his cap; he stared persistently at the woman, his eyes showing an open admiration. Then his boat glided on towards the wharves. 189

"Is that Meramble?"

"Yes; quite an Italianized-looking man, isn't he?"

There was a slight access of color on Lawrence's face, but his voice was perfectly even in its lightness, as he responded:



"Was that an Italianized stare he gave you?"

Prudence shrugged her shoulders; and that was the only reply she made to the question.

More boats and more yachts came by. Sometimes there was waving of hats and handkerchiefs from those on board to the two on the battery.

"We must look quite a Darby and Joan," remarked Prudence.

"Quite," said Lawrence.

Again Prudence turned her eyes quickly on her husband. Then she asked:

"Do you remember what Mr. Meramble sang at the Ormistons' last night?"

"No."

"I do; it was so cute. You were close to the piano; you ought to remember."

"I recall Mr. Meramble's shirt-collar and his tie, but not his song." As he spoke, Lawrence laughed. It must be confessed that his laugh was extremely irritating. 190

"Listen," said Prudence.

Then, in a veiled, sweet voice, she sang:

"Can you keep the bee from ranging,  
Or the ring-dove's neck from changing?  
No. Nor fettered love from dying  
In the knot there's no untying."

Lawrence sat so motionless that he almost had an air of rigidity. He continued his straight-ahead stare as he remarked, in an indifferent voice, "Meramble looks like a man who would not only sing like that, but act like that."

Prudence did not speak for some moments. Then she said she wondered why men seemed to hate each other so; she never could understand it.

"Then what you have not understood may be beyond your comprehension altogether."

Here Lawrence drew out another cigar, contemplated it, and then returned it to its case.

"How pleasant the water-battery is!" exclaimed Prudence.

"Perfectly delightful," was the man's response.

Another silence. Then Prudence turned with an indescribable, confiding movement towards her husband. She slowly removed her glove, looking down at it as she did so. She gently and caressingly laid her bared hand in her husband's, which was lying listlessly on his knee. The masculine fingers closed quickly about the feminine ones. 191

But Lawrence did not yet turn his head. He knew that Prudence had moved imperceptibly nearer. Presently he heard a soft whisper, "Dearest."

He turned now, and his eyes met a warm glance that was even more thrilling than the word had been.

A fire sprang instantly to his eyes as he murmured:

"My darling! My darling wife!"

She responded to the eager pressure of his hand, the eager brilliance of his eyes. Then she said, with tender gaiety, "It isn't so stupid on the water-battery, after all, is it?"

"How can it be stupid where you are?"

"Oh, thank you! That's just what I intended you should say, Lawrence. It's so nice not to have you disappoint me."

Here the two smiled into each other's eyes; and then Prudence added, "You are never dull, you dear old fellow, only when you choose to be. That's why it's so very, very trying, you know."

"But I don't want to try you," Lawrence responded. 192

"Perhaps it's just because you're a man, dear," she said lightly, but still with the sweet warm look in her eyes.

"Then I fear I can't help it if the trouble is so deep-seated as that." There was an ardent strain below the lightness in his voice. "Prue," he added, in a half whisper, laughing slightly, "if we were not on the water-battery I'm almost certain I should kiss you."

"On the Plaza, for instance?" she asked, with a raising of the brows. "I suppose we look quite ridiculous, as it is. Please throw my mantle over our hands; that is, if you insist on keeping my hand in yours."

Lawrence flung the gray wrap over their clasped hands. He began to talk gaily. Suddenly he ceased speaking. Group after group had gone past them as they sat there, but now a man in white pantaloons, with a blue coat over a white rowing jersey, came walking over the battery. This man was middle-aged, swarthy, with a heavy black, carefully kept beard, and black eyes with a puffiness beneath them. He came up hat in hand.

"Of course I know I'm *de trop*, Mrs. Lawrence," he said, easily; "but then a man may decide to be even that for the sake of a word with you." 193

He nodded at Lawrence, who bowed with extreme distance in return, and who altogether had a look, as his wife informed him later, of wishing to rise and throw this newcomer into the sea.

"Only you'd have had a terrible armful, dear," she concluded, with a laugh and a glint of the eyes.

Having spoken thus, Mr. Meramble calmly sat down on the other side of Mrs. Lawrence and asked her if she didn't think he had rowed by in excellent form. Whereupon they entered into a brisk talk about rowing and yacht-racing and kindred topics.

Lawrence grew more and more glum, and at last rose and said he believed he would go back to the Ponce.

To his surprise, Prudence also rose.

"Wait a moment, dear," she said, sweetly, "and I'll go with you."

And of course Meramble rose, and refrained from accompanying them.

"I wish you were not quite such a donkey, Rodney," said Prudence, as the two walked away.

"Thanks for your good wish." Lawrence had a sense of suffocation upon him. This sense was caused by his now having fully decided in his own mind that his wife used just such tones and just such glances with other men as she had used—nay, as she still used—with him. This conviction, he felt, was reached rather soon after his marriage, and he was in the first acute suffering of the full discovery which had been slowly, like a dull pain, coming to his consciousness. 194

"I don't mean that you are habitually a donkey," she went on, as they strolled through the Plaza, "but only occasionally, and, of course, just when you particularly ought not to be."

Here the speaker bowed to an acquaintance, and Lawrence hurriedly raised his hat without seeing whom they had met.

"Just now," she continued, "you ought to have been especially sweet to Mr. Meramble."

"Why? Because the creature is a blackguard and a male flirt?"

Prudence raised her brows again. But she touched her husband's sleeve, and her glance tried to meet his.

"Because," she answered, "he is one of those animals who like to make husbands jealous."

Lawrence turned towards his wife with a restrained ferocity.

"And you would let him?" he asked, speaking in a whisper lest he should speak too loud. 195

Prudence threw back her head and laughed; the merry sound made people near turn and look at her.

"Good heavens!" muttered Lawrence under his breath, "what a thing it is to be a woman!"

"Not half so much of a thing as it is to be a man. A man is a miracle of suspicion and trust, of belief and incredulity. Don't you believe me, you angry old Rodney?" she asked, with another touch on his arm, and a swift, sweet modulation of voice.

"Yes," he answered, grimly; "I believe everything you tell me."

"Oh, no, you mustn't do that, for soon you'll be blaming me for deceiving you. But we're getting off the subject,—Mr. Meramble. He likes to make you jealous. It is kind of exciting, you know, to suspect that some one is behind a door, or somewhere, fuming and biting his nails down to the quick; you've noticed that jealous people always bite their nails to the quick, haven't you?"

"I can't say I have."

"Well, they do; I suppose they enjoy it. Now about Mr. Meramble; have you anything special against him, Rodney dear?"

"Yes."

"What?" 196

"Do you want it in plain words?"

"Oh, dear, yes. I'm not afraid of plain words; and really I'm getting interested in him."

"Are you? The plain words are that he is a gambler and a seducer of women."

"Oh! And perhaps he smokes, too?"

The words left the smiling lips with a flippancy that seemed to Rodney nothing less than atrocious.

And yet he could not help hoping that she was saying them only to shock him. He had often thought of late that she liked to shock him; he could not understand such amusement, however.

"We won't talk any more here in public on this subject," Lawrence said, when he believed he could speak in his ordinary tone; "if we wish to exhaust the topic, let us go back to the hotel."

"Very well; and perhaps you'll have me whipped if I don't agree with you. I heard of a man the other day who

said it was only cowardice on his part that he didn't whip his wife."

To this remark Lawrence made no reply. The two were walking now towards the Ponce. Unconsciously Lawrence hastened his steps.

When the door had closed upon them in their own apartments, Prudence suddenly turned to her husband, flung her arms about his neck, and pressed her head against his breast. She sobbed; she clung to him as if she could never let him go; and when he sat down with her held close in his arms, she lifted her tear-wet face, put a hand under his chin, and held his face away while she looked long and tenderly into his eyes. 197

How could he have been so angry? How could he ever forget for a moment the look he saw on her face now?

These were the questions he was asking himself, while his heart beat with the old rapture, the old intensity of joy in her presence.

"You ought not to be cruel to me," she murmured, after awhile. Then, with a long, quivering breath, her head sank on his shoulder, and the two sat silent.

At last Lawrence became aware that his wife had fallen asleep. He looked down at her with inexpressible tenderness. He lightly kissed her forehead. He was already telling himself that he had been harsh, brutal. Was she never to speak to any one save him?

But, though he thought thus, though the burden in his arms was so unutterably dear to him, he had a conviction that he should not be able to refrain from returning to the subject of Meramble. Things were not yet satisfactorily settled. Lawrence could not understand how any self-respecting man could be willing that any of his womankind should be more than barely civil to a person like Meramble. Even women here in St. Augustine, who skimmed very near the fence that separated the respectable from those that were not respectable, stopped at Meramble. Some of them looked over the fence longingly, for Meramble was said to be mysteriously entertaining, and charmingly devoted when he chose to be so. And there was about his appearance something that seemed a cross between a man of the world and a bandit. And he could sing; why, those who had heard him averred that even Mario could never have so "charmed with a tenor note the souls in purgatory" as could this man. 198

Still, Meramble was "in society" and yet was only tolerated. The stories about him perhaps made him more interesting, while they made people afraid. The men nodded distantly at him; what friends he found were women who would not be thought intimate with him, but who would not cut him dead, on "account of his brigand face," their husbands said.

It may be permitted to remark here that the time when a man thinks he has been "harsh and brutal" is the time when his wife can most easily "twist him about her finger." 199

When Prudence woke, ten minutes later, she found Lawrence sitting motionless lest he should disturb her. She opened her eyes and gazed sleepily at him for an instant. Then she smiled and nestled still nearer to him.

"You dear old thing," she said, in a whisper, "you must be aching in every bone. You may move now."

Lawrence changed his position slightly, but still held her.

"There's one thing I want to ask," he said, presently.

Prudence raised her head. "Oh, dear!" she exclaimed, with a smile, "when a person wants to ask one thing it's sure to be something dreadful."

She began to stroke her husband's face. Lawrence took her hand and held it fast.

"Nevertheless, I must ask it," he said.

"Well," she said, resignedly, "go on."

She lay looking at him with soft shining eyes, her lips curved in something far sweeter than a smile.

"Are you going to be cruel to me?" she asked.

"Was I ever cruel?" 200

"No, no, dear old boy. Now go on."

At this moment it seemed really ridiculous to Lawrence to ask what he had in mind to ask. But he kept to his resolve.

"I want you to promise not to—well, promise to snub that Meramble. Don't be any more than barely civil to him. You know what I mean. It's pollution for a woman to be kind to such a man."

Prudence raised her head and laughed.

"Is that all?" she said. "Ask me something harder than that. What do I care for Mr. Meramble? Pshaw! I can give you that promise easily enough."

"Oh, you will, then?" he asked, eagerly.

"Certainly."

And upon this Lawrence was afraid he had been a silly tyrant. But he now inquired why, then, Prudence smiled on that confounded scamp.

"Smiled on him?" she inquired, in bewilderment.

"Yes; in a—well, in a peculiar way, calculated to make him think you cared for him—or would like him to care for you—or—oh, no matter what. Stop smiling on him, anyway."

Here Lawrence tried to laugh. He felt awkward and foolish.

Prudence rose. She knelt down in front of her husband and crossed her arms over her bosom.

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"My lord," she said, in a low voice, "your will is my law. So be it, even as you have said. I will smile no more on that Meramble man person. And if your slave does not obey, cut off her head; then she will smile no more on any one."

Lawrence leaned forward and caught his wife back in his arms.

His spirits suddenly rose wildly, and they kept at this high tide for several days. Prudence was as she had been immediately before and after their marriage, passionately in love with him, gay, saucy, tender, caressing.

Therefore he was somewhat surprised that, when he came home from Jacksonville one morning, he should meet an acquaintance who should say:

"You've missed the excursion down to Matanzas, Lawrence."

"Yes, but I meant to miss it," was the reponse.

Afterward Lawrence remembered that the man looked at him with some curiosity as he remarked, carelessly:

"Mrs. Lawrence likes such junketings better than we do. She's gone in Meramble's launch."

"Yes," Lawrence heard himself saying, carelessly, "she's always happy in a boat. How did the tennis match come out? Eustace won, of course?"

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Then Lawrence walked slowly from the station by this man's side, and put questions about the tennis match, and seemed interested in the lengthy replies. But when he was at last left alone he strode eagerly down to the wharves. He knew there was no regular conveyance to Matanzas, but as he felt now he would go if he had to walk or swim there. He would not try to analyze or subdue the fury in his heart. It was not that he was jealous in the ordinary sense of the word. But that broken promise gave him a poignant and terrible sense of desecration.

As he asked here and there at the wharves for a sailboat, he could hardly bring himself to listen to the replies because of the agony of humiliation that overwhelmed him. He recalled with piercing vividness every look and tone as his wife had given the promise. What had she meant? And did she love him? Impossible to doubt it; and yet—The sting of that "yet" was unbearable.

He found a small sailboat which he could hire. The wind was just right, and he started. It seemed to him that he did not look to the right or left as his boat glided down between the Florida bank and the shore of Anastasia Island. The soft air was sweet with the smells of pine woods and salt water. The white gulls flew over him; the marsh ponies galloped up to the brink of the river to look at him, then as he came nearer they snorted and galloped away again, mane and tail flying.

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It was several hours before his craft sailed up to the rickety old wharf near the ruin of the Spanish fort.

Two or three people were strolling on the beach, poking the fiddler-crabs with canes, or looking idly off about them.

"Hullo, Lawrence; so you decided you'd come, after all, eh?"

"Yes; thought better of it when I found I got back from Jacksonville in time."

Lawrence would not ask concerning his wife. A burning pain seemed to have seized his heart. He had not eaten since morning, and then but a few morsels of food. He was obliged to battle against a certain tremor of the limbs that sometimes came upon him. He walked along among the fiddler-crabs that were everywhere darting into their holes and then coming out again. He examined these crabs as if they were of the greatest interest to him. He talked a great deal with the people he met. Two or three of them spoke afterwards of his appearance, and some averred that there was a peculiar expression in his eyes. But there are people who make use of such phrases after a thing has happened.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### AN INVOLUNTARY BATH.

Strolling thus in front of the old house with its big chimneys and verandas, Lawrence thought he would go and sit down on one of those verandas: people who saw him would suppose he was enjoying the scenery, and he was conscious of an imperative desire to think calmly. That was what he had been trying to do all the way down here,—think calmly. He called himself an idiot, an unmitigated idiot, for coming at all. How should he better things by coming?

He rose from the old bench on which he had been sitting, and walked around the corner of the house. Walking, thus, he came upon a man and a woman standing there within the shade of some thick clambering vines.

The man's back was towards Lawrence but the woman's face was plain to his sight, with upraised eyes and—he could not be sure of the expression, for Prudence instantly advanced, saying, briskly:

"So nice of you, Rodney, to come, after all. Mr. Meramble was just suggesting that we go back to the launch and take a turn outside and see where Menendez and his ruffians came in." 206

"Capital idea," responded Lawrence, a trifle too pleasantly. "I always thought Menendez was rather overestimated as a scamp. You remember we looked the whole thing up when we came to Augustine, Prudence?"

He glanced at his wife with a most amiable expression. Meramble hastened to ask Lawrence to go in the launch, and Lawrence accepted with rather profuse thanks. He talked glibly as the three made their way to the bit of a craft, which required no work save what its owner could do himself.

Two or three times Prudence gave her husband a swift look in which perhaps there was a hint of questioning terror. She had never seen him in the least like this. She recalled, for the first time since she had heard it, the remark her Aunt Letitia had once made to the effect that Rodney had a terrible temper when he was roused, but that he usually kept it under control.

You would have said that these three people were on the best of terms with one another as they went talking and laughing down to the launch, and as they embarked and the little craft began to glide out into the open sea. Prudence afterward told some one that, as her husband looked full at her with such extremely pleasant eyes, she didn't know why she should think of Bluebeard and a few other characters noted for amiability to their wives. 207

At any rate, there was something in the suavity of Lawrence's manner that soon made it a great effort for Prudence to speak at all, try as she would. Her smile became constrained; her heart beat heavily. She sat under the little awning and looked at the two men.

Lawrence was telling a story with good effect; sometimes he smiled as he talked; he was really very entertaining and very good-humored. His wife endeavored to forget the time when she had given him a certain promise. Were such promises ever kept, any more than the false vows that men were continually making?

The launch was going quite fast, straight out on the smooth water to sea. The land was already two or three miles away.

Prudence saw Lawrence turn and look towards the coast that lay low, its white sand glittering in the bright light. Then he glanced towards Meramble.

"Can you swim, Mr. Meramble?" he asked, presently. 208

"Certainly," the man replied, with a slight accent of surprise.

"So fortunate," returned Lawrence.

"Why fortunate?"

"Because I am presently going to throw you into the sea," was the suave answer.

The other man thought this was a joke, and a very poor joke. But he laughed, and said there might be a difference of opinion about that.

"Oh, no, I think not; I think I can do it easily."

"Ah!"

Meramble's white teeth glittered in his black beard. Yes, it was a joke in the very worst possible taste, and before Mrs. Lawrence, too. But he smiled all the same as he uttered the interjection.

The sense of electricity in the clear air suddenly became almost intolerable.

"Damn him!" Meramble was saying to himself, "what's he talking like that for?"

Lawrence sat silent for a few moments, gazing towards the shore. Prudence made an effort to keep up some kind of conversation. Though Rodney terrified her, she was secretly admiring him. She was thinking that she had not known he could be exactly like this. 209

Lawrence turned from his contemplation of the receding shore to objects nearer.

He rose with the utmost quietness of movement. He stooped slightly, and, notwithstanding the quick and furious warding motion made by Meramble, that gentleman was lifted bodily up, and flung over the boat's side, where he fell splashing into the water.

The boat darted away from him, but not so soon that the two in it could not hear the terrible oath he uttered.

"Oh, Rodney!" cried Prudence, starting from her seat.

"Sit down," said Rodney, calmly, but his face was not quite steady. Now that his anger had done something to satisfy itself, he must begin to feel the reaction in some way.

"He will drown," said Prudence.

"No matter."

"But you will be hanged."

"In that case you will be a widow."

Here Lawrence began to laugh. Drops of moisture appeared on his forehead.

Prudence rose again. This time she came and was going to sit down by her husband, but he made a gesture for her to go back. 210

"He won't drown,—never fear," he said.

"As if I cared whether he drowned or not!" she cried. "It's you I care for."

At this Lawrence laughed again. He was watching Meramble, who was swimming after them, his black head shining on top of the water.

Now he withdrew his eyes from Meramble, and fixed them on his wife. He felt as if a devil were in him that was not yet satisfied. And why should he still have that furious, unreasoning love for this woman? Had she not jilted him once, and when she could not get her English lord, had she not won him again? Did she love him? Had she ever loved him? Good God! it was dreadful to look at her now and doubt her. There was terror in her face, but there was something else, too, the thing which had lured him and held him, and which he was afraid would always hold him; and it seemed to be love for him,—some cruel passion which a woman like her was capable of feeling, even while she coquetted with other men. He did not understand; he was not going to endure it.

Lawrence was sitting in the place just occupied by Meramble. He wished to be ready to attend to the launch; he had put it about directly, and they were now returning to the shore. Prudence had taken her seat near him. With some appearance of timidity she leaned forward and touched his sleeve. 211

"I would never testify against you," she said, in an awed whisper, her terror plainly visible.

"Testify?" he repeated, scornfully; "never fear about that. That creature won't drown; and he'll never tell how he came to have this bath. I didn't seem to have any opportunity to thrash him, so I threw him over. If you think he's going to drown, I'll stop and pick him up. I'm afraid he won't love me any the better for this. I had to do it, however, or kill him outright."

Lawrence spoke so rapidly that his words were hardly distinguishable. He no longer attempted to seem amiable. There was a ferocious light in his eyes, and he was very pale. Altogether he looked as a man may look who for the time has given himself over to the devil. Being an honorable man with an unseared conscience, he would have to pay a good price in self-contempt for the last half-hour. But the time for the self-contempt had not yet struck.

Prudence sat quietly trembling,—nay, she was almost cowering,—watching her companion with great eyes that made her face wild and strange. Why is it that an outbreak of savage Berserker blood so often excites admiration in the spectator? Does a drop of that same barbarian blood mingle yet with the milder current of civilization? 212

It was not the way of Prudence to keep silent, no matter what was happening. But she was afraid to speak now, and afraid to remain silent. She hesitated; she wanted to grasp her husband's arm, but the slight touch she had given him was all she dared. Was this the man whom she had been able to influence? Odd that she should be so proud of him because he had picked up Meramble and tossed him over the boat's side. Odd that she should be sure that she should never have any interest in Meramble again. How contemptible he had looked, flying over the side! But he had had a great way with his eyes, and he was said to be dangerous.

Here she laughed hysterically.

Meramble, swimming along behind, happened to hear that laugh, and he gnashed his teeth as if he were the villain of a melodrama. And he swore also, and swam still faster through the smooth water. If he had had a pistol in his hand at that moment, it is quite probable that he would have fired at those two in the launch, and I am quite certain he would have aimed at the woman first. Fortunately, however, in these days of high enlightenment we do not usually have revolvers within reach every time we are indignant. 213

"Do let him get in, Rodney," Prudence at length exclaimed, as soon as she could stop laughing.

At this Lawrence literally glared at her. Then he asked if she were so anxious concerning her friend's safety.

"No," she answered, hardily; "I don't care a penny whether he drowns or not. But you—oh, I'm afraid for you! He won't love you after this."

Then, in spite of herself, she began to laugh again, and then she burst into a violent fit of weeping, bending forward and hiding her face in her hands as she did so.

"No," said Lawrence, grimly; "I don't think I've done anything to win his affection."

As he spoke, he slowed the launch. Its owner presently came up alongside and laid hold of the boat's edge.

"Do you want to get aboard?" inquired Lawrence.

It was an instant before Meramble could reply. Poor devil, it was hard on him!

"Is there any other craft near?" he asked, finally.

Lawrence gazed leisurely about him. "None within five miles, I should say," was the answer.

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To this Meramble made no reply in words. The launch came to a stand, and he scrambled aboard. It is dreadful when a human being has within him quite so much of a wild-beast rage. Meramble knew that he had been made ridiculous before this woman. He knew that he was dripping and ridiculous now. He had not been in any real danger; real danger would have eliminated the ridiculous.

Lawrence rose, bowed, and relinquished the charge of the launch to its owner.

Meramble sat down without a word. Since he could not use the violent oaths which were all the words he wanted to use, he did not know why he should speak at all.

So it was in entire silence that the three went back to land. The group on the shore came down to the wharf, uttering exclamations and inquiries.

Meramble explained that he had been awkward enough to fall into the water, but that Lawrence (with a look at that gentleman) had been kind enough to rescue him, and he added that he, Meramble, should never rest until he had been able to do as much for Mr. Lawrence.

Somebody on the wharf affirmed that, at this speech, Mrs. Lawrence shuddered unmistakably. Therefore, a wise few immediately asserted that there was more in Meramble's falling into the water than met the eye.

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When Lawrence tried to recall how he and his wife reached St. Augustine and the Ponce that night, he could never remember the slightest thing. Apparently they did get back the same as the rest of the party.

The next day the owner of the sailboat came to Lawrence and demanded to know what had become of it. Then Lawrence endeavored to carry his mind back to the sailboat, and to explain. But it ended in his paying the man an exorbitant price for the boat, and so settling the matter that way.

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## CHAPTER XIV. A BULL TERRIER.

After this Prudence said she would not stay in St. Augustine another day; she affirmed that the place was hateful to her. She said she expected to find Rodney with a dagger stuck through him, if he left her for a moment.

Lawrence listened calmly to all this. The two were on the water-battery of the old fort again, and he was smoking. It was the week following the expedition to Matanzas.

Prudence looked pale and very charming in a white suit that fitted as her clothes always fitted. Lawrence once told her, with a suspicion of bitterness in his tone, that if she were to be led out to execution she would not pray, she would only ask if her gown were becoming, and was her hair right?

"Where do you want to go?" he inquired.

"I don't care."

"That means you do care."

He reached forward, and knocked the ash from his cigar against a stone. To-day his face was almost colorless, and his eyes were hard; and the dreadful thing about his eyes was that when they were turned upon his wife they did not change. 217

As for Prudence, she would have said that her heart was like lead. She dared not soften her voice when she addressed her husband, lest he might turn savagely upon her, though his manner now was as gentle and cold as a flake of snow. She glanced at him shyly, and was inwardly irritated that she should feel timid. She did not wish to be afraid of anything. One is not comfortable when one is afraid. And she was admiring him also; and she wished to tell him of that admiration, and hang upon him, and smile, and caress him.

"No," she said, at last, in response to his words; "it means exactly what I say."

"Since when have you meant what you say?"

He turned his cool, veiled eyes upon her, scanning her interrogatively.

She plucked up courage, and replied, lightly:

"Oh, I've always had seasons of meaning what I say."

"Indeed! But how is one to know when it is the season for truth?"

He spoke carelessly, as if he had no interest in the reply, whatever it should be. He puffed out a cloud of smoke and watched it float away. 218

Prudence drew her light mantle closely about her. She would not press her hands together beneath it, though she was tempted to do so.

She had expected an explanation, storm, tears, renewed tenderness. Surely he could not be tired of her so soon.

She did not answer his question, but apparently he did not notice this.

"Rodney, let us go away," she said, earnestly. "I hoped Mr. Meramble would go, but, since he stays, I can't endure my anxiety about you. I can't—I can't!"

Her voice grew unsteady. She looked at her husband entreatingly; tears gathered in her eyes.

"I am sorry to have you suffer from anxiety on my account," he responded, courteously; "but I think we will remain here. Augustine is a small place, I know, but it will hold Mr. Meramble and me."

"Please go!"

She moved a little nearer. A faint flush came to his face.

"Sorry to refuse you, Prudence, but you ought to see that after having flung Meramble into the water I can't run away as if I were afraid of him. Still, we don't fight duels nowadays, you know." 219

"But sometimes folks kill some other folks," she returned.

Lawrence shrugged his shoulders and said nothing.

"And Mr. Meramble's smile is so very glittering; it makes my backbone cold," Prudence went on; "and when he looks at you I feel like screaming."

"I wouldn't scream, if I were you," Lawrence remarked.

"I sha'n't, if I can help it; but I'm sure the time will come when I can't help it."

"In that case I'll call you insane and put you into an asylum."

Lawrence spoke these words so calmly that his wife shivered again, though she knew he was jesting. The glance she gave him now was not pleasant.

She turned towards the river and gazed at it, while her companion smoked. Already it seemed months since



the other day when he and she had sat there and she had made him look at her with love.

"I'm nearly certain that it has leaked out that Mr. Meramble didn't fall into the water," said Prudence, after a silence. "I suppose somebody must have been looking through a glass at us. People are always looking through a glass at the ocean and telling each other what they see. That man will do something, I tell you. He isn't smiling in such a shining way for nothing." 220

"Very well; let us wait and see what he does. We shall have thus some interest in life left to us; that will be something for which to be grateful to your friend."

"My friend!"

"Certainly; and he may thank you for his ducking."

Lawrence again puffed out a cloud of smoke and watched it dissipate in the blue air. But his wife refrained from speaking.

A few more days passed. On one of them Prudence remarked that they had made a great mistake in leaving Europe; in Europe they wouldn't have met Mr. Meramble.

"It might as well be Meramble as another; it was sure to be somebody," Lawrence returned.

That afternoon a great many of the winter residents attended a tennis match. Of course Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence were there; so was Meramble; and just as the game was over this latter gentleman suddenly appeared near Lawrence, who was in the midst of a group of men and women.

Meramble's face was crimson, and he was smiling. People looked at him curiously as he made his way among them. He carried a dog-whip in his hand; but then there was a bull-terrier at his heels, following closely, his red eyes watching his master. 221

"How do you do, Mr. Lawrence?" Meramble asked.

His voice was a trifle loud; but Lawrence spoke very low as he answered, distinctly, "How do you do, Mr. Meramble?"

"Never was better in my life, thanks. I owe you one. Sometimes I have a fancy to pay my debts—as now."

There was quite a theatrical air about the man as he spoke; indeed, his appearance usually savored of the melodrama.

"Ah! That so?" said Lawrence, calmly. He was thinking, "That fellow knows that people know I flung him in."

He had barely time to finish this thought when Meramble started forward and swung his dog-whip square across Lawrence's face. Lawrence felt a stinging blindness that confused him and made him reel for the instant. And he could not gather himself before something else had come upon him. Meramble's dog was at his throat; the brute had fastened himself there and was swinging by his hold. 222

There was a rush, a shouting, a scramble of several men forward to get the dog off.

Meramble stood back and looked on; he was still smiling with a glitter of black eyes and white teeth.

Somebody got hold of the dog's legs. But somebody else was nearer still, and in the utter confusion in Lawrence's senses he yet heard a voice say, sharply, "No! no! His throat! His throat!"

And all the time he himself was trying to find the dog's throat; but he was like a man whose hands would not obey him. The stroke so near his eyes had cut like a knife, and his brain was still reeling from it, and from the onset of the dog.

But he thought he recognized the voice crying out thus; and, curiously, in the hurrying blackness of the moment he was aware that he inhaled the odor of iris.

It was really but a second before he knew that his wife's fingers, strong and unflinching, were choking the beast from him. He heard him panting, then he heard the gurgle in the dog's throat; the teeth had to let go.

The terrier dropped to the ground, and was caught up by some masculine grasp and flung somewhere.

Lawrence blindly opened his arms and gathered his wife unto them. She lay trembling on his breast. 223

Some irrepressible in the crowd uttered a cheer for Mrs. Lawrence; the cheer was taken up, and every man there, save two, roared lustily in another "cheer for Mrs. Lawrence."

In the midst of it all, Lawrence, holding Prudence, heard her whisper, with her lips on his face:

"My dearest!"

In that instant his heart gave a glorious bound of ecstatic happiness.

Immediately she withdrew from his arms; somebody went off for a physician, for Lawrence's throat was torn and bleeding; somebody else offered an arm to him to assist him back to the hotel. There was a babel of talk and exclamation, and in the midst of it Meramble, still almost purple in the face, and still smiling, walked away.

When he was well clear of the crowd this gentleman paused and looked about him. Then he whistled a long-drawn-out note. A moment after this note had died on the air a black and white bull-terrier with red eyes, and with some drops of blood on his muzzle and chest, came at a slow sling trot from some place unseen and

ranged at his master's heels. Then dog and man walked out of sight, and I think out of the pages of this chronicle. 224

Lawrence's lacerated throat kept him in his room for some days. He lay on a lounge and tried to listen to Prudence as she read or talked to him. She was very sweet and very lovely. Lawrence felt the old charm of her presence, her smile, and her voice; he thrilled as he recalled over and over again her voice, and her words, and her act when the dog was at his throat.

But all the time, notwithstanding everything, there was with him the dull memory of her wantonly broken promise about her behavior to Meramble. He could remember too vividly her face as she had been talking with Meramble on the veranda of the old house at Matanzas.

When this remembrance was at its keenest, it was only by great self-restraint that Lawrence refrained from starting up and shouting out a curse for the woman who could do such a thing. But she loved him? The old, dreadful question; she loved him? Even now, in the midst of smiles and tears and kisses, she could make him believe her.

For the first three days Prudence was devotedly attentive; she scarcely left his side, and her devotion was plainly spontaneous.

A slight fever had set in, though the wounded throat was doing as well as such a hurt could do. Prudence began to grow listless in the very slightest degree. 225

Lawrence made her leave him and go down into the court, where a party were heard laughing and talking. After she had gone, with painful intentness he listened for her voice.

Ah! there it was. He raised himself on his elbow. Yes, honey sweet, gay, seductive, suggestive. He listened, his wounded throat throbbing as he did so. It was not that he desired to know what she said, it was only her tones that he must hear. And he groaned as he heard them.

He wished he might be able to understand her. He was not the first man who has wished to be able to understand a woman.

As Lawrence sank again on his couch, another day came back to his mind,—that day when he had been lying in his room at Savin Hill and had heard Prudence laugh outside.

Then he had been going to marry Carolyn Ffolliott. Then—he groaned again and moved uneasily.

It was terrible for a man like Lawrence to have one spot in his life which he dared not touch. He winced every time he came near that place in his mind. He wished that it might be covered up, encysted like some morbid growth in the body, and not remain so atrociously alive. As a man runs away from some place where he knows he will be hurt, so Lawrence's mind always ran away from the thought of Carolyn. Yet somehow, within the last few weeks, he could not help thinking of her. 226

He had stopped his ears against any news from Savin Hill. He even shrank from looking too closely at a Boston newspaper, lest he should see the name of Ffolliott.

Not a week ago Prudence had silently put before him a paper with her finger on a paragraph. This was the paragraph:

"At a reception lately given by Mrs. Letitia Ffolliott at her residence on Commonwealth Avenue, among the prominent guests was Lord Maxwell. His lordship came to the States some months ago, bringing an invalid wife. His friends will learn with regret that Lady Maxwell has since died. We understand that Lord Maxwell will remain in Boston for some weeks."

Lawrence's lip curled as he read these lines, and Mrs. Lawrence laughed.

"His lordship!" she exclaimed, and laughed again.

"How the fair women will smile upon him!" cynically remarked Lawrence; and he added, "Well, he hasn't a teaspoonful of brains, but he has his title." 227

"Yes," said Prudence, "and now he has the brewer's money without the brewer's daughter. Perhaps he will marry Carolyn Ffolliott."

Having sent this shaft, Prudence refrained from looking to see if it went home.

Lawrence said quietly that he did not believe Carolyn would marry a man she did not love; but then, she might love Maxwell.

And here the subject had dropped; but neither of these two forgot it.

Lawrence grew very restless during those days when he was confined to his room at the hotel. The lacerated wound induced some fever, but still he was doing as well as possible. After the first, Prudence did not stay with him. She could bravely attack a dog in his behalf, but it appeared that she could not stop in a sick-room. Lawrence urged her to go, and, after a due amount of reluctance, she went. Her husband had plenty of time to think; he could not always thrust remembrance from him. He seemed to himself to be a very poor kind of a being. Where were his hopes for a career of usefulness and dignity in the world? Were they all lost for a woman's smile? And his self-respect? Had he bartered the peace of years for the rapture of moments? 228

And Prudence was getting tired of him. It was impossible any longer to doubt that fact; as impossible as it was to doubt that other fact that she had once had a passion for him which she was willing to indulge when she could not marry an English nobleman. She greatly preferred him, Lawrence. Here Lawrence uttered a

very grim-sounding word.

In spite of himself, Lawrence did a great amount of thinking in those days, when he did not mean to think at all, and when he could often hear, in court or veranda, his wife's gay laugh mingling with the plash of fountains and the murmur of music.

But she said she was greatly bored, that it was hard to wait until Rodney could get out again.

The second time she said this, Lawrence responded by saying that as soon as he was able they would go North.

"What! before spring?" she asked, in surprise, and with a hint of indignation.

"Yes, before spring. I've been idle long enough. You've forgotten that I'm a lawyer. I had just begun to have a little success. I'll put on harness again."

Prudence glanced at him with an elevation of eyebrow; she was wise in her way, and she knew that now was one of the times when it would do no good for her to plead. 229

Thinking over the matter afterwards, Prudence decided that it would, after all, be more interesting to go North.

## CHAPTER XV.

### "TOO MUCH FOR ANY WOMAN TO FORGIVE."

Though summer comes very slowly to New England, it yet does come, and when it has fully arrived its sumptuous beauty makes amends for all delays.

It was summer again at Savin Hill. There was the ocean in its splendor just as it had been the year before. The year before? Was it not rather a dozen years before? This was the question Lawrence put to himself as he stood on one of the cliffs from which he could see the towers of the Ffolliott summer residence. He and his wife had come down to Seaview to stay for awhile. He thought that, unless he chose, he would not be likely to see the Ffolliotts. He could hardly understand why he longed to be at the old familiar shore. He supposed it was because he was not quite well,—not ill, by any means, but not in his usual robust health. He hardly knew what was the trouble. He seemed to have recovered from the attack of the dog. The physician whom he consulted did not mention any disease, but he gave strong advice against work at present. "Just have a good time," he had said, at which Lawrence had laughed.

231

Now, as he stood on this cliff, his eyes dwelt upon that château-like house which had once been a home to him. Never a home to him again. Sometimes his dishonorable way of leaving that place so rankled in him that he wanted to cry aloud, or weep like a hysterical woman. That was because he was not well, of course, though not ill; no, indeed, not ill. He would soon be at work again. When he could once work he would cease to be so weak. As for Prudence, she no longer hung upon him with passionate caresses; she was careless, though good-natured. He fancied he had seen a half-concealed contempt in her glance of late. Well, no one could despise him as much as he despised himself. He sometimes thought that he was one of those poor creatures who could do evil, but who were not strong enough to stop thinking about it after it was done.

"In short," he said, aloud, "I haven't the courage of my wickedness."

At first Prudence had made him forget everything but herself; she was a kind of hasheesh to him. But she was getting weary of him,—nay, was already weary.

232

Lawrence had sat down on the cliff by this time. Somebody was coming up the other side. In a moment a boy's head appeared. Lawrence leaned forward quickly. Leander Ffolliott sprang up and came forward,—a little taller for one year's growth, but otherwise much the same.

"I bet ten to one 'twas you," he said, "when I saw you first."

He held out his hand, and the two greeted each other cordially. Lawrence was sorry for himself that he should be so glad to see this youth, but he perceived by Leander's manner that the boy knew nothing of any reason why they should not be on good terms. This knowledge touched the man. He leaned back and put his hands under his head as he gazed at his companion. How ridiculously glad he was to see him!

There stood the boy, feet wide apart, hands in his pockets, hat tipped to the back of his head.

"You ain't well, are you?" was Leander's first question.

"Pretty well, thank you. How is it with you?"

"Tip-top. I say, where's Devil? Is he alive?"

"Very much alive. We take him everywhere."

"That so? Wish you'd give him to me."

233

"I will."

"Golly! Will you?" The boy jumped on one foot, and then on the other. "I'll go back with you after him. But mebby you'll bring him?"

"No. You may take him."

Leander screwed up one eye and contemplated Lawrence on the rock before him.

"I will. Say, you married Prue, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"So I thought, near's I could tell. Folks been awful mum 'bout the whole thing. I s'pose 'twas kind of odd, wa'n't it?"

"Perhaps."

"Yes, I guess 'twas," was the response, "'cause I asked Caro one day if 'twas odd. She said 'twasn't odd, 'twas natural; but I didn't believe her, all the same. Been sick much?"

"I'm not sick."

"You don't look right, somehow. Let's go down to the house. Folks'll be awful glad to see you. Come on."

"I don't think I'll go now."

"Why not? I say, ain't it funny that the Britisher's there again this summer?"

"Is he?"

"Yes. Comes a lot. Sparkin' sis, I s'pose. Sparkin' Prue last summer, you know,—wife takin' sulphur somewhere. Wife dead now. I say, is Prue's much of a brick's ever." 234

"I think so."

"It must be awfully jolly, then, to have her around all the time, same's you have folks when you're married to 'em. I wanted Prue to wait for me, 'n' marry me. She said she would; but you see she didn't."

"Yes, so I see; but if I should happen not to live you might have a chance still."

Leander eyed the speaker for some seconds in silence before he said, "You wa'n't drowned when the *Vireo* went to pieces?"

"Apparently not."

"Yes, it does seem so. Did she go on a rock?"

"No; run into."

"And what became of you 'n' Prue?"

"Picked up."

"So you thought you'd get married?"

"Yes."

"Well, the folks felt awful when they thought you were all dead; 'n' so did I. Afterward I overheard marmer say she didn't think it possible you could be such a scamp. I s'pose she meant as not to be drowned. Funny, though, wasn't it?"

"Very." 235

"They were goin' to put on black, but Caro wouldn't; she said you wa'n't drowned. I say, how do you lug the crow round?"

"We have a big cage and have it in the baggage-car."

Leander contemplated this fact in silence for a time. It was plain that some things puzzled him. Then he took out his watch, evidently something new, for he had already looked at it twice in this interview.

"I guess it's about time she was here," he remarked.

"Who?" asked Lawrence, quickly.

"Why, Caro, of course. I was going to show her how my new fish-pole works. It's down below there. Oh, there she is now."

Lawrence sprang to his feet. He was too late. Carolyn stepped up on to the rock where the two stood.

She had not noticed any sound of voices; she was there in front of this man, and could not retreat. But she gave no sign of wishing to retreat. After the first instantaneous and uncontrollable flutter of features, she was calm,—how calm she was! So Lawrence thought. He supposed it was the calmness of contempt. He knew that she ought to feel contempt for him; more than that, he ought to wish her to feel it. 236

If he had only been manly in his manner of desertion! If he had only told her that his old passion for Prudence had sprung into life again stronger than ever; that would have been bad enough, but that now seemed honor itself compared with what he had really done.

He gave one look into her steady, lovely eyes. Had she always been as beautiful as she was now?

He told himself, meanly and bitterly, that she couldn't have suffered much from what he had done. After all, he might have been very much mistaken in his estimate of her love for him. Perhaps women could not love deeply, anyway.

Lawrence did not know how pale he was; but he soon perceived that Carolyn was growing white after her glance at him.

"I hope you'll be kind enough to speak to me, Miss Ffolliott," he said, as soon as he could command his voice.

When he had spoken thus, he was afraid there was too much pleading in his tone.

He had often pictured himself as writing to her, explaining everything, and beseeching her to pardon him; but he had never quite dared, even in his thoughts, to stand before her as he did now. And yet he had come to this shore because he longed to come; he must have known in the bottom of his thoughts that here it would be possible to meet her, though he might guide his movements so as to make such a meeting improbable. 237

"Certainly," Carolyn answered, promptly, "I will speak to you. I am sorry to see you looking so ill."

"You need not be sorry. I have been ill, but I am greatly improved now. I hope to go to work in the fall."

He turned about somewhat confusedly to look for his hat, which was lying on the rock. He picked it up and seemed to be going. But he did not go. In the midst of his painful consciousness was the wish that Leander were not present. But the boy was quite visible, and was plainly listening to every word, while his eyes dwelt first upon one face and then upon the other. Was he scenting a "secret?" He still retained his love of secrets, and it must be a jolly one that could make these two people look precisely like this. Things had been very odd

"Did you bring your fishing-rod, Lee?" asked Carolyn.

"Yep," said the boy, but he did not stir.

The girl turned. "Come," she said, "and let us see how it works." She spoke with perfect steadiness, but a small, bright red spot had now appeared on each cheek.

"Miss Ffolliott!" exclaimed Lawrence.

She paused and looked back at him. Lawrence had now forgotten the boy; he had almost forgotten everything but that he must try and get this girl's forgiveness. For the instant nothing in the world, save her forgiveness, seemed worth anything.

"I wanted to ask you one question," he said, humbly.

He did not know that his hand which held his hat was trembling pitifully; but Carolyn saw it tremble. She seemed to hesitate, then she said, quickly:

"Leander, run down to the beach and wait for me."

Leander mumbled something, but he did not quite dare to disobey when his sister spoke like that. He walked away as slowly as he could possibly move, and he was continually turning his head back to look at these two. But even at this gait he did in time reach the little sandy beach, and they saw him sitting there and piling up sand over his feet.

239

Now Carolyn turned and asked, "Did you wish to say something to me, Mr. Lawrence?" and immediately, "Will you please sit down? You look very ill."

"No; I will stand. I won't detain you long. I wanted to ask you if you think you can ever forgive me?"

Lawrence's voice was low and shaken; his hollow eyes, darkly marked beneath them, were fixed on the girl's face.

She hesitated; he hastened to say, "I hope you don't think I mean for not marrying you,—I know well enough that that was a happy chance for you,—but for the grossly insulting way in which I left you. It is very little to say it was not planned—that I did not seek—that it was a chance—that—"

But the man would not intimate what part Prudence had acted on that evening. He resumed, in a harsh tone, "Chance gave me the opportunity to be a villain, and I embraced the opportunity. Now can you forgive me?"

Still Carolyn was silent. She was standing without the least movement, save the tremulous motion of the knot of silk at her throat. She was not looking at her companion; her eyes were fixed on the ground.

240

Presently he began again. "I see how it is. It is too much to beg of any woman to forgive. Now I ought to ask you to forgive me for asking you to forgive. Can you do that?"

He did not wait for an answer to this last question. Still with his hat in his trembling hand, he turned away and began to descend the rock. But a sudden and imperative physical weakness made him stumble. He could have cursed that weakness.

Carolyn sprang forward; she caught hold of his arm.

"You *are* ill!" she said, in a half whisper. "Will you sit down here for a moment?"

From very helplessness Lawrence was obliged to comply. He sat down; he did not try to speak. He had nothing more to say; and he was beginning to know how foolish he had been to say as much as he had said.

Carolyn sat down also, a few feet away from him. The tide had turned, and the waves were splashing intermittently against the base of the rocks below them; out in the bay the water had assumed that look of new life which the incoming of the tide produces. The girl dully wondered why, at such a moment, she should note all this. But she did think of these phenomena more keenly than when her mind was at liberty. And at the same time it seemed as if she saw nothing and knew nothing but that ghastly face with its terribly brilliant eyes that had been looking at her like eyes from some other world.

241

She moved her hands now, as if some movement, however slight, would be a help to her.

This was Prudence Ffolliott's husband. And it was plain that he was not happy. But perhaps that was because he was ill. She tried not to be confused by the pity his physical weakness excited in her. She wished to be kind, but not too kind. She wondered what was the exact way in which she ought to behave.

She glanced swiftly at Lawrence. He was sitting with his hands resting on his knees, his gaze fixed unseeingly before him; she knew that he did not see anything; and she knew how indignant he would be if he realized how weak he looked. She must not wound him. Her eyes melted, her whole face softened indescribably, and her voice, when she spoke, partook of this change.

"You see, don't you," he said, quickly, "that all that I can say to you is to beg for pardon. After that I will not annoy you."

242

"I forgive you," she answered, at last. "I forgave you long ago."

"God bless you for that! Oh, Caro, God bless you for that!"

The words burst from his white lips, and the old familiar name came unconsciously.

How differently he was behaving from the way he had meant to behave if he ever saw Carolyn again! When he had spoken thus, some consciousness of this fact seemed to come to him. He sat up more erectly. Then he rose to his feet.

"It was all a mistake, our engagement," said Carolyn, now speaking as if she were referring to the affairs of some other woman. "I am to blame. I ought never to have allowed it. Let us not mention the subject again."

"Very well. But you have been to blame in nothing. Good-by."

Lawrence walked slowly down towards the beach where Leander was still piling up sand. He did not even see that youth, or hear him when he shouted, "Remember about Devil." The man walked on as fast as he could. The boy gazed after him, muttering that he should like to know what was the matter, anyhow. He immediately climbed the rocks again. Evidently his sister did not hear him, and Leander stood gazing at her in silence, with a growing conviction that he had by no means fathomed the matter, but that he would do so yet.

243

Carolyn was sitting crouched forward, with her knees drawn up and her hands over her face.

"If she's crying, she'll be whimpering so I can hear her," thought the boy. But she did not whimper so that any one could hear her.

Leander waited until he became impatient; then he called out that if she wanted to see the fishing-rod she had better come along.

The girl rose immediately and accompanied her brother; she succeeded in displaying a proper degree of interest in the rod, so that its owner offered no criticism on her conduct.

As for Lawrence, he did not stop in his walk, following the shore until he reached the hotel. He had not expected to find his wife in, but she was at a table in their sitting-room, apparently writing letters. The crow was on the back of her chair, occasionally thrusting his head about so that he could look over her shoulder, as if he could read the words she had written.

Lawrence sat down quickly. He thrust his hand into the breast-pocket of his coat and drew out his cigar-case. Having selected a cigar, he did not light it, but sat looking at it.

244

Prudence laid down her pen.

"You look rather done up," she remarked, in an indifferent voice.

"Yes, I feel so," was the response.

"I shouldn't think you'd walk so far," she said, with the same indifference.

There was no answer to this.

Presently Lawrence said, "I've given Devil away."

At this the bird drew himself up and looked at the speaker.

"What?" came somewhat sharply from Prudence.

Lawrence repeated his words.

"But I'm not going to part with the crow," said Prudence, positively. "He knows all my secrets,"—here she laughed,—and, besides, he's my mascot. No, I sha'n't part with him."

"He hasn't brought you any great luck, it seems to me."

Lawrence put his unlighted cigar back in the case, stretched out his legs, and gazed at the toes of his shoes.

"That's true enough," returned Prudence, "but I'm always hoping he will. I'm going to keep him. To whom did you give him?"

245

"Leander Ffolliott."

Prudence started perceptibly. She looked for an instant intently at her husband, her eyes narrowing in their old way as she did so.

"Have you been there?" she asked.

"No; I saw the boy on the rocks."

"Perhaps you saw the boy's sister also."

"Yes, I did."

"Oh!"

Prudence tipped her head back and laughed ringingly, her eyes still upon her husband's face. There was a little added color on her cheeks. The laugh was somehow so exasperating, so strangely insulting, that Lawrence rose to his feet in a fury. But he sat down again directly and resumed his old position.

"You seem to be amused," he remarked, coldly.

"Yes." She laughed again. "I was imagining the meeting,—such astounding propriety as I know characterized it. You would do the right thing, and Caro is nothing if not proper. Caro is a darling girl, and I love her dearly,

but you must confess that she *is* proper, Rodney dear."

"Yes, I confess that," he said, grimly.

"Certainly; she would never take the least little part in a French novel."

246

"Never," he agreed, with emphasis.

Prudence gazed at her husband a moment without speaking. Her eyes changed. She rose and went to him; she stood by his side, put an arm lightly about his neck, and bent down slightly towards him. He sat perfectly quiet.

"I'm sorry you allowed yourself to get so tired," she said.

"Oh, I shall get over that," he replied, carelessly.

"Yes, but it hurts you."

He smiled in silence.

She moved slightly nearer. There was the old indefinite something in her manner which had once charmed him so.

"Don't reproach yourself," she said, pleadingly; "you know you didn't love her then."

No answer.

Prudence bent nearer and kissed her husband's lips. But they did not respond.

"You loved me," she murmured, kissing him again.

In the silence that followed, during which Lawrence sat like a stone, Prudence gradually drew away from him. She stood looking at him, and the softness left her face. 247

"Perhaps you don't love me any more," she said, finally.

Lawrence roused himself. Everything seemed black before him, but he was conscious of trying to be gentle and courteous.

"Perhaps I never loved you," he answered.

"Oh!"

It was strange how the woman's countenance had darkened; it did not look grieved, but angry. At that instant, if her face had worn a different look, Lawrence's heart might have suddenly melted and some things have happened differently. But no, he told himself afterward, how could she change herself? What was to be would be. The old fatalistic saying recurred to him again and again. But what was he, that he should blame any one for anything?

"Prudence," he said. He put out his thin, burning hand and took hers; but in a moment she withdrew it. She stood before him, her graceful, erect figure in a blaze of sunshine that poured in through the window behind her.

Lawrence wondered that her touch could give him no thrill now; his blood ran coldly beneath her kiss. Was he beginning to know her? or was it that he had known her when she had so enthralled him? 248

These questions went through his mind so persistently that he was confused.

"I have been a puppet in your hands," he said. He added, with an inexplicable smile, "But then, there was Mark Antony."

He leaned wearily back in his chair. Prudence went to her own chair and sat down in it. The crow hopped round to her knee; he sat there looking at her, first with one eye and then with the other. She thought it was curious that she should recall, just at this moment, that night she had spent in the Boston hotel after the *Vireo* had been run down, the night before she had been married. She and the crow had been together then, and she had thought of killing him. It seemed to her that the bird had called her a liar—a liar. She tried to throw off this remembrance.

She looked at the man sitting so wearily opposite her. So he believed he had never loved her? Well, she still believed that she had loved him. It was galling that he should have told her that. He ought to have known better than to say such a thing. So she had been a kind of Cleopatra to him? Well, he was not a Mark Antony to be held by love; but he hadn't loved, he said. She also was becoming confused. She put her cold fingers up to her temples and pressed them there for an instant. 249

"Never shall amorous Antony  
Kiss kingdoms out for you."

Where had she read those lines? But it was no matter where she had read them.

"Your interview with Carolyn seems to have had a disastrous effect," she said. "What did she say to you?"

"She said she forgave me."

"Indeed!"



"Yes; I asked her, you know."

"You asked her?" she said, with an elevation of the eyebrows.

Lawrence nodded. In a moment his wife said, "Now I should really hate to have a man ask me to forgive him for not marrying me. I should hate that. I should want somebody to come and thrash that man for me."

Lawrence raised his head and met his companion's sparkling glance of resentment.

"Of all the stupid things you ever did, Rodney Lawrence, that was the most stupid."

"But I didn't ask her precisely that," he said. "I told her she was lucky not to have me for a husband; but I did beg for forgiveness for the way in which I left her." 250

"Oh!"

Prudence's way of uttering this interjection was as if she had struck a stinging blow across her companion's face. He winced inwardly, but still he met the stroke bravely. He had told her this in accordance with a resolve he had made long ago that he, on his part, would have no concealments from his wife. Perhaps the discovery that she sometimes prevaricated, sometimes colored simple statements, sometimes told downright falsehoods, had strengthened this resolve in him. On his side he would have simple, straightforward truth. But what was he, that he should rebuke her? Had he not broken the most sacred word a man can give,—broken it in the most insulting way possible? This thought came to him when he was tempted to rebuke. Then he would tell himself, with a corroding bitterness of feeling, that as a man sows so he must reap. He was reaping now.

"I suppose you think you love Carolyn." Prudence said this after a silence.



**"LAWRENCE SPRANG TO HIS FEET."**



## CHAPTER XVI.

### TÊTE-À-TÊTE.

Lawrence allowed himself an uneasy movement in his chair, and he did not answer.

Prudence sat stroking the head and neck of the crow, which still remained on her knee.

"Since we are having such a very interesting conversation," she said, "pray let's continue it. There's nothing so spicy and agreeable as a *tête-à-tête* between husband and wife who are thoroughly disillusioned; don't you think so?"

Lawrence said nothing. He glanced about the room like one who would be glad to escape. He was weary and faint, but he would not seem weary if he could help it; and there was a weight like lead on his heart. He thought, with seeming triviality, that he had never before quite known what that phrase, "a heart as heavy as lead," meant.

"You have decided now that you never loved me," she continued.

"Why need we discuss that question?" he asked.

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"Oh, because it suits me to discuss it. I feel analytical this morning. Let us dissect a few feelings. My husband has just had an interview with an old flame, and now he comes and tells me he thinks he never loved me. You must believe that I shall be interested in this subject. Pray, Rodney, if I may ask, what did you feel that made it possible for you to take me to Boston that night?"

Lawrence sat gazing at Prudence as she spoke. He had a fanciful notion that his heart was like ashes as well as like lead. How could he have been so blind? He could not now imagine that he had felt what he had felt for Prudence. Some one has said that there is nothing so dead as a dead passion.

"I suppose," he said, slowly and drearily, "that I had a fancy for you. You infatuated me; it was a kind of intoxication."

"Do you eliminate passion from love?"

She put the question as if she were making an inquiry concerning a symptom of disease.

"No, but love is not all passion. It has a basis of tenderness and respect; it is not a delirium."

"From which you recover to despise yourself?"

She seemed to add this to his sentence.

Lawrence rose; he stood a moment in front of his wife, gazing down at her. He was bewildered by the tumult of his emotions, by his strange indifference to Prudence, and, perhaps more than all, by his physical weakness.

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He turned towards the couch near and stretched himself out upon it. His wife rose and put a shawl over him, and he said, "Thank you," in a mechanical way. Then he asked, trying to prevent his voice from showing irritation:

"Is it really necessary for us to continue this talk?"

"Perhaps not; but if I prefer to go on, dear Rodney?"

Lawrence closed his eyes.

"Go on," he said.

"How kind of you to let me have the last word! But you see I think I'll take up the study of psychology, with you and me as object-lessons. Can't we mount a scrap of our feelings on a bit of glass and put it under that microscope of yours? Really, I didn't think I should come to look back almost with envy to that time when I nursed mamma at Carlsbad. At least I wasn't married then, and Lord Maxwell came to the place. To be sure, he had symptoms, and a man with symptoms isn't much better than a block of wood to flirt with."

Prudence's voice was running on with a semblance of gaiety; and now she laughed.

254

"I wonder what sort of a flirter Caro finds Lord Maxwell. Of course he's stupid, for is he not a man? I heard Mrs. Yorke say yesterday that people began to talk as if Maxwell would marry Carolyn. She may be the countess in the family, after all. Then mamma can say, 'My niece, Lady Maxwell,' instead of 'My daughter, Lady Maxwell.' Of course it won't be quite so fine, but it will do. I suppose Caro will visit every cottage on his lordship's estate, and will make no end of flannel petticoats. In novels, you know, the good lady carries petticoats and strong soups to the poor, and reads to them. Can't you see Caro doing that, Rodney?"

Lawrence lay with his eyes closed. He opened them now to glance at his wife. She was looking full at him, and their mutual gaze met as two shining bits of steel might meet. It almost seemed as if one listening might have heard the clash of metal on metal.

Lawrence immediately closed his eyes again.

"Can't you see Caro doing that?" repeated Prudence, relentlessly.

"I haven't an active imagination like you," he answered, at last.

Prudence, after a moment, turned to her writing again. Her husband lay there, and heard her pen going over the paper.

He began to think more calmly, and it came to him that he had not done a good thing in telling Prudence that he had never loved her. There was no need of his saying that. He would give much now if he could recall those words; but he knew he could not remove the sting of them. What a brute he had been! What a very different person he was, every way, from the person he had meant to be! He did not feel able to understand it all. He wished he could banish the memory of Carolyn's lovely, truthful face. He was sorry he had seen her. Did human beings always want the thing they could not have?

For what seemed a long time, he heard his wife's pen on the paper; then the noise grew indistinct, and Lawrence knew that he was going to sleep, and was thankful for the knowledge.

But he did not sleep long. Nothing special awakened him, however. He opened his eyes; they rested on Prudence, who had stopped writing. She was sitting with her hands folded on her lap, gazing at him. How old and hard her face appeared! She smiled immediately, smiled brilliantly and without any softness.

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"I was waiting for you to waken," she said.

"Well?"

"I hadn't quite had the last word yet," she said, with a slight laugh.

Lawrence sat up.

"I was a brute to tell you I had never loved you," he exclaimed, abruptly.

"Never mind; we must always tell the truth, you know," she returned, lightly.

He said nothing. He was trying to brush the clouds away from his brain and think clearly.

"And since we must speak truth," she went on, "I was waiting to tell you I was distractedly in love with you,—it was no make-believe,—but that I was deadly tired of the whole thing in a few months. It's not quite a year yet, is it? That's why I wanted to amuse myself with Mr. Meramble, or somebody. But when you flung Meramble into the ocean you did it so well, and he seemed so insignificant, that I was almost in love with you again. But it didn't last. Now I've had the last word; I imagine we understand each other."

She rose and stretched her arms above her head. She glanced at her watch.

"I'm going sailing with Mrs. Yorke and a few others. I hope you won't need anything before I come back. Don't you think you'd better try to have another nap? You look very tired. And I hope you won't forget your medicine, and all that kind of thing."

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She went into the inner room, and in a few moments came back with hat on and parasol in her hand.

Lawrence was walking back and forth in the room. He paused near his wife, and laid his hand on her arm.

"I hope you won't remember the foolish things a poor half-sick fellow says," he began. "I hope, since we are to spend our lives together, we may be on friendly terms, Prudence."

Prudence was occupied in furling her parasol, and in fastening the folds. She did not raise her eyes, as she answered, "Of course we shall be friendly. You didn't think I should begin to quarrel with you, did you? I'm not quite so vulgar as that. I'm not going to mend your stockings, or warm your slippers, or that kind of thing, you know. We are like other people, that's all."

Prudence now glanced up at her companion. There was a fire in her eyes that blazed still more, as she continued:

"I imagine I have a great deal of temperament, as the French say. Now, good-by. I don't know whether we shall sail down to Plymouth, or not."

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She left the room. The crow walked after her to the door, made a guttural sound, then occupied himself by pulling threads from the carpet.

Lawrence leaned against a window-casing, and gazed vaguely at the bird.

"What did she mean by that?" he asked, aloud. "What is it to have a great deal of temperament? Perhaps I have it myself."

He turned towards the window, from which he could see the ocean.

"Not quite a year ago. Really, it's horrible to come to this in less than a year. There they go. How charming Yorke thinks her! See him take her parasol and carefully hold it between her and the sun. His wife is carrying her own sunshade. See Prudence look up at her cavalier and smile at him. Oh, what an egregious ass I have been. And now let me drink what I have brewed."

He turned from the window. He gave a short laugh. "Why, I am actually becoming a soliloquizer. To how much lower depths shall I sink, I wonder?"

After a short time he left the hotel, and walked out to a group of rocks that at low tide stood up bare and brown in the sunlight. Just now no one was there so he chose them as a resting-place. His tall, gaunt form, as it made its way slowly along the beach, looked out of tune with its gay surroundings.

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When he had seated himself, a sail came gaily round the little promontory, and glided within a few rods of him. Some one waved a handkerchief at him; he lifted his hat mechanically, and saw that it was his wife who was saluting him. Then the craft gathered speed, and reeled away out into the great blue space.

Prudence, sitting in the bows, leaned forward as if to greet still more quickly the immensity and grandeur of the sea. She never tired of the ocean. Her whole face seemed to kindle; beautiful curves came to her lips as she sat there silently. The sensuous nature drank in, with a kind of dainty greediness, the scene before her. To love the beautiful passionately, to be moved strongly by it, and revel in it, and be drunk with it,—perhaps Prudence did not actually formulate the belief that to do this made her a refined person, somehow above the merely upright human being; but she certainly had a nebulous conviction to that effect. She had an unexpressed contempt for those people who pretended to be guided by their consciences, or by what they called religious principle. Of course it was all a matter of temperament, she said. She once remarked, with one of her light laughs, that she did not know what it was to be a pantheist, but she rather thought that she was one; she would be either that or a devout member of the Roman or Greek Church,—something which had a gorgeous ritual into which she could plunge her senses and stimulate them with sumptuous dreams, and images, and music, and perfume of incense. Yes, after all, she believed she preferred that kind of thing to being a pantheist; though, on second thoughts, perhaps pantheism included all these.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### "ARE YOU GOING TO MARRY LORD MAXWELL?"

Carolyn Ffolliott was sitting on the piazza at Savin Hill, sitting in much the same position and with the same surroundings as when we first met her in the opening chapter of these chronicles. Only it was a year later. A year usually writes very little on the human face, though it may have brought experiences which will in time make their imprint visible.

Carolyn was reading; her brother Leander was sitting on the lawn, trying to unravel the tail of a kite; her mother was walking slowly back and forth, watching her son. There was the sea, just as it had been; and apparently there were the same sails, and the same coal-barges drawn by tugs, and the same steamers far away in the offing.

"It's rather stupid here this summer, don't you think?" remarked Mrs. Ffolliott; "and I'm afraid Leander isn't having as good a time as usual. Are you, Lee dear?"

"Yep, bully," was the prompt reply. "Only there's Prue ain't here, you know."

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As if as a sort of comment upon this remark, there was the sound of steps at the other end of the veranda, and a young woman in a bicycling suit came walking forward. There was a bright color on her face, but then she had been "biking," and it was warm.

Carolyn, as she saw Prudence, rose quickly, her own face growing red, a spark coming to her eyes.

Prudence came on, going straight to Mrs. Ffolliott.

"Dear aunty," she exclaimed, "I've wanted to see you so"—kiss—"that I finally decided I would come over"—kiss—"and I was sure you couldn't bear any malice after all this long while. You dear Aunt Tishy, you, you were always as much like a mother as my own mother herself; and then you didn't have rheumatism, either; so you were better-natured, you know."

Here the speaker laughed excitedly. She still held her aunt's hand in both her own. She did not seem, at this moment, to see her cousin, who was gazing steadily at her.

"You're not going to turn me out, are you, Aunt Tishy? You don't know how I've missed Savin Hill. It's more like home to me than any place in the world. You won't turn me out?"

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In the bottom of her heart Mrs. Ffolliott was thankful for this diversion. She remembered, first, that time did not usually hang heavily where Prudence was; but then, immediately she remembered, secondly, that Prudence had run away with Carolyn's lover on the eve of their marriage; she had not forgotten that,—how could she? But—oh, dear, how complicated things were!

She now kissed her niece with an air of not knowing what she was doing, as indeed she hardly did know. Then she began by saying she was sure, she was very sure she was sure—and just here Leander dashed up and cried out that this was the jolliest thing that could happen, and he'd get his wheel, and they'd go down the east road, and he'd beat her all holler in no time.

"Perhaps you'll beat me, but you won't beat me holler, I'm positive," she responded.

She shook hands with the boy; then she stooped and kissed his forehead; whereupon, to the amazement of the witnesses, Leander flung his arms about her neck and kissed her cheek resoundingly.

When Prudence lifted her head, the girl standing there watching her was surprised to see that there were tears in her cousin's eyes.

264

We are often surprised when people whom we think rather wicked and false show signs of natural feeling or affection.

Carolyn was moved, too. She was a tender-hearted creature, who could never bear to see anything suffer; and she was sure that Rodney was not happy with his wife. No man who looked as he did was a happy man. If she had believed that he was happy, would she have been able to do as she did now? Who can tell? The human heart, besides being "desperately wicked," is a very mysterious organ.

Carolyn advanced a few steps, and the two looked into each other's eyes for the first time since Prudence had been Rodney's wife. In the eyes of Prudence were pleading, and deprecation, and just enough unhappiness to win upon her cousin; and all these feelings were also truly in her heart. She was one of those subtly wise women who know how to make use of genuine emotion.

Carolyn did not put out her hand. She could not quite do that,—not yet, anyway. She said, "How do you do, Prudence?" in quite the ordinary way, and as if the two had met the day before, and nothing particular had happened since.

"Very well, thanks. Are you well, Cousin Caro?" was the response.

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To this Carolyn answered that her health had never been better. Then Mrs. Ffolliott, with some nervousness in her manner, asked after Rodney's health, adding that she had heard very distressing rumors about him.

Carolyn looked away from Prudence as the latter made reply:

"Rodney, poor boy, is getting to be a terrible hypochondriac. I don't know what we shall do with him. We must all try to amuse him."

As she pronounced the word "all" she glanced markedly at Carolyn, who was gazing off to the horizon.

"Then he isn't really ill?" asked Carolyn, turning calmly towards her guest and speaking as if referring to some stranger.

"She certainly has good stuff in her," was the mental comment of Prudence as she answered, aloud, "Not very ill, I'm sure. A few functional disturbances of some of the organs, I forget just what ones; the liver, I imagine, and heart."

"I should think being at the seashore might benefit him," said Mrs. Ffolliott, solicitously.

"Oh, yes, of course it will."

Thus Prudence dismissed the subject.

266

She walked to where Carolyn had taken her place immediately after greeting her, a pillar of the piazza against which she was leaning.

"Caro," she said, softly, "let me see you a moment, please."

Carolyn showed the surprise she felt. She lifted her brows interrogatively as she asked, "Do you mean alone?"

"Oh, yes; what can one say with Leander present?"

"Let us go down to the beach, then," answered Carolyn, and the two started, being followed by Leander, until that person consented to go back on condition that Prue would return and ride a race with him that very morning.

On the ridge of dry sand above high-water mark Carolyn and her cousin sat down. Neither spoke for some time; Carolyn was resolved not to be the first to break the silence. She would not aid Prudence in whatever she had to say, and she was so weakly human that she could hardly help shrinking a little away from her as she sat beside her. But she did not shrink; she sat with that utter quiet of which she was capable, hardly an eyelash stirring.

As for Prudence, she put one hand down in the warm sand and burrowed into its depths, trying to absorb herself in the action. She had come on an impulse to see Carolyn and to gain an entrance to Savin Hill again. It had been uncomfortable to have to reply that she did not know, when people put inquiries to her about the Ffolliotts. And she was tired of suffering this sort of banishment. She wanted her aunt and cousin to be reconciled to her. People in the end always thus far had been obliged to become reconciled to her. This, to be sure, was rather a difficult matter.

267

How very irritating Caro's face was! This she felt as she glanced at that face calmly contemplating the movements of a dory which a man was rowing out to his fishing-smack.

"Caro, dear," she at last begun.

Carolyn turned promptly towards her, and waited.

This waiting was, for some reason, inexpressibly exasperating to Prudence, whose face flushed, and who was obliged to wait on her own account before she could speak as she wished to speak. Evidently she was to receive not the slightest help from her companion.

With the rapidity of lightning, Prudence changed her plan as to what she would say. There came a certain line on either side of her mouth, a line which Carolyn had seen before and wondered about.

268

"Do you want to know the very inmost, secret reason for my coming, Caro?" she asked.

She removed her hand from the sand and carefully dusted her fingers with her handkerchief, smiling to herself as she did so.

"If you'd like to tell," was the answer.

"I'm dying to tell," she said, turning now fully towards her cousin and fixing her eyes upon her face.

"Then," said Caro, placidly, "if you're dying to tell, I'll try to wait until you speak."

Prudence felt her fingers tingle with a vixenish desire to slap the face before her. Really, was Caro so provoking as this in the old days?

"Well, then, I came to congratulate you, my dear."

"Congratulate me?"

"Certainly. I hear one thing said every time your name is mentioned."

Here Prudence came to a full stop, and tried to be patient until Carolyn should ask a question. But Carolyn resumed her watching of the man in the dory, who had now nearly reached the smack.

Prudence began to plunge her hand once more in the sand. Her face was growing red. What had changed matters between her and the girl beside her? Formerly she had easily maintained the ascendancy; now, indefinitely, she felt that she had lost this ascendancy.

269

There was color in Carolyn's face,—her blood she could not control,—but her features were as calm as if she could not think or feel. This one fact made Prudence afraid that when she did speak she might stammer from sheer anger and astonishment. Was this the cousin whom she had considered a sort of namby-pamby, goody-



goody girl who would be easily controlled?

It wasn't of the least use to wait for some word from Carolyn; so Prudence said:

"You seem so calm, I suppose everything is all settled."

"What is settled?"

"Your marriage to Lord Maxwell."

For reply Carolyn gave a glance of contemptuous interrogation.

"Oh, yes," Prudence reasserted, "and let me tell you that every girl is not so lucky."

No response.

"I suppose you're flesh and blood, and not wood!" she cried, indignantly.

"I don't think I'm wood."

270

"I've a great mind to pinch you and see."

"Very well."

"Caro, do you remember that time when you told me how you loved Rodney?"

Now the girl winced visibly beneath this cruel thrust. But she answered, promptly, "Yes."

"Well, I don't believe a word of it; I don't believe you could ever love anybody,—lucky creature that you are!"

Carolyn looked for one instant at the eyes fixed upon her. Then Prudence suddenly threw her arms about her cousin, and exclaimed, with an outburst of tears:

"Oh, do forgive me! I'm half crazed! I don't know what I'm saying! I have to suffer so, and nobody seems to think a woman like me can suffer!"

Carolyn remained rigidly quiet; she would not pretend to respond to this embrace; inwardly she turned sick at it. Yes, of course Prudence could suffer; and she ought to suffer.

Carolyn was astonished at the vigor of her own resentment. And why had Rodney Lawrence's wife come here? To spy out the land? Well, she should not be much rewarded if that had been her object.

Finding that her embrace and her tears seemed productive of very little, Prudence sat up and put her handkerchief to her face for a moment. 271

"I know," she said from its folds, "that there are some things a woman cannot forgive. But, though I stole your lover away from you, I've not been supremely happy since. And I know you used to pity unhappiness."

"I hope I'm still sorry for any one who is unhappy," said Carolyn, steadily.

"I suppose you're going to marry Lord Maxwell; aren't you?"

This question was put with abrupt rapidity, and Prudence dropped her handkerchief and darted a look at the face beside her.

Carolyn could not tell why she suddenly resolved not to reply to this question; perhaps she made this resolution because of the eager curiosity which leaped from her cousin's eyes as she spoke. She did not answer; she averted her face lest Prudence should read the truth there, but she was conscious of a sense of shame as she did so.

"Won't you tell me?" persisted Prudence.

"I would rather not say anything on the subject," was the response.

Prudence's eyes flashed fire. Until now she had not in the least believed the rumor.

Was this girl—this—this—oh, was she to become Lady Maxwell, while she, Prudence Ffolliott, had cut herself off from such a congenial career as that with a husband whom she could twist this way and that—while she, because of the passion of a moment, was tied to a man who was tired of her, and whom just now she was sure she hated? Thoughts like these rushed hotly through her mind in a confused troop. 272

So, after all, Carolyn was just like other girls. Why, of course she was. Why shouldn't she be? And Maxwell was now very wealthy. Prudence sat up straight. She thrust her handkerchief into the pocket of her little cycling-jacket.

"I beg your pardon," she said, with great suavity. "I didn't know but that you might be willing to tell me. I suppose I must wait, however, until the announcement is made."

Having said this, she rose and brushed the sand from her garments. She remarked that she would run up to the house and have a spin with Leander.

Carolyn walked up with her, and the two conversed affably, and parted with great politeness on both sides.

But as Prudence mounted her wheel outside, her hands trembled, and she was white instead of being flushed.

When Leander returned, he informed his mother and sister that Prue wasn't any good any more, and that he had beat her all holler without half trying. Also, as an afterthought, he said they had met Lord Maxwell on his 273

wheel at the turn in the east road, and that the Britisher had gone on home with Prue.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### LEANDER AS A MEANS.

You don't marry a woman because she is religious or is inclined to tell the truth, or has this or that trait of mind. You are much more likely to fall deeply in love and to ask her to be your wife because of a certain droop of a lock of hair over her forehead; or perhaps a particular trick of smiling lips caught your fancy and set it on fire. Why, I know a man who begged a woman to be his wife just because he was convinced that she had the most delightful little lisp in the world. Fortunately, or unfortunately, she refused him, and he has since united himself to a woman whose speech is remarkable for clearness of tone. I often wonder whether he wishes that she lisped, or if he has decided that he can be happy without a lisping wife. And how remarkable it is that, when once you have won your love, the little thing which attracted you, for some mysterious reason, ceases to be attractive, and you wish her mind was something more in sympathy with yours, or that her temperament was better fitted to yours. Ah, that matter of temperament! One can put up with a good deal that is wrong if only the temperaments be rightly adjusted. 275

I am not going to claim these as particularly my thoughts. They were the thoughts that were going rather indefinitely through Lawrence's mind one afternoon as he lounged in a little sailboat opposite the hamlet where he was spending the summer. His wife had gone on an all-day's cycling trip with Lord Maxwell. The two had left the hotel at about ten in the morning. As Prudence had put on her gloves before leaving her room, she had remarked to her husband that she hoped he would amuse himself in some manner while she was gone. There was Caro only three miles away; he might call on her if he were not so odd.

As she spoke thus, Prudence had looked steadily for a moment at the man standing in the window with his back to the light. She could not forgive him for refusing to visit at the Ffolliotts'. His refusal seemed so absurd to her; but he persisted in it. It was now two weeks since the time when she had ventured there, and had come away thinking that Carolyn was engaged to Lord Maxwell. Since then she herself had seen a good deal of that nobleman, but she had not quite been able to make up her mind as to the existence of an engagement between him and her cousin. 276

Lawrence did not think it worth while to reply to this suggestion that he call on Carolyn. He was engaged at this moment in intently watching Prudence as she pulled on her gloves. Having drawn them on, she came to his side and extended a hand for him to fasten the glove.

As he performed this little office with his customary deftness, she regarded him with more care than was of late usual with her.

Since one particular interview, she had hardly been able to look at him without remembering that he had told her that he had never loved her. As she had not a particle of what she called love left for him, it was rather surprising that this remembrance should so rankle in her mind. And he did not betray—worse than that, she was sure he did not feel—the slightest irritation that she was so much with Lord Maxwell of late. How very disagreeable he was! And she had loved him; yes, she had certainly loved him even before the spice of the attempt to get him away from his betrothed was added to that feeling.

She lingered a moment after her gloves were fastened, still gazing at her companion. 277

"What do you think of a separation?" she asked.

He looked at her quickly. "I had not thought," he answered.

"Please think, then. You let me have the crow, and a generous allowance, and I'll go my way. There seems no reason why life should be so extremely disagreeable as it has been of late. Good-by. Don't get too tired, and don't forget your medicine."

She opened the door and left the room. She returned immediately to say that she had promised Devil he might go with her to-day. She chirruped, and the bird hopped out of the door, which was closed again.

Lawrence stood in the window and saw the two ride away on their wheels, the crow flying along leisurely after them, alighting occasionally to investigate something on the ground. He saw his wife turn and call Devil just before she wheeled out of sight.

It seemed to Lawrence that he was always standing in the window watching his wife go somewhere; and always she was gay and spirited, and people liked to be with her.

There was that long, light-colored Englishman,—was there any truth in the talk about him and Miss Ffolliott? It would be rather a curious thing if Prudence should take two lovers from Carolyn. 278

Here Lawrence shut his hand tightly, and, being alone, indulged himself in flinging his fist out into the air. But he immediately felt that this was an extremely childish action.

He supposed she was not really sincere in her remarks about a separation, but if she were—He did not finish this thought.

Recalling this day later in his life, Lawrence's mind was always somewhat confused concerning it. He knew that after lunch he had gone out in his boat, and that, instead of sailing, he had dropped anchor not far off shore. It had been a gray, cloudy day, with very little wind. Lying with his hat over his face, Lawrence had fallen into a deep sleep; and he remembered that he had dreamed horribly. When he fully awoke it was sunset, and the first thing he saw was the crescent of a very new moon set in the flush of the west, with its attendant star near it. The clouds had all dispersed; it was a superb sunset. There was not a breath of wind now, so he rowed in towards the shore; he was obliged to row very slowly, for he was not strong; it often

seemed to him of late as if an unconquerable weakness had fastened upon him, and he had a morbid conviction that his wife would soon have her coveted freedom. It was unnecessary to make arrangements for a separation. 279

Lawrence went up to the hotel and tried to eat his dinner. Then he sat on the piazza and made an attempt to smoke. Some people who had been cycling came home, a buzz of talk and laughter heralding their approach.

In the white glare of the electric lights Lawrence looked to see Prudence and her escort wheeling up the broad driveway.

"Saw Mrs. Lawrence and Lord Maxwell on the Jerusalem Road," said one young man, as he sat down near Lawrence and lighted a cigarette. "I vow I don't know which is the better rider, your wife or Maxwell. They were talking of going over to Hull. They challenged me to come along, but I thought of the fifteen miles back here."

Presently the young man went in to dinner. Lawrence still kept his seat, though the wind had come up east with the turn of the tide towards the flood. He began to shiver, and at length rose to go and get an outside coat. He returned immediately with the coat buttoned closely about him.

It was not until near ten o'clock that he really began to wonder why Prudence did not return; and even then he was aware that this hour was not late, and particularly it was not late in these long summer days, when it seemed to be still day until far into the evening. 280

There was a dance in the parlors, and Lawrence tried to watch the dancers from his place on the veranda. When another hour, and yet another, had gone, and the clocks had struck twelve, the man's heart began to burn within him. It seemed to him also that one spot, on the top of his head, was on fire. But he was no longer conscious of being weak and ill. He believed he had never felt stronger in his life. He ran up the stairs to his room; but when he had arrived there he forgot what it was he had come for. He thought he said, "That cursed woman!" below his breath.

He wished he could see Carolyn Ffolliott,—not see her to speak with her, of course, but just look in her face. Just to look in her face would strengthen and comfort him, he was sure.

With this thought in his mind he left the hotel and walked away in the direction of Savin Hill. It was three miles there.

He did not expect to see Carolyn at this time of night, but the walk would take up his mind, and he was stronger than he had been since his illness. By the time he returned to the hotel perhaps Prudence and Lord Maxwell would be back. 281

He had got over the ground rapidly. In a short time he had entered the side gate which opened into the vegetable garden.

The brilliant starlight made it possible for him to see his way with sufficient clearness; every yard of ground was familiar and dear to him. He passed on slowly along the dew-wet path until he came to a small space which was Carolyn's flower-garden; he knew she worked in this spot with her own hands, digging and weeding, and that she allowed here only her own especial favorites.

He stood a moment here. He could not distinguish the different plants, but the warm night air brought out heavily the perfume of heliotrope and mignonette. Carolyn used to be in the habit of wearing every day a little bunch of these flowers. But then that time was a thousand years ago.

Lawrence stepped carefully into the garden and peered about until he found and gathered a sprig of each of these flowers. Holding them in his hand, he went towards the house.

As he saw a light in the room that he knew was "Aunt Tishy's," he began to fear that some one might be out in the grounds this lovely evening, and come upon him. That would be a very awkward meeting for him. But if he could happen to see Carolyn— 282

He walked on slowly. The turreted house towered up blackly. He heard Mrs. Ffolliott's little terrier barking somewhere within the building. He leaned against a tree that stood on the edge of the lawn. He felt like an outcast. Where were all his dreams of usefulness and happiness? He had an idea that he had been considered what is called "a promising young man." And he had really meant to do something. He smiled forlornly and tried to rouse himself. He thought that his musing was like the musing of an old man. What an inconceivable act of folly he had committed!

He shook his shoulders impatiently. He turned, thinking to retrace his steps to his hotel. Perhaps Prudence had returned by this time.

Was it possible that Carolyn was going to marry Lord Maxwell? And was that one reason why Prudence was so excessively kind to the Englishman now? His mind went galloping from one subject to another.

Something moved in the tree above him. He raised his head and looked up into the darkness of the leaves.

"There are some birds there," he said, idly. 283

The sound was made again, and now Lawrence started quickly as something fluttered down to the ground near him. He could only dimly see a dark object which hopped close to his feet, making a little rasping noise as it did so.

Lawrence stooped quickly and lifted Devil in his hand. The crow's feet clung about his fingers, and the bird made his chuckling, strange sound and pecked blindly at the hand that held him.

Lawrence knew that he was unreasonably startled at the presence of Devil. He walked forward quickly along the gravel path, not noticing that he was on the way that led from the house.

Had Prudence returned, or had the bird decided that he would himself come home? It was not strange that the crow had flown to Savin Hill. Leander, who sometimes rode his bicycle to the hotel, had given the information that Devil was frequently at his old home.

Lawrence began to hurry. He would go back to the hotel. It had been very foolish of him to come thus far. And suddenly he was conscious of being tired; but he did not slacken his pace.

All at once he became aware that there were steps behind him, steps running.

He drew back quickly into the shrubbery. Were there other prowlers besides himself in the Ffolliott grounds to-night? He hoped that he should not be seen. 284

The next moment he saw that it was a woman coming, and the next he was sure it was Carolyn.

She must be in trouble; something must have happened.

She seemed to fly by him, so fast she went. He heard her panting.

He stepped from the shrubbery after she had passed. His only thought was to help her.

"Carolyn!" he called.

She stopped short.

He hastened up to her.

"Carolyn!" he said, again.

She drew back a step. "What! You?" she said, in a half whisper.

"Yes. What is the matter? Oh, do let me help you!"

She came nearer now, as if in time of trouble she would naturally draw near to him. Then she started back and began to fly on again. But she cried in answer, "Lee is dreadfully ill. I'm going to send Jack on the black horse to the village for a doctor."

The words came distinctly to him as he hurried on after her. When he had taken in the meaning of her reply he stopped in the walk. There was the stable close by, and the man Jack slept in a room of the building. 285

Lawrence stood a moment undecided. Ought he to go away?

No; surely it was proper for him to stay and know how it was with the boy. And this used to be like a home to Lawrence. It was terrible for him to feel that it was home no longer. All the old and natural sense of protective tenderness towards this household sprang into full life again.

He hastened to the house, pausing at the side door to which he knew Carolyn would return; and indeed he found this door opened, and a light burning in the room close by. He stood here listening. All the time the crow had remained securely perched on his hand. It now flew up on his shoulder.

Presently he heard the sound of a horse's hoofs going rapidly along the road to the village. Then the light, quick footfall on the walk again, and Carolyn came up to the door.

Lawrence moved aside. The girl just glanced at him, as she hurried forward.

"Only let me wait here until you can let me know how he is," said Lawrence, quickly.

"Come in," she said, hastily. "You must not stay outside." 286

Carolyn passed on into another room, and then he heard her go up the stairs. The young man was so well acquainted with the house that he could locate every sound.

After a few moments of waiting, Lawrence grew uncontrollably anxious. Sometimes, when a door opened, he could hear the high, sharp tones of Leander, tones that revealed that the boy was not in his right mind; sometimes the tones rose to a furious shout.

At last Lawrence could bear it no longer. He pulled the crow from his shoulder, and put it down in a chair. Then he ran up the stairs, forgetting that he was not as strong as usual. He entered Leander's room just as the boy was trying to leap from his bed, and his mother and sister were struggling to keep him there.

"Oh, Rodney! help us!" cried Mrs. Ffolliott, breathlessly.

Lawrence walked forward and put the two women aside. He held out his arms; Leander sprang into them, nearly throttling him in the violence of his embrace.

But Lawrence could not sustain the burden for more than a moment. He turned to find a seat, then he sank down on the bed, holding the boy fast all the time. 287

Mrs. Ffolliott was wringing her hands and crying, "Oh, what shall I do! Oh, what shall I do!"

But Carolyn was standing straight and still, her eyes on Lawrence, watching to discover if there was any way for her to help.

Leander's eyes were wildly dilated; his limbs seemed to have a convulsive movement.

"Let us try a hot bath," said Lawrence.

Then Carolyn flew to prepare it. Meanwhile Lawrence sat on the bed, the boy's arms fast about his neck, the mother walking frantically here and there in the room. Every few moments she exclaimed, "Will the doctor never come?"

But Lawrence did not say anything. His heart was heavy within him. To this mother the world itself seemed to circle about simply that her son might live upon it.

Carolyn came back to say that the bath would soon be ready. She went to her mother and put her arm about her. "Let us be as brave as we can," she whispered; and she kissed her mother's cheek.

The time dragged in that deadly way which so many of us know.

Lawrence did not rise. He sat rigidly still, holding Leander. He looked at Carolyn, whose face suddenly 288  
blanched still more. She turned to her mother.

"Please see if the water is just right, mamma; you'll find Jane there."

Mrs. Ffolliott went out of the room.

"Carolyn," said Lawrence, in a voice just above a whisper.

The girl came slowly to the bed.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### "I SHALL COME BACK."

"Dear Caro," said Lawrence, in the same whisper, "can you bear it?"

The girl sank on her knees by the bed. She reached up, and caught hold of Lawrence's arm; she clung to it.

"No, no!" she cried, in a half voice; "it can't be! Let us try the bath! Let us try everything! The dear little brother! I will not have it so!"

She rose as quickly as she had knelt. She endeavored to take the boy from the arms that held him.

"I will carry him," said Lawrence, rising. He had no hope, but he walked steadily to the bathroom. He helped the mother put the rigid form in the hot water.

The next moment he uttered a quick exclamation below his breath.

Had a faint flush come to the white little face?

The mother bent over her son. She rubbed his limbs; she pressed her cheek to his; she seemed almost to breathe her own breath into him. 290

Carolyn stood leaning against the door-frame. She could do nothing more; she could only wait, her pulses beating in her throat and threatening to choke her.

Suddenly Lawrence stood upright. "Thank God!" he breathed. He turned to Carolyn and took her hand, holding it firmly. They did not speak; they stood there hand in hand.

It had all happened so quickly to him, the terror, the relief, that now it still seemed as if he had not come to Savin Hill, as if he must be in his own room at the hotel, and dreaming all this.

But the touch of that soft, tender, and strong hand,—was not that real? And now the hand was withdrawn.

"Hullo, Rodney! That you?" A small, piping voice from the bath-tub thus spoke.

"Run and get another blanket," said Mrs. Ffolliott.

In another moment the blanket was tightly wrapped about the boy in his dripping nightgown, and Rodney had taken him again in his arms. Thus the procession started back to the chamber they had just left. Mrs. Ffolliott was now weeping aloud and as unrestrainedly as a child. 291

"What's the row, anyway?" asked a weak voice from Lawrence's shoulder.

"Wait," said Carolyn from behind.

"I won't wait, either," said the boy, feebly, but quite in character. "Tell me now."

"You've been ill."

"Have I? I feel kinder queer, I do believe."

A silence followed, and continued, until the boy had been invested with a dry night-robe and covered in bed.

"I don't want Rod to go," he now announced. "I want Rod to lie down on this bed."

"Rodney, you must," said Mrs. Ffolliott.

"But, mamma, it may not be convenient—" began Carolyn.

"I want Rod!"

There were indications that the small legs under the bed-cover were about to kick with what strength they had.

"I'll stay," said Lawrence.

So it came about that he did not go back to the hotel that night, and that the crow spent the remainder of the time until morning on the same chair where his master had placed him in one of the lower rooms at Savin Hill. 292

The doctor came and spoke vaguely of "convulsive seizure," said nothing could have been better than a warm bath, left some medicine, and drove away.

Lawrence kept his promise to the boy, and passed the night on the bed by Leander's side.

In the early morning he rose. The boy was asleep, but it was evident that he would be ill,—how ill could not yet be told.

Weary, indescribably depressed, the young man went slowly down the stairs.

A servant had apparently been watching for him, for a tray with hot coffee and bread and butter was immediately brought to him. Having eaten and drunk, a spark of courage seemed to come to his consciousness.

He looked out of the window. An east fog had risen in the early morning, and all the world was a dense mist. He could hear the low booming of the sea against the shore.

Do you think he thought of Carolyn as those in battle think of peace, as those in despair think of that time when they may hope?

He turned from the window and went to the room where he had left Devil. He would take the crow and go back to his own life again. He shivered uncontrollably. 293

The house was utterly still. A clock struck six. Mrs. Ffolliott was with her son.

Yes, there was the crow, looking as if it had not stirred all night. But it moved now as its master approached, raised itself, and turned its head that it might gaze at him with one eye. It lifted its wings also, and stretched out one leg, gaping as it did so.

The man's pulses gave a great start, and he sprang forward, seized the bird, and found a small roll of thin paper fastened to its wing.

"So you are a carrier-dove," he said, harshly.

He took the paper to the window and unfolded it with hands that trembled in spite of all his efforts to make them firm.

Yes, there was his wife's handwriting, close, upright, regular; her hand had not trembled when she had penned these lines.

Lawrence's lips set themselves hardly under his mustache, as his eyes, beneath heavily frowning brows, glanced at the first words. These words were "My dear Rodney."

Having read thus much, Lawrence turned and pulled a chair up to the window. Then he looked at the door; what if some one should come in? It not being his own room he could not turn the key. He felt as if he were on the brink of a precipice and he must be alone that he might gaze over the edge of it unhindered. 294

Was it possible that he hated the woman who had written this? And now had she disgraced him?

He walked out of the room with the letter held tightly in his hand. As he reached the outer door Mrs. Ffolliott's voice called from above the stairs:

"Rodney! You mustn't go! Lee may want you when he wakes."

"I will come back," he answered.

"Be sure! Come right back."

Lawrence made an inarticulate sound in response, then he closed the outer door behind him and stood in the open air.

He hastened beyond a thicket of syringa; then, leaning against a tree, he opened the paper again.

"MY DEAR RODNEY:—It strikes me that Devil will be a remarkably fit messenger for the letter I'm going to write you. You see, I shall have it all written when I ride away this morning, but I think it will be more appropriate to take it with me and let Devil deliver it. You'll be sure to find it sooner or later.

"I'm going away with Lord Maxwell. I suppose you'll think I'm the only one to blame in the affair, and perhaps I am. But no matter about that. You needn't believe for a moment that I'm the least little bit in love with him, for I'm not. Who could love a man with a chin like his, and who was always telling you how jolly you are? No, I don't love him, and I was intensely in love with you. I've made a fine plan, I think. This is it: I go off with Donald—that's Lord Maxwell, you know. That makes a kind of scandal, to be sure, but it will soon blow over. I'm so deadly tired and deadly dull being with you, and you're so deadly tired and deadly dull being with me, that I, for one, think almost anything would be better than our staying together. You'll be able to get a divorce without the slightest trouble; and I'll get my freedom, too. Then we can change partners, as if the dance were over, and we glad enough that it is over. Marriage need not be such a hard and fast affair, for there's nothing in the world that people make such mistakes about as they do about marriage. Now, why not 'all change hands,' as they used to do in the old dances? 295

"I'm going to be very frank with you, Rodney. I'll confess that I might not take such a decided step as this if I were not afraid Maxwell would marry Carolyn. The dear girl! She has already refused him once, so he tells me; but what does one refusal mean? Just nothing at all; though it might with Carolyn. But I don't want to risk that. They say the third time never fails, and I shall be Lady Maxwell sooner or later. Of course I shall be under a cloud for awhile, but I'm not afraid but that I can win my way. And Donald is perfectly infatuated with me. That goes without saying. This time no brewer's daughter will step between us. How I am going on! But I wanted you to understand the whole thing. I hope you won't delay any about the divorce. Of course I know you love Carolyn; of course I know you'll thank me in time for what I'm doing. Why didn't I wait and try the incompatibility plea? Because Maxwell might marry Carolyn, and then you'd be as disappointed as I. So I'm sure, on the whole, you'll agree with me. And for the sake of regaining your freedom you'll forgive me for the scandal I make by doing this way. I'm sorry this way seemed to be necessary, for I don't mind saying I shrink from it. Now, my dear Rodney, don't swear; you'll live to thank me." 296

Thus the letter ended, without even a name signed to it.

"But it doesn't need a name," Lawrence said. He stood there and read the pages three times, each reading seeming to shed a still brighter glare on the character of the writer.

"That is the woman I married," he was thinking. "That woman!"

He turned about and faced the house, the turrets of which he could see above the trees, blurred in the mist. He walked out from among the syringas, walking unevenly, like a man who is drunk.

Above, in her chamber, Carolyn saw him. She was standing by the open window. She leaned forward and watched him, her tired eyes dilating as she watched. After a moment she left the room and ran quickly down



the stairs and out of the house.

Suddenly, as Lawrence went staggering on, a slender shape glided up to him and drew his hand quickly within an arm. 297

"Rodney, lean on me," said Carolyn, in an unsteady voice, "Oh, how ill you are! Here, sit on this bench. I will go and get some one to help you."

Lawrence sank down on the bench, but he caught at the girl's skirt, saying, breathlessly:

"Stay! Stay! Read this."

The letter fluttered out towards her. She stopped, standing perfectly still. She recognized her cousin's writing, and her eyes darted over the lines, not reading much, but taking in, as by a flash of lurid light, the whole sense of the base epistle. She did not speak, but stood gazing down at the letter after she had ceased to read it. She did not wish to look in her companion's face; she felt that she could not. Her own cheeks were hot with humiliated indignation.

Lawrence had leaned his elbows on his knees and covered his face with his hands. He was not thinking; he was not even feeling. A dull sensation of sinking down—down, he knew not where, was all that he was conscious of. Then some keen stab, as if from a hot knife, went through him. He started up, turning his face towards Carolyn. He flung out his hands as if he were groping blindly. 298

"Oh, Caro, my love!" he cried, not knowing what he said.

Then he fell forward on the ground at her feet.

The climax of illness and anxiety and unhappiness seemed to have been reached. The inanimate body was taken to the room which had always been Lawrence's, and put upon his old bed.

Then followed days and weeks of illness, during which the man was sometimes delirious, sometimes lying in a stupor.

A nurse and Mrs. Ffolliott and Carolyn watched over him.

At last, when summer had waned towards its end, and there were already hints of the autumn glories, Lawrence opened his eyes and saw Mrs. Ffolliott sitting by him.

"Is it a good while?" he asked, feebly.

She bent over him. "A few weeks."

"And Lee?"

"He's all right. Don't talk."

"No. I can't."

Then, in a moment, "Aunt Tishy, I'm going to die, and I'm glad of it."

"No, no!"

"Yes, I am. And I want you to tell Caro that I love her,—love her—" 299

He closed his eyes; he spoke dreamily, then was silent.

But he did not die. He began to gain steadily, and he often remarked that it was a great mistake; then was the time for him to die.

Carolyn came no more to his room. Sometimes he heard her voice when a door opened, or he could hear her singing far off somewhere.

Frequently the crow was allowed to come to the chamber, where he would gravely amuse himself by hopping over the floor, occasionally picking at something; or he would sit on the top of a chair and look at the man on the bed.

At last Lawrence could go down-stairs and sit in the sun on the lawn, the shadow of a man, his long, bony frame stretched out, his gaunt face and great eyes turned towards the shining blue water.

Every day he told himself that perhaps the next day he could go away. He was longing to work; he felt the springs of life and strength slowly rising within him. Happiness was not for him, but there was work.

One day Mrs. Ffolliott came across the grass and sat down beside him. Indeed, she often did this, but he thought there was something special in her manner just now. 300

"You're getting very much stronger and better, aren't you, Rodney?" she asked.

"Oh, yes; I shall soon be all right," was the reply. "And I shall go away as soon as I can. How good you've been to me!"

"Don't mention such a thing. Rodney—"

The speaker paused. She looked uneasily about her.

"Caro says it's time you were told," she went on, and then stopped again.

Lawrence sat up erect. He began to brace himself for he knew not what.

"You might hear it from some one else, now—"

"Hear what?" in an imperative voice.

Mrs. Ffolliott twisted her fingers together. But she tried to go on.

"That day when Prudence went bicycling with Lord Maxwell—"

"Yes, I have her letter; I know all about it," he said, in a hard voice. "Don't be afraid to speak of it."

"No, you don't know. Oh, how can I tell it? She was killed. They were run into; she was thrown on to a rock,—killed instantly. Lord Maxwell was badly hurt, but is nearly recovered. We couldn't tell you before. We knew it the next day. Oh, the dreadful, dreadful thing!" 301

Mrs. Ffolliott had risen. "Oh, don't look so!" she cried.

"Aunt Tishy, please leave me a few minutes."

She could hardly hear what he said, but she did hear it, and walked away.

She looked back and saw him leaning forward in the old attitude, with his hands over his face.

Up-stairs Caro saw him also. Her own face was ashen. She left the window and sat down.

He was still sitting thus when Mrs. Ffolliott went back to him. She put her hand on his shoulder.

"Rodney," she said, "I must remind you that no one knows what—what there was in her letter,—that they were going away together,—only Lord Maxwell, and you, and I, and Caro. You see, there'll be no scandal."

"And she is dead. Now I am going to leave you, really."

It was three days later that Lawrence announced that he was going, and he would not yield to remonstrances and assertions that he was not well enough.

He saw Caro alone when he bade her good-by: he had asked to see her alone.

"Lee is going to keep Devil," he said. "The boy wanted him." 302

Caro was in the embrasure of a window, leaning against it. She made a silent motion of assent.

Lawrence walked about the room.

"I'm going to try to make something of my life," he went on.

He came and stood a moment before the girl. He took both her hands. But all he said was:

"Caro, I shall come back."

THE END.

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## **Transcriber's notes**

Clear printer's errors were corrected, but original spelling was not modified or harmonized, with one exception: "reënter" was changed by "reenter" (Chapter IV): "Here she was interrupted by a whoop from somewhere,—reënter Leander at a full run."

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