

IN A MONK'S CASSOCK †



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In a Monk's Cassock



Cordially yours,
Pearl Van Antwerp Moran.

IN A MONK'S CASSOCK

BY

Pearl Van Antwerp Moran



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PEARL VAN ANTWERP MORAN



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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
BEATRICE W. FOGWELL

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CHAPTER I

SWOLLEN STREAMS

THE late March winds were suggestive of a speedy awakening of nature after the long restful sleep of winter. Spring had started out early on her march north, and danced with sheer joy among the beautiful Alleghenies, laying her warm touch here and there on the mountain-side, melting the deep snows, and bringing into bloom the pink and purple blossoms of the mountain laurel.

Shortly a veil was drawn across the way, shutting out the warm sunshine. A mist rose in the valleys and crept up the mountains, then the rain fell incessantly for days. The rivers rushed on madly continuing to rise higher and higher.

Along the S—— river, and skirting a mountain, the L—— passenger train, eastward bound, crawled, as with great caution. The river had risen on a level with the railroad tracks and in places, was washing ruthlessly over the ties. Suddenly the train started up with full speed and dashed along the swamped rails for the space of a quarter of a mile, then slowed down again as though picking its way along.

Earlier in the afternoon, when the train stopped at H——, two men boarded the parlor car. Howard Kornell, tall, broad-shouldered, and possessing an exceedingly attractive face, preceded the man of smaller build, but of equally good appearance. Kornell gave one quick glance the full length of the car then brought his gaze back to a young lady who occupied the second chair to the right. For an instant only their eyes met, then the lady turned and looked out of the window, seemingly greatly interested in the scene without. Kornell and his private secretary, Felix Ransome, took possession of the two chairs across the aisle, the only seats which remained vacant. They made themselves comfortable, after which Mr. Kornell began giving notes to his secretary. He quite often let his dark gray eyes turn in the direction of the young lady opposite—a pleasing picture to look upon—it rested him. He did not get a full view of her face after that first glance when he entered the car, but he studied the heavy waves of light brown hair, her almost perfect profile, the curve of her white throat showing above the faultless collar, and the fully developed figure, which bespoke health and youth.

Thus the last afternoon of March drew near a close. The passengers were weary and overwrought with the excitement of the last few

hours, and now with the darkness near at hand, what was in store for them?

The train rounded a sharp curve, then came to a sudden stop, which sent the passengers into a panic. The men immediately left the train and ran forward to ascertain the cause of the sudden stop at this out-of-way place. A few of the women became hysterical, others ran back and forth aimlessly through the cars. The young lady who had so attracted Howard Kornell remained calm and collected after the first shock of the sudden jolt. In a very few minutes Kornell came hurrying back, and removing his hat addressed her:

"I beg your pardon, but all conventionality must be thrown aside, for we all are in very grave danger. Will you allow me to assist you? I see that you are alone."

"You are kind," she answered, "and I thank you, but I am well able to care for myself. There are a great many women on the train who need your aid much more than I. There is that old lady, crying, in the far end of the car, or the woman with that wee babe who sits near her."

"Very well," he answered pleasantly, and stepped to his own chair.

A commotion occurred at the car entrance; then the conductor entered, mounted a chair, and called out:

“All must remain calm and do our bidding. We are in a very great danger. The river has risen until it is about ready to wash away the bridge. The first section has sprung, and the car rails are wrenched apart. It is impossible for the train to pass over, and it is equally impossible for us to remain here, or go back, as that last dash along those swamped rails sent them afloat. The river is rising rapidly, and unless we leave the train and cross the bridge afoot, we will die here like rats in a trap. There is a station but a mile further on, after we cross over. Now, ready! and hurry! No unnecessary luggage. Not a moment to lose.” He stepped to the floor and hurriedly left the car. Instantly a shrill cry rose from the very fat woman holding the wee babe.

“Oh! we shall die! Die like rats in a trap! Do you hear, baby? We are going to die ‘way off here all alone. Oh! my God!”

Kornell stepped to his fair fellow-passenger and said:

“I believe you could quiet her. Won't you try? She will craze the whole trainload. Mercy! such howling. I'll see what I can do to help get the women and children across.” He left her and aided a woman and two children to cross the bridge and hurried back to assist others.

The young lady approached the screaming woman, and tried to quiet her.

“Don’t you know this won’t do?” she asked. “You are the only woman on the whole train that is making such a fuss. You must become quiet and leave this car. You can not stay here alone. Think of your baby; you must save him. See, the car is empty, every one is fleeing for safety.”

“Go and leave me,” cried the woman. “Save yourself; I don’t dare cross that rickety bridge.”

“But you will surely die if you stay here.”

“What is the difference? I’ll die if I step foot on that bridge.”

“Come, let us leave the car; you may feel differently after you see others crossing safely.”

The woman allowed the girl to persuade her to leave the car, but she resolutely refused to go near the bridge, and sat down on the car step. The men hurried back and forth, with their burdens. But a few remained to be piloted across. The young lady was becoming impatient with the willful stubbornness of the woman to flee to safety. She watched the last of the party embark on the trembling bridge. She counted the minutes which seemed like hours until she saw Kornell, his secretary and one of the porters coming toward her.

Kornell was the first to speak:

"Come," he said. "Make haste! That bridge won't hold on much longer and we will be cut off from the rest of the party. It's getting dark, too, and those clouds are going to open up on us like suds in a very short time." He looked at the young lady, for the fleshy woman refused to speak or move. "It's of no use, I can not get her to go," she told him.

"Then let her stay here. Why need you lose your life if she holds hers at so little value?"

"But I cannot go and leave her and that little babe here to perish. It would be murder. If she stays I must stay."

A great light of admiration shone in his eyes as he looked at her.

"Can't you bring your Yankee intuition into play, and help us out of this? For unless you go, I shall stay, too. I tell you frankly that I do not relish the idea of death in this lonely place."

She looked off toward the rushing, foaming river, then turned about with a purpose and leaned over the moaning woman, speaking kindly:

"Let me take the child just a moment, won't you? You have held him so long, your arm must ache."

Unwittingly the mother gave her child into the arms of the young lady who stepped back, hugged it to her for a moment, then quickly

placed it in the arms of the strong porter, and gave him a push toward the bridge, saying:

“Hurry! run with all your might! It is our only way out.”

The mother, wild with fury, glared savagely at the beautiful face of the girl who had trapped her, then gave a lunge forward. The secretary caught her and led her toward the bridge. Kornell turned to the lady left alone with him.

“Cleverly done,” he said. “Now we must hurry. Do you know, that bridge has sprung a foot farther in the last ten minutes.” He grasped her arm and hurried her forward. Her skirt caught on the lower step of the car as she turned to leave, and tore the front panel to the hem. They paused long enough to tear the strip of cloth free from the skirt, then hastened on.

“The rain will be here with greater force directly; the drops are getting larger, and strike heavier.” They could hear the bridge timbers cracking, and hurried forward and stepped onto the trembling structure. “I hope we—can make it,” concluded Kornell, with a white, set face.

Step by step they picked their way along. Then a sickening fear took possession of the strong, broad-shouldered man, for slowly but surely that section of the bridge was giving away. Steadily and firmly he pulled his companion along. It seemed as though they were going at

a snail's pace, and every second counted. He could not have spoken to have saved his life. They came to the end of the swaying structure and he was about to help the trembling girl onto the solid portion of the bridge when amid a deafening crash of timbers and roaring of waters they found themselves rocking and tumbling down the mad river, clinging to the ties of the floating railroad bridge. After the structure settled into easier sailing they endeavored to stand erect, clinging to heavy timbers that formed the side guards of the bridge. It was now quite dark and the rain came down in torrents.

"Great Cæsar," exclaimed Kornell, above the roar of the waters. "It rains as though it never had rained before. Strange what odd freaks fate plays with." For her sake he was trying to be cheerful.

"Where do you think we are going?" she asked.

"Time will tell."

"It is getting so dark, too. What would I do were I alone. But you are here, there is comfort in that."

"I am very happy if I prove any sort of a comfort to you. Here, let me tie that handbag to your arm, then you can hold onto me with both hands, which will be easier for you than trying to hang onto this large beam." He took out

his pocket-handkerchief and passed it through the handle of the bag, then tied it about her wrist.

“Thank you,” she breathed.

He grasped her cold hands and held them firmly within his own. For a long while they remained silent. Then she asked:

“Don’t you think we will reach one shore or another before long? This river is not very wide.”

“No, not very wide, but mighty long and I surmise we are going the full length. If by chance we can reach the opposite shore, we can tramp it back to the station—the rest started for—but if we land back on the same side we left we are lost for a while at least.”

“It is dreadfully dark.”

“Yes, densely black,” he answered. Again silence fell between them. It seemed ages since they had spoken to each other, when suddenly their raft struck the rocky shore, tilted on end, sending them into the icy water. Kornell grasped his companion, passed his arm about her and swam to the shore. She struggled to her feet and dashed the water from her face. Her heavy hair fell about her shoulders, she twisted the water from it, then with Mr. Kornell’s help, wrung her dripping skirts. At her request he loosened the handkerchief tied about her wrist.

"We landed on the wrong shore, didn't we?" she asked.

"Decidedly so."

"What shall we do?"

"I shall have to find a way out. But we may have to stay here until morning. It would be foolhardy to tramp aimlessly over mountains on a dark rainy night. Let us look about." They looked off toward the south, nothing but a wall of darkness met their eager gaze. "It is terrible to have you standing here in this cold, wet through and through. I fear for the safety of your health." He turned toward the north, after a second he exclaimed eagerly:

"Look up the side of the mountain, there. Do you see that light? It is either a very large one or it is much nearer than I think for."

"Oh! how fortunate we are. Let us hurry. We can surely find shelter there."

"No, we won't go just yet. Listen a moment. We can't tell what sort of a place that light shines from; it may be the abode of rough people. You have been wonderfully brave so far, and haven't caused me a particle of trouble; now, can you be brave a little longer, and stay here alone in the dark while I go up the mountain and investigate that place? I cannot take you there until I know whether or not it is safe to do so. I promise you I shall hurry."

"I will stay here if you wish me to. You know best, of course."

"Before I leave you give me the assurance that you have placed your trust in me. Of course, I fully realize that we are strangers to each other, but this is the time and place for perfect confidence. Hasn't the great danger we have just passed through together taught you that you may safely trust me? There are times when two moments on the brink of eternity will bring people to a clearer understanding of each other than a lifelong friendship could ever do." His voice, full and deep, sounded so reassuringly good to her that she reached out her hands to him saying:

"I do trust you. I trust fully."

"Now you have made me feel better about leaving you here alone. When I return, I'll give this whistle." He gave a peculiar little call, low and soft. "Only much louder," he added. "Be sure you answer no other sound but that." Then he disappeared from her side.

But a few seconds and the sound of his footsteps died away; all she could hear was the mad onrush of the river and the falling rain. It took strong nerves, a will power almost superhuman to stand there in that wet, desolate place and wait. She became chilled to the marrow, but did not dare to move about, lest Kornell should have

difficulty in finding her. She prayed for strength and endurance. It might be an hour or more before Kornell returned.

Much sooner than she anticipated, that odd whistle came down to her from the mountain-side.

"Who-o-o-oo." Strong and clear she sent the answer, for she knew that he was having some difficulty in tracing his way back to her. Five minutes more and the call came again, much nearer and louder.

Before she could realize his nearness, she heard his voice quite close.

"Where are you?"

"Right here," she answered joyfully.

"I made this trip much sooner than I expected. That light wasn't so far away, after all."

"Is it a safe place for us to go to?"

"Quite safe," he answered, stepping close to her and speaking low. "But I must prepare you a little for the sight that will meet your eyes. That light shines from the abode of a Brotherhood. You will find eight or ten men there each wearing a Monk's cassock."

"A Brotherhood!" she exclaimed. "I didn't suppose—such things are common in Europe, but I never before heard of one being in this part of the country."

"Neither did I, but perhaps these fellows can

account for it. One of the Brothers came with me to assist us back to the house." He spoke to the Brother who stepped forward. "My friend," he continued, "this is my companion in distress. We will hasten on, for the lady is nearly overcome from exposure to the water and cold."

Without another word, the trio started off toward the bright light.

They picked their way along up the rough rocky mountainside. Without much difficulty, they reached the home of the Brotherhood. The building was low, long and of rough exterior, and as near the color of the surrounding rocks as could be obtained. The front entrance appeared more like that of a small chapel than of a home. The broad stone steps led up to a small arched alcove, out of which opened a massive weathered-oak door, hung with hammered-brass hinges and boasted two long panels of richly stained glass, through which the light in the hall shone dimly.

The Brother-guide opened the oaken door and let his companions into the hall. Then with a soft tread he disappeared through one of the many doors at the side of the room. A veil of mystery seemed to settle down and envelope them. A stillness as of death reigned throughout the building. Not the damp, musty air of the home of the recluse greeted their nostrils,

but a warm, spicy odor as of burning incense. Kornell was quite sure he had not noticed this on his visit here a half hour earlier. Perhaps he was too eager to procure shelter for himself and fair companion to have noticed a white elephant hanging from the plain but rich chandelier, had there been one. He appeared at ease, but the girl at his side drew in fluttering breaths, and her eyes shone large and dark as they glanced along the sides of the hall. She noticed the small doors were at intervals of about eight feet apart, presumably opening into cell-like rooms. She knew the abode of Brotherhoods were upon this plan, but not that they partook of this grandeur. What order could it be? Her eyes sought the highly polished floor. She felt that it should have been roughly hewn stone or coarse planks. Then she raised her eyes to Kornell, who was intently watching her.

“Are you afraid?” he asked.

“I am not without some fears.”

“What could harm you? Remember I am large enough and strong enough to protect you, come what will. Besides the Brotherhood is composed of refined, highly educated men. You may be entirely without fear.”

At that instant the door through which their guide disappeared a moment before was thrown open and a man, tall, broad and of commanding

appearance, garbed in a dark brown cassock, strode softly and gracefully into their presence. He extended a hand of welcome to each of the hapless guests.

“Sorry to have kept you standing here so long. We were arranging for your comfort. Will the lady please follow me?” He preceded her to a room at the extreme end of the hall. Kornell went with her to the door, for she had given him one appealing look. “Now,” continued the Brother, “you will find a few things for your comfort in there. If you wish for anything, ring the bell which you will find on the mantel.” He turned from her to Kornell. “Now for you, my friend, follow me.” He led Kornell directly across to a small room, and bade him change clothing and get warm.

When the trembling girl stepped into the room set apart for her, she closed the door, bolted it fast and looked about her with bated breath.

“A fire-place!” she exclaimed. “And in this place of all places. Oh! but it does seem good!” She walked over to the bright blazing fire, and extended her hands toward the flames. After a second she turned to the single bed on which lay an outfit of clothing. The underwear—well, beggars and flood-refugees shouldn’t be choosers—the brown cassock she knew would be warm and the moccasins could be tied on, and so cover

her feet. She hastily discarded her wet clothing and donned the raiment laid out for her, partially dried her hair, and braided it into one long thick braid. But two hair pins were all that she had left, and these were used to fasten the hair back from her face. With a set purpose, she picked the bell up from the mantel and went to the door, opened it and sent a loud ring through the silent hall. With a very white face and trembling limbs, she waited for an answer to her summons. A moment later, a third member of the Brotherhood stood before her. He was extremely good looking and of pleasing manner, though he was not so large a man as Mr. Kornell or the Brother who had led her to this room. She looked steadily into the man's face. He plainly showed wonder and surprise when he saw her.

"You rang?" he asked.

"Yes. May I please have a pail of water and a stout cord at once?"

"I will get them for you." He bowed himself from her presence, and in a few minutes returned with the pail of water and the cord. She took them from his hands, thanked him, and closed the door rather abruptly. The man walked away with a beautiful picture firmly impressed on his mind.

The lady again bolted the door, took the pail of water to the fire-place, before which her wet

clothing lay in a heap. Drawing the two heavy chairs forward before the blazing fire she stretched the cord between them and fastened the ends securely. Piece by piece she rinsed out the garments and hung them up to dry. But her dress proved a hopeless case; she dropped it into the pail of water and pushed it back against the wall.

Another tap at the door. A fourth Brother stood outside, bearing a tray on which was placed a tempting lunch and a cup of steaming coffee. The lady hailed this with eagerness, for she was indeed faint for want of food.

A half hour later, a third knock sounded through the room. "Brother number five. This time it is to inform me that it is the hour for 'lights out.'" The humorous side of this affair struck her forcibly, and caused her to smile despite herself. Then with calm dignity, she opened the door. Mr. Kornell, handsome and smiling, stood before her. The brown cassock he wore became him immensely. They looked at each other oddly for a moment.

"How fortunate," he said, "that these men wear the cassocks."

"Yes, fortunate for me," she answered good humoredly.

"Do you feel equal to a few turns about this hall before we say good-night?"

"It would prove a sort of a relief, I believe, but will the Brotherhood sanction it?"

"You are here under my protection. The Brotherhood have nothing to say. What a charming bundle of propriety you are," he said, looking kindly down into her face as he placed her small, white hand on his arm. "Now, tell me, for I am very anxious to know, have you everything comfortable in your room? Is it warm?"

"Very comfortable and warm. I could ask for nothing more unless it were a presentable gown;" she looked dubiously down at the brown cassock she wore. The heavy brown cord with its fluffy tassels was tied loosely about her waist and hung nearly to the floor. The wide flowing sleeves showed to advantage her white plump arms, and the hood-like cape hung from her shoulders, the ends forming a V-shaped opening at her throat, which appeared so white and slender against the dark folds of the cassock. The robe was too long for her. She gathered up a fold with her free hand to keep from stepping on the hem. Kornell thought she made a far more beautiful picture than when he first saw her, gowned in a dark blue traveling suit.

"You appear very well in the gown you are wearing," he ventured.

She immediately changed the subject.

"Don't you feel that there is a great air of mystery surrounding this place?"

"I hadn't thought about it. Do you feel so?"

"Yes, from the moment I stepped into this hall, I felt it was all very strange."

"Why?"

"We all know that a real Brotherhood dwells in a place devoid of all comforts. Those men deprive themselves of all but the actual necessities of life. Polished oak floors and hammered brass hall lamps are not in harmony with their devout living, while these men seem to have every comfort."

"I have but the one answer that I gave before. Perhaps these men can account for it all."

He led her back to the door of her room and paused.

"You are tired and need rest. But before I let you go, promise me to retire immediately and go to sleep. For if we can possibly get away from here tomorrow, we shall have a strenuous tramp of it. Assure me that you will lay aside all fear, and sleep."

"I cannot promise you that for I know I shall not sleep a wink, but I shall try to rest. Good-night." She extended her hand, he clasped it within both of his and looked kindly into her eyes.

“Good-night,” he bade her, then went across the hall to his own room.

Through the long hours of that night, the weary girl tossed about on her bed, unable to close her eyes in sleep. The dangers she had passed through and the mystery she felt surrounding this place banished any semblance of sleep that might have come to her.

Long past midnight, she realized with a sickening chill that she had lost her handbag, which contained baggage checks, a considerable amount of money and a few other trifles. Here she was, a stranger, and the only woman among all these men, way off on a lonely mountain-side, without a gown or a cent with which to buy one. She rose and paced the floor of her room feverishly, waiting for the dawn.

CHAPTER II

MORNING MISTS

THE faint light of the early morning crept through the long, narrow window into the small room and caressed the tall, supple form of the hapless girl, who paced the floor nervously.

The fire in the grate had burned out, leaving but a pink glow deep down in the ashes. The garments hanging on the cord stretched between the two chairs were dry and looked ghostly in the dim light. The girl took them down and smoothed them out as best she could by laying them across her knees and passing her hands firmly over them. A half hour later she was dressed and ready to start out in search for the lost handbag.

Softly she left her room and crept stealthily along the hall to the front door, unbolted it and stepped into the small vestibule. She spied an umbrella in a shadowy corner, and taking possession of it descended the steps and started for the river, going as near as she could remember over the ground the trio had traversed the night before. All the way to the river's edge her eager gaze was unrewarded. The river had risen several feet higher during the night, and the mad rush of the foaming water passed far above the rock where they had landed ten hours earlier.

The girl stood there, dazed. Her utter dependency overpowered her. She knew not which way to turn. Although an expert swimmer, she realized it would be madness to attempt to cross that seething, roaring river. All about her the mountains loomed up forebodingly—no gateway to the outer world; penned up here, the only woman among a half score of men. Her situation was appalling. Her bravery began to waver; she felt her limbs tremble beneath her and a feeling of suffocation came into her throat. She turned about with a look of utter despair written on her lovely face. Then with a catch in her breath and drawing herself up majestically, she exclaimed:

“Why, sir, did you follow me here?” for the Brother who, the night before had brought her the cord and the pail of water, stood before her.

“I beg your pardon for being here, but you are unacquainted with this sort of a place, and I feared you would be unable to find your way back to the home. You see the building is so near the color of the rocks you could easily miss it.”

“I don't understand why you need worry about my welfare. Pray leave me. I shall find the building readily.” She did not wish to be spied upon and resented this intrusion.

“But I cannot leave you here alone. It is my duty to look after you.”

“Why is it *your* duty?” Her dark blue eyes seemed to blaze.

“I am one of the Brotherhood, as you know; therefore, I am in duty bound to look after your welfare. Do you realize your position here?” He seemed very serious and spoke kindly.

“I certainly do realize the position I am in here. I can't see that you can alter it any.”

“Perhaps I can. I understand that the gentleman who accompanied you here last night is a stranger to you, and that”—the steady unflinching fire from her dark eyes caused him to take a step backward.

“Though he were one thousand times a stranger, he is the truest of perfect gentlemen,” she retorted.

“I do not deny his gentlemanliness. I only wish to prove to you that I am sincere in what I am about to say to you.”

“I don't want to hear one word!”

“You shall hear me; remember you are here alone and need a protector. Last night when I looked into your white, scared face, my heart went out to you and long before morning I realized that I loved you—.”

“Stop, sir, not another word. Leading the

life you do, you are debasing yourself and insulting me by talking in this manner."

"It is true that I have taken the vows never to marry; but they can easily be broken."

"Oh! I blush in shame for your fallen manhood. Leave me!"

"Do not be so hasty. Let me explain things to you. I can clear myself in this matter," he said almost pleadingly.

"Nothing you could ever say would clear you. I shall not listen to a single explanation. Leave me this instant, or I shall call for help." In her distress, she had unwittingly lowered the umbrella and the rain fell on her relentlessly.

The large, loose hood of the brown cassock had fallen back from her head, forming an effective background for her clear, almost perfectly chiseled face. Both man and woman were so filled with emotion that they failed to hear approaching footsteps and were startled when they heard another voice exclaim:

"What is this about, calling for help?" Kornell looked straight into the Brother's eyes, who returned his gaze with equal intensity.

"This lady," replied the Brother, "resented my friendly overtures. She need have had no fear of me, for I assured her that I could explain matters satisfactorily. I was perfectly honorable in my offer—."

“Offer!” Kornell glared at him savagely, then stepped to the trembling girl and gathered her cold hands into his warm palm. “What offer did you make her?” he demanded.

“An offer of protection. She is alone here among a dozen men. I wished to—.”

“Once and for all, understand this! This lady is under my protection so long as it is necessary for her to remain here, and the man who so far forgets himself as to offer her a discourtesy shall be answerable to me, be he priest or one of the common herd. Step back, please, and let us pass.” He picked up the fallen umbrella and held it over himself and companion, whose fingers eagerly clung to his strong arm. He led her from the place and up the mountainside toward the abode of the Brotherhood, but the Brother remained standing in the lonely spot for some time after they had left.

Kornell and his companion traversed nearly the whole distance before a word was spoken. The man’s face was white with suppressed anger, and his lips were drawn into a straight line, indicative of firmly clinched jaws. When they neared the home, he spoke to her in a voice which she hardly recognized as his:

“I thought I had planned so that just such annoyances as this should be avoided. I see that I failed. May I ask why you were down there?”

"Yes," she replied, looking up and meeting his intent gaze, "I have lost my handbag and went there to search for it." Something suggestive of a very charming dimple played near the left corner of her mouth, but it disappeared immediately, for Kornell still wore that angry look.

"You can't find your handbag?"

"No; I firmly believe that I must have dropped it there by the river when you untied it from my wrist. I never gave it a thought after that."

"Well, the loss of the handbag is of secondary matter. We won't worry over it. It won't do any good if we do. That which troubles me most is that fellow's conduct. What did he say to you that annoyed you so?"

"Let us not talk about it. I don't think he really meant any harm."

"But I must know. Answer my question, please."

"He said something about—he wished to—well, he thought he had fallen in love—."

"Oh! he did, eh? The scoundrel!"

"He is one of the Brothers."

"It doesn't make a particle of difference, we will have a settlement later."

They went the rest of the way to the home in silence. Kornell led his companion up the steps and into the vestibule. They paused before the massive oaken door. Howard Kornell looked

into the girl's face with that stern and intent gaze, then he asked:

"I wonder if you can tell me what a man should do in a case of this kind?"

"What do you mean? What sort of a case?" she asked.

"I know you fully realize the unpleasant position you occupy here. You also know that I am your most humble servant. Now tell me what I should do?"

"Get us away from here with all speed possible."

"Before we attempt to do that, we will look into the conditions of things. That river yonder, for instance, gobbles up everything that comes within its power. It would be madness for me to try to cross it. You would be worse off than ever, for I never should reach the opposite side—alive."

"I don't suppose we could find a boat within fifty miles in which we might try to cross over?" she asked.

"These fellows don't believe in such things; besides, no rowboat could cross that river and stay right side up. Now, that much is settled with. We will take the mountains next. They seem to have a grip on us like grim death and hold us here despite all efforts to get away. There isn't a town within forty miles either north or

south of this place. You cannot tramp along the mountains that distance, and I cannot go and leave you here alone. Another point settled. But there is a village back of this mountain, about ten miles distant, so one of the Brothers told me." He watched her closely, to see what effect this would have upon her. The girl's face brightened.

"Ten miles! That isn't far. I can tramp that and in the rain too."

"But listen." Kornell smiled at her eagerness. "Between this mountain and that village, there lies a valley which is literally swamped by this flood business. That ends the third and last loophole of escape." He looked at her pityingly, for she had stepped back against the wall for support. All signs of eagerness had left her face and her eyes shone bright with apprehension. Kornell was sorry for her. He would have given half his fortune to have been able to give her one spark of hope.

"Is there no possible way out of here? I can't stay here another hour. I shall endeavor to swim across that river. Even if I drown in the attempt, it were better than this, for don't you see—."

"Yes, I see," answered Kornell. "I understand all about it. But you must not go near that river; promise me—, promise me that!"

"It is my only way out."

“I can’t let you go that way. I should not attempt it myself, and what an utter failure you would make of it. Be reasonable and listen to me, for I shall advise you only for the best. Go to your room, get warm and comfortable. I shall see that a tempting breakfast is sent in to you—or rather, I shall bring it to you myself. You shall not see any more of these Brothers than is absolutely necessary.” He led her into the long warm hall and on down to the door of her room. “Stay in there until I come for you an hour or two later. You will do this, will you not?”

“Yes. You are so kind, I know that you do and *will* do what is best for me. I can but abide by your wishes.”

Kornell opened the door for her, let her pass through, closed it and went in search of food for his companion.

CHAPTER III

A MAN OF HONOR

AFTER the breakfast hour, Howard Kornell sought the head Brother, who had gone to his private sanctum for an enjoyable smoke. To Kornell's firm rap, he answered: "Come in," then rose the instant that his caller entered.

"Brother Paul," said Kornell, "I wish to hold a short conference with you. Will you grant me a few minutes of your time?"

"I am at your service, Mr. Kornell. What can I do for you?" He bade his guest to be seated. Briefly and rapidly Kornell laid before Brother Paul a matter that had pressed heavily upon him since the night before. When he finished, Brother Paul rubbed his firm white hands together, and nodding his head in a business like way, remarked:

"It is the only thing to do, Mr. Kornell. The only, yes, the only and right thing for you to do."

"Before we go farther with this affair, however, I should like to have a little mystery cleared up. Everything must be done honorably or not at all. You understand?"

"Yes, Mr. Kornell, quite right. What is the mystery you allude to?"

“I feel, as does this lady who is in our midst, that this Brotherhood of which you are the head is a trifle out of the ordinary. You see, if this Order is what I surmise it is, you have neither the right nor the power to carry out my wishes in the matter which I put before you a moment ago. I must have a decidedly truthful answer to my question. Who are you fellows, and why are you here?”

The careful, studied manner of Brother Paul banished in a twinkling; he leaned back in his chair and laughed heartily.

“There is no use trying to masquerade before a man of the world. You can't deceive him. Kornell, I shall have to own up. We are a party of business men hailing from different cities throughout the State. Five years ago we formed this Brotherhood, then tramped about until we found this lonely spot.

We had this retreat built, following closely upon the plan of the homes of the monks. Our tailors made the brown cossacks we are wearing. We have a signed and a sealed document, wherein we have sworn never to enter the bonds of matrimony. For six weeks out of the year we live together up here in our lonely retreat. We literally vanish from the world, not a soul knows our whereabouts, and all communications with the outer life are cut off. You and the young

lady are the first to have stumbled upon us. We tried to keep up the semblance of true Brotherhood, but I felt you saw through the flimsy attempt. We even burned spices in the hall last night before you returned with the lady, that you might mistake it for incense, and think us right good fellows."

Kornell looked at him intently. "What pure unadulterated deceit. Suppose your friends think you are on a flying trip to England, or on a cruise to the West Indies. This sort of life is all right providing you live up to it. Fasting and prayer—." Kornell looked at Brother Paul with an odd twinkle in his dark grey eye.

"Fast! Why man alive we live on the fat of the land," said Paul. "As for prayer—well, I have never forgotten my 'Now I lay me.'"

"That much to your credit," said Kornell. "So you have taken vows never to marry—never to fall in love?"

"That we have."

"How about the fellow you call Brother Stephen?"

"He stands pat by the order, and will never go back on his vows. He was the first to take the oath."

"And the first to break it."

"Eh?"

"I think we had better go back to the subject

that brought me in to see you. I suppose that matter will have to be waived aside."

"Not at all, I can help you out just the same, Kornell, for I am a probate judge."

"Then the sooner it is settled the better. Mind you, I expect to meet with some difficulty, but I fully realize that it is the only way out of this affair." He rose and walked to the door. "I shall inform you as to my success or failure."

Kornell left the young judge and walked with a firm step down the hall and stopped before the lady's door and rapped. The lady answered his knock, then joined him in the hall.

"We will take a long walk this rainy forenoon, in this delightful hall. How was your breakfast?"

"Very nice, indeed. I relished every mouthful, and now I am ready for a long tramp." She fell into step with him, then asked: "Can't we go up to the top of the mountain?"

"Not if the walk is to be taken in the hall."

"I meant that we should take it out-of-doors, of course. I am not afraid of rain, and I should take delight in climbing up there."

Howard Kornell looked into her face. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes shone bright; he knew that she would be equal to the occasion.

"Haven't you had enough of long tramps in the rain?"

"It would help to pass away the time if we went. Besides, the mountain-side is full of beauty. The laurel is beyond description; it forms a veritable carpet, with its pink and purple blossoms."

"I feel that you wish more to disprove my assertions than to find pleasure or see beauty in climbing this mountain."

"No, I believe what you told me about the valley being filled with water. But seriously, what do you suppose we would see if we went to the top of the mountain?"

"Probably what the bear saw."

"And that?"

"Was the other side of the mountain."

The lady looked up quickly, but his face was perfectly calm.

"You are droll," she said.

"I don't feel a bit droll. Since last night, my brain hasn't known an instant's rest, for it has been pressed with a very weighty matter."

"Foreign matter pressing the brain usually proves fatal."

It was his turn to look quickly at her, but her face was very sober and she looked straight ahead, and spied the German letters S. M. R. set in the stained glass transom above the front door.

"I suppose those letters stand for 'Saint Michael's' or 'Saint Matthew's Retreat?'"

"'Single Man's Retreat,' would be more to the point," he answered.

"I know that a Brotherhood is composed of single men."

"Yes, but this is different."

"How different?"

"This is not a religious order."

She looked up startled: "Not religious! Then there is a mystery?" The pink flush left her cheeks. "Are they a—a band of robbers, disguised as Monks? You must know. Tell me what you have found out, for I cannot stand this suspense a moment longer."

"No, they are not robbers, but very respectable business men. They come up here and live this life for the oddity of it and to have a thorough rest from the cares, both business and social."

"That, then, is what that fellow wanted to explain to me, and I wouldn't listen because I thought he belonged to a holy order. Oh! I'd give all I possess if I could only get away from here."

"But we cannot get away for at least a week or ten days."

"What shall we do?" She clasped her hands in a vice-like grip.

"I have thought of every possible way of escape, but I am balked at every turn. As for myself, I don't care, but your welfare must and shall be considered, now that I have made sure that we are prisoners for a while. Let me get a chair for you, then I will tell you what I think should be done." He started for his room, but she detained him.

"No, don't get a chair; I could not sit quietly for a second. Let us walk."

Together they paced the length of the hall, then Kornell said:

"I know it is hard for a girl to place confidence in a stranger. I shouldn't advise it in every instance. But as our case is a trifle out of the ordinary I hope you can bring yourself to trust my honesty in the matter I am about to lay before you. First of all, do you believe me to be a man of honor?" He looked into her eyes. She answered:

"Indeed, I do. Your conduct toward me through all our mishaps proves that."

"Again. Do you believe me when I tell you that I have no one nearer and dearer to me than my mother and sister, and that I have a perfect right to say all of this to you?"

"Yes, I know your—I am sure you speak the truth," she corrected hastily.

"If my sister were in your place and a good

upright man wished to do for her that which I wish to do for you, I should honor him greatly. You are here, the only woman among a dozen men; they are worldly fellows and when they find out whom we are they will have a great deal to say—should they feel so inclined—when they return to their homes. I want to avoid this and offer you as a protection my name. Will you accept it upon so short an acquaintance? Remember it is for your future welfare that I do this. Think the matter over seriously. You will see that it must be as I wish.”

The girl looked at him wonderingly. She was unable to comprehend his meaning for she seemed stunned for the moment. She raised her dark eyes, and searched his face intently.

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“That we be married immediately.”

“Married!” she cried out. Then a faint smile passed over her pallid face, for a happy thought came to her.

“Why, we cannot be married, for these men are not priests.”

“No, but there is a probate judge among them, and he can perform the ceremony.”

“But that would be a civil ceremony.”

“Which I feel would be as binding and hold as good as a religious ceremony.”

“Either civil or religious, in this case, it would not be a true marriage.”

“Why not?” He was looking at her intently.

“There must be true, undivided love in the heart of each in order that a marriage be a true one. You know that,” she finished, meeting his eyes steadily.

“Yes, I know. But we will forget that there is a lack of sentiment in the affair, and think only of what must be done. In this case, it is a man doing his duty by protecting a woman's honor. I am sure you see it all clearly.”

“You are kind—wonderfully kind—to take my welfare so to heart. But I cannot accept your generous offer.”

“Think of your career.”

“My career!” she exclaimed, looking up with a startled expression. “You—.”

“Yes, I know most women have mapped out a career for themselves. You impressed me as being one of the talented sort. I have weighed well all sides of the affair, and I know I have decided for the best. It is no more than any man, possessing a true sense of honor would do. Think over clearly and carefully what I have proposed, then give me your answer.”

White and trembling, she kept pace with Kornell back and forth in the hall. He began to wonder when she would speak or whether she

were past doing so. He looked at her white face and saw she was going through a terrible struggle. But he knew that she was of strong mind and clear thought, and that her sense of the fitness of things would bring her to his way of thinking.

Finally she spoke.

“Oh! was ever a girl in such a plight?”

“I am sorry, honestly and heartily sorry for you.” He placed her hand back on his arm and held it there with a firm pressure. “Have you reached a decision?” he asked very kindly.

One long fluttering breath, then she answered:

“On two conditions only will I consent to—to what you wish.”

“And those conditions?” he asked.

“Are these: That while we are here, you will treat me as though I were indeed your sister, and when we leave here we shall each go our separate ways. And if we should chance to meet later it must be as though we never had met before. For the world must never know.”

“All shall be as you wish. I only ask you to take my name and give me the right to protect you while it shall be necessary for us to remain here. As for the future, we will let that take care of itself. Now let us have it over with at once. The sooner the better. Shall it be so?”

“But it seems to me that we could get out of

here if we made a stirring effort. You see I do not want to give in to this unless it is absolutely necessary. Don't you think in another day or two we could leave here? It seems to be brightening a little. Perhaps those clouds will disappear and the sun will show his face and dry things up so that we can make our escape."

"It will take several days of warm sunshine to enable us to get away from here. You must listen to reason and do as I wish."

"Very well, as you think best," answered the girl passing her hand wearily across her eyes.

Howard Kornell paused and faced her, and kindly said:

"Now you must keep up your bravery. Remember, this will give you the right to come to me with all your perplexities. One or two questions I must ask you; they are very personal ones, and I stand in no little awe about asking them. You know the judge will have to make out a special license and he must know your age and name. Tell me, please, how old you are."

"Twenty-four," unfalteringly.

"And now your name."

A flush overspread her face, for he looked deep into her eyes as if to challenge her. But she mustered up courage and answered:

"Beatrice J—Jones." Instantly she looked

away from him, for she had caught an amused twinkle in his eye. "Why do you smile?"

"The name, that is the latter part of it, doesn't seem to suit you."

"Why not? Isn't Jones a good enough name?"

"Yes, of course. It has got to be a good name. Why, bless you, there are thousands of people in this old world of ours bearing that name. It is one of the four great pillars. But I own I was a little disappointed, for I have always had an odd fancy that people's names suited their bearer, and Jones doesn't strike me as suiting you worth a cent."

"Well, I am a descendant of Paul Jones." She dared to look into his face. He wore a broad smile, which hurt her immeasurably.

"Sir!" she said vehemently. "This is no time to laugh. It may all seem funny to you, but to me it is a very serious matter."

"Pardon me, Miss Jones—it really seems good to know of some name by which I may address you, whether it be Smith, Jones, Robinson or Brown. At any rate you have been a *jewel* through all this odd adventure and excitement; do pardon me for smiling and seeming to be rude, but the thought struck me that Paul Jones died an old bachelor.

Beatrice looked up at him with an amused smile and asked:

“Did I say a descendant of Paul Jones? I meant, of one of his relatives.”

“We will let that go as settled then. Now I will take you back to your room, and will come for you when we are ready. As a parting word of cheer, remember this: That all shall be as you wish.”

Kornell stood aside and watched Beatrice enter her room and close the door, then he turned and went to the judge's room.

CHAPTER IV

A BINDING KNOT

HOWARD KORNELL made final arrangements with the judge for the ceremony, then went back to Beatrice's room. The door stood ajar. Kornell rapped, called to her, but no answer came. He pushed the door wide open and looked into the room; the girl had gone. With a horrible fear rushing upon him, he looked about, and hurried down the hall to the massive front door. He was afraid that she had attempted to make her escape.

The heavy door swung back and Kornell hastened into the vestibule. He was not prepared for the sight that met his eyes.

Beatrice was leaning against the wall, close to the archway, her hands tightly clasping the edge of the framework, and her head bent forward and resting on her arms, hiding her face, on which was written the pangs of suffering. She was a pitiable sight to look upon. Kornell stepped up to her and spoke her name, but she remained rigid and did not appear to have heard him. He placed his strong hand over her cold, stiff fingers and in a deep, kind voice said:

“We are ready now.”

Still Beatrice did not move.

“Won't you look up?” he asked. “This won't be nearly so hard as you think, and the sooner we have everything settled the better. Come,” gently, but commandingly, “The judge is waiting for us.”

A shudder passed over the form of the girl; she raised her head and slowly turned her pallid face toward him. Kornell gave a slight start, when he saw this evidence of agony.

“Great God!” he said reverently, “how you are suffering,” and his own face paled. “I wish for your sake there were some other way out of this. But as there is none, can't you see that this is for the best? That it must be? You have been the bravest of women all through our short but adventurous acquaintance. You are not going to waver now, are you?”

Only a low moan from the wretched girl answered this. With a gentle touch, Kornell unclasped the stiff fingers that gripped the framework of the archway and held them firmly within his hands, compelling her to look up into his eyes.

“I wish,” he said, “that you knew how it hurts me to have you take this so to heart. I fear that you think I am taking undue advantage of your situation here. But I swear to you most solemnly that I have but one thought, and that is to do for you what is right and honorable. Beatrice—

pardon me for addressing you thus, but give me that privilege, will you? It seems less formal, considering the step we are about to take. After a little I shall want you to call me by a name." He looked kindly and smiling upon her. She tried to answer, but her lips would not form the words. Kornell continued: "A little while ago you assured me that you trusted me; that you knew that I had a perfect right to take this step, and that I am doing all this for your welfare alone. Now prove to me that trust and come with me without another moment's delay."

Beatrice stepped back from Kornell and drawing her hands from his, said falteringly:

"I am going in there with you—. I have made up my mind to that, for I fully appreciate your honorable act. I thought I knew the world and its ways, but I find that this phase of it has struck me forcibly for the first time. No matter how innocent a person may be, the world as a whole believes the worst.

"I have been wondering how many men would have done as you have in this matter; thrown aside sentiment, personal feeling, and dismissed the idea that friends and relatives might censure you, merely to protect an utter stranger. And the only way I can prove my gratitude is to go through with the ceremony. If in your estimation, and that of these men, it is binding enough

to avert any hint at a scandal, I consent. But before we go in there, let me say once more, that you shall be as free as the wind and I shall consider myself the same, for to me this ceremony is not binding; I do not feel that it is a holy union; therefore, we cannot be as man and—wife.”

“That, then,” said Kornell, “is the cause of your hesitancy. Your proud, sensitive nature has been shocked. How mightily sorry I feel about it. But, listen, I bow most humbly and respectfully to your decree, and you shall have no fault to find with me. You already know why I am doing this. To me this ceremony will be binding, but you need not think of that, for I shall keep my place. When a man has lived to reach my age, he generally knows whether or not he is willing to give up his freedom. I do not believe that you can ever forget this episode. You cannot close your eyes and blot it out entirely. It is going to come to you occasionally, and each time it is going to leave a greater impression upon you, and perhaps—who knows what the future may hold for us. This affair seems cold and unnatural, I know. We all have dreams of a beautiful romance to come some time in our lives, when the heart of one person is filled with pure, warm affection for a chosen one. But love to you I do not offer, I shouldn't dare to do so. You would only laugh such a declaration to scorn. But the

hands which I hold out to you are clean, thank God. You need not hesitate to place your pure, white ones in them."

Beatrice looked at the strong hands Kornell extended toward her, then confidently placed her own in them, and with a very winning smile said:

"I hardly believe that in the kindness of your heart, you have stopped to consider what you are doing, in taking this step. I am a total stranger to you; how do you know that I am worthy this great sacrifice on your part?"

"'Tis true," answered Kornell, "that we never met until yesterday, but when a man looks into the face and a pair of eyes which reflect thoughts of a beautiful mind and a pure heart, he knows that he is in the company of a noble woman, worthy any act of kindness he may tender her. But believe me, I am making no sacrifice." He looked smilingly into her eyes. "I think we thoroughly understand each other. Now we will go and have the seal put on this compact." He placed her hand on his arm and started toward the door, but Beatrice hung back and looked down at her gown.

"Why do you hesitate?" asked Kornell.

Beatrice raised her dark blue eyes and looked at him. He thought the tears were very near the surface; and her voice trembled slightly as she answered:

“The thought just came to me that my gown is hardly a proper one for the occasion. I am arrayed in a Monk’s brown cassock.”

“You are no worse off than I am. I don’t know but what I am a little elated at the idea that you cannot crow over me as far as finery is concerned,” he laughed softly.

“But that cassock becomes you immensely.”

“I could easily return the compliment. Now we are ready, aren’t we?” he said, starting once more toward the door. He led her through the hall and on into the judge’s room, where several of the Brothers as witnesses were awaiting them.

The Brothers rose when Howard Kornell and Beatrice entered. The judge met them in the center of the room, and led them to the low, massive table whereon lay books and magazines, then he stepped around to the other side and in a full, deep voice impressively repeated the marriage ceremony. When he had finished, the Brothers circled about them and tendered their congratulations. Kornell took it all calmly, and he noticed that Beatrice was trying to do likewise, but her face had become pitiably white, and once she passed her trembling hand across her eyes, as though to close out all that had just taken place. Compassion for the girl filled Kornell’s heart. He led her quickly from the room and out to the vestibule. He waited some moments for her to

regain composure. When he saw the color returning to her cheeks and her head lifted up in its usual proud way, he drew from an inner breast pocket of his cassock a bit of folded white paper and said:

“Are you not the least bit curious to know your new name?”

“No, I think not. I have taken it on trust with all the rest.” She looked way off to the hazy distance.

Kornell stepped quite close to her, and unfolded the bit of paper. When Beatrice saw this, she took a step backward, the color again receded from her cheeks and her eyes took on a frightened look. Somehow that trifling piece of paper struck terror to her heart. A weakness overcame her and her limbs began to tremble, and nearly refused to bear her weight. She had fought against the idea that this marriage should be a binding one. What if that piece of parchment bore mute evidence against such a thought? Her lips could hardly frame the question.

“What is that paper—why do you bring it to me?”

“Beatrice, you know what it is. You know that it is the certificate of our marriage, and that I must give it into your keeping. *Never* lose it. Before I give it to you, however, I want you to look at it, please, for it is time you found out your

new name." He held the unfolded sheet of paper before her but placed a finger over his own name. "Beatrice, will you look at this certificate?" There was a faint ring of entreaty in his voice; she raised her eyes to the paper. The certificate had been beautifully written out, but the words were all jumbled together before her with the exception of her name; that stood out in bold, clear black letters, *Beatrice Jewell*. She stood as though rooted to the spot for a moment, then turned her eyes, wide with astonishment, upon him, asking falteringly:

"You—you knew me, then?"

"Yes, I knew you the instant I saw you, upon entering the car yesterday afternoon. Now, will you look at my name?"

"No, take away that paper. I have no need to look upon it."

"Why not?"

"I know your name."

"Yes, you know that it is Howard, for the judge told you that. The rest is what I want you to know."

"I know that, too."

"Have you known all along?"

"I have. I saw you on the platform at the depot before you entered the train yesterday. I never before saw brother and sister look so much alike as do you and Ethel."

"Then I am—" he wanted to hear her speak his name.

"Howard Kornell," she answered.

"Then if you recognized me, why didn't you make some sign? Why did you wish to keep me ignorant of that?"

"Because I thought you did not recognize *me* and I have always tried not to—."

"Not to meet me?"

"Yes. I never wanted to meet you. I had made a final resolve to that effect."

"Why did you not want to meet me?"

"I had very great reasons."

"What were they?" His voice had a ring of sternness in it.

"Do you insist upon an answer?" smiling into his eyes.

"I do. Please answer at once."

Beatrice turned away from his beaming eyes and answered:

"Perhaps you are not aware of the fact that your mother and sister turned matchmakers in our behalf?"

Kornell laughed heartily.

"They thought that you and I were entirely suited to each other, and endeavored for years to bring about a meeting, but you successfully frustrated each attempt. Knowing that you and Ethel were such inseparable friends, I have often

wondered what kept you from coming to our home, when you knew there was a probability of meeting me. You were not afraid of me, were you?"

"Oh, no! but even though I dearly love your mother and sister, I could not let them dispose of my hand in that manner, were you twice their son and brother."

"But fate stole a march on them, didn't it, and gave me that privilege?" He gathered her hands into his own and held them closely. "Now, I suppose you wonder how I came to recognize you so readily? If a certain miniature artist, who has won great fame in New York in the last year, would stop to reflect for a moment, she would remember that she painted a charming miniature of herself and presented it to my sister just before the close of their seminary days."

"And you saw that? Ethel promised me faithfully she would never show it to you."

"She didn't. I saw it by accident. I asked her whose picture it was and she told me."

"I wonder where that miniature can be. Ethel told me that she had misplaced it, and she has searched the house from end to end and is unable to find it. Have you any idea where it could be?"

"Shall we go in now?" asked Kornell, seemingly in a hurry to dismiss the subject of the miniature. "You have stood out here in this chill air

too long. The first thing I know I will have a sick one to care for. Dinner will soon be ready. The Brothers have prepared a feast in our honor. You will gratify them by dining with us, will you not?"

"Yes, I will go with you. I am quite anxious to see them all."

"I am greatly pleased to think you will do this. Now, I will take you back to your room, and when the feast is spread, I will come for you."

Slowly they went the length of the hall. The color had returned to the girl's cheeks and a smile flitted across her face. Kornell felt that she was regaining her cheerful spirits. When they reached her door, she paused and said as she drew her hand from his arm, "What a strange adventure this has been. I cannot help but wonder how it will all end."

"We can't tell that now. But I feel sure it will end right, for this was to have been; we cannot get away from that, therefore, it must end well." He bowed smilingly to her, then went to his own room.

CHAPTER V

A MOUNTAIN CLIMB

THE bridal feast, as the Brothers termed it, was a decided success. Beatrice was seated at the head of the table as honorary guest. She was smiling and brilliant in conversation, forgetting for the time being her peculiar situation. Kornell sat at her right and the judge occupied a seat at the left. The Brothers, one and all, strove to make the hour a pleasant one. When the meal was finished, they rose and tendered to the one woman in their midst a toast. Beatrice responded gracefully, but a pink flush suffused her face, when she heard herself addressed as Mrs. Kornell. After this, she felt more at ease at the "Retreat."

The small library, with its goodly store of books and magazines, was tendered her as a place to pass the time during the day. After the supper-hour each evening she walked with Kornell, back and forth in the hall, for an hour or more, then she would bid him "good-night," and lock herself securely in her room.

Thus the days passed while they were in their prison house. After a little the sun showed his face and his genial smile warmed the rocks, dried

up the wet places, and sent a breath of spring along the mountain-side.

The second Sabbath of their sojourn at the "Retreat" dawned beautifully bright, the air was quite warm and laden with the breath of the laurel.

Directly after dinner Howard Kornell challenged Beatrice to a tramp to the crest of the mountain. She accepted and they started away joyfully on their trip.

Kornell helped her over the difficult places, although she preferred to pick her way unaided. Their conversation was on general subjects—never of a personal nature. True to his promise, Kornell had kept his place, and never by word or look treated her other than a loved sister.

Their tramp up the mountain-side was an enjoyable one. When they reached the summit they stood quietly and looked at the magnificent panorama stretched out before them. A deep, full breath escaped the girl's lips; Kornell heard it and looked quickly into her face. Instantly he realized that although her body was present, her mind was far away. He thought to bring it back, and broke the silence:

"What a beautiful world this is."

"Glorious," she answered, with the far-away look still in her eyes.

"But I mean it."

"So do I."

"Beatrice, will you take your eyes off that point you have fixed in the far distance, the dickens knows where, and look at me?"

Her eyes never wavered, but a smile wreathed her full red lips, as she asked:

"Why do you want me to look at you?"

"Because I feel sure you do not really know what sort of a looking man I am. I don't believe you have looked at me twice since we have been in prison."

"I don't think that I shall ever quite forget how you look."

"Then I have made a slight impression?" Quickly he stepped before her. "Pardon me, but I fear that unless I cut off that current of magnetism, you will fare as did Lot's wife. Salt is all right in its way, but it is decidedly out of the way up here on this mountain crest."

For the first time he heard her silvery laugh ring out. She raised her eyes to meet his and said:

"I was deep in thought. This is the first time I have been able to get away from here since our imprisonment."

"Don't go again until I can go with you. Please keep your thoughts here. It's mighty lonely when one is left to himself."

"I didn't mean to be rude. Kindly forgive me."

“You are fully forgiven. Now to cheer you up a bit, I am going to tell you why I brought you here. Do you see that small ridge running into the submerged valley, off there to the west?”

“Yes, I see it; that is, a very small part of a ridge.”

“Well,” said Kornell slowly. “That ridge will soon be above water, and we will be able to make our way over it and get to that village that lies off there to the south.”

“But when? That water is an eternity in lowering. When will it be low enough to allow us to pass over?”

“In a few we—”

“Weeks! exclaimed Beatrice, excitedly. “You don’t mean to tell me that we are compelled to remain here for weeks to come?”

“Do you dislike being here with me so very much?” looking into her worried face. She encountered a look in his eyes that caused her to turn away quickly, but he saw the flush spread from her cheek to the tip of her dainty ear.

“I should be at home,” she said, ignoring his question. “I have several important engagements for next week and the week following. And I know Cousin Emily is wild with worry about me. She has had no word from me for nearly two weeks. We have been here ten days, and if there are *weeks* to follow—I shall attempt to swim

across that river. It is not so wild as it was and not nearly so high."

"We are going to wait for the water to lower from that ridge," said Kornell calmly and forcibly. "Be patient, and I shall get you away from here as soon as I possibly can. We are in hopes that by the last of this week we may be able to make our way along the ridge, and get to the village yonder."

Beatrice turned about with a beaming face, saying joyfully;

"Why didn't you say days instead of weeks? I believe I can wait patiently for the end of the week. But how you did frighten me. Why did you do it?"

"I wanted to hear what you would say. Now that you know that release is near at hand, you feel happier, don't you?"

"I can hardly believe what you have told me is true. We have been here ages, it seems."

"Shall we tramp back to the house? We'll spend the rest of the afternoon in that cozy little library."

"I am ready to start this instant, Mr. Kornell." She turned to leave, but he grasped her hand and detained her.

"Beatrice, unless you cease calling me Mr. Kornell, I shall address you as Mrs. Kornell, just as sure as the sun shines above us."

“Oh! no, no!” she shrank away from him. “Please do not. I’ll be very careful not to speak the name again.”

“But, I am sure, you know what I should like to have you call me.”

“Please do not ask it of me. Remember our short acquaintance.”

“But you have known of me for years. And now,” he said with a meaning look in his eyes, “we are as one.”

Beatrice tried to draw her hand away, but he held it tightly.

“Why do you allude to—to that?” she asked, lowering her eyes before his steady gaze.

“Because I do not want you to forget it, *ever!* What have you done with the certificate, Beatrice. You have it safe, have you not?”

“It—it is safe.”

Kornell did not like her indifferent attitude, his face became stern. “Beatrice, what have you done with it? Have you dared to destroy that certificate? For if you have I shall have another one filled out, and take care of it myself. To me this is a very serious matter.”

“You will not have to get another, for I have this one safe and sound.” She looked at him with a mocking little twinkle in her blue eyes.

Kornell reached for her other hand, and holding them firmly within his, fairly beamed upon

her. "Why didn't you tell me at once that you had that paper safe?"

"I wanted to hear what you would have to say."

"You rogue," he said, raising her hands to his lips and pressing a caress on the back of each. Beatrice blushed painfully and quickly drew her hands from his.

They left the crest of the mountain and picked their way down toward the "Retreat." At first they were silent, not even glancing at each other, then the shyness, caused by Howard Kornell's first caress, partially wore away and Beatrice essayed to converse with him.

When they reached the retreat they went to the cozy library. Kornell drew a large, comfortable chair to the side of the couch, placed Beatrice in it, then he picked up a magazine and threw himself rather wearily upon the couch. Beatrice could look squarely into his face. She watched him closely for a moment. He searched the pages of the periodical; having found the desired article, he placed the magazine in her hands, saying:

"Read that to me, please, and I shall consider it a great favor."

Beatrice looked at the title, then glanced over the succeeding pages.

"But this is a love story."

"I know it. Read it, please."

Beatrice looked at him quickly. He was lying

on his back, stretched full length, with eyes closed and hands pressed beneath his head.

"You are tired?" asked Beatrice. She had noticed for two or three days past that a weariness was growing about his eyes. He was either deep in thought or did not choose to answer. She asked again, "Are you tired?"

"A trifle. Please read."

He was firm in the resolve that she should read to him, so she took kindly to her task. Her voice, though low, was clear, musical and very soothing to the weary man. His eyes remained closed, and she read on for nearly half an hour. Suddenly she ceased reading. Silence ensued for several minutes, then Kornell spoke:

"That ended rather abruptly and altogether at the wrong place."

"But that wasn't the end."

"Then we will hear the rest."

"It's dreadfully silly."

"It can't be. I know the author of that story and he is a very sensible fellow."

"Still, he could write silly stuff."

"Do you call the outpouring of a full heart silly stuff?"

"It sounds so when you read it to—aloud. Of course, when people read such things to themselves they don't seem that way."

“It didn't seem at all silly to me. That man has a wonderful gift for love making on paper.”

“There is a reason for his pouring his heart out on paper.”

“Why?” asked Kornell, opening his eyes and looking at her.

“You have met his wife, surely?”

“Yes; I know her well, and think her a very charming woman.”

“Charming!”

“Why, yes. Don't you agree with me?” Kornell had again closed his eyes and his face was perfectly calm.

“No, I do not agree with you. In fact I know that you do not mean what you say when you call her charming, for to be charming, one must be passably good looking, and she—Oh! I never before saw, nor have I since seen, so frightfully homely a woman. I do not wonder R—— locks himself in his study when his heart gets full to overflowing and pours out his feelings to an imaginary sweetheart. For a man filled with beautiful romance cannot sing love sonatas to one so far removed from his ideal. That is the reason he makes such a success with his love stories, for he writes of what he feels is lacking in his own life, and for which his whole soul is longing with a passion that is past understanding.”

“But he must have loved her, else why did he marry her?”

Beatrice flushed and looked at Kornell. His eyes were still closed and his face remained passive.

“He, like many another, chose his life companion before the awakening of his soul.”

“Had he waited—?”

“He would have found and married his ideal.”

“Then you would advise a man to wait until he was thirty or thirty-five before he chose a wife?”

“Until he was twenty-five, at least.”

“As I am thirty-six, you will no doubt give me credit for having known what I was about when—”

“I will finish reading this romance,” broke in Beatrice, “just to see how it will end. Try to fall asleep while I am reading.”

Kornell drew his hands from beneath his dark head, interlaced his fingers and pressed them across his eyes. Soon his regular breathing caused Beatrice to feel that he was sleeping, and lest she wake him by stopping too suddenly, she lowered her tones gradually and finally ceased reading, her voice trailing off in a whisper. She dropped the book to her lap, then leaned her head against the cushioned back of the chair and breathed deeply. Long and earnestly Beatrice looked at the man lying before her, whose broad

chest rose and fell at regular intervals. A mere suggestion of a smile lurked about the corners of his firm but pleasant mouth, and the heavy mass of dark brown hair fell back from the broad, white forehead, which bespoke high intelligence. Beatrice knew that the carefully groomed hands which lay across his eyes were strong, helpful ones, and would, she felt, be very tender toward the woman who could fully and unreservedly give herself into their keeping. She conjured up all sorts of pictures with the man lying before her as the central figure; but the woman, a sort of a filmy being, who basked in the light of his devotion, was other than herself, and she found not a pang of jealousy in her whole being.

Thus nearly a half hour passed away, when suddenly Kornell startled Beatrice by saying:

“Well, what is your estimate of the man?” He drew his hands from across his eyes, slipped them under his head and looked at her openly.

“I thought,” she looked away quickly, and a deep blush mantled her cheeks, “I thought you were sleeping,” evading his question.

“I will be honest and tell the truth. I haven't closed my eyes for an instant.”

“Then you—”

“I knew you were watching me. I felt the magnetism. What were your thoughts?”

Beatrice knew now that he had been watching

her through a tiny crack between his fingers. She felt exceedingly foolish and wished she were anywhere else upon earth than just there.

“I do not believe my thoughts would be considered worth very much,” she replied. “I was dreaming wake-dreams, sort of filmy affairs, which passed before me without clear outlines and which I tried to put into some semblance of reality.”

“You paint mental pictures, too, do you? I confess that I have drawn a few while I lay here, but they were very clear and seem quite real. I am going to try and bring them into life.” He arose and walked to the window, but returned immediately and sat upon the couch near Beatrice, so near that she felt his warm breath caress her flushed cheek.

“May I tell you about those pictures?” he continued. “They might make a difference.”

“No, please do not tell me about them. Let us talk of other things.”

“I think perhaps it were just as well to change the subject, for here comes Brother Stephen. That reminds me. I still have that account to settle with him. I wonder whether he prefers pistols or swords?”

“He shall have no choice to make, for I shall not allow any affair of that sort to take place.

If you want to keep my good will do nothing more about that fellow's foolish speech."

"I want your good will above all things, so I suppose I shall have to give up the pleasure I anticipated in tanning that fellow's hide."

Brother Stephen tapped lightly on the door casing, and announced the Sabbath evening meal.

CHAPTER VI

FAREWELL TO THE BROTHERHOOD

THE following Thursday morning dawned bright and clear, giving promise of a beautiful day. Very early a column of smoke ascended from the broad chimney of the "Retreat," and soon the appetizing odor of coffee and fried bacon stole through the building. The breakfast was served long before the usual hour, for Howard Kornell and Beatrice were to leave for the little town of W——, and the tramp over the mountain and across the valley would be long and tiresome.

At seven o'clock the party, consisting of Howard Kornell, Brother Paul and Beatrice, left the "Retreat" and started on their journey over the mountain.

Kornell wore a suit of grey tweeds, belonging to Brother Paul; the latter gentleman was attired in black, but Beatrice, through necessity, was gowned in the brown cassock.

The men were very solicitous concerning Beatrice and helped or lifted her, as the case required, over the rough places. Although the journey was tedious, the girl's steps never lagged. She easily kept pace with her companions, for this ordeal meant freedom, and she would have under-

gone greater hardships than this to be out in the great wide world again.

At nine o'clock they started their tramp across the valley. The ground was wet and in many places pools of muddy water were to be seen. It was not many minutes until Beatrice's feet were soaked, but she went on unmindful of their condition. The men were better protected, as they wore the high-top boots.

As the trio were about to leave the valley, they encountered a strip of deep mud which extended as far as they could see in both directions and was about thirty feet across.

The travelers came to an abrupt standstill. Kornell was the first to recover from this shock.

"This is an interesting state of affairs. All the mud in the universe seems to have collected in this one place." He turned and looked about. "Not a plank or a stone one might use in passing over. A tree couldn't have conveniently fallen across there to help us out. What are we to do?" He looked from Beatrice to Brother Paul. As no answer, but looks of disgust and disappointment came to his query, he turned about and gazed at the strip of mud.

Beatrice stepped to his side and timidly placed a hand on his arm and said:

"If you and Brother Paul are not afraid to cross over, I am not. I dare attempt it if you do."

Kornell looked into her eager face.

"We dare attempt it, but you shall not walk across. Here, Brother Paul," he turned to the man who stood silently behind them, "we will carry the lady." He directed Paul to cross hands with him and form a seat.

"Beatrice, we will carry you across. Be seated, please."

"I should prefer to walk."

"That is entirely out of the question. Be seated." He looked stern. She had no other choice but to do his bidding.

They bent low and when Beatrice was seated upon their hands, they straightened up and raised her clear off the ground. She looked at Paul then at Kornell. The ridiculous picture she knew she presented caused her to banish sober thoughts and her silvery laughter rang out. Kornell assumed surprise—even disgust—at her merriment.

"What can you see to laugh at?" he asked.

"The ridiculous position I occupy."

"The position you occupy is far better than plowing through this mud."

Their progress was slow, for their burden was not a light one and they sank ankle-deep into the mud.

When Kornell and Paul reached solid ground, they lowered Beatrice to her feet and the trio soon found the road leading to W——.

Another hour's steady walk brought them in sight of the town. They hurried on and sought out the only hotel the place afforded.

Beatrice's queer garb occasioned not a few rude stares as she walked along the village street. She gladly welcomed the sheltering walls of the small hotel. Kornell took her to the sitting room. He found the place warm and stuffy and proceeded immediately to open the windows and lowered the shades to exclude the brilliant sunshine, which streamed across the much worn and faded carpet. Two or three rocking chairs stood about. Howard chose the most comfortable looking one from the number and bade Beatrice be seated.

"I know you are frightfully tired and hungry. I will order a lunch for you, for it will be an hour or more before those people get their dinner ready, and you look very much in need of something to eat."

He left her and found the very obliging landlord who went at his request into the kitchen and ordered a cup of coffee, a sandwich and a doughnut. Kornell carried the lunch to Beatrice.

"This will tide you over until dinner time. Now if you will tell me what you wish to have done, I shall execute your orders at once."

"I have been thinking of what I shall have to purchase, for, of course, I cannot continue my

journey in this array. But I haven't—haven't—a cent." She colored painfully.

"But you know that you can command me to the extent of half of my fortune."

"I shall not need much. I'll be very moderate in my purchasing."

"Suit yourself. Now tell me what you want me to do."

"I do not want to go on the street again in this condition, and I have been thinking that perhaps you would go to some dry goods store and send a lady clerk here to take my order."

"Gladly. But is that all you want me to do?"

"That will be all, I think."

"Very well, you may expect some one up directly."

He left her and inquired of the landlord where he might find the best dry goods store. Mr. Jameson directed him to the only store in town carrying general merchandise, one block from the hotel. Then he and Paul started out on the round of errands.

First they went to the dry goods store, and Howard Kornell asked the clerk who came forward if she would kindly call the proprietor. The salesgirl disappeared through a door in the rear of the building. In a moment she returned followed by a short, thin man, with light hair, watery blue eyes, and an extremely large nose. Kornell

looked down upon him from his superior height, and asked:

“You are the proprietor of this establishment, are you not?”

“Yes, sir; I am.”

“I wish to ask a favor of you. I will explain matters briefly first. We were caught in that flood that swept through here two weeks ago. My wife lost her trunks and the dress she wore was completely ruined. We cannot continue our journey to New York until she has a respectable gown. Now, will you kindly send your clerk up to the hotel and get her order as quickly as possible?”

“I will see to it at once,” said the merchant. He called the clerk forward and directed her to go to the hotel to get the lady’s order.

Kornell and Brother Paul left the store and proceeded to the depot, where they inquired the time of the departure of the next train for Philadelphia. The station agent informed them that it left at three o’clock sharp. Kornell sent two messages to New York—one to Beatrice’s cousin, Emily, stating that Beatrice would arrive home on the following day. The other was to his mother, informing her of his safety and that he was on his way home. He then endeavored to find a suit of clothes for himself, but all to no avail.

The suits were either too small or decidedly the wrong color. He finally gave it up as a bad job.

“Let it go, Kornell,” said Paul. Keep the suit you have on. I give it to you as a souvenir, and may it bring kind thoughts of me.”

“Thank you, Paul. I am forced to accept your generous offer, and don't worry about me ever forgetting you. The little office you performed up there at the 'Retreat' has won a warm place for you in my life.”

“I am mightily glad to hear this from you, Kornell. Now, is there anything more for us to look after?”

“I think not. Perhaps we had best return to the hotel.”

“Yes, I want to bid Mrs. Kornell goodbye. Then I shall start on my return journey, for I wish to reach the 'Retreat' before sundown.”

“Very well; to the hotel it is, then.”

When they entered the little hotel sitting room they found Beatrice very busy. She looked up quickly as they entered and greeted them with a winning smile. Both men noticed that the heavy brown braid which had hung over her shoulder since she had entered the “Retreat” was now deftly dressed low at the back of the head in a large knot and several puffs. She let her work slip from her hands as she rose to greet them.

“You see I have been busy at work.”

“Don't put aside your work for me, Mrs. Kornell. I just came in for one moment to bid you goodbye.”

Beatrice's face turned rosy-red when Paul addressed her thus, but she placed her hand in his.

“I am very glad, Mrs. Kornell, to have had you in our midst—to have had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with you, although it was under such exciting circumstances. And now I must bid you farewell.”

“Goodbye, Brother Paul, and thank you for all your kindness toward me while at the ‘Retreat.’ ”

Paul left the room. Kornell followed, and walked to the outskirts of the village with him, then bade him goodbye, and returned to the hotel.

When he returned to the sitting room, he found Beatrice cutting and snipping away at a silk suit of black and white check.

“You evidently fared better than I did. I see you found a gown,” said Kornell.

“Yes, it was a streak of luck. Happens to fit me nicely, but it is spoiled by this red piping, and I am trying to cut it away. I am not a lover of red.”

“It will take you quite a while. Let me help you.”

“If you will be careful not to cut the gown, you may help me.”

A few moments later he was busy at work on

the gown. He noticed that Beatrice's eyes twinkled with merriment.

"You seem to be amused."

"I am."

"I refuse to work another instant if you make sport of me."

"I would not think of doing that. But may I not smile when I see you employed as you are? For I never could imagine you as—as—."

"Interested in woman and her affairs, eh? You have always thought of me as a confirmed bachelor, with mind for nothing but my numerous coal mines and the wealth derived from them. Please give a man credit for being able to tear away from the sordid things of life and adapting himself to circumstances or helping a very charming woman out of a difficulty." After a moment's thought he continued: "This gown is pretty, but I rather like the cassock best. You will keep it, will you not? I should like the idea of your doing so."

"What should I ever do with it?"

"I might want to see you wear it some time in the future. That robe has made a great impression on me."

"We are not to think of the future."

"But it is a privilege we all have."

To Beatrice's great relief, there came the call for dinner. She accompanied her husband to the dining room. They were seated at a small table

by themselves. The dinner was a tempting one, and was relished exceedingly by the hungry travelers. When the meal was eaten they returned to the sitting room and completed the cutting away of the red piping. A moment later Kornell left her and went to the dry goods store, settled the account there, thence to the depot to purchase the tickets to Philadelphia.

CHAPTER VII

HOMeward BOUND

WHEN Howard Kornell returned to the hotel he found Beatrice awaiting him, gowned in the traveling suit his money had paid for. A feeling of pride and ownership passed over him. But he was very careful not to let his feelings show in his face.

“You are ready for the home trip, are you?” he asked.

“Yes, at last. Oh! it seemed as though this time would never come. I will be the happiest girl on earth when I shall have entered the dear old home. You do not appear so elated, but seem very sober.”

“Because I know what this journey means. The sweet life we led up there at the ‘Retreat’ is at an end, and by your own decree we are to go each our separate ways. I was in hopes that during those days you would learn to think differently of me.”

“My feelings have not changed, save that my estimation of your manliness and honor has been steadily on the rise.” She saw the disappointment come into his face. She turned away wearily.

“I will not press the subject further, do not

fear. It is nearly time for our train. I think we had best go to the depot."

"I wish I might stay over until the next train. I fear we will come across someone who knows us."

"There is hardly any danger of that. At least we will risk it."

They went to the depot and had been there but a few moments when the train came thundering in. They entered the parlor car and made themselves comfortable for the trip to Philadelphia.

At six o'clock Beatrice and Kornell went into the diner for their supper. Up to this time the trip had been uneventful.

Before they were through with the meal, Beatrice was attracted by the watchful gaze of a man across the aisle and two tables back. Then he looked at Kornell, whose back was toward him. Beatrice spoke to Kornell regarding the stranger. "There is a man at one of the tables back of us whom I feel quite sure knows you. What shall we do? I knew it would end this way?"

"Don't worry. I'll see that you are not annoyed."

Almost at that instant the stranger rose from his place at the table, and to Beatrice's horror came toward them, and slapping a familiar hand on her companion's shoulder, exclaimed:

“Kornell, old man, how are you? It is a dickens of a time since I saw you.”

Howard rose to greet him.

“How are you Crawford? This is a surprise.”

“Perhaps I wasn’t surprised to see you, for I heard that you had perished in that flood,” he finished, glancing toward Beatrice.

Kornell hastened to relieve the girl of this embarrassing position. He put a hand on Crawford’s shoulder and gently pushed him toward the door, saying:

“Go into the smoker and I will follow you directly.”

Mr. Crawford left them and Howard returned to the table. When they had finished their supper, they returned to the parlor car. Howard made Beatrice comfortable, gave her two or three of the late magazines, excused himself and sought his friend.

Mr. Crawford was waiting for him. As soon as they were seated, he said:

“Kornell, I always heard that your sister was a beauty, but I had no idea that she was so beautiful. I will tell you candidly, that I have fallen heels over head in love with her, and I want to meet her.”

Kornell looked rather sober.

“See here, my man, not so fast, please. You say you have fallen in love with her?”

"The moment I saw her."

"Then you are doomed to a great disappointment. I shall have to let you in on a little secret. No one knows it aside from the interested parties but myself. You must not lisp a word about it—she is already engaged."

"You don't mean it! Are you telling me the truth?"

"That I am, my man."

"I want to meet her just the same. Will you take me in there?"

"In a moment. I'll send in word that you want to meet her."

Kornell pulled a card from his pocket and wrote this message:

"Beatrice: Tom Crawford wants to meet you. He imagines you are Ethel. Let him think so. If it comes right, call me 'Howard.'"

He rang for the porter and sent the card in to Beatrice. In a few moments they were in her presence.

"Beatrice," said Kornell, "this is my friend Thomas Crawford."

She greeted Crawford charmingly and conversed with both men with an easy manner. Once it was necessary for her to address Kornell by name. She didn't quite know whether he meant it to be so or not. At any rate she was compelled to say 'Howard.' She stumbled slightly over the

name and a rosy flush mounted to her cheeks. Both men noticed her confusion. Crawford thought: "If she can speak her brother's name so charmingly how would she speak that of a man she loved."

He left them soon after for his destination was the next station.

When they reached Philadelphia, Beatrice plead most earnestly for Kornell to allow her to continue the journey to New York alone. "We are too near home. We must not risk going another mile together."

"You know that I shall not allow you to go from my watchful care. But if you wish me to, I will ride in another coach."

"Or sit at the other end of the car, and don't pay any attention to me."

Howard Kornell reluctantly took himself to a far end of the car, and remained there until they reached New York. Even then, he watched over her until she entered her own home. Then he went to his mother and sister, who were anxiously watching for him. They greeted him joyfully. For days they had mourned him as lost. Felix had given them a graphic account of the flood and efforts to save every passenger on board the train. After getting the very large woman and her babe to the station with the rest of the party, he had returned to the bridge and found

that the farther section of the structure was gone, and Kornell and a lady passenger, whom he tried to save, had disappeared. Therefore, he thought they had perished. And as the days glided into weeks and no word came from Howard, they felt sure that he had lost his life in that wild river. Their joy knew no bounds when they received his telegram, announcing his safety. When the excitement occasioned by his return had subsided he told them briefly of his stay at a mountain home he had been fortunate enough to stumble onto.

“What about the woman, Howard?” asked Ethel. “Felix said you were trying to save a woman.”

“And I did save her.”

“Did she stay at the same mountain home?”

“She did.”

“Suppose you became real well acquainted with her?”

“Enough so, that should I ever meet her again I should know her.”

“Was she nice looking?”

“Beautiful.”

“Howard! have—did you fall in love with her?”

“My sister is not content with being a mere match-maker, but must add that of mother-confessor to her acquirements. And as I am in no mood to confess, I shall take myself off to bed. Good night, little busy-body,” he said, pressing

her face between his hands and kissing her tenderly. "Don't worry any more about the woman." Then he caressed his mother and went to his room for a much needed rest. He had not slept a night through while at the "Retreat," but kept a faithful watch over Beatrice's door till nearly dawn, when he would lie down and sleep until 6:30. The first two nights he paced back and forth along the hall. After that he sat in his room with the door wide open. He spent the long hours reading. And now the man was indeed weary. The luxury of sleeping in his own bed would be a rare treat. He was soon lost in a heavy slumber.

CHAPTER VIII

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA

ON the 14th of April, Beatrice received an invitation from the elder Mrs. Kornell to accompany herself and daughter to the opera.

“There will be just you, Ethel and myself in the party. Come early and dine with us. We want a long visit, for we haven’t seen you since you returned from your trip to Chicago. Do not fail us.”

At 5 o’clock Beatrice arrived at the Kornell home. It seemed strange to go there after all that had taken place. At first she felt ill at ease in the presence of Howard’s mother and sister. But this uneasiness gradually wore away, and by the time they entered their box at the opera she was her usual animated self.

True to her word, Mrs. Kornell invited no other guests.

Beatrice was passionately fond of music. Soon she was lost to her surroundings.

Toward the close of the opera, she became annoyed at some one sitting at her left, who nervously beat a tattoo on his opera glass. Unconsciously she put out her hand and touched that of the man at her side. This had the de-

sired effect. The offender laid aside the glass, folded his arms across his broad chest and watched her intently.

He knew that she was entirely oblivious of his presence there, and that she would not remember having been annoyed by him, she was so enraptured.

When the curtain rang down on the last act, she rose with the rest, and turning to Mrs. Kornell was about to express her delight over the performance when Mrs. Kornell said:

“Beatrice, I want you to meet my son. Howard, this is Miss Jewell.” She watched them closely. To all appearances they were perfect strangers, meeting for the first time.

Beatrice placed her hand in Kornell’s and smiled up into his face. If he held her hand a moment longer than was necessary, it only pleased his mother and sister. For they had planned for years to bring this meeting about?”

Kornell said: “I am very happy to meet you here this evening. It is a pleasure I had not anticipated.”

Beatrice looked at him quickly. He felt that she thought he was telling a falsehood. He determined to set things right at the first possible moment. He released her hand, stepped aside and let the ladies pass, then followed them out of the building and helped them into the carriage.

He placed his mother and Beatrice on the rear seat; he and Ethel occupied the front one facing them. This gave him the opportunity of looking at Beatrice for the light flashed brightly upon her as they passed rapidly along the thoroughfare. She wore a wrap of rare old lace over heavy silk of deep cream and a filmy scarf of the same tone was tied loosely about her head. Kornell thought he never before saw her so beautiful.

He had ordered the coachman to drive directly home. Mrs. Kornell was somewhat surprised when the carriage stopped before her own door.

“Mother,” said Kornell, “I know you intended taking your friend home, but I shall relieve you of that necessity.”

He assisted his mother and sister to alight and accompanied them to the door, then returned to the carriage, seated himself beside Beatrice and ordered the coachman to drive to the Jewell home. He reached over and gathered one of Beatrice's hands into both of his and held it firmly, for it trembled slightly. After a moment, he spoke to her:

“You carried your part beautifully this evening when we met. But, Beatrice, how could you be so deceitful?”

She tried to draw away her hand, but he held it firmly.

“It is I who should bring you to account, for you knew positively that I did not want to meet you before—quite—so soon.”

“I fully understand that. And furthermore I know that you would far rather I were not here. But I want to square myself. I suppose you think that I had a hand in what took place a half hour ago. I swear most solemnly that I had nothing to do with it. It was all mother’s doing. She was bound that we should meet, and planned the little affair to suit herself. She knew that I would get home this evening, for I sent a telegram to her this forenoon to that effect. When I entered my room I found a note lying on my dressing table, stating that I should not fail to join her party before the close of the opera. I am sorry to have to say this about mother, but I am determined that you shall know the truth. Now, what are you going to do about it?”

“I shall have to forgive her, I presume.”

“I wish you would. For she has our welfare at heart. She really believes that we would make an ideal couple. But what hurts me is this: that which she most wishes for has come to pass, and she must not know of it.”

“But it is not as she would have it. She feels as I do about—marriage. Therefore, your mother must be kept in ignorance of what happened. You must, and will in time, I feel sure, see it as I do.

Let us not talk about it. It is very distasteful to me."

Kornell was very anxious to please her, and put away the subject which began to weigh heavier with him as the days slipped by. Beatrice had a knack of drawing him from the land of forbidden joy. He leaned back and listened attentively while she narrated to him the surprise and joy occasioned by her return home after so many days of silence.

"I wonder," said Kornell, "if you had the same questions put to you, that I ran up against?"

"I had to do considerable sparring. It would have amused you no doubt, had you heard it."

They had stopped before the Jewell home.

"Our little visit is at an end, for this time," said Kornell, which meant very plainly that another should follow when he chose, and that he was master of the situation. His very tone and manner bespoke that, and caused Beatrice to feel that the firm foundation she had builded beneath her citadel of defense was trembling under the weight it supported and would ere long give way completely and go crashing to the four winds of defiance. She lifted her head proudly as Howard Kornell helped her from the carriage, and walked majestically beside him to the outer door of her residence. She meant that he should be awed by her bearing, that he should be brought to realize

that she, too, had a will and that he must banish every thought of another meeting.

Howard saw her safely within her home, and as he raised her hand to his lips he looked straight into her eyes. She turned away quickly for the bright glare from the hall lamp showed his face illuminated by a light never before seen there. She drew her hand away, frightened, for she did not fully realize the meaning that flashed from the depths of those dark gray eyes. She felt that he meant to have his way, whether consistent or not. He saw her startled look and hastened to reassure her.

“Please do not be afraid in my presence. You were not, back there at the ‘Retreat.’ Here you have less need to be so. Beatrice”—he lingered a trifle over her name—“Good-night.” He turned and left her; entered his carriage and returned home.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE STUDIO

THE balmy breeze of May-day wafted through the open windows of Beatrice's studio and caught the perfume from a large bouquet of American Beauty roses and lilies of the valley and carried a sweet message to the young artist who sat on a divan under an oriental canopy, caressing the dimpled hand of a wee child. The rare odor from the flowers caused a pink flush to overspread Beatrice's face, as did the blossoms themselves, when they arrived earlier in the day by a special messenger. Just a small white card bearing the initials H. K., written in a masculine hand, accompanied them. Since their arrival Howard Kornell had dwelt more or less in Beatrice's mind. The breeze, perfume and beautiful sunshine had woven a spell about her, and she had slipped from the present and looked away to the future. Lost completely in thought, she was entirely unaware that some one had entered the studio. The intruder stood entranced before the picture that confronted him. The rich oriental draperies of canopy and divan, the many sofa pillows of deep-toned colors formed an ef-

fective surrounding and enhanced the beauty of the woman and child he looked upon.

Beatrice was arrayed in a gown of old rose lace over ivory satin, yellowed with age. The full skirt lay in soft billows about her and the low bodice and short puffed sleeves showed to advantage her plump white neck, shoulders and arms.

She leaned caressingly over the infant clothed in spotless white who lay close beside her on the divan. Suddenly she felt Kornell's presence, and, looking up, beheld him in silent adoration before her. She did not seem surprised, neither was she angry, as he had anticipated, but greeted him with rather a wistful smile. She did not attempt to rise, but Howard took a step or two nearer, and said:

“Pardon me, Beatrice, for having entered your presence unannounced. But I rapped several times and was about to leave, when Mrs. Winter opened the door and bade me enter, for ‘she knew you were in here.’ ”

Beatrice pushed back one or two sofa pillows, and made room for him beside her. For the time being she forgot that he was other than a very dear friend, and was truly glad to see him.

With an air of being perfectly at home, Howard availed himself of the proffered seat and lean-

ing toward her, looked across at the child and asked:

“Where did you find that little one?”

“This wee laddie was brought here by his mother, who is a very dear friend of mine. She begged of me to care for him until she returned. She had received a message stating that her husband had been seriously hurt in an automobile wreck, and was hurried to an hospital—I have forgotten which one, I was so excited. Beth’s nurse-maid was off for the afternoon and she felt she could trust her son to my care and brought him just as I arrived from M—— studio.”

“What were you thinking about so seriously when I came into the room? What did you see in that little fellow’s face?”

“I was thinking of his future; wondering what sort of a man he would be if he grew to manhood.”

“It seems a pity, doesn’t it, that such a pure, beautiful child should grow up to be a great, coarse man? But we will hope that he will be a good fellow.”

“That is what I most fervently wished for. I even prayed that he would become the true, honorable man you have proven to be.”

Unconsciously she had set him up as a standard of par excellence, and a great wave of joy passed

over Kornell when he heard her words of praise, but he modestly said:

“Thank you, Beatrice. It is worth any effort to be such, just to hear those words from you. Now allow me to tell you something.” He looked with beaming eyes upon her. “You are very beautiful today. I shall never forget the picture that confronted me when I came into this room. Arrayed as you are my first thought was that you had stepped from one of those large gilt frames which adorn the walls of our ancestral halls.”

“I shall have to apologize for receiving you in this gown. But I really had no time to change it for one more appropriate. You see I did not expect you. In fact, I expected no one this afternoon.”

“You have no need to apologize, for I think it a very beautiful gown, and an extremely becoming one. But if I mistake not, it was made some decades ago.”

A tender expression came to Beatrice's face as she gathered up a fold of the rich lace skirt and pressed it lovingly between her soft palms, and said in a low sweet voice:

“This was my mother's bridal array. And this is the first time I have worn it. I had always thought that when—if I were to—should I ever marry, it would be my wedding gown also. That

was mother's wish, and to that end this beautiful mass of lace and satin has been guarded and cherished all these years. I would not have thought of donning it, even now, but to please my father. I am posing in it for my portrait. He says I am the image of my mother at the time of her marriage."

"I am glad that I came unexpectedly, else I should have missed seeing you thus. Perhaps—." He rose and walked leisurely about the studio, for he dared not trust himself to say more. He looked intently at the pictures hanging on the walls. He recognized many foreign scenes.

"I see," he said, "that you paint scenery as well as miniatures. You have some very beautiful sunsets here."

"I have a passion for sunsets and I have gone to a great deal of trouble and inconvenience to see a beautiful sunrise. On every trip to Europe I visited M——, in Switzerland, and rise at an unearthly hour to witness old Saul rise majestically over those mountains. And in Italy—Oh! those beautiful varying tints at break of day—you have seen them, I need not describe them to you, they beggar description. To me Italy is the land of dreams. Father and I have a wee place way up on a hillside, about two miles out of C—— overlooking the pretty lake of L——. The terraces are smooth and green and the roses are in per-

petual bloom. It is there that I can dream to my heart's content, dream—pictures, that can never be put on canvas, so extravagant are they.”

Kornell had turned at her first utterance and listened attentively to her. When she had finished he returned to the seat beside her and said:

“Beatrice, we have been soaring for some time. Let us become practical. No doubt you wonder how I could have had the effrontery to come here, knowing that to please you I should stay away.”

“I hadn't thought of it, but now that you mention it, I do marvel at your daring.” She glanced at him roguishly. Kornell laughed softly and took possession of her left hand. He pushed the jewelled rings away from the half-hoop of diamonds which she had loaned him to place on her finger as a wedding ring. He became very sober, and looked into her face. She met his eyes fearlessly, but her cheeks were suffused with blushes. Kornell slipped the rings back to their place and said:

“This may be the last time I shall ever call upon you.” He watched her closely but she gave no hint of surprise. “I have found that I must have a diversion, must get away for a while. I have decided to visit South America. My stay will be of several months' duration, and whether I return alive or not will depend greatly upon the endurance of my constitution. I am going to a fever-

invested district. Rarely, if ever, does a man return alive who goes there from this climate at this time of the year. I have conferred with my lawyer and arranged all my affairs so that if I should fall a victim to the disease, you will, as my wife, control my property."

Beatrice quickly rose from her place beside him and walked half the length of the studio; turned, came back and stood before him, white and angry.

"You have been to a lawyer! You have dared to tell him—!"

Kornell rose, gathered her hands into his against her will, and looked calmly and masterfully into her eyes, saying, with emphasis:

"Beatrice, this is pure nonsense. Calm yourself immediately. I have done nothing to so excite your anger. It is my duty to look after you; that you cannot keep me from doing."

"But you promised me back there at the 'Retreat' that you would tell no man of that event, and now your lawyer knows, soon your mother will know, then *everyone* will know."

"I hope so," Kornell breathed to himself, but aloud he said:

"My lawyer is most solemnly sworn to complete silence. One word from him, and he loses my patronage. That he knows. But he is a man of honor, and I trust him fully. I have employed

him for years, and not once has he betrayed my confidence. Now we will sit down and talk over seriously this affair which seems to be such a bug-bear to you. Be careful not to wake that young fellow there!"

"I wish he were with his mother."

"I thought you adored children."

"I do. But what if he should wake and become cross?"

"We would call Mrs. Winter and intrust him to her keeping. Beatrice—pay attention to me, please—do you still insist upon our present existence?"

"I certainly do." She avoided looking at him.

"Is there no chance of your changing your mind?"

"None whatever."

"You don't think that the time will ever come when you would long for some one to care for you, watch over you and love you?"

"That time will not come. I am 'sufficient unto self.'"

"At the present time, perhaps, but what about the future?"

"We will let the future take care of itself. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'"

"You are so devoid of sentiment that you will never allow love for a man to enter your heart?"

"No not that, for I do dearly love my father

and I have no thought apart from him and my beloved art."

"But you will not always have your father, and your art will in time lose its charm. The day will come when this firm, soft hand will become unsteady, and your pictures will prove a failure. Then, I fear, you will regret having taken so firm a stand for single blessedness, and your heart will cry out in its loneliness."

"I cannot see it as you do. You know what my views are regarding our situation. There must be no sacrifice placed upon the altar of imaginary duty. If you still insist on the matter resting as it is I abide by your will. But I would far rather you look at it as I do and dismiss the whole affair as null and void. As for myself, I shall never bother about it. But you—some day you might find someone whom you cared for. Then you would be glad that you were free."

"But I do not consider that I am free, or that I shall ever be free, while life lasts. To me, that marriage ceremony was binding, and most sacred. I am in duty bound to live true to those bonds."

A strange tremor in his voice caused her to look into his face. He was surprised in turn to find her eyes dimmed with tears. She said brokenly:

"I pray you would do as I wish in this matter, for it would nearly kill me if I were to know that some time in the future I stood as a barrier be-

tween you and happiness. To me, the saddest thing in this world is for a man or a woman who is tied to some one who is not, or never could be, a congenial mate, where there is no affection, simply friendship and a mere tolerance of their presence, then some day—oh! the pity of it—some day they look into the eyes of one whose glance changes this old world into a perfect Eden. If this were to come to you, what would be my portion were I to allow you to win me to your way of thinking, that it is your honorable duty that you are striving to live up to, not that your heart is really in it. I could not accept such a sacrifice, even though I cared for you with my whole soul.”

“Beatrice, you are as hard as flint. Some day you will see the folly of your decision, and will want to rectify it. When that day comes, will you put aside all reserve and send for me? Remember, I shall come to you, even from the very ends of the earth.”

“Because you thought it your duty to do so.”

“No! Duty has nothing to do with it.” His face was white and stern, and it seemed to Beatrice that a fire smoldered in the depths of his gray eyes. “Answer me. Will you send for me, when you find that you want me?”

Simply and unaffectedly she answered:

“Should that day come, I will send word to you. But do not look for it.”

"I fully realize that I need not look for it if you take time to consider. But if you should send me word I shall know that you did it in an unguarded moment. Now I must leave you, for I have overstayed the time allowed for the first call. Bless that little fellow for having the grace to sleep the whole time that I have been here." Kornell looked kindly upon the child. "I had your undivided attention."

"When will you start for South America?" asked Beatrice, ignoring his allusion to the child.

"Tomorrow morning. I will not see you until my return." He clasped her hands, and bending over them, pressed a kiss on the back of each. "Goodbye, Beatrice," he said, looking long and earnestly into her eyes, then unclasped her hands and left her.

When Beatrice realized that Howard had gone, that she was alone in her studio, which a few moments ago was bright and filled with a genial, lovable personality and was now extremely void of charm, she went to the window, and unseen by anyone, watched the tall, broad and erect form of Kornell until he disappeared around a corner, nearly a block further down the avenue.

CHAPTER X

VARIED EMOTIONS

THROUGH the summer months that followed, Beatrice worked unremittingly. If Howard Kornell's handsome face came between her and the task she was intent upon, she brushed her eyes gently and strove to banish the thought of him. Several times she had exchanged visits with his mother and sister. Never once did she ask concerning him, but Mrs. Kornell and Ethel took particular pains to keep her informed regarding his travels.

On the afternoon of September 3rd, Ethel Kornell ran tearfully into Beatrice's studio, and throwing herself into the arms of the young artist, cried out:

"Beatrice, we have just received the most terrible news! I am nearly distracted over it. Howard has been stricken with that dreadful fever, and is being brought home in his private car, attended by two trained nurses and a physician." Ethel dried her eyes and looked wistfully and appealingly at Beatrice. "Why don't you say something, or don't you care?"

"I feel very sorry, but what can I say?"

"I came to you for solace. Can't you give me a word of cheer?"

"Dear, we do not know how ill your brother may be. And until we find out, do not grieve so. He may not be so ill as you imagine."

"Oh! he is very sick, that I know. His physician sent the message, and when a man needs two trained nurses—oho-o—." She broke off into a wailing sob.

"Ethel, calm yourself. This will never do. You must be strong for his sake."

"I wish I were like you." Ethel looked into Beatrice's face. "Why, there isn't a tear in your eyes, and I thought you would sympathize with me."

"One can sympathize with a friend without calling forth tears to demonstrate the fact. My dear, I feel as badly about this as you could possibly wish me to. But I can do nothing to restore your brother's health. He probably wouldn't thank me for even feeling the least bit concerned about his welfare."

"I think he would, for he admires you greatly. He even said that he—."

"Never mind, dear, I do not want to hear what he said."

"Will you be interested to know how he is when he arrives?"

"Yes; I want you to inform me at once."

“Very well, I will send you a message as soon as I possibly can. We expect him tomorrow. Now I must go. I left poor mother in care of aunty while I came out here to tell you about Howard. Goodbye, Beatrice.”

“Goodbye, dear. Don’t forget to let me know at once, for I shall be waiting to hear from you.”

Ethel hastened away, leaving Beatrice in a quandary as to what she had best do regarding the invalid. If he were so dreadfully ill, ought she to go to him and help care for him? Would he be pleased to find her near when he returned to consciousness? This last question caused her to decide quickly. She would not go near him, for he had never spoken one word that would have given her the right to do so. He had given his willingness to proclaim her as his wife before the whole world, but not once had he uttered a word of affection, even given a hint that he cared the least for her other than a highly prized friend. He had been kind and gentle and had hinted at what the future might hold in store for them. But she felt that he did this more out of pity for her than for any sentiment he might cherish in the matter.

The next afternoon shortly after three o’clock Beatrice received a telephone message from Ethel to the effect that Howard had arrived, accompanied by his physician and nurses. He had been

taken at once to the emergency hospital, where everything that money and science could do was being done to save his life. "Of course, we are not allowed to see him," said Ethel. "The nurse told me that his ravings are terrible." She didn't tell the young artist that the nurse had spoken of his talking about a flood, and of someone named Beatrice, but she finished her message by saying: "I will keep you informed as to Howard's condition."

For days the same message came to Beatrice from Ethel, "Howard is no better." This only served to keep Beatrice in an unsettled frame of mind and her work and spirits suffered thereby. Not once, of her own accord, did she seek to gain knowledge of his condition. Her stubborn pride forbade that. No one should know that she had the least interest concerning him. She did not know that Ethel guarded a very deep secret; did not know that the sister watched jealously every look that Howard bestowed upon Beatrice that night at the opera, and felt almost instantly that her brother had lost his heart to the lovely young artist. She had never before seen him look at any woman as he had looked at Beatrice, when she had placed her hand in his at the time of the introduction. Ethel resented Beatrice's cool indifference and decided to punish her. She called Beatrice up as usual on the 15th of the month

and informed her as to Kornell's state of health. "And now," she said, "this is the last time that I shall tell you anything concerning Howard. If you don't care enough about your dearest friend to show more interest regarding the welfare of her only brother, I shall not take the trouble to keep you enlightened as to his condition. You can see that I am angry, and I am justified in being so. That you must admit. Of course, if it should come to the worst I will let you know. Goodbye."

Beatrice went back to her work, but it had lost its charm for her. She knew that she had sorely offended her friend by not seeming more interested in the invalid's welfare. She also knew that she would receive no more daily messages.

The golden September days dragged slowly by and brought forth the last Sabbath of the month. Beatrice had intended to spend a quiet afternoon in the well equipped library of her home, and was cozily seated in a comfortable chair, and seemed day-dreaming rather than reading. Suddenly she was aroused by hurried talking in the hall. A moment later a message was brought to her, and with trembling fingers she broke the seal and read:

"Beatrice: Come to our home at once.

ETHEL."

Beatrice was informed that the Kornell car-

riage was waiting for her. Without a moment's delay she hastily prepared for the ride and was soon being driven rapidly to the Kornell home. Many misgivings assailed her as she rode along. She knew, of course, what to expect when she entered that stately mansion. But had she really done wrong in holding aloof? In her own estimation, no.

Before she realized it, the dreaded moment had come, and the carriage had stopped before the door of Howard's home. She alighted and went up the broad steps. The first thing to confront her was a large bouquet of spotless lilies which reposed in a tall vase at the side of the door. One glance at them and her face became pallid. She forced herself forward and entered the hall. Again she was confronted by flowers, flowers everywhere. For a moment Beatrice was overwhelmed, bewildered with the terrible thought that forced itself into her mind. Then slowly and majestically Ethel came toward her and with tears streaming down her cheeks, said:

"Beatrice, I knew you would come. You could not have refused. Dear, he is in there." Ethel pointed to the library door. "Go in and see him. I want you to."

Beatrice looked at the door, startled. Could she bring herself to go into that room? She felt

that she could not. Ethel was determined that her friend should do her bidding.

“Beatrice, you must go in and see him. It was for no light reason that I sent for you.”

Beatrice walked slowly to the door and placed her hand on the knob. A flood of tenderness swept over her for the man who lay in the next room. Too late, of course. Why couldn't she have felt this for him before? He had given up his freedom to protect her and she had all but laughed to scorn his feelings of sacredness concerning the affair. Perhaps she was more to him than she had really dreamed of, else why had he provided for her future—intrusted his wealth to her care in case of his demise. Then she said:

“Why, oh! why couldn't I have acted differently? Why couldn't I have shown a more sensible side of my nature, then perhaps he would not be lying here in this state? What have I not to answer for?”

One more effort and the cold, trembling hand turned the knob. Beatrice hesitated for a moment. Ethel thought she meant to retreat, and commanded:

“Go into that room. You must not turn back now.”

Beatrice pushed the door open and stepped into the library. Through the mist that clouded her vision, she discerned the form of a man lying

on a leather couch which stood between two open windows, where the breeze swept through and gently swayed the gauzy curtains.

The trembling and half-frightened girl closed the door, pressed her hands across her eyes. For a moment she stood thus, then summoning forth all the strength she could command, looked at the man lying before her. His face was turned toward her, and he looked at her intently with eyes made sad and large by a very great illness.

Beatrice's softened mood vanished in a twinkling, and drawing herself up haughtily, she exclaimed:

"How could you—how dare you do this?"

For answer, Kornell closed his eyes wearily and turned his face toward the window. This did more to bring Beatrice to her senses than any words could have done. Silently she went forward and knelt beside Kornell, and clasping his white hand in hers, said, in a low, tremulous voice:

"Forgive me. I thought you had played a trick to bring me here."

"What trick?"

"Why, I supposed you were—"

"You supposed I was what?"

"Oh, don't you know? What could I think when I saw all those flowers. Oh! they are so nauseating. How can you bear them?"

"Are there flowers out there?"

“Oceans of them. They are in every conceivable nook and corner. And I thought—how could I help but think—”

A faint smile came to Kornell’s white face as he said:

“And you thought that I was dead.”

“Yes. How could I think otherwise? And when Ethel met me, she was crying.”

“She was crying for happiness over my recovery. And no doubt those flowers were sent by many kind friends for the same reason. But why didn’t you ever send one word of inquiry? Why did you make me send for you?”

“Could I have done other than I did, considering the stand I had taken?”

“Through false pride, you would let a man die for want of a cheering word or a look into your face.”

“But you have recovered and you didn’t really need me after all, I see. Now you must not say another word, for you are still very weak, and you may become feverish.”

Beatrice loosened her clasp of his hand and rose from her knees, taking a step toward the door as though to leave.

Kornell attempted to sit up, and said:

“Don’t go just yet. Can’t you see that I want you here?”

"If you will promise to lie quietly and not say a word I will sit here beside you for awhile."

"I promise faithfully to keep quiet. Bring your chair close beside me, and talk to me. We will not be bothered. Ethel has my strict orders to allow no one near that door."

Beatrice drew a low, easy chair beside the couch and seated herself. Kornell reached out and rested his hand on her knee, open palm upward. She placed her hand upon his, he closed his fingers about it, holding it in a warm clasp, looking steadily at her lovely face.

"Ethel tells me that I talked all sorts of nonsense in my delirium; made admission that I should have preferred to make at the proper time and to the proper person."

"You promised to keep quiet," said Beatrice.

"But if you remember, I didn't promise not to talk."

"Unless you do promise, I shall leave immediately."

"You are afraid that I will tell you a few things I rambled about while out of my head."

"I simply want you to keep quiet, for you must not have a setback."

"Very well, I'll keep from talking."

For nearly an hour Kornell kept to his promise. He seemed content to lie quietly and watch her. Suddenly he said:

“Beatrice, do you know that it is nearly five months since I saw you last?”

“There you are talking. That is the signal for my departure.” She arose and drew her hand from his.

“I was merely going to say that you hadn’t changed a particle.”

“You insist upon talking, so I know you want me to go.”

She went to the door, but Kornell called her back.

“Don’t go. I didn’t mean that you should go. How can I help talking to you?”

“But you must help it. If your physician were to know that you were talking so much he would order me out at once.”

“Not while I had strength to utter a protest. Sit down, please. I will try once more to keep still. You may talk to me, and I will prove a most attentive listener.”

Beatrice complied with his wish and talked in a low musical voice that soothed him. Time passed swiftly and the sun was low in the west before they realized the lateness of the hour. Beatrice rose and said:

“I really must go now, for the afternoon is nearly gone. I hope you will continue to gain strength, and will soon become well.”

“Do you insist upon going now?”

"I do. I cannot stay a moment longer."

"I must not be selfish and keep you against your wish. But before you go, Beatrice, I want you to make me one promise. Come every day to see me, will you?"

"I can't make you that promise."

"I shall not ask you why you can't promise, but I request you to come. I must have some incentive, something to live for."

"You must not talk so foolishly. You have everything in this world to live for, mother, sister, and wealth. What more do you want?"

"I am tempted to answer you."

"Do not or I shall promise *never* to come. Good-bye."

"Are you going to leave me that way? Come here, please."

She went back to the convalescent and gave him her hand. He clasped it in both of his saying:

"Beatrice, do you realize that I have never kissed you, and it has been six long months since the right to do so was given me?"

A wave of sadness and tenderness swept over Beatrice; she leaned down and turned a very flushed cheek toward him. Kornell looked at it a moment, then said:

"A very lovely cheek, fit only for the gods to caress. Any other man on earth would be satis-

fied with that, but I am not." He reached up and placed a hand on either cheek and drew her face down to his and pressed a lingering kiss upon her trembling lips. When he released her, he looked into her eyes and found them suffused with tears. She drew back and said tremulously:

"For one so weak, you are wonderfully strong."

"Yes, for once I have conquered. Now promise me you will come to see me tomorrow."

"I dare not promise you that, but I will come if I feel that I can. Goodbye."

One last handclasp, then she left him. He watched her until the door closed after her. Before she could reach the outer door, Ethel came toward her with outstretched arms. Beatrice waved her aside.

"Do not come near me, Ethel. I am not worthy even of your touch. For, I have found since I came into this home this afternoon what a heartless wretch I have been. And until I can humble myself before your brother, and make some attonement—I cannot allow his sister to feel lenient toward me or permit myself to receive a caress from her, as much as I should dearly love to feel her arms about me. Don't detain me."

"Sit down with me a moment. You must wait for the carriage and it will take several minutes before it is ready."

“Do not order the carriage for me. I shall not need it.” Without another word, Beatrice left the Kornell home. She walked until her strength gave way, then she hailed a passing cab and was driven home.

CHAPTER XI

THE FLIGHT

THE next day was bright and beautiful; and very early, Howard Kornell began to look for Beatrice. The forenoon proved a disappointment. The noon hour passed and hope was revived, for surely she would come during the afternoon. But hour after hour passed away, still she did not come, and Howard bade fair to become feverish and irritable. He called Ethel to him and bade her go for Beatrice. To humor her invalid brother, she went against her will and better judgment. Arriving at the Jewel home, she went, as was her custom, straight to the studio, but the young artist was not in her accustomed place. Ethel went through the house in search of Beatrice. She was not without some misgivings. Soon she found Cousin Emily who seemed disheartened.

“Mrs. Winter, what is the matter? Where is Beatrice?”

“I wish I could tell you, Ethel. But I cannot. I don’t know where she is. I have worried about her until I am nearly distracted.”

“When did she go? Did she leave no word?”

“She must have gone very early this morning, before any one was awake. She left a note saying that I shouldn't worry about her. That she had gone up into the State to a lovely farm home, where she could find rest; she had worked so hard this summer that she was nervous and unstrung. She ended by saying: ‘Don't look for me. I am with friends and will come home when I am rested.’ What shall I do?”

“Do as she says; leave her alone. I have hardly understood her lately. She has seemed altogether different the last six months. What could have come over her is more than I can fathom. The best way to cure her is to ignore her. If she should come back within the next few days, will you let me know?”

“Gladly; but I think she means to be gone several weeks. I shall not know a moment's rest until she returns.”

“I shouldn't worry. Now, goodbye, dear Mrs. Winter. I must hasten back to my brother.

Ethel Kornell hurried home to her brother and informed him regarding Beatrice's disappearance. Howard received the news calmly, but Ethel saw that he drew his mouth into a straight line and a determined look came into his eyes. She did not question him or bother him by talking, but discreetly left him to himself. From that time on

Kornell had but one thought, to gain strength and health as fast as possible.

The October sun shone brilliantly on woods and fields, making beautiful the autumn landscape. The pungent odor of fallen leaves filled the air and the call of the crow rang out sharp and clear.

Beatrice had been three weeks in Farmer Joyce's home, and this rural beauty held great charm for her. On this beautiful morning Beatrice and Mrs. Joyce sat late at the breakfast table, visiting. Suddenly they were startled by Mr. Joyce, who came hurriedly into the room exceedingly excited, and, forgetting to remove his large slouch hat, said:

"You women keep to the house this morning. Neighbor Crosby's dog was hurt in some way a few days ago and has gone mad, and is now running at large. I told Crosby he should have shot him at once, but he thought there was no danger. We have a party formed to search for him. Remember, don't leave the house." Mr. Joyce left hurriedly.

As the forenoon advanced Beatrice forgot Mr. Joyce's warning and started out for a long ramble. Lured on by the beauty of the scenery, she went farther than she had at first intended and it was nearly 11:30 o'clock when she entered the farm-yard. She kept close to the fence, along

the top of which was stretched a barbed wire. The girl was deep in thought and was not aware of approaching danger. Suddenly she was violently startled by the snapping and snarling of a ferocious beast, close at her heels. For an instant she was rooted to the spot. Her first impulse was to climb over the fence, but before she had time to draw a breath, the mad brute sprang upon her. Instantly several shots rang out simultaneously on the clear autumn air. The dog dropped to the ground, but was upon its feet in an instant, and with renewed fury again sprang upon Beatrice. The force of the dog's body pushed her against the fence, she threw out her arm to catch herself, and tore a deep gash across her wrist, on one of the barbs. Another shot was fired and the dog dropped heavily to the ground for the second time. A half dozen excited men gathered about the fallen brute. The frightened girl ran to a smokehouse, several feet away, entered and closed the door. She felt the warm blood flowing freely over her hand. The interior of the building was too dark to allow her to ascertain the extent of her injuries. Although half-fainting with fright, she had the presence of mind to stop the flow of blood, by pressing the thumb of her left hand forcibly on the artery above the wound.

In the meantime, two strange men had joined the group gathered about the dead dog. They

were coming up the highway in a large red roadster, at the time of the shooting, and witnessed the whole affair. After looking at the dog and finding him dead, the taller and larger of the two men said:

“Was the woman hurt?”

Mr. Joyce looked up quickly.

“I declare, I had forgotten her, I was so excited. Was it my wife or the young lady?”

“It doesn’t make any difference whom she was, we must find whether or not she was bitten,” said the first spokesman. “I will see about it.” He went to the smokehouse and tapped on the door. A trembling, frightened voice sounded from within.

“You will have to push open the door. It is closed fast and there is no handle on this side.”

Hurriedly the stranger pushed open the door, and to his horror he saw before him the pale trembling girl grasping her lacerated wrist, from which the blood was dropping and staining the whole length of her dress. He was quickly at her side and gripping her arm.

“My God! that brute did bite you.”

Beatrice looked steadily into his eyes, seemingly forgetful of her injuries, and asked:

“Did you know that I was here?”

“As there is a Heaven above us, I did not,” answered Kornell. “But that cursed dog bit you.

You must not stand here an instant longer." He tried to draw her from the building but she withdrew from his hold upon her, and said:

"Do not be alarmed. The dog was shot before he could fasten his fangs into my flesh. I must have torn open the artery in my wrist on that barbed wire, as I tried to save myself from falling when the dog jumped upon me."

"I am very thankful it wasn't torn open by that brute," said Kornell, as he examined the bleeding wrist. That wicked looking wound must be attended to at once. Felix and I are touring the country and my car is out in the road. I will take you to town at once." He took his handkerchief from his pocket and bound it tightly about the wrist. "We will go to the house and bathe this hand, then get your wraps on and come with me, for this must be attended to as soon as possible. That barb was no doubt very rusty and the wound will have to be cauterized."

Together they went to the house. Mrs. Joyce was very excited over the affair. She hurried about and helped Beatrice prepare for her call at the doctor's. In less than ten minutes Beatrice and Kornell were in the automobile, whirling rapidly down the road.

When they reached town they soon found a physician and the ugly wound was skilfully dressed.

Felix Ransome drove the car at a moderate pace back to the farm.

Mrs. Joyce had made known to her husband the fact that Kornell was a friend of Beatrice. Mr. Joyce immediately sat watch for their return. When he spied them coming, he met them at the gate and invited the men to stop for dinner. They accepted, and soon were partaking of a bountiful repast.

Two or three times Beatrice looked up at Kornell, who sat at the opposite side of the table, and caught him eagerly watching her. She looked away quickly. Felix Ransom was discreet and did not appear to notice that his employer's eyes had the power to bring the rosy flushes to Beatrice's cheeks, and Mr. and Mrs. Joyce attributed it to the excitement of the last hour.

Kornell stayed as long after dinner as politeness would allow. Before he made his adieus he said:

"I am junketing about, trying to regain some of my lost vigor. What is your opinion as to my state of health at the present moment?" He looked at Beatrice and laughed good-humoredly.

"You are looking splendid," she answered. "I had no idea that one could regain his health so rapidly. Touring this beautiful country certainly agrees with you."

"Yes; I think it does. I have made plans to

stay here for some time. That is, stop at the hotel in town and take long drives into the country. I find that the best way for me at present. I cannot stand going from town to town, as I had at first intended doing. How long are you to stay here?"

Beatrice hesitated for a moment, then answered:

"I can hardly tell at present. I never know one day what I will do the next."

"But you will stay for some time. You cannot possibly think of going home in your present condition." He arose and extended his hand to Beatrice. "I see that Felix seems a little impatient. He has been sitting in the car for the last ten minutes waiting. I will run out tomorrow morning to see how you are getting along."

With just a hand-clasp and no word of farewell he turned and left her standing on the sunny porch where they had been visiting for the last hour or more.

Beatrice was piqued. Perhaps he meant her to be. She missed his usual grave courtesy at leave-taking. And he had not once during their conversation alluded to her visit to his home that Sabbath afternoon, and a hot wave rushed to her face when she remembered that she had allowed him to kiss her. She knew that he spoke truthfully when he told her that he did not know that

she was there. His happening along at that time was simply a coincidence. But he did seem very much affected when he thought she was bitten by that mad dog. Still, he may have felt just the same had it been Mrs. Joyce or any other woman. Fix it any way she would she felt there was something lacking in his manner today. The rest of the afternoon she was preoccupied, and paid very little attention to what was going on around her.

CHAPTER XII

A HASTY DECISION

HOWARD KORNELL was detained from going out to see Beatrice the next forenoon. An accident to his automobile caused a delay of several hours, and it was not until late in the afternoon that he made his promised call.

Mrs. Joyce met him at the door and invited him in.

"I suppose you came to inquire about Miss Jewell?" she asked.

"I did," answered Kornell. "I believe she expected me."

"Yes, she said that you intended to call today."

"May I see her, please, or is she too ill to receive callers?"

"She is not at all sick. At least, she didn't appear so, only that she was very pale."

"But may I see her?" Kornell was becoming impatient with the woman.

"Well—I don't know—I—."

"What is the matter? Tell me quick, Mrs. Joyce."

"I hardly know how to tell you, Mr. Kornell, but—."

Mrs. Joyce continued to stumble over her task.

Kornell rose and started toward the door, saying:

“Perhaps Mr. Joyce can enlighten me on the subject.”

“Wait, Mr. Kornell. Miss Jewell didn’t want me to tell you, but I shall just the same. She has gone home. Went early this morning.”

Kornell looked at Mrs. Joyce in amazement.

“She has gone home, you say?” A dark scowl came between his eyes. “How dared she go in the condition she was in?”

“I don’t know, Mr. Kornell, but after you left yesterday she seemed worried and depressed. At supper time she informed me that she had made up her mind to go home. This morning Mr. Joyce took her to the early train. I did her packing for her and helped all that I could. She said that she would need a great deal of waiting on and that the best place for her was at home. There, too, she could have her own physician to attend her.”

“Nevertheless, she should not have gone.” Kornell seemed greatly disappointed and did not attempt to conceal the fact. He bade Mrs. Joyce adieu, hurried out to his car and rode rapidly back to town.

That night he sent his private secretary to New York city on an important business matter, while he stayed in the country town and toured about as suited his fancy.

Beatrice arrived home late that evening and for a day or two thereafter was in a very unsettled state of mind. She found that being in her own home was not all that she thought it would be. There was still a longing which she could not appease. There came to her a vision of the little nook of a home, nestling among the roses on a hillside in sunny Italy. Instantly her mind was settled upon a plan. The next day she went to the steamship office and procured passage to Europe. On her way uptown she stopped into a store to procure a few needful articles for her trip, and very unexpectedly met Ethel Kornell.

"Beatrice, how you surprised me. When did you return to town?" asked Ethel.

"I came home Tuesday, but not to stay. I am going to Europe."

"Isn't this rather sudden, Beatrice?"

"To tell you the truth, I didn't make up my mind to go until last night."

"When do you start?"

"Next Tuesday, and as this is Saturday, you see I shall have to hurry. Come with me while I do some shopping. I may want your opinion on some things."

For a couple of hours they went from place to place. Then Ethel left Beatrice to return home and the latter went on a business errand. When she was about to leave the office building, Felix

Ransome entered. He inquired concerning her wounded arm and thought she was looking very well, considering her injuries. Some hidden impulse caused Beatrice to take a small white card from her purse and write this message:

“Will leave on the Steamer C—— for Europe Tuesday.
BEATRICE.”

She handed the card to Felix and said:

“Please hand this to Mr. Kornell.”

The secretary took the card and slipped it into an inner pocket of his coat, tipped his hat to her and hurried toward the elevator.

Beatrice hastened out of the building. Her cheeks began to burn and she had a great desire to get away from the feeling of loathing she entertained for self for displaying that one little act of weakness. But for the looks of it, she would find Felix Ransome and demand the return of the card. But her pride kept her from doing so, and she went home with all speed possible. Upon arriving there she went straight to her own room, to avoid meeting Mrs. Winter or any of the servants, for she was afraid of what they might read on her face. She removed her hat, walked over to the dressing table and looked long and fixedly at her reflection in the mirror, finally saying:

“Beatrice, you little fool, have you fallen in love with that great big man? Not for worlds

would I have him surmise such a thing, and all unsolicited by him, too. Oh! if I could only get my fingers on that card! What a little idiot I was? What could have possessed me? I merit all contempt he will feel for me. I never thought I would become such a goose!"

She turned away from the mirror and left her room, seeking Mrs. Winter. She opened the door of the sewing room and found the object of her search busily at work.

"Cousin Emily, I have something very important to tell you."

"I thought so, my dear." Mrs. Winter looked into the girl's flushed face. "I have felt for weeks that you had something on your mind which you would eventually confide to me. Now, tell me all about it, dear. I am very anxious to hear all that you have to say. You see, I surmise right away what it is."

"Well, we will see if you are correct. Now then, Cousin Emily, we are going to Europe." Beatrice looked steadily at Mrs. Winter.

"Who is going to Europe, my dear?"

"You and I, Cousin Emily."

Mrs. Winter rose quickly, letting her scissors fall clattering to the floor and the garment on which she had been sewing slid to her feet in a snowy heap.

"You—and I?" she asked incredulously.

“Yes, Cousin Emily.”

“No, ma’am! I flatly refuse.”

“But I must go. My state of health demands it. I can’t go alone, so you *have* to go.”

“But you promised me faithfully the last time we made that trip that you would never take me galavanting over Europe again.”

“I remember that I made some such promise. But how was I to know that I would have to go away to regain my health, for my arm—.”

“Health, fiddlesticks! You are a goose.”

“I know I am. I have been calling myself all sorts of names the whole afternoon, but that doesn’t heal the wound in my wrist or ease my ruffled feelings.”

“You are determined that we shall go?”

“I am. Our passage over is already engaged.”

“When are we to start?”

“Next Tuesday.”

“Tuesday!” groaned Mrs. Winter. “How do you expect me to get ready in two days? What have you been thinking about?”

“I can’t tell you of all I have been thinking about? Don’t worry about getting ready. I have prepared for our needs. All that we will have to do is our packing. We had best start in at once.” Beatrice left for her room and when Mrs. Winter overcame this new shock, she followed Beatrice and together they prepared for their trip.

CHAPTER XIII

TO SUNNY ITALY

LATE Monday afternoon Howard Kornell received a letter from Ethel in which she stated that on Saturday she had very unexpectedly met Beatrice. "And, Howard," she wrote, "I hardly understand Beatrice lately. She is as sweet and lovely as ever, but she acts restrained in my presence, as though she feared me. What should cause it? Does she care for you and is afraid to have me know it, or have you told her what you confided to me and she resents it? She told me the Sunday she came to see you that she was going to do penance. I believe she fully intends to do so. But why should she isolate herself? How I shall miss her through the coming winter. She sails for Europe Tuesday—."

Kornell read no farther. He rose and paced the floor excitedly. "For Europe—Tuesday," he repeated. Those three words stood out clear and black above the rest of the letter. "And there isn't another train out of here until four in the morning. An unearthly hour? That's what a fellow gets for putting up at such an out-of-the-way place. I'll reach New York City too late that's a certainty. But I shall follow on the next

boat out. This shyness and everlasting running away must and shall be stopped. I have no one to blame for this but myself, for I find that I have waited longer than I should have." He finished reading the letter, but it held little interest for him. He hurriedly attended to his packing, and looked after the shipment of his automobile. After everything was in readiness there were any amount of hours to dispose of. Kornell walked up and down the streets until a late hour then he returned to the hotel and retired for a little rest. Long before four o'clock he was up and ready for the journey. It was with great relief that he heard the train steam into the station.

Long and tiresome was the trip to New York. Upon arriving in the city Howard Kornell went immediately to his office. He knew that he would find his secretary there at that hour, and he needed him at once.

Kornell had sent no message apprising Ransome of his arrival, therefore that gentleman was greatly startled when, upon looking up at the sound of the opening of the inner office door, he beheld Kornell. He rose quickly to meet his employer.

"What is the matter, Mr. Kornell?"

"We must sail for Europe on the first out-going steamer to overtake a party who sailed on the

C—— at 10 o'clock this forenoon." Kornell sat down before his office desk. "Drop everything and look up the boats and find out when we can get out of here."

Ransome left the office and in half an hour returned and informed Kornell that by going to Boston they could get a boat out the next forenoon.

"Very well. Telegraph ahead and secure passage for us. Then get everything in order here. I shall have to call up Johnson. There are several matters I want him to attend to during my absence. I will run out home for an hour or so. Be sure to meet me at 6:30 at the union depot."

The next noon found Howard Kornell and his secretary on board ship, merging onto the broad bosom of the Atlantic in fast pursuit of Beatrice, who had twenty-four hours the start of them.

The days aboard ship seemed interminably long. Kornell was restless and very uncompanionable. His secretary proved as poor a companion, silent and inclined to be moody. Several times Kornell caught him in deep study. Finally he asked:

"What is the matter, Felix? You seem to be worried."

"I am worried. There is something that I have forgotten to do. What it is, I cannot say.

It has bothered me ever since we came aboard ship."

"You attended to everything at the office? Put those papers in the safe?"

"Yes; everything there is alright. That which bothers me is apart from business. I have racked my brain until my head aches trying to remember what I should have done. I never before had anything slip my memory so entirely."

"Don't bother your head any more about it. You will think of it when you least expect, probably. Such is often the case."

Two more days of ocean travel then they reached Liverpool. No delays were made. They hastened on toward Italy. Kornell felt quite sure that Beatrice would go straight to the little place on the hillside among the roses that she had told him about, so he hastened thither.

Travel-stained and weary, they reached the little city of S——, just over the border line into Italy. They were taken to the hotel, where they intended to remain until the next day. Quite early in the evening Kornell went to his room, not merely to rest but to be along with his thoughts. Felix had told him that he intended to stroll for a time in the beautiful gardens surrounding the hotel.

It was long past nine o'clock when Howard Kornell was aroused from his reveries by the

hurried advent of Felix into his room. The secretary was very excited, and throwing his hat onto a nearby chair, began to search his pockets. Finally withdrawing a small white card from among a few others which had reposed in his pocket all those days, he handed it to Kornell, saying:

“You remember that I told you that I had forgotten something? Well, this is the cause of all my worry.”

Howard Kornell took the card from Ransome's hand. He read the name, “Beatrice Jewell,” then turning the card over read the short message she had written him. He looked up quickly at his secretary.

“How could you have forgotten to hand me this message?”

“I remember now, that it was given to me on Saturday, to hand to you when I saw you. Your coming so unexpectedly into the office the following Tuesday and your hurried orders to get off here to Europe knocked the whole thing from my mind. I'm sorry, Mr. Kornell, but I don't see how I can help it now.”

“Why, man, do you know what this means to me?” Kornell looked at the neatly written message again. “How did you happen to think of it?”

“I met her but a moment ago while walking in the gardens.”

“Met her! Are you sure?” Kornell grew ex-

cited. "Where did you meet her? Tell me the exact spot. Did she see you?"

"I hardly think so. I turned away quickly for I thought that perhaps I was mistaken. But I looked after her, and I am convinced that it was Miss Jewell."

"Wait here for me." Kornell took his hat and quickly left the room. Ransome, left alone, fell to speculating upon his employer's past and present conduct. He put two and two together and conjectured that Kornell had at last lost his heart. He knew now who was the person they were to overtake. He waited patiently for Kornell, who was scouring the hotel gardens for Beatrice. His search was fruitless. Whether Ransome was mistaken, or Beatrice had seen and recognized him and had hurried to her room to avoid meeting Kornell, for she would know that the secretary would inform his employer of her presence there. Kornell reasoned that she no doubt felt hurt at his non-appearance at the dock the day she left. That he had ignored her message, and she meant to keep from his sight in consequence. He knew exactly how she felt. If he could only find her and get a moment's chance to explain, to tell her that he had but that hour received her message, that he had come all this distance to find, and to tell her that which he should have told her in the beginning. To make sure that his secretary was

not mistaken, he went into the office and asked to see the registry. He found on the page preceding that on which his own name was registered those of Mrs. Emily Winter and Beatrice Jewell, and that they had arrived the day before. It was now ten o'clock and Kornell felt that it was too late to present himself to Beatrice. He decided to wait until morning, then insist upon a thorough understanding.

He went back to Ransome and told him that Beatrice was really there, but that he would not attempt to see her until the next day. Then they separated for the night.

The next morning Kornell stationed himself where he could watch each guest as they went to the dining room. But Beatrice did not make her appearance. He waited long past the breakfast hour; still she did not come. He became apprehensive, and sought the clerk in his office.

"Will you find out whether or not Miss Jewel is in her room?"

"Miss Jewell and her companion left very early this morning."

"Gone, have they? Missed them again!" Kornell was a little inclined to be angry, still he knew that he could not blame Beatrice, considering the circumstances. He found that he could not get away from there until that afternoon.

Late the next day Howard Kornell and Felix

Ransome arrived in C——. Kornell started out alone, after the evening meal and found the way to the little villa on the hillside. He learned that two strange ladies had that forenoon taken possession of the pretty little building which had been closed for many months. He knew that Beatrice meant to hide from him in this beautiful spot. He understood her thoroughly, and felt that she would undergo almost any torture rather than to meet him face to face, for she had humbled herself and made a veiled admission and had he chosen, he would have known that she cared more than she was willing to admit openly. But a grave mistake had been made and she was suffering. But he decided not to present himself that evening for he felt that she was weary with long travel and should have this time to herself.

He remained at some distance from the villa lest he be seen. Not for worlds, would he have her know that he was so near. He watched the full moon rise into the deep blue vault above. Its silvery rays caressed the hillsides, and flooded the valley, lighting up the beautiful lake nestling at the foot of the hills. The rare perfume of roses filled the night air, and the liquid notes from a violin, played by a master hand, floated out to the man whose mind was filled with reveries made inexpressibly dear by the witchery of the beautiful night.

Filled with a tender and revered mood, Howard Kornell turned away from this beauty and grandeur, and went back to the hotel, feeling that he had left Beatrice in a world apart from the one in which he now walked—a world made for such as she. Always would he hold the memory of this night sacred.

CHAPTER XIV

OLD ROSE LACE

WITH the light of the new day Howard Kornell was up and ready for the conquest that awaited him. The hours of the morning dragged along slowly. At ten o'clock he started for the villa on the hillside. He set out slowly, but his steps became rapid as he went along, and before he fully realized it he was in sight of Beatrice's hiding place. His eager eyes caught sight of the woman for whom he had traveled so great a distance to overtake.

Beatrice was busy among the roses, and was utterly unaware of his near approach. Suddenly a peculiar little whistle rang out on the clear morning air. Beatrice dropped the roses she had gathered and looked about startled. An instant later, Howard Kornell stood before her with his head bared to the morning sun and his arms extended toward her.

"Beatrice." A deep feeling sounded in his voice.

The astonished and frightened girl stepped backward and said falteringly:

"Don't you know that I have been running away from you?"

"I am well convinced of the fact." He had dropped his arms to his side and took a step nearer.

"Why, then, did you follow me?"

"If a man's wife takes it into her head to run away, that man has a right to follow her and bring her back. And now," he said, leading her to a rustic bench overlooking the sloping terrace and the valley beyond, "we will sit down here and have a thorough understanding. Now, then," he continued, after they were seated, "what prompted you to run away?"

"To get away from myself and everything in general."

"And Howard Kornell most particularly. Come, own up."

"Perhaps," said Beatrice, timidly.

"Still, you sent him a message apprising him of the fact that you were going away from him."

"Oh! don't. Please, do not mention that." Beatrice turned away a very flushed face.

"I will mention it, dear, for you must know that I never received that message until two nights ago, and you must accuse me no longer of heartlessness. Evidently you thought that I was back in the city the day you met Ransome and that I would receive your message in time. But as it happened, I stayed in the little town, and Ransome was not to return until the latter part of the

next week. Ethel wrote me of your intended departure, and when I arrived in the city you had already gone. My sudden and unexpected appearance in my office that day, and my hurried orders to get off for Europe, drove every thought of your message from Felix's mind until he met you in the gardens two nights ago. "He waited a moment, then, with his free hand he turned her face toward him. "Why don't you say something?" he asked.

"How can I? You are holding the floor."

"I am holding your hand," he answered, with mocked solemnity.

She turned away with a little shrug of disdain.

"You always spoil everything by being funny."

"Do I, dear? Then, from this instant on I shall be the most serious fellow you ever knew. Beatrice, sweetheart, listen to me, for what I am about to say to you I shall say with all truth and sincerity." There was an impressive moment, then he continued with a deep full note ringing in his voice.

"I love you."

Beatrice rose quickly, attempting to draw away her hand. But Kornell did not release his hold upon it.

"Now, this won't do at all. If you remember correctly, I told you a few moments ago that we would not leave this spot until we had had a

thorough understanding." He drew her back to the seat beside him. "You must listen to me, for I am determined that you shall know all. I have loved you for years. I realized when it was too late that I should have told you so in the beginning. But I feared you at that time. As I said way back there, at the 'Retreat,' that I dared not offer you my love lest you laugh it to scorn. I did not think that you recognized me; therefore, I could not tell you that your miniature, which Ethel had misplaced, had reposed in a safekeeping about my person all these years." Beatrice looked quickly into his face. "Then, too," he continued, "I thought it wiser not to tell you of my love lest you would feel that I was taking undue advantage of your situation to further selfish designs. I knew that your affections were still unstirred. I decided then and there to wait for some sign from you that you cared ever so little for me, before I declared my love for you. And that unwise decision caused this long chase to the land of sunshine and roses." He placed his arm about her shoulders, saying slowly and impressively, "and you do love me."

Beatrice withdrew from his encircling arm and rose quickly, going a few steps away. Trying to keep a very firm voice, she said:

"You take a great deal for granted."

Kornell was at her side in an instant.

“But this proves it,” he said, holding before her the small white card on which was written her message.

Beatrice glanced at it, then hid her face in her trembling hands.

“Haven’t you a bit of mercy?” came in muffled tones.

“You haven’t shown me a particle of mercy all these past months, and now I ask that you mend matters by answering my question truthfully.”

Gently he drew her hands from her face with one of his own, the other he placed under her chin and forced her to look up at him. “Beatrice, you do love me?” A tender, pleading note sounded in the voice of this tall, broad-shouldered man, which rang on a responsive chord in her own breast and caused her to raise her deep blue eyes dimmed with tears, to meet his, and said unaffectionately and almost sadly:

“Yes, Howard.”

He put his strong arms about her, drawing her to him in a close embrace, then kissed her lips and forehead reverently.

“Our betrothal kiss, sweetheart. For I believe you still hold to your views on civil and religious ceremonies.”

“I haven’t changed my views in the least.”

“Then there must be a second ceremony?”

"Yes, for to me the first one does not seem holy."

"When shall it take place, dear?" He pressed her head close to his breast and tenderly smoothed her fair cheek.

"Not tomorrow, for it will be Friday. And the next day will be Saturday; of course that won't do. And Sunday—I should not care for that day, for to me a wedding day should be sacred, apart from all others. Monday, of course, is entirely out of the question, and—"

She did not finish, for Kornell quickly held her from him, and looked at her keenly, saying:

"Now, look here. If for one moment you think you are going to put off this event until next Wednesday, you are mightily mistaken, lady dear. I am determined that there shall be no more foolishness in this affair. I see that you are not capable of setting the day, so I will do so. There is a small Protestant chapel down in the southeast end of the city. Together with Mrs. Winter and Ransome, we will go there and have the ceremony performed, this very afternoon. To my way of thinking, Thursday is as good a day as Wednesday."

"But it's so soon."

"You have had since last March to think about it."

"I know all about that. But one wants a little time in which to get ready."

"You will do just as you are. But I know that you have something that will be appropriate. What a pity you didn't bring along that beautiful gown of lace and satin, that you once dreamed of wearing on this occasion.

"I did bring it, Howard."

"What more beautiful array could you wish for? And now, you will let me go and arrange for the ceremony to take place this afternoon? I will come for you at two o'clock."

"I would far rather you wouldn't come for me. Cousin Emily and I will meet you and Mr. Ransome at the chapel at the hour you name."

"But I can't trust you. Remember your propensity for running away."

"I won't fail you this time. Please trust me."

"If that is your wish, I shall abide by it."

"Let us go and tell Cousin Emily, for I know she will be very happy over this."

Together they went into the house and confided to Mrs. Winter the event that they had planned for the afternoon. Then Howard took his departure to make arrangements for the second ceremony, which would make the bond doubly secure. He also sent a cablegram to his mother with this announcement:

"Married to Beatrice this afternoon.

HOWARD."

At two o'clock a carriage sent by Kornell arrived at the villa to convey Beatrice and Mrs. Winter to the chapel. When they reached the small edifice, Kornell and Ronsome, met them and escorted them into the building. This time Beatrice did not falter as she walked with Kornell to the chancel rail. Neither did she hesitate because of the quality of her gown. Kornell was justly proud of the beautiful woman at his side, arrayed in old rose lace and ivory satin. She carried a large bouquet of deep cream roses, but wore neither hat or veil.

After the ceremony they all returned to the villa, where an impromptu wedding luncheon was served.

Beatrice had decided that they would stay here for two or three weeks, then return to America in time for Christmas.

Mrs. Winter laid forth her plans. She would go to the hotel and stay those few weeks. "For this place is only large enough for two at the present time."

They tried to persuade her to remain with them, but she was firm in her resolve to leave them to themselves.

"I was young once myself, my dears. I know that young folks want to be alone."

Felix Ransome, accompanied Mrs. Winter to the hotel. Howard and Beatrice watched them

until they were lost in the dimness beyond. Then Kornell turned to his wife, whose face and form were lighted up by the silvery moon. The night air was scented with the breath of roses and from somewhere came faint, sweet music. The same world that he had had a glimpse of the evening before, but tonight he was not shut out. A great wave of happiness passed over him as he tenderly placed his arms about Beatrice and drew her to him. For the first time he felt her soft, plump arm steal about his neck.

“I have you safe now, sweetheart. No more running away.”

With her lovely face raised to his, she answered: “I have no desire to run away. I am content.”

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