

When Woman Proposes



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Anne Warner



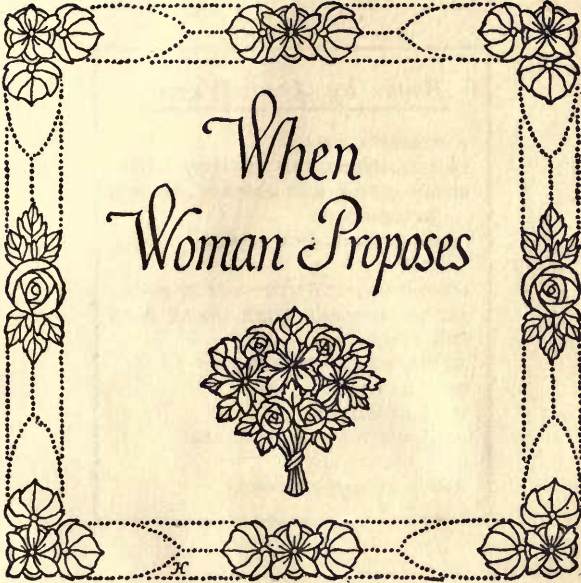


Arthur Butler Sibley

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When
Woman Proposes



Books by Anne Warner

A WOMAN'S WILL
THE REJUVENATION OF AUNT MARY
SUSAN CLEGG, HER FRIEND AND HER
NEIGHBORS
SUSAN CLEGG AND A MAN IN THE
HOUSE
SEEING FRANCE WITH UNCLE JOHN
SEEING ENGLAND WITH UNCLE JOHN
THE PANTHER
AN ORIGINAL GENTLEMAN
IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY
YOUR CHILD AND MINE
JUST BETWEEN THEMSELVES
HOW LESLIE LOVED
WHEN WOMAN PROPOSES



*"Now I see it all so clearly,
and know it all so well."*

Frontispiece.

H. Weber-Ditler

When Woman Proposes

BY

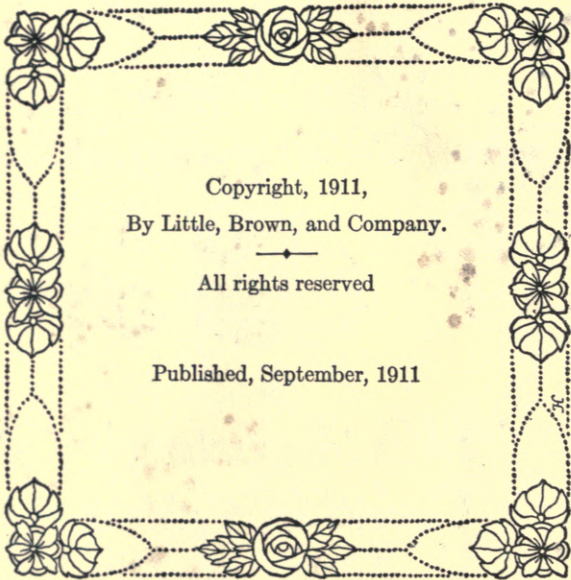
Anne Warner

Author of "The Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary" etc.



With Illustrations by
Charlotte Weber Ditzler
and Decorations by
Theodore B. Hapgood

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Little, Brown, & Company
1911



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Foreword

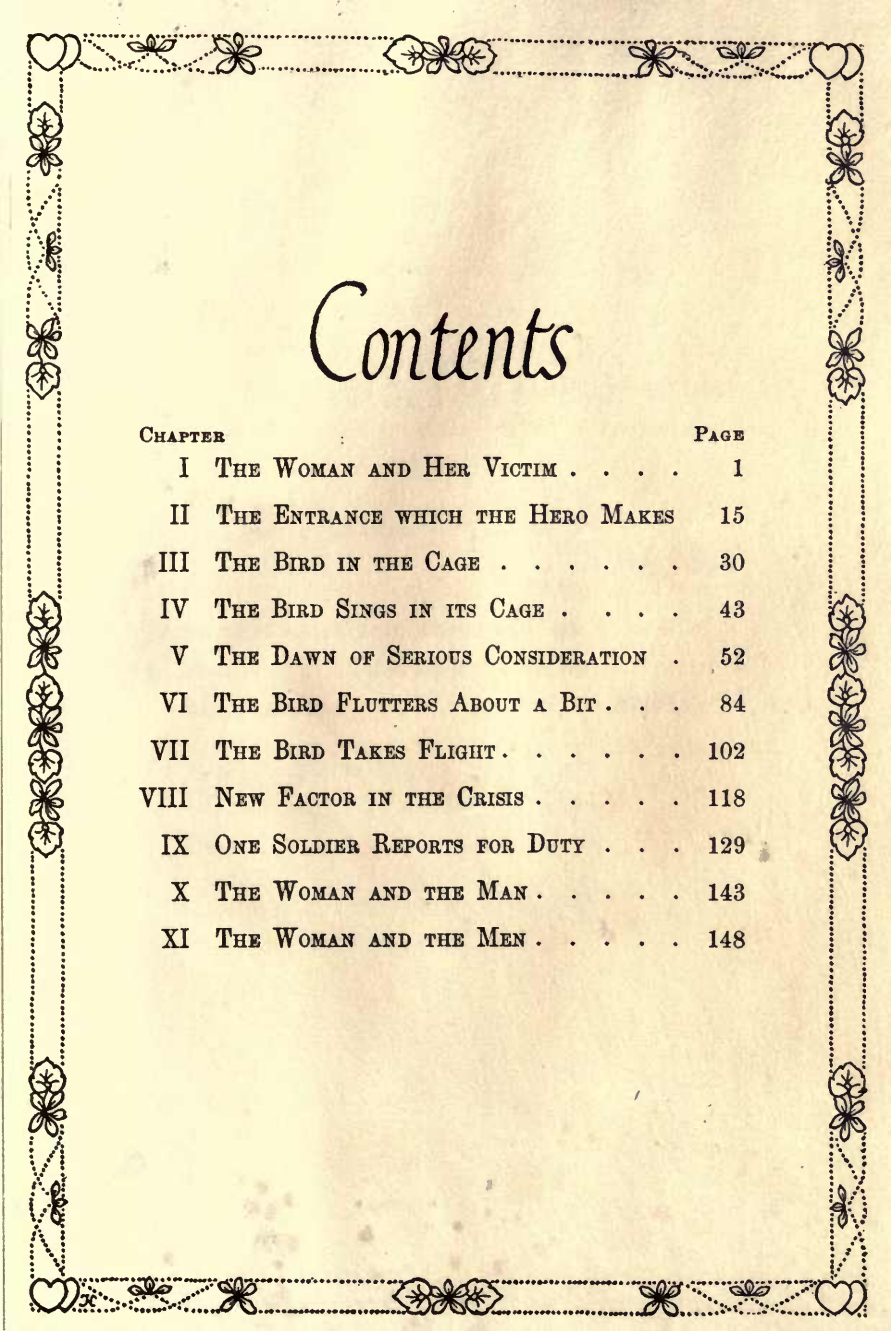
THE scene of this story is laid in the land of Nowhere, "Nowhere" being — as most of us recognize intuitively — that uncharted empire of the Future where all manner of wonders lie waiting to be discovered and whence come rushing with ever fresh force and power those mighty rivers of Life and Hope which make our days worth living and our dreams worth dreaming. New developments along old lines are the key of the present movements and are proved by the way in which both men and women are thinking and writing along lines that only a few years ago were either unknown or forbidden. When I speak with such men and women or read their words I am overwhelmed with a desire to be able to be just as helpful as they are. But we are all cast in different moulds and my mould is such a curiously mixed pattern of the old and the new, that when a very brave and distinguished officer gives me the outline of a new and daring solution for familiar woes, I can only develop it

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through the old, old story of the old, old methods of a woman who loves with all her heart. This is a century of wonders and we may yet see a real Nathalie addressing a real governmental body somewhere, but when we do see a miracle of that order I think we may all be very sure that before she took up the cause of humanity in general, she — like my own not very deep little heroine — had taken up the cause of just one man in particular and learned to love the world and the right because she loved him so infinitely more.

Perhaps this is not an advanced standpoint but it is mine and — even in writing fiction — I cannot get beyond it. Or perhaps I do not want to get beyond it.

ANNE WARNER.



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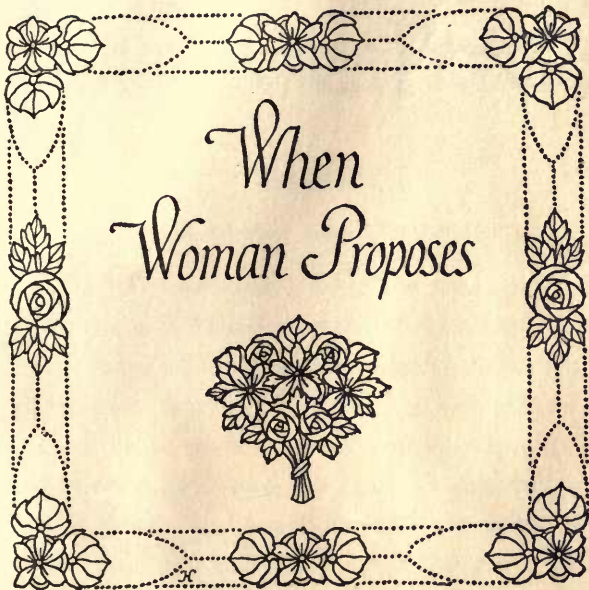
“Now I see it so clearly—and know
it all so well” *Frontispiece*

There was something startlingly im-
pressive in his expression and in
his pose PAGE 8

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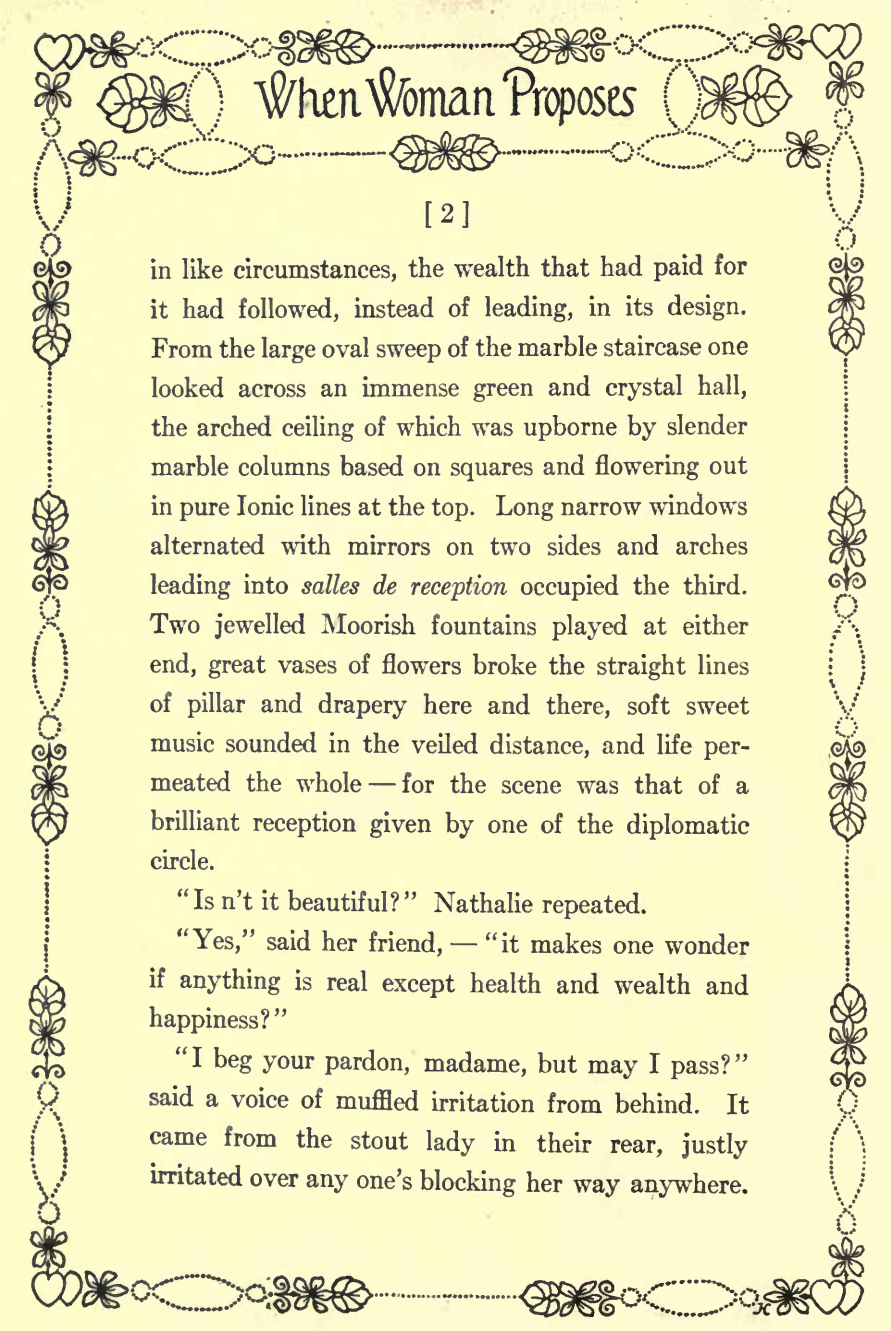
CHAPTER I

THE WOMAN AND HER VICTIM

THEY were coming down the staircase, Nathalie first, Mrs. d'Yprés just behind her. A very stout lady, following both, suddenly set her foot on the narrow train of Nathalie's Empire costume and caused her to cease to move. Nathalie never pulled, or frowned, or turned her head with an awful look when people trod upon her silks or satins, — she only stood still until they saw fit to move on and permit of her doing the same. Therefore she now laid her gloved fingers lightly upon her friend's arm and said, in tones surely the sweetest ever heard from a woman who knew another woman to be aggressing upon her hem, —

“Is n't it beautiful down there?”

Mrs. d'Yprés put up her lorgnette and gazed over the gorgeous show beneath them. It was truly a fairy spectacle for, unlike many princely interiors



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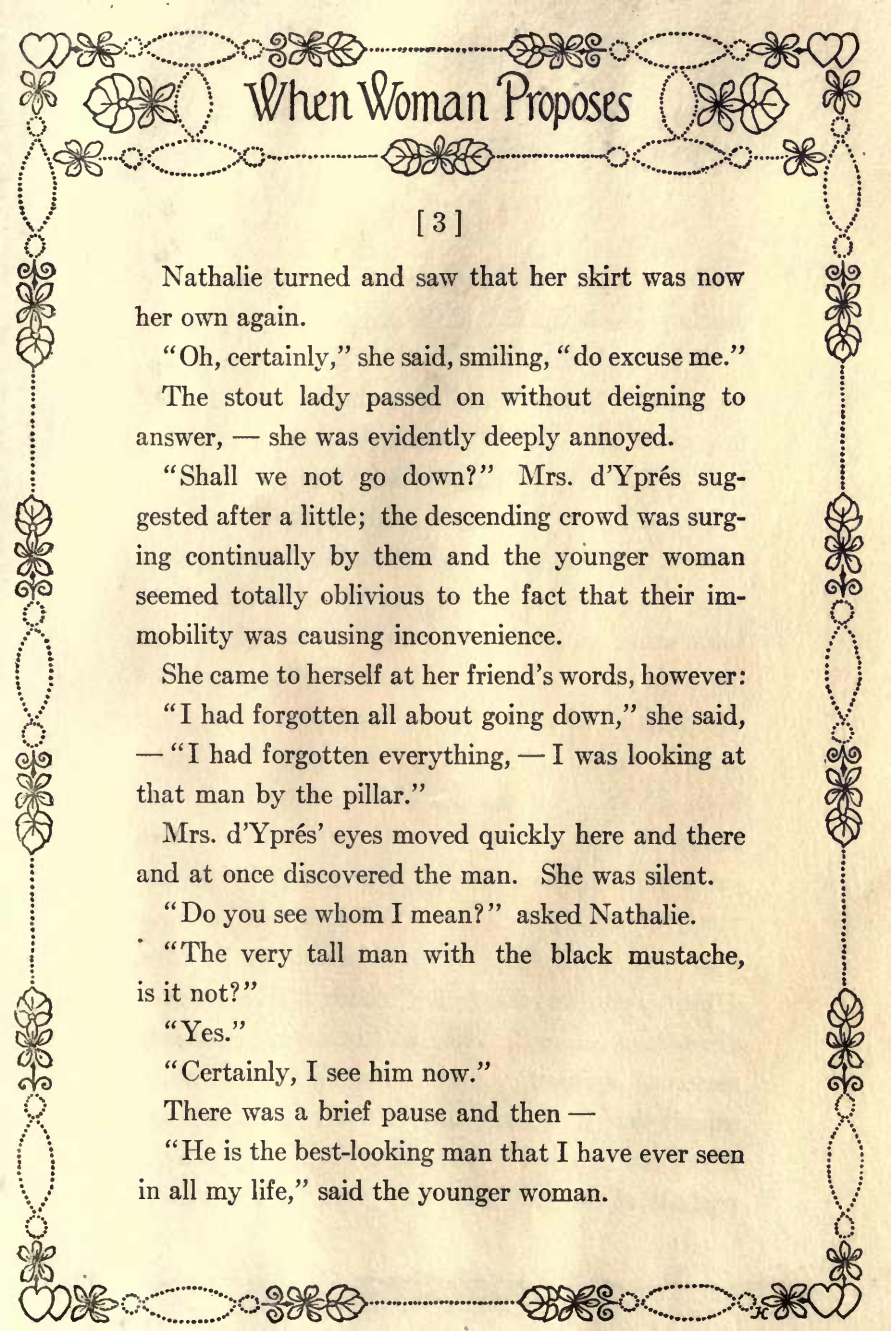
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in like circumstances, the wealth that had paid for it had followed, instead of leading, in its design. From the large oval sweep of the marble staircase one looked across an immense green and crystal hall, the arched ceiling of which was upborne by slender marble columns based on squares and flowering out in pure Ionic lines at the top. Long narrow windows alternated with mirrors on two sides and arches leading into *salles de reception* occupied the third. Two jewelled Moorish fountains played at either end, great vases of flowers broke the straight lines of pillar and drapery here and there, soft sweet music sounded in the veiled distance, and life permeated the whole—for the scene was that of a brilliant reception given by one of the diplomatic circle.

“Is n't it beautiful?” Nathalie repeated.

“Yes,” said her friend, — “it makes one wonder if anything is real except health and wealth and happiness?”

“I beg your pardon, madame, but may I pass?” said a voice of muffled irritation from behind. It came from the stout lady in their rear, justly irritated over any one's blocking her way anywhere.



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Nathalie turned and saw that her skirt was now her own again.

“Oh, certainly,” she said, smiling, “do excuse me.”

The stout lady passed on without deigning to answer, — she was evidently deeply annoyed.

“Shall we not go down?” Mrs. d’Yprés suggested after a little; the descending crowd was surging continually by them and the younger woman seemed totally oblivious to the fact that their immobility was causing inconvenience.

She came to herself at her friend’s words, however:

“I had forgotten all about going down,” she said, — “I had forgotten everything, — I was looking at that man by the pillar.”

Mrs. d’Yprés’ eyes moved quickly here and there and at once discovered the man. She was silent.

“Do you see whom I mean?” asked Nathalie.

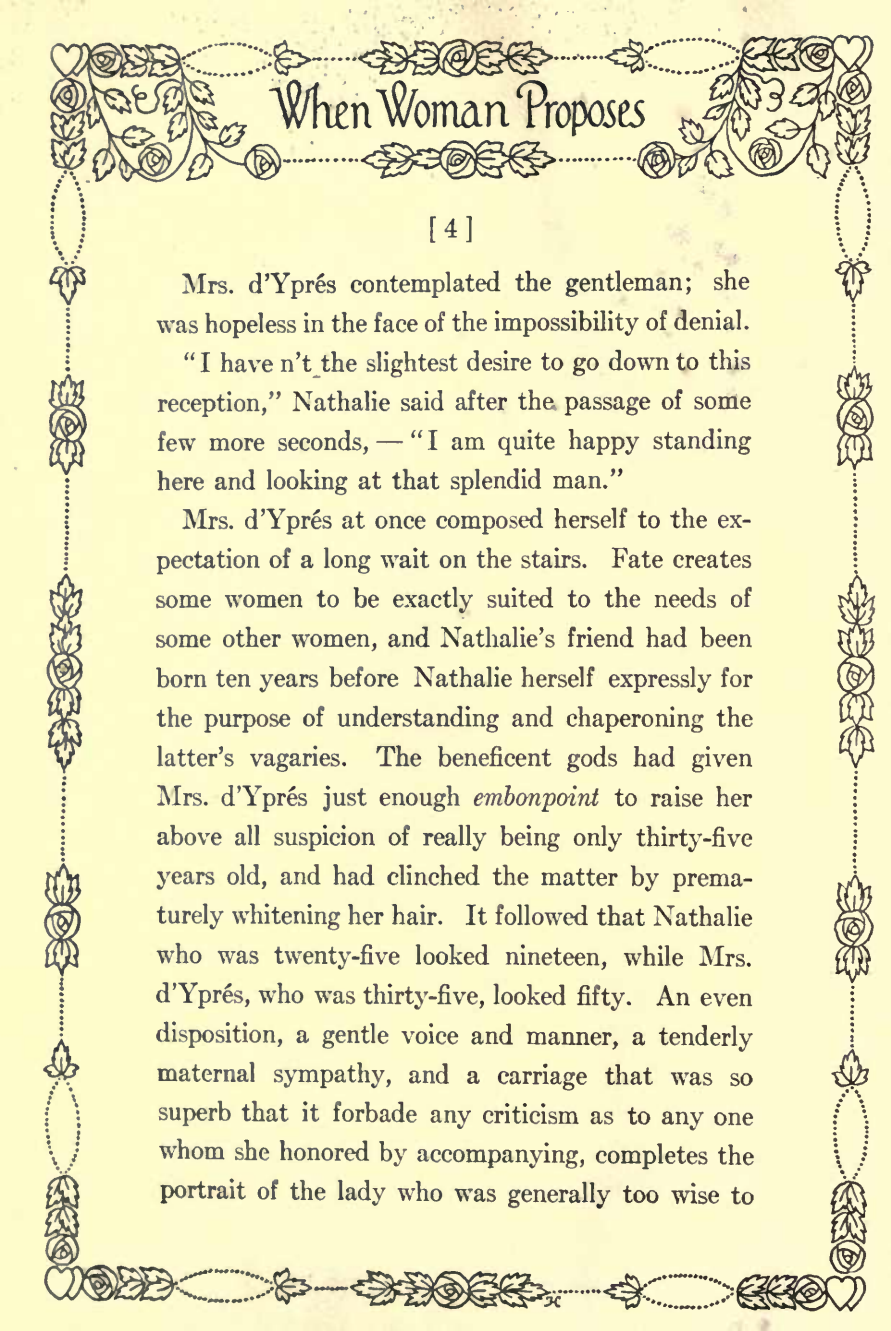
“The very tall man with the black mustache, is it not?”

“Yes.”

“Certainly, I see him now.”

There was a brief pause and then —

“He is the best-looking man that I have ever seen in all my life,” said the younger woman.



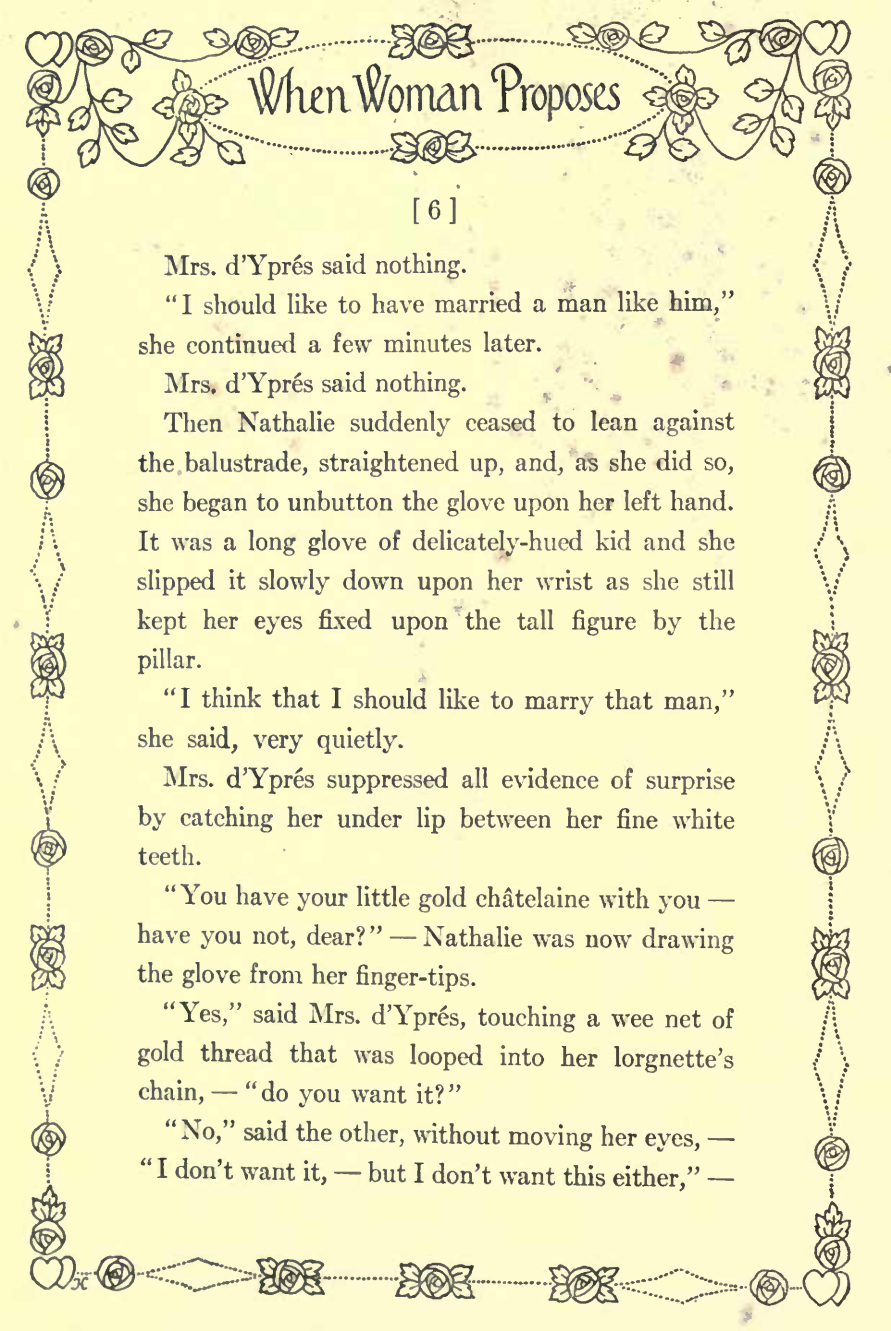
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Mrs. d'Yprés contemplated the gentleman; she was hopeless in the face of the impossibility of denial.

"I have n't the slightest desire to go down to this reception," Nathalie said after the passage of some few more seconds, — "I am quite happy standing here and looking at that splendid man."

Mrs. d'Yprés at once composed herself to the expectation of a long wait on the stairs. Fate creates some women to be exactly suited to the needs of some other women, and Nathalie's friend had been born ten years before Nathalie herself expressly for the purpose of understanding and chaperoning the latter's vagaries. The beneficent gods had given Mrs. d'Yprés just enough *embonpoint* to raise her above all suspicion of really being only thirty-five years old, and had clinched the matter by prematurely whitening her hair. It followed that Nathalie who was twenty-five looked nineteen, while Mrs. d'Yprés, who was thirty-five, looked fifty. An even disposition, a gentle voice and manner, a tenderly maternal sympathy, and a carriage that was so superb that it forbade any criticism as to any one whom she honored by accompanying, completes the portrait of the lady who was generally too wise to



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Mrs. d'Yprés said nothing.

"I should like to have married a man like him," she continued a few minutes later.

Mrs. d'Yprés said nothing.

Then Nathalie suddenly ceased to lean against the balustrade, straightened up, and, as she did so, she began to unbutton the glove upon her left hand. It was a long glove of delicately-hued kid and she slipped it slowly down upon her wrist as she still kept her eyes fixed upon the tall figure by the pillar.

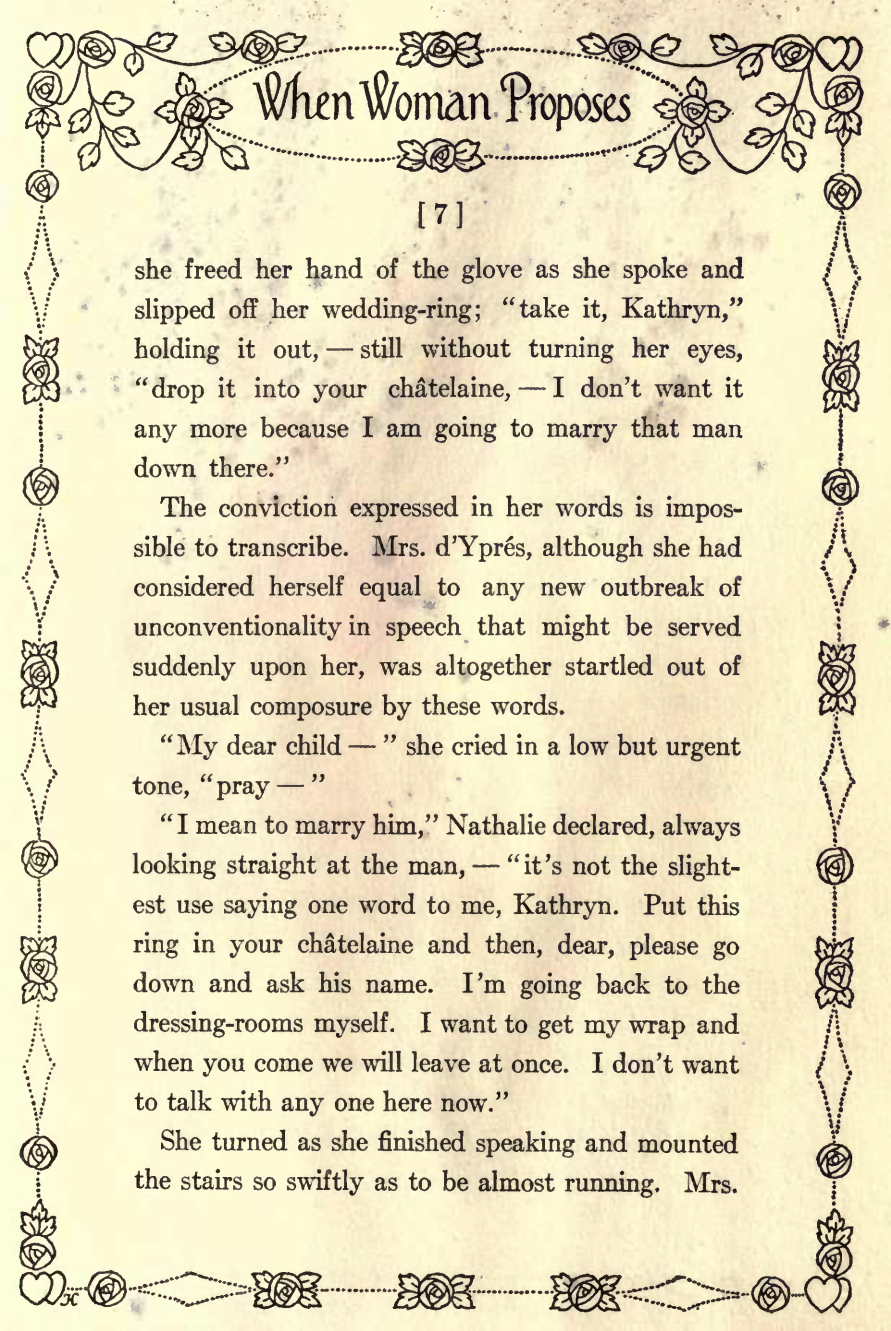
"I think that I should like to marry that man," she said, very quietly.

Mrs. d'Yprés suppressed all evidence of surprise by catching her under lip between her fine white teeth.

"You have your little gold *châtelaine* with you — have you not, dear?" — Nathalie was now drawing the glove from her finger-tips.

"Yes," said Mrs. d'Yprés, touching a wee net of gold thread that was looped into her lorgnette's chain, — "do you want it?"

"No," said the other, without moving her eyes, — "I don't want it, — but I don't want this either," —



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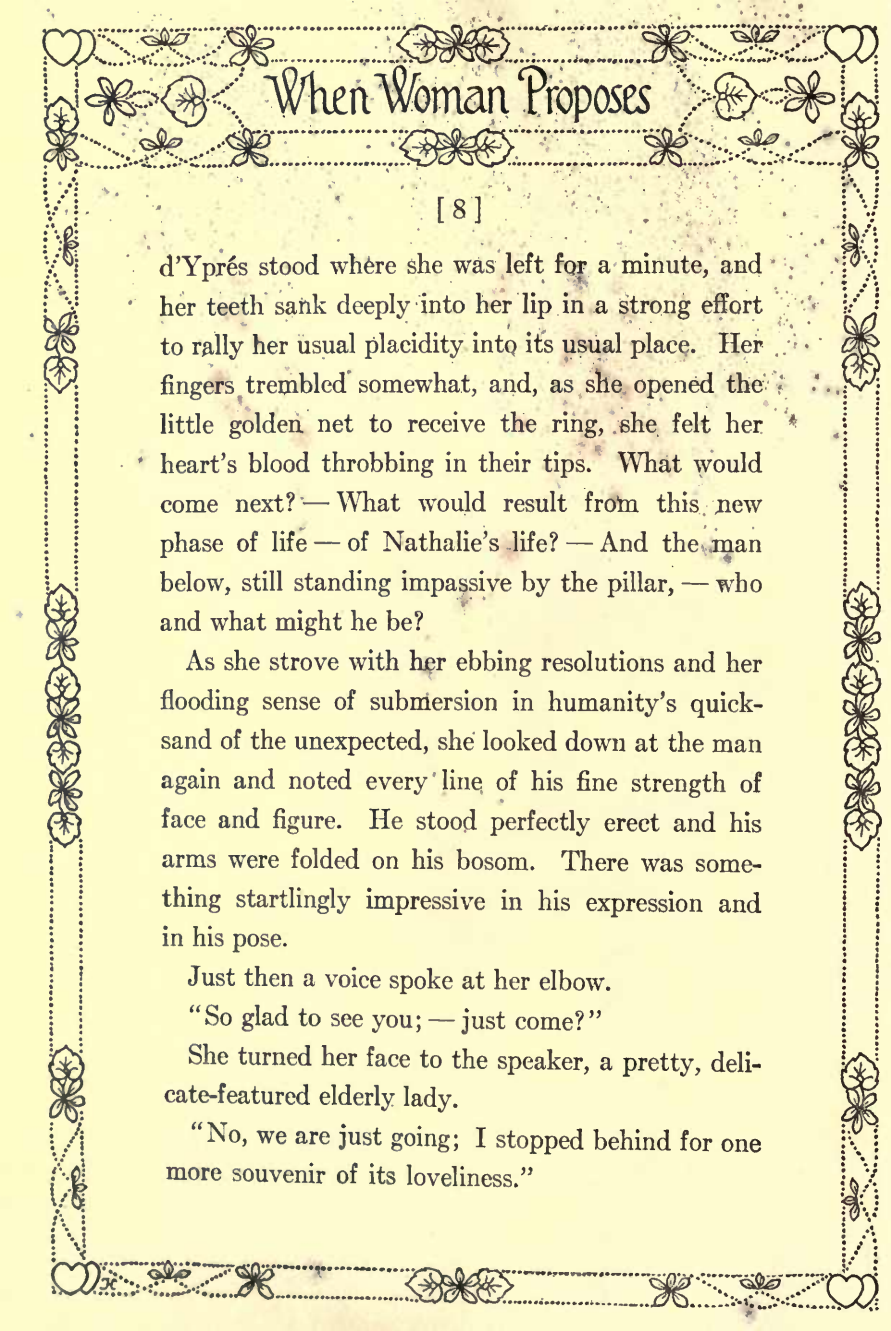
she freed her hand of the glove as she spoke and slipped off her wedding-ring; "take it, Kathryn," holding it out, — still without turning her eyes, "drop it into your châtelaine, — I don't want it any more because I am going to marry that man down there."

The conviction expressed in her words is impossible to transcribe. Mrs. d'Yprés, although she had considered herself equal to any new outbreak of unconventionality in speech that might be served suddenly upon her, was altogether startled out of her usual composure by these words.

"My dear child —" she cried in a low but urgent tone, "pray —"

"I mean to marry him," Nathalie declared, always looking straight at the man, — "it's not the slightest use saying one word to me, Kathryn. Put this ring in your châtelaine and then, dear, please go down and ask his name. I'm going back to the dressing-rooms myself. I want to get my wrap and when you come we will leave at once. I don't want to talk with any one here now."

She turned as she finished speaking and mounted the stairs so swiftly as to be almost running. Mrs.



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d'Yprés stood where she was left for a minute, and her teeth sank deeply into her lip in a strong effort to rally her usual placidity into its usual place. Her fingers trembled somewhat, and, as she opened the little golden net to receive the ring, she felt her heart's blood throbbing in their tips. What would come next? — What would result from this new phase of life — of Nathalie's life? — And the man below, still standing impassive by the pillar, — who and what might he be?

As she strove with her ebbing resolutions and her flooding sense of submersion in humanity's quicksand of the unexpected, she looked down at the man again and noted every line of his fine strength of face and figure. He stood perfectly erect and his arms were folded on his bosom. There was something startlingly impressive in his expression and in his pose.

Just then a voice spoke at her elbow.

“So glad to see you; — just come?”

She turned her face to the speaker, a pretty, delicate-featured elderly lady.

“No, we are just going; I stopped behind for one more souvenir of its loveliness.”



*There was something
startlingly impressive in his
expression and in his pose.*

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The other smiled and put up her glass.

"Tell me," said Kathryn d'Yprés, "do you know who that gentleman by the pillar is? — He looks so very interesting."

"Know him —" the elderly lady looked vaguely in the direction indicated — "oh!" (she saw who it was suddenly) — "why, of course I know him. He's a sort of distant connection of ours, — Francis Mowbray, you know."

"Does he live here?" Mrs. d'Yprés asked.

"Dear me, no; — he lives wherever they send him. He's an officer in the army, — a captain in the X—th."

Mrs. d'Yprés' eyes moved to the man's face.

"He's good-looking, is n't he?" said his relative. — "Come and take tea with me Thursday and perhaps I can persuade him to come too. He's really interesting if you can get him to talk. He is to be here a fortnight, I believe. Cuthbert will know. Bring Mrs. Arundel with you. How is she? — Dear me, I *must* go. — His name is Francis Mowbray I said, you know, — Thursday — don't forget. — Good-bye."

Mrs. d'Yprés went slowly back up the stairs to

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Nathalie, whom she found standing by a window, watching the carriages come and go, with eyes that saw nothing for the moment.

The eyes saw the friend readily enough, however, and brightened perceptibly.

“Oh, Kathryn, you’ve found out his name. I see it in your face.”

“Yes, I — ”

“What is it?”

“Francis Mowbray; he’s — ”

“Does he live here?”

“No, he — ”

“Where does he live?”

“He — ”

“What is he?”

“An officer in — ”

“In what, Kathryn; — do speak quicker.”

“In the X—th; he — ”

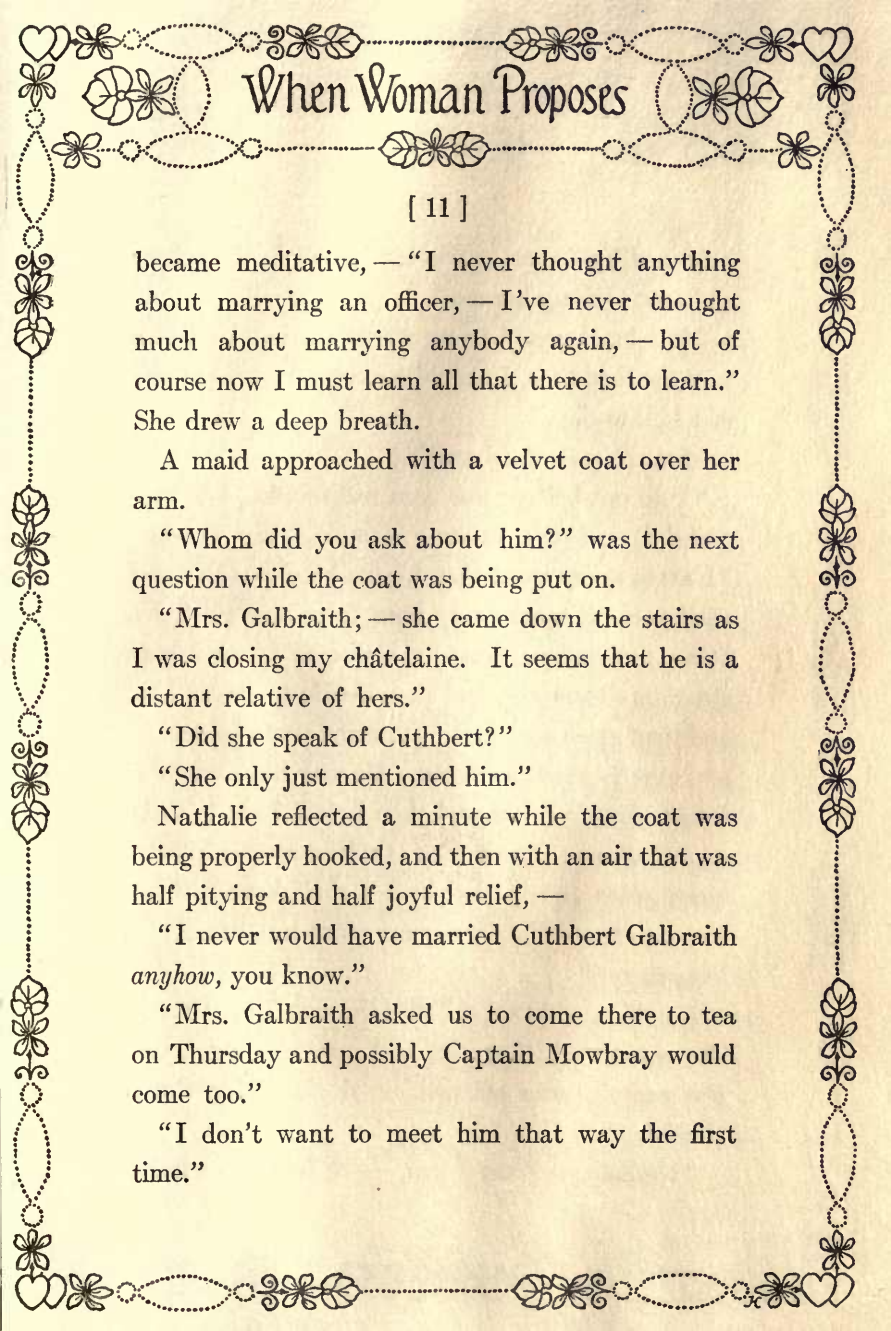
“What’s his rank?”

“He’s a captain.”

“A captain, — is that a very high position?”

“I think so.”

“A captain in the X—th, then I must learn all about the X—th, and all about the army.” Her tone



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became meditative, — “I never thought anything about marrying an officer, — I’ve never thought much about marrying anybody again, — but of course now I must learn all that there is to learn.” She drew a deep breath.

A maid approached with a velvet coat over her arm.

“Whom did you ask about him?” was the next question while the coat was being put on.

“Mrs. Galbraith; — she came down the stairs as I was closing my *châtelaine*. It seems that he is a distant relative of hers.”

“Did she speak of Cuthbert?”

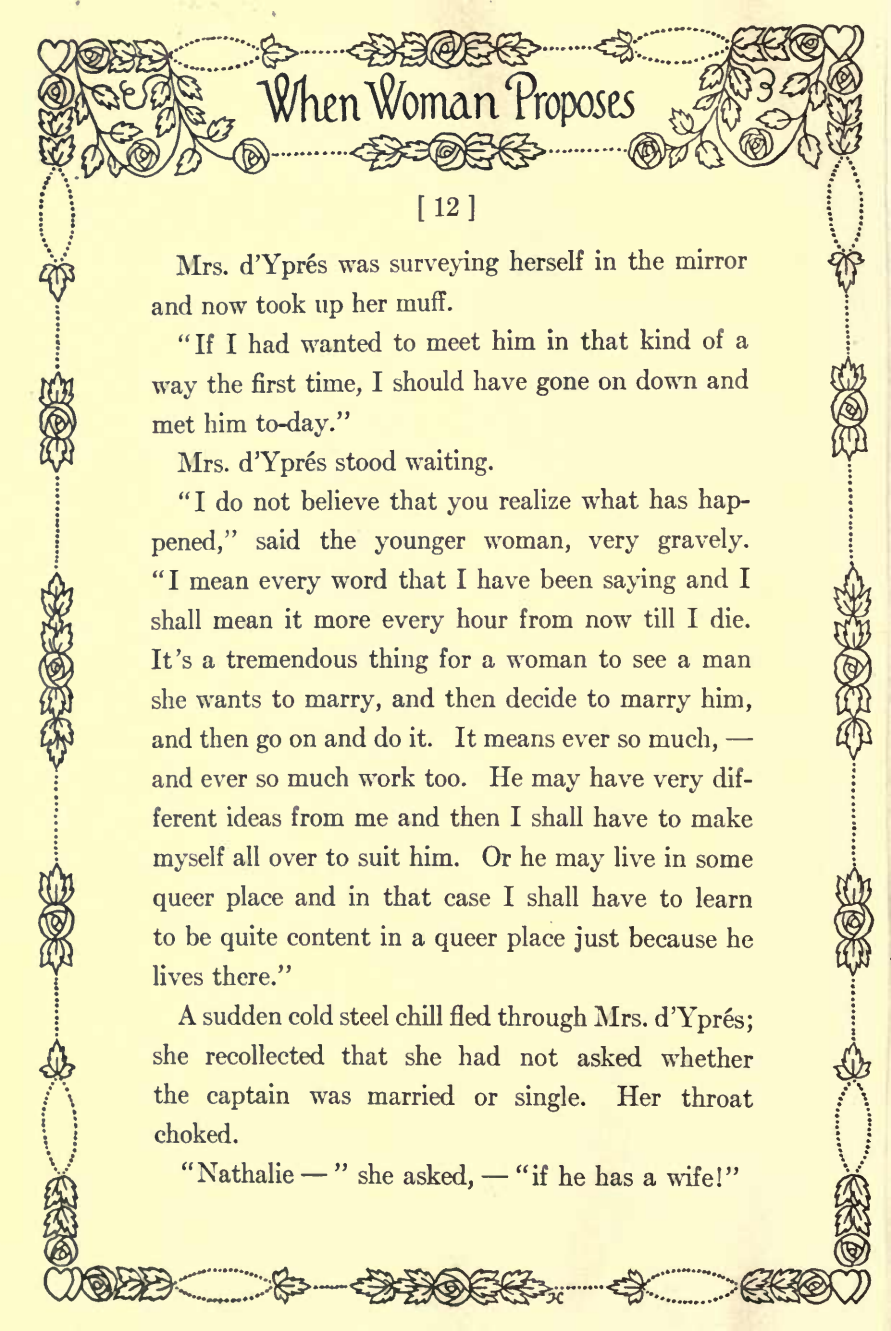
“She only just mentioned him.”

Nathalie reflected a minute while the coat was being properly hooked, and then with an air that was half pitying and half joyful relief, —

“I never would have married Cuthbert Galbraith *anyhow*, you know.”

“Mrs. Galbraith asked us to come there to tea on Thursday and possibly Captain Mowbray would come too.”

“I don’t want to meet him that way the first time.”



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Mrs. d'Yprés was surveying herself in the mirror and now took up her muff.

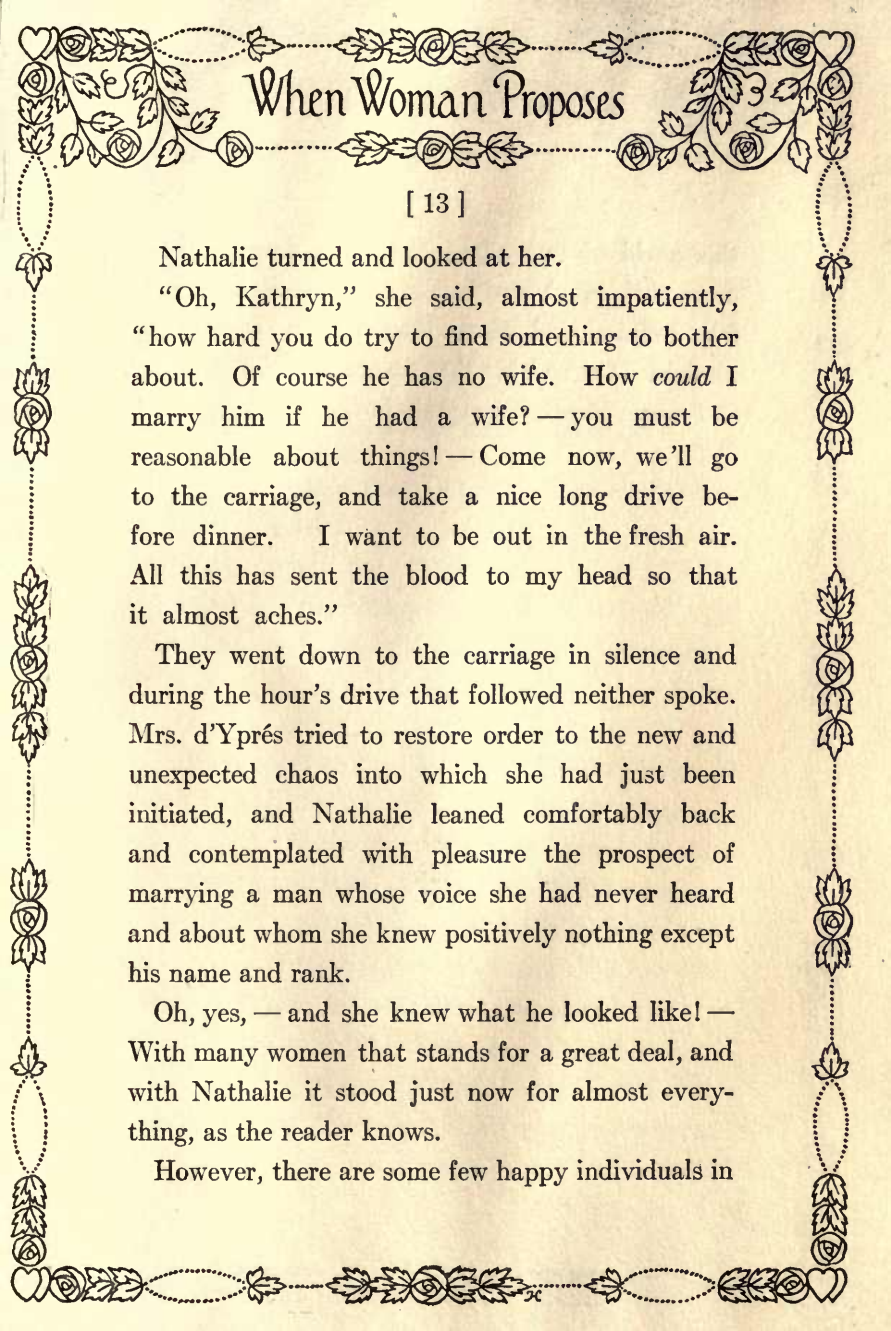
"If I had wanted to meet him in that kind of a way the first time, I should have gone on down and met him to-day."

Mrs. d'Yprés stood waiting.

"I do not believe that you realize what has happened," said the younger woman, very gravely. "I mean every word that I have been saying and I shall mean it more every hour from now till I die. It's a tremendous thing for a woman to see a man she wants to marry, and then decide to marry him, and then go on and do it. It means ever so much, — and ever so much work too. He may have very different ideas from me and then I shall have to make myself all over to suit him. Or he may live in some queer place and in that case I shall have to learn to be quite content in a queer place just because he lives there."

A sudden cold steel chill fled through Mrs. d'Yprés; she recollected that she had not asked whether the captain was married or single. Her throat choked.

"Nathalie —" she asked, — "if he has a wife!"



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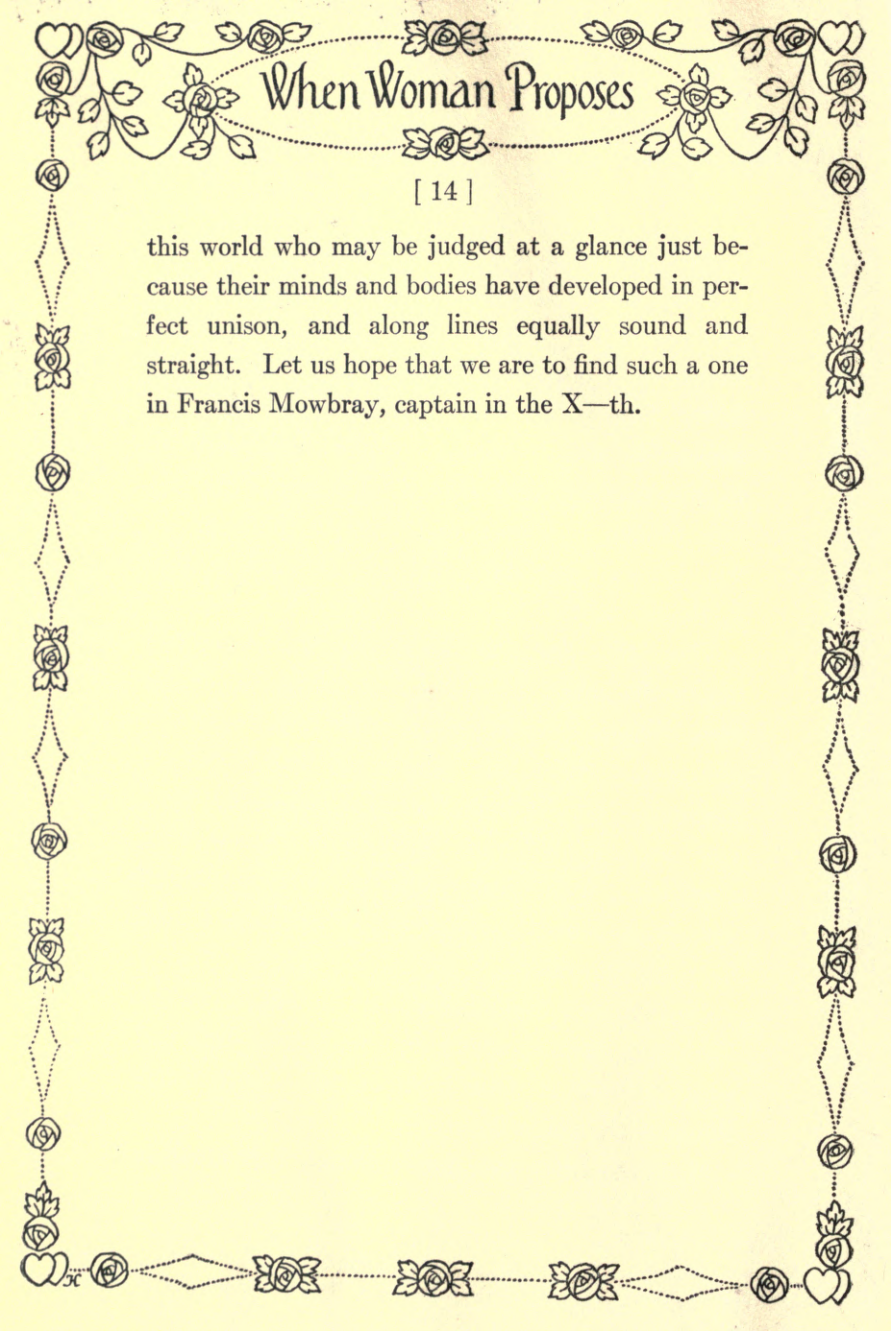
Nathalie turned and looked at her.

“Oh, Kathryn,” she said, almost impatiently, “how hard you do try to find something to bother about. Of course he has no wife. How *could* I marry him if he had a wife?—you must be reasonable about things!—Come now, we’ll go to the carriage, and take a nice long drive before dinner. I want to be out in the fresh air. All this has sent the blood to my head so that it almost aches.”

They went down to the carriage in silence and during the hour’s drive that followed neither spoke. Mrs. d’Yprés tried to restore order to the new and unexpected chaos into which she had just been initiated, and Nathalie leaned comfortably back and contemplated with pleasure the prospect of marrying a man whose voice she had never heard and about whom she knew positively nothing except his name and rank.

Oh, yes, — and she knew what he looked like! — With many women that stands for a great deal, and with Nathalie it stood just now for almost everything, as the reader knows.

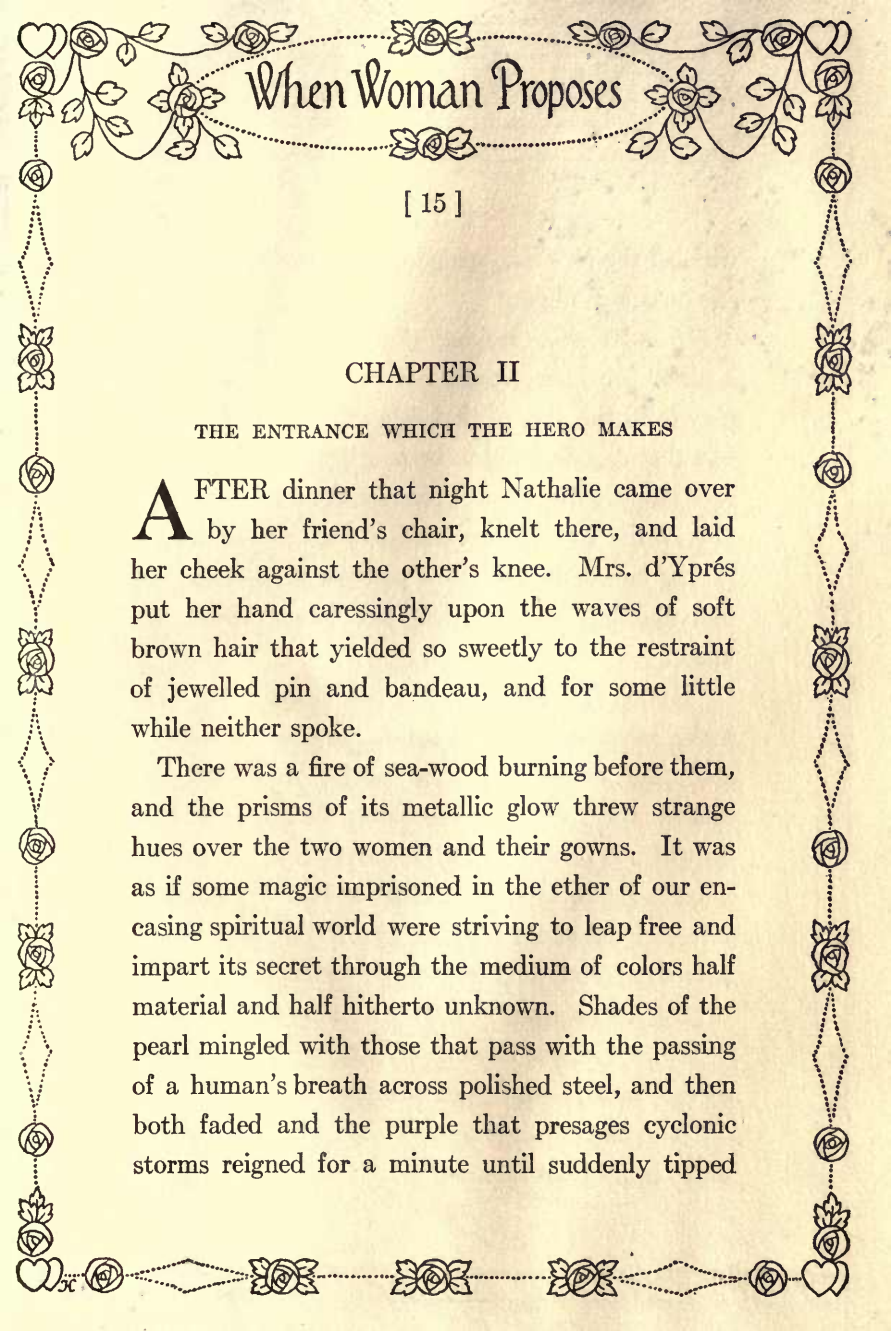
However, there are some few happy individuals in



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this world who may be judged at a glance just because their minds and bodies have developed in perfect unison, and along lines equally sound and straight. Let us hope that we are to find such a one in Francis Mowbray, captain in the X—th.



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CHAPTER II

THE ENTRANCE WHICH THE HERO MAKES

AFTER dinner that night Nathalie came over by her friend's chair, knelt there, and laid her cheek against the other's knee. Mrs. d'Yprés put her hand caressingly upon the waves of soft brown hair that yielded so sweetly to the restraint of jewelled pin and bandeau, and for some little while neither spoke.

There was a fire of sea-wood burning before them, and the prisms of its metallic glow threw strange hues over the two women and their gowns. It was as if some magic imprisoned in the ether of our encasing spiritual world were striving to leap free and impart its secret through the medium of colors half material and half hitherto unknown. Shades of the pearl mingled with those that pass with the passing of a human's breath across polished steel, and then both faded and the purple that presages cyclonic storms reigned for a minute until suddenly tipped

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with all the shooting splendors of the Aurora Borealis on a zero night.

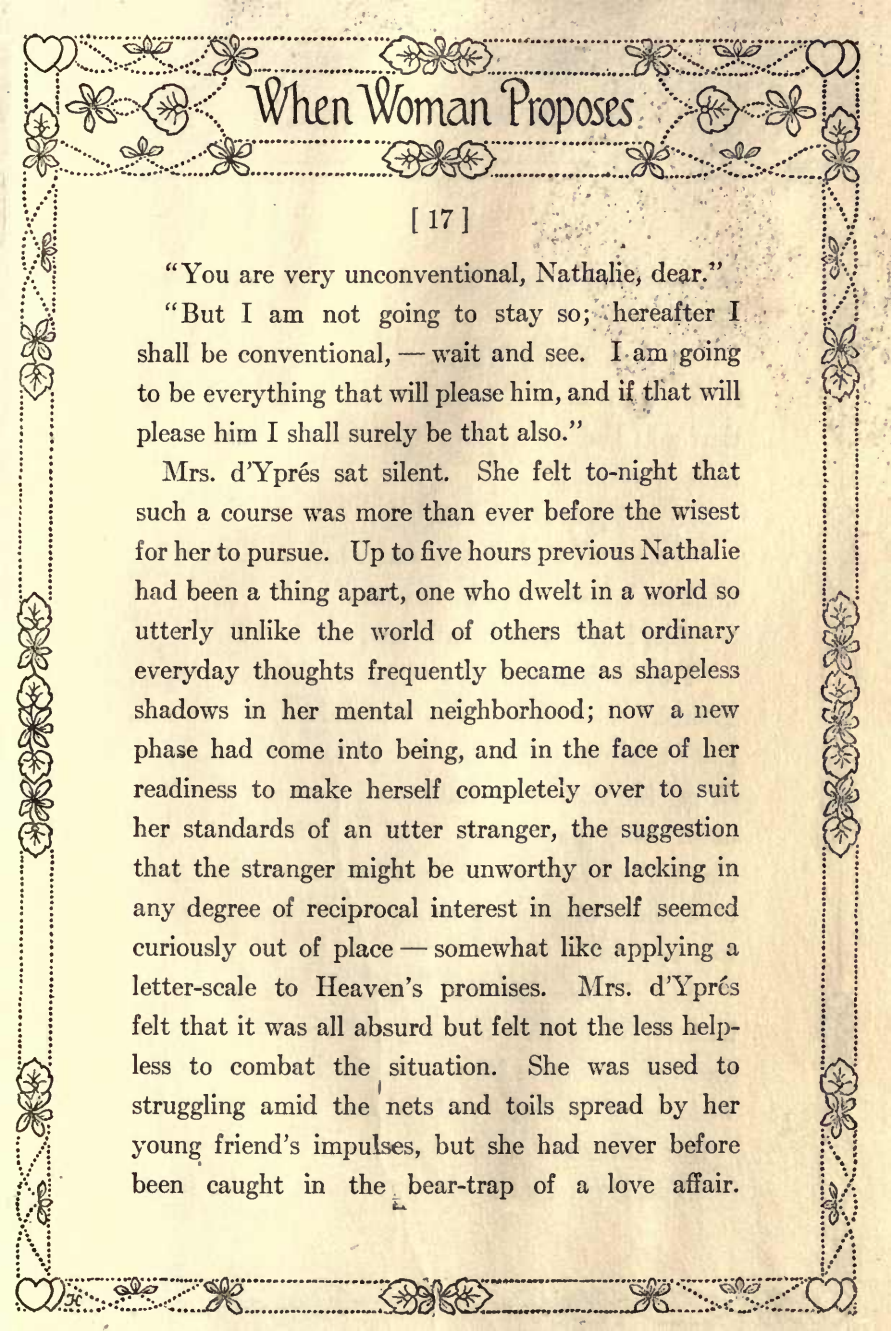
Mrs. d'Yprés, looking downward at the face against her knee, could not distinguish the fire's play from the play of that other fire which Nathalie had that day declared to be new lighted. The latter was unwontedly quiet — but in the end she spoke first of the two. She ceased to lean as she did so, raising herself instead to a position of unsupported individuality, and clasping her hands about her knees.

“Kathryn,” she said, “he has already begun to make me over. He is making me see my faults and want to cure them as quickly as I can. He looked very, very conventional; that means that he will not like anything unconventional in me. I must begin to be conventional at once. I must be conventional about meeting him.” She paused and looked earnestly and inquiringly at her friend.

Mrs. d'Yprés smiled a little — a very little.

“If he does not like unconventionality, my dear,” — she began, — and then stopped.

“You mean that if he does not like unconventionality, he will not like me?”



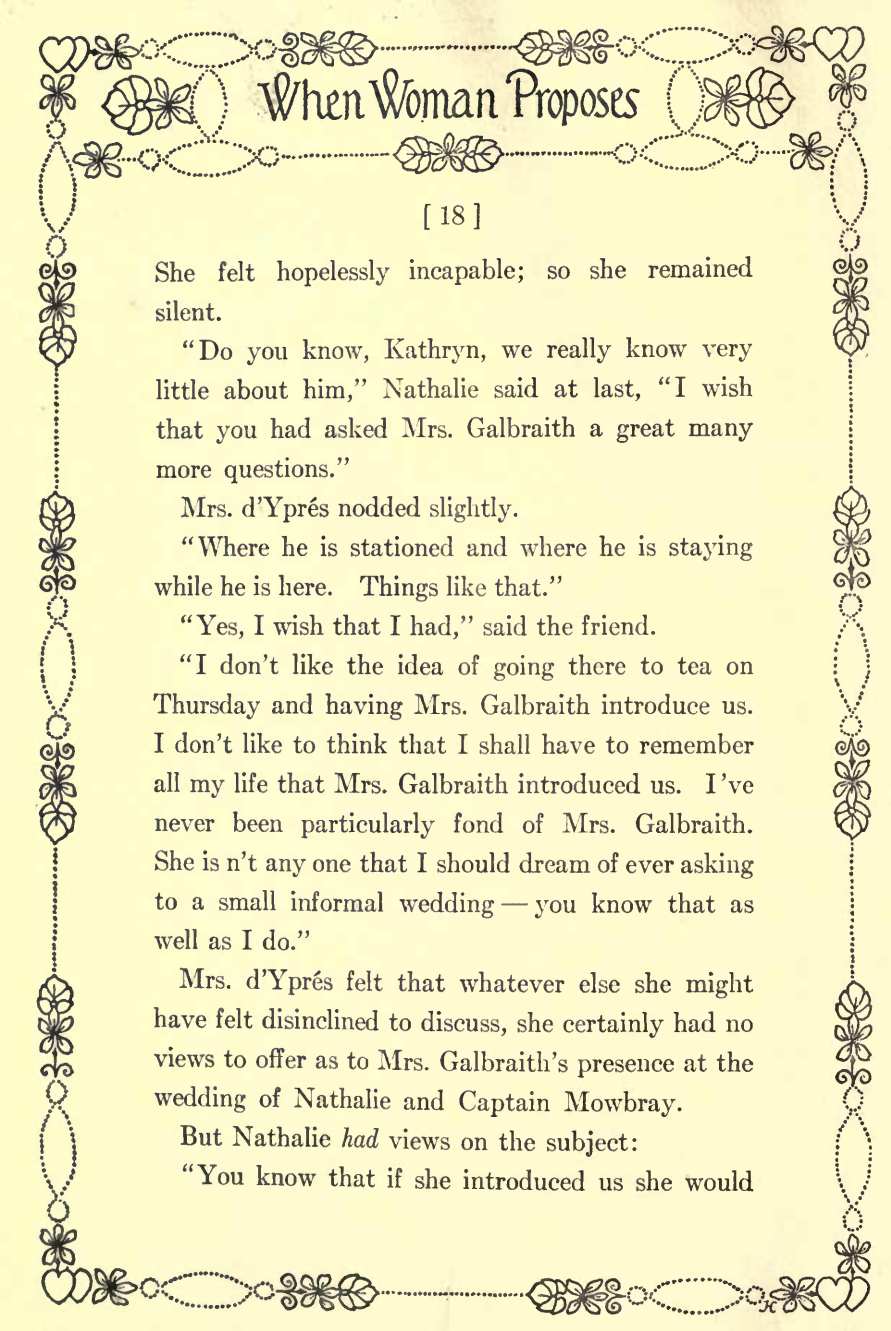
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“You are very unconventional, Nathalie, dear.”

“But I am not going to stay so; hereafter I shall be conventional, — wait and see. I am going to be everything that will please him, and if that will please him I shall surely be that also.”

Mrs. d'Yprés sat silent. She felt to-night that such a course was more than ever before the wisest for her to pursue. Up to five hours previous Nathalie had been a thing apart, one who dwelt in a world so utterly unlike the world of others that ordinary everyday thoughts frequently became as shapeless shadows in her mental neighborhood; now a new phase had come into being, and in the face of her readiness to make herself completely over to suit her standards of an utter stranger, the suggestion that the stranger might be unworthy or lacking in any degree of reciprocal interest in herself seemed curiously out of place — somewhat like applying a letter-scale to Heaven's promises. Mrs. d'Yprés felt that it was all absurd but felt not the less helpless to combat the situation. She was used to struggling amid the nets and toils spread by her young friend's impulses, but she had never before been caught in the bear-trap of a love affair.



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She felt hopelessly incapable; so she remained silent.

“Do you know, Kathryn, we really know very little about him,” Nathalie said at last, “I wish that you had asked Mrs. Galbraith a great many more questions.”

Mrs. d’Yprés nodded slightly.

“Where he is stationed and where he is staying while he is here. Things like that.”

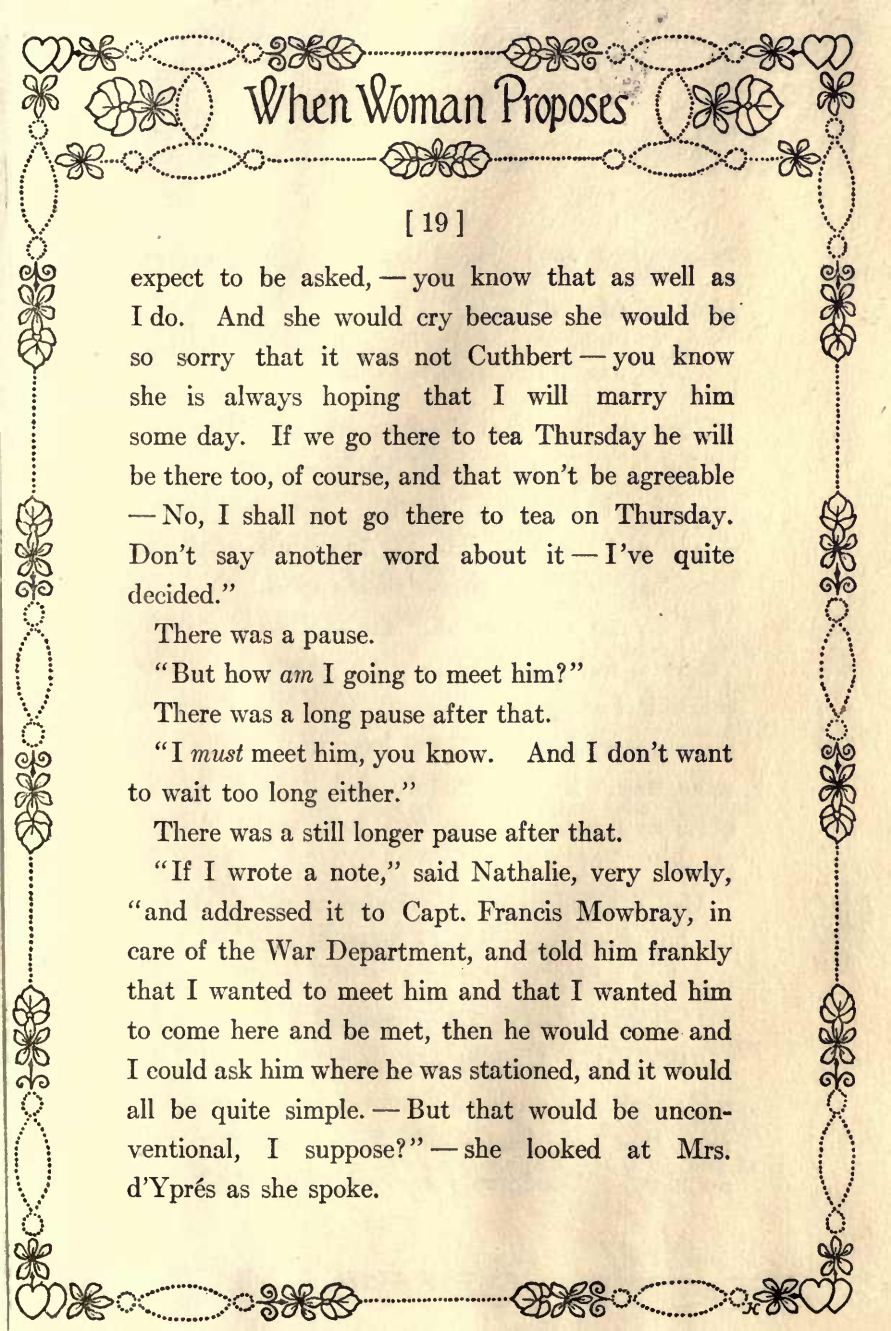
“Yes, I wish that I had,” said the friend.

“I don’t like the idea of going there to tea on Thursday and having Mrs. Galbraith introduce us. I don’t like to think that I shall have to remember all my life that Mrs. Galbraith introduced us. I’ve never been particularly fond of Mrs. Galbraith. She is n’t any one that I should dream of ever asking to a small informal wedding — you know that as well as I do.”

Mrs. d’Yprés felt that whatever else she might have felt disinclined to discuss, she certainly had no views to offer as to Mrs. Galbraith’s presence at the wedding of Nathalie and Captain Mowbray.

But Nathalie *had* views on the subject:

“You know that if she introduced us she would

A decorative border with floral and heart motifs surrounds the page. The border consists of a dotted line with various floral designs, including hearts, leaves, and flowers, interspersed along the line.

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expect to be asked, — you know that as well as I do. And she would cry because she would be so sorry that it was not Cuthbert — you know she is always hoping that I will marry him some day. If we go there to tea Thursday he will be there too, of course, and that won't be agreeable — No, I shall not go there to tea on Thursday. Don't say another word about it — I've quite decided."

There was a pause.

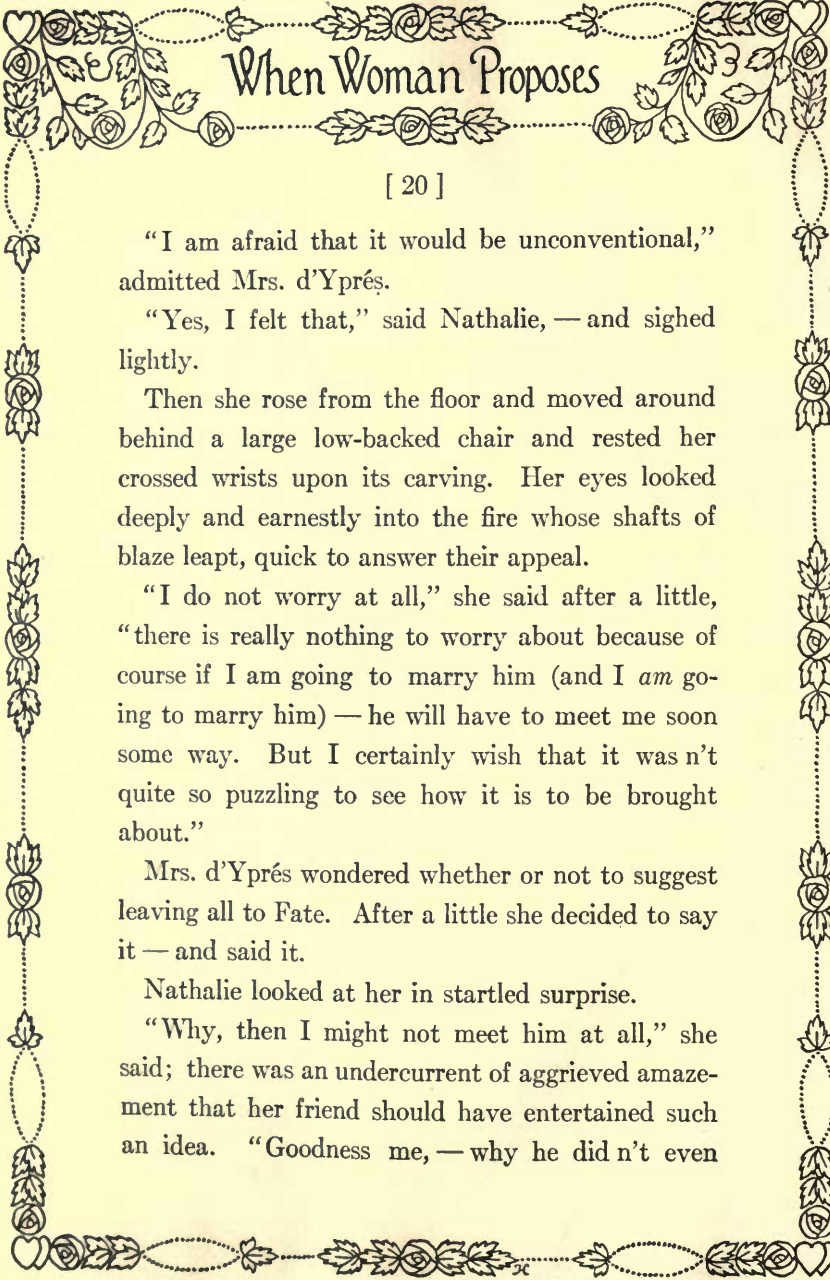
"But how *am* I going to meet him?"

There was a long pause after that.

"I *must* meet him, you know. And I don't want to wait too long either."

There was a still longer pause after that.

"If I wrote a note," said Nathalie, very slowly, "and addressed it to Capt. Francis Mowbray, in care of the War Department, and told him frankly that I wanted to meet him and that I wanted him to come here and be met, then he would come and I could ask him where he was stationed, and it would all be quite simple. — But that would be unconventional, I suppose?" — she looked at Mrs. d'Yprés as she spoke.



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"I am afraid that it would be unconventional," admitted Mrs. d'Yprés.

"Yes, I felt that," said Nathalie, — and sighed lightly.

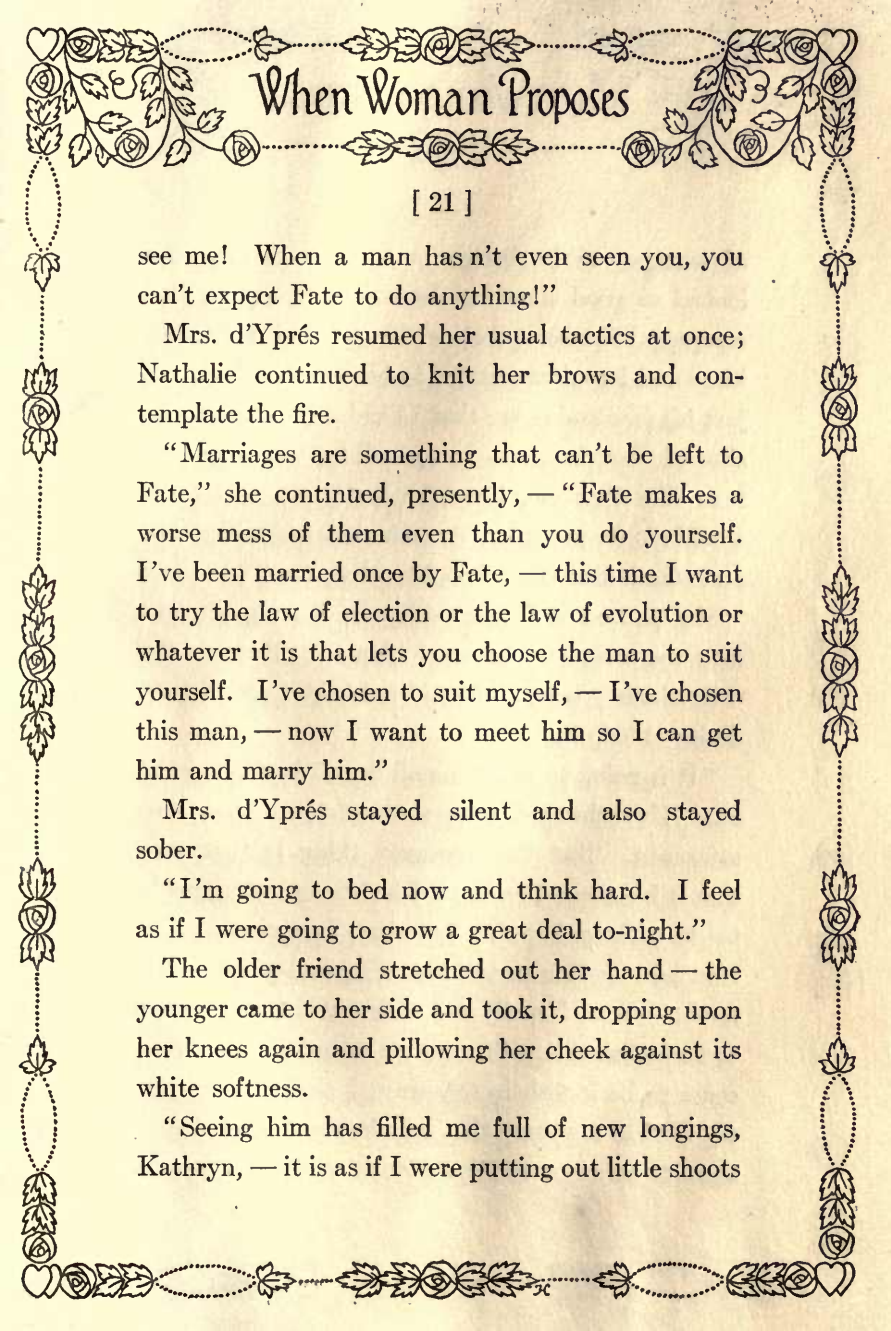
Then she rose from the floor and moved around behind a large low-backed chair and rested her crossed wrists upon its carving. Her eyes looked deeply and earnestly into the fire whose shafts of blaze leapt, quick to answer their appeal.

"I do not worry at all," she said after a little, "there is really nothing to worry about because of course if I am going to marry him (and I *am* going to marry him) — he will have to meet me soon some way. But I certainly wish that it was n't quite so puzzling to see how it is to be brought about."

Mrs. d'Yprés wondered whether or not to suggest leaving all to Fate. After a little she decided to say it — and said it.

Nathalie looked at her in startled surprise.

"Why, then I might not meet him at all," she said; there was an undercurrent of aggrieved amazement that her friend should have entertained such an idea. "Goodness me, — why he did n't even



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see me! When a man has n't even seen you, you can't expect Fate to do anything!"

Mrs. d'Yprés resumed her usual tactics at once; Nathalie continued to knit her brows and contemplate the fire.

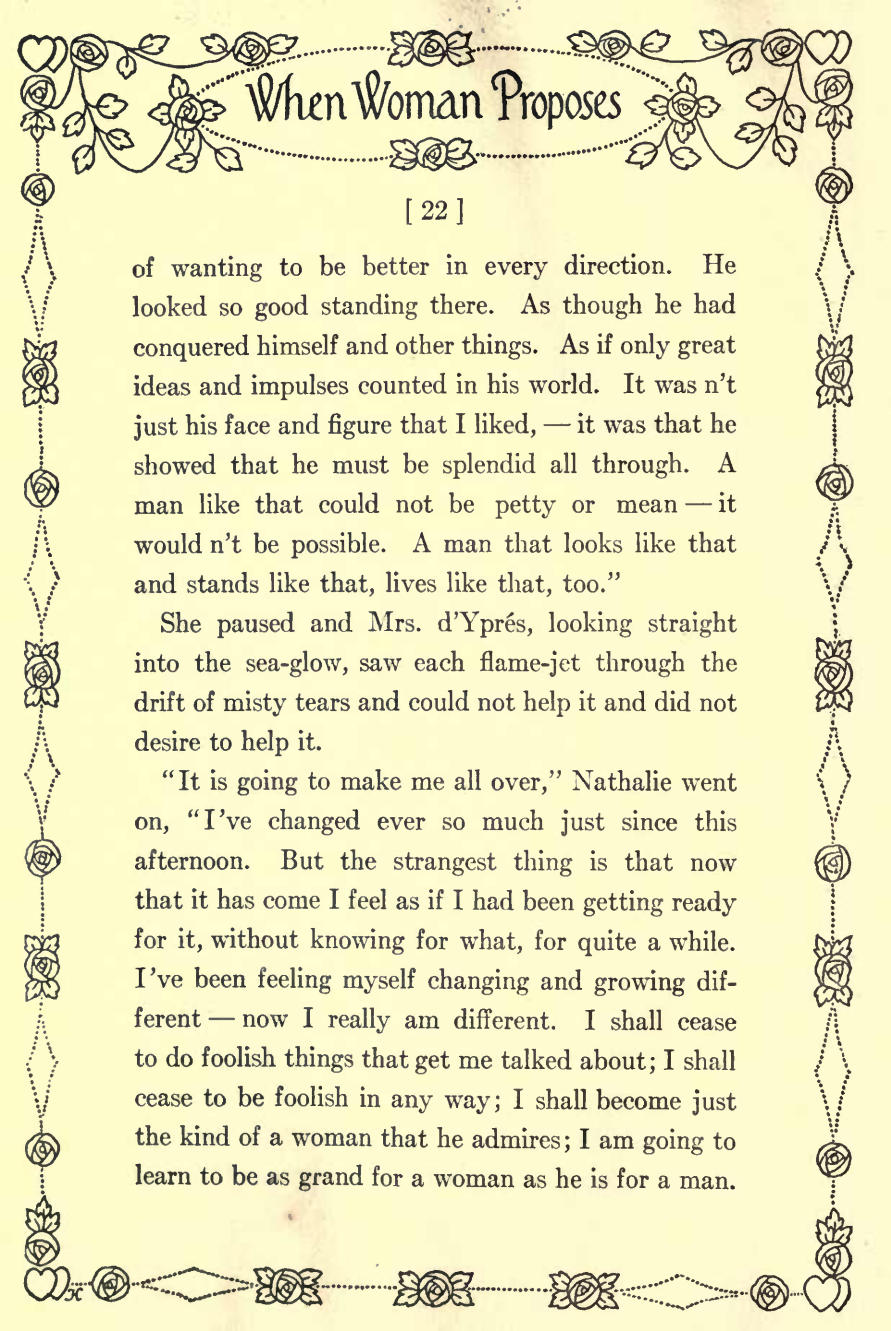
"Marriages are something that can't be left to Fate," she continued, presently, — "Fate makes a worse mess of them even than you do yourself. I've been married once by Fate, — this time I want to try the law of election or the law of evolution or whatever it is that lets you choose the man to suit yourself. I've chosen to suit myself, — I've chosen this man, — now I want to meet him so I can get him and marry him."

Mrs. d'Yprés stayed silent and also stayed sober.

"I'm going to bed now and think hard. I feel as if I were going to grow a great deal to-night."

The older friend stretched out her hand — the younger came to her side and took it, dropping upon her knees again and pillowing her cheek against its white softness.

"Seeing him has filled me full of new longings, Kathryn, — it is as if I were putting out little shoots



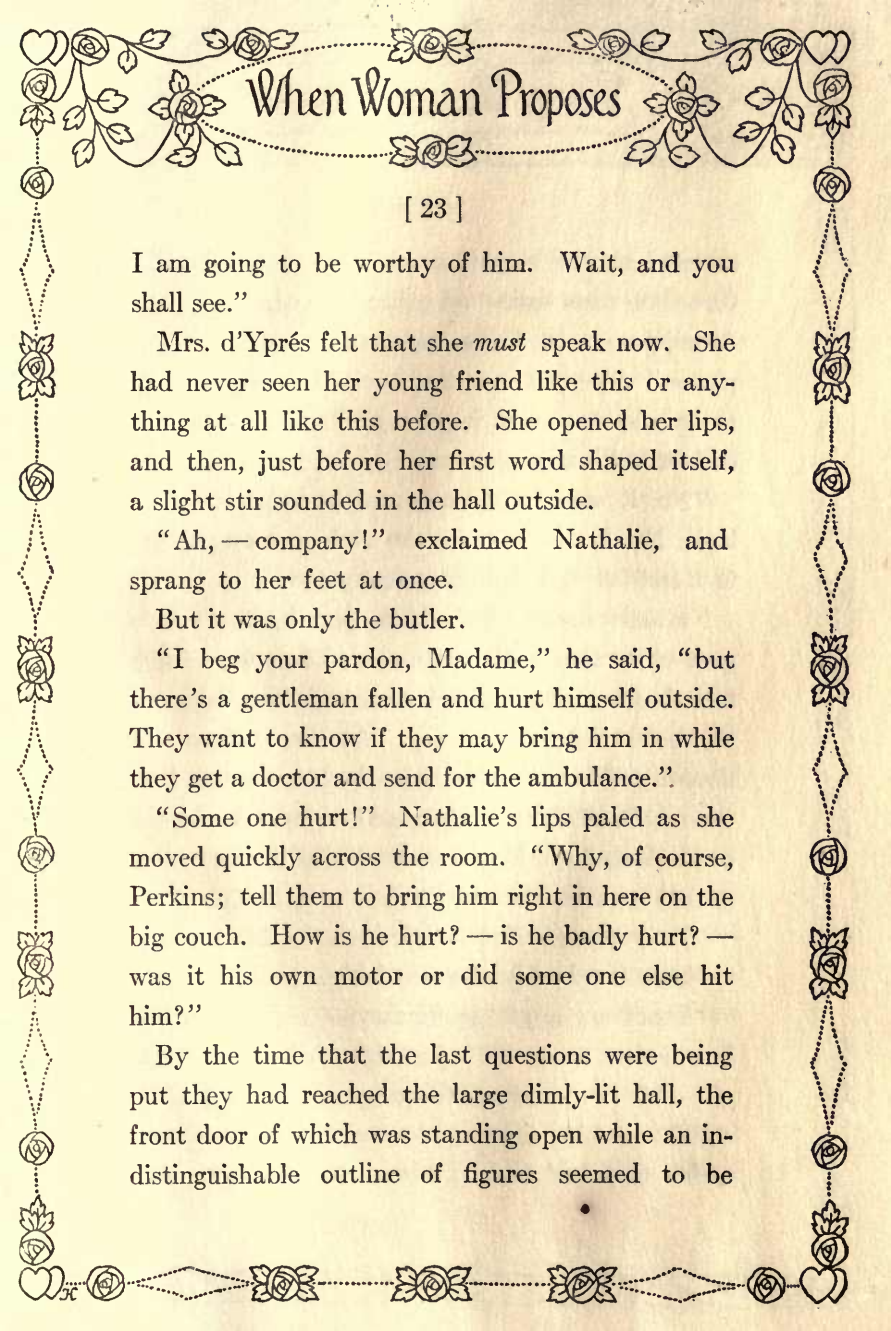
When Woman Proposes

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of wanting to be better in every direction. He looked so good standing there. As though he had conquered himself and other things. As if only great ideas and impulses counted in his world. It was n't just his face and figure that I liked, — it was that he showed that he must be splendid all through. A man like that could not be petty or mean — it would n't be possible. A man that looks like that and stands like that, lives like that, too."

She paused and Mrs. d'Yprés, looking straight into the sea-glow, saw each flame-jet through the drift of misty tears and could not help it and did not desire to help it.

"It is going to make me all over," Nathalie went on, "I've changed ever so much just since this afternoon. But the strangest thing is that now that it has come I feel as if I had been getting ready for it, without knowing for what, for quite a while. I've been feeling myself changing and growing different — now I really am different. I shall cease to do foolish things that get me talked about; I shall cease to be foolish in any way; I shall become just the kind of a woman that he admires; I am going to learn to be as grand for a woman as he is for a man.



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I am going to be worthy of him. Wait, and you shall see."

Mrs. d'Yprés felt that she *must* speak now. She had never seen her young friend like this or anything at all like this before. She opened her lips, and then, just before her first word shaped itself, a slight stir sounded in the hall outside.

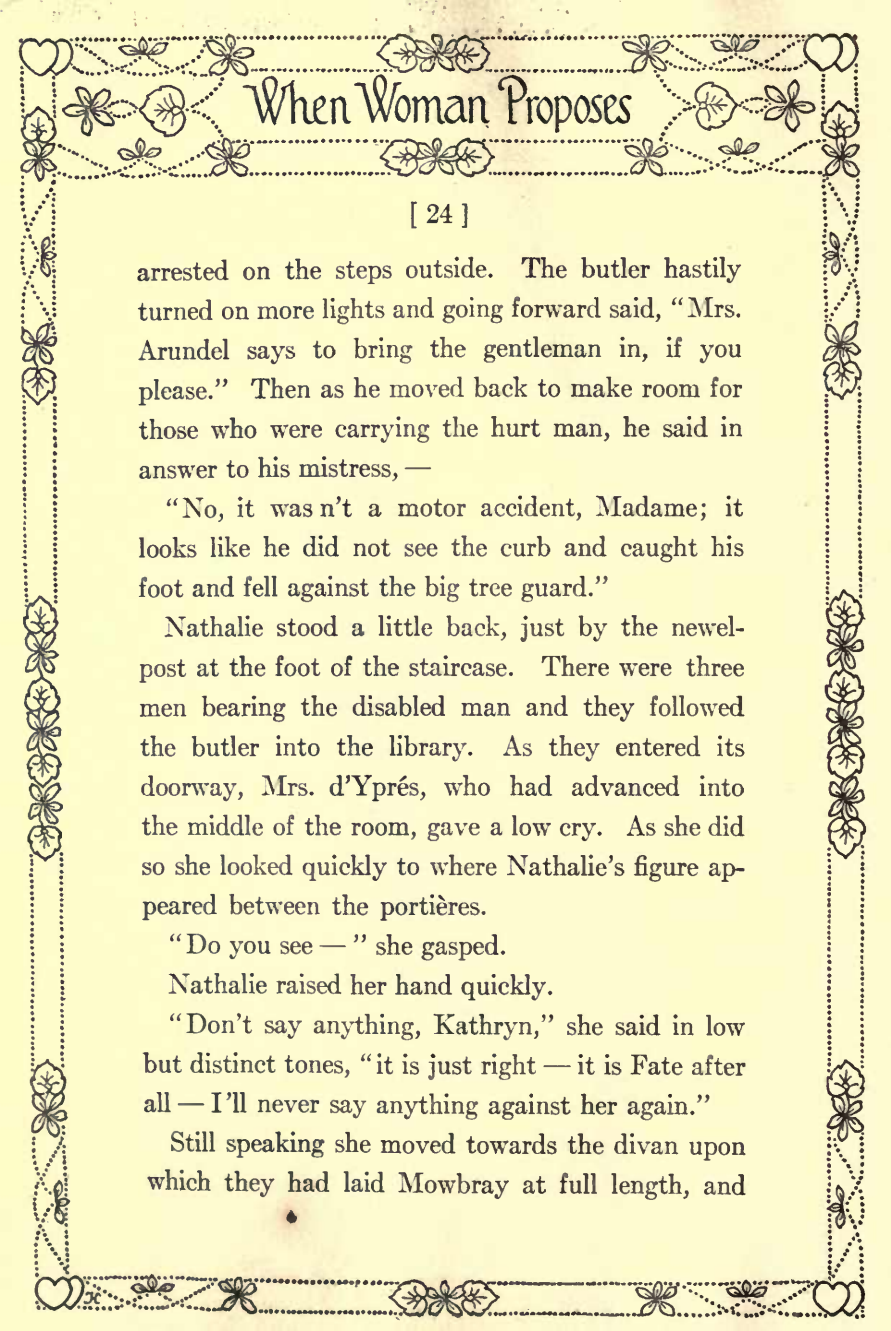
"Ah, — company!" exclaimed Nathalie, and sprang to her feet at once.

But it was only the butler.

"I beg your pardon, Madame," he said, "but there's a gentleman fallen and hurt himself outside. They want to know if they may bring him in while they get a doctor and send for the ambulance."

"Some one hurt!" Nathalie's lips paled as she moved quickly across the room. "Why, of course, Perkins; tell them to bring him right in here on the big couch. How is he hurt? — is he badly hurt? — was it his own motor or did some one else hit him?"

By the time that the last questions were being put they had reached the large dimly-lit hall, the front door of which was standing open while an indistinguishable outline of figures seemed to be



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arrested on the steps outside. The butler hastily turned on more lights and going forward said, "Mrs. Arundel says to bring the gentleman in, if you please." Then as he moved back to make room for those who were carrying the hurt man, he said in answer to his mistress, —

"No, it was n't a motor accident, Madame; it looks like he did not see the curb and caught his foot and fell against the big tree guard."

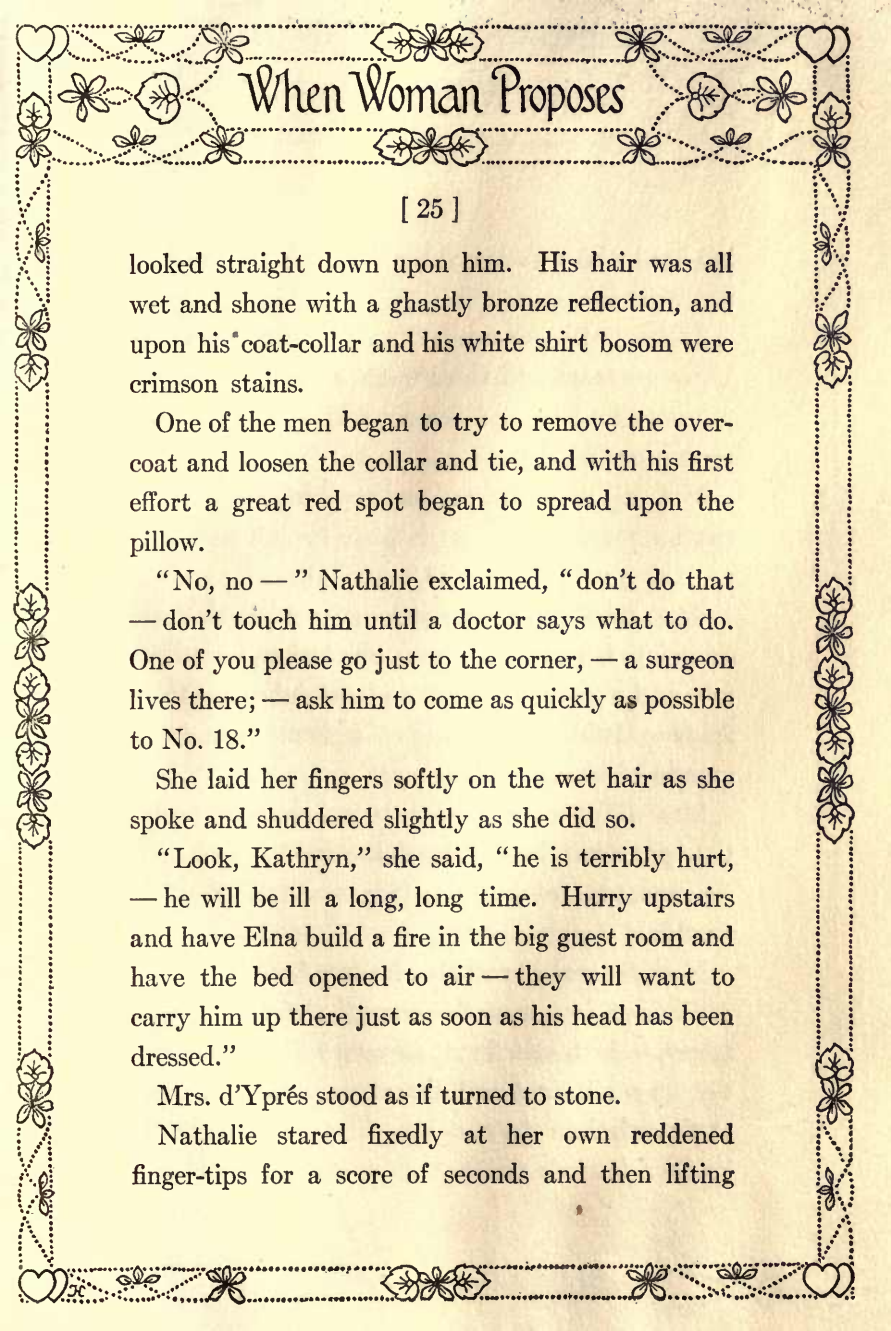
Nathalie stood a little back, just by the newel-post at the foot of the staircase. There were three men bearing the disabled man and they followed the butler into the library. As they entered its doorway, Mrs. d'Yprés, who had advanced into the middle of the room, gave a low cry. As she did so she looked quickly to where Nathalie's figure appeared between the portières.

"Do you see —" she gasped.

Nathalie raised her hand quickly.

"Don't say anything, Kathryn," she said in low but distinct tones, "it is just right — it is Fate after all — I'll never say anything against her again."

Still speaking she moved towards the divan upon which they had laid Mowbray at full length, and



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looked straight down upon him. His hair was all wet and shone with a ghastly bronze reflection, and upon his coat-collar and his white shirt bosom were crimson stains.

One of the men began to try to remove the overcoat and loosen the collar and tie, and with his first effort a great red spot began to spread upon the pillow.

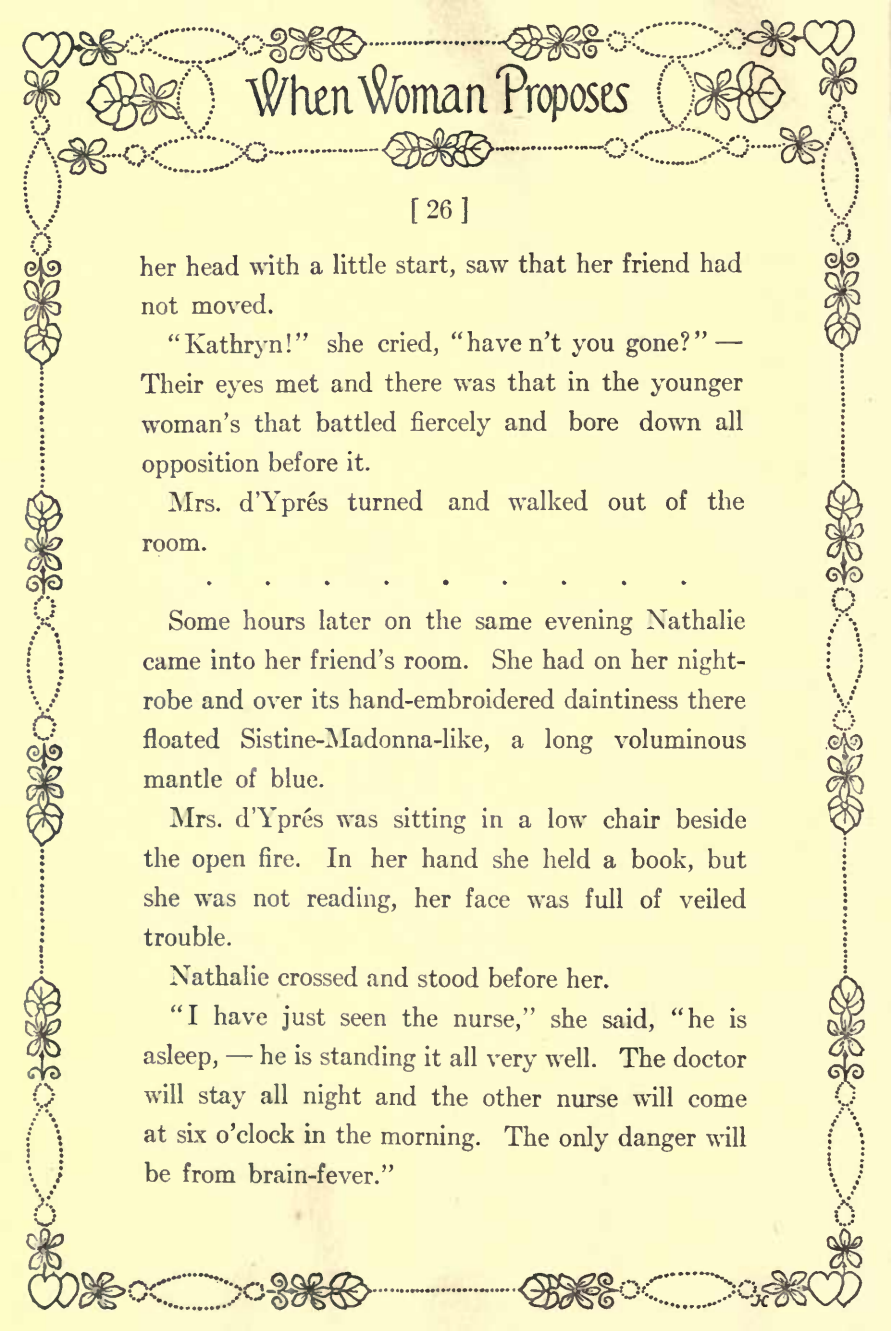
“No, no —” Nathalie exclaimed, “don’t do that — don’t touch him until a doctor says what to do. One of you please go just to the corner, — a surgeon lives there; — ask him to come as quickly as possible to No. 18.”

She laid her fingers softly on the wet hair as she spoke and shuddered slightly as she did so.

“Look, Kathryn,” she said, “he is terribly hurt, — he will be ill a long, long time. Hurry upstairs and have Elna build a fire in the big guest room and have the bed opened to air — they will want to carry him up there just as soon as his head has been dressed.”

Mrs. d’Yprés stood as if turned to stone.

Nathalie stared fixedly at her own reddened finger-tips for a score of seconds and then lifting



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her head with a little start, saw that her friend had not moved.

“Kathryn!” she cried, “have n’t you gone?” — Their eyes met and there was that in the younger woman’s that battled fiercely and bore down all opposition before it.

Mrs. d’Yprés turned and walked out of the room.

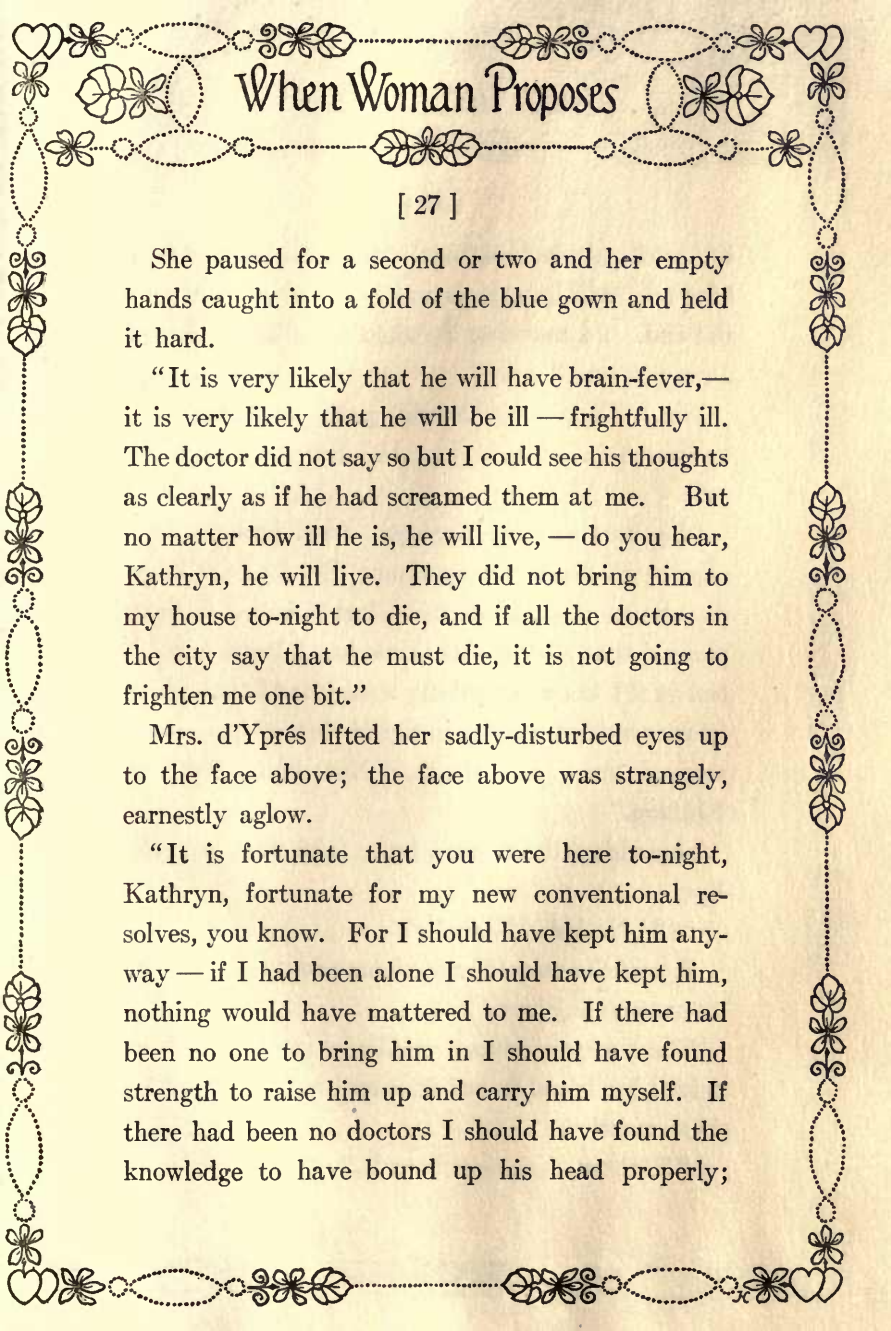
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Some hours later on the same evening Nathalie came into her friend’s room. She had on her night-robe and over its hand-embroidered daintiness there floated Sistine-Madonna-like, a long voluminous mantle of blue.

Mrs. d’Yprés was sitting in a low chair beside the open fire. In her hand she held a book, but she was not reading, her face was full of veiled trouble.

Nathalie crossed and stood before her.

“I have just seen the nurse,” she said, “he is asleep, — he is standing it all very well. The doctor will stay all night and the other nurse will come at six o’clock in the morning. The only danger will be from brain-fever.”



When Woman Proposes

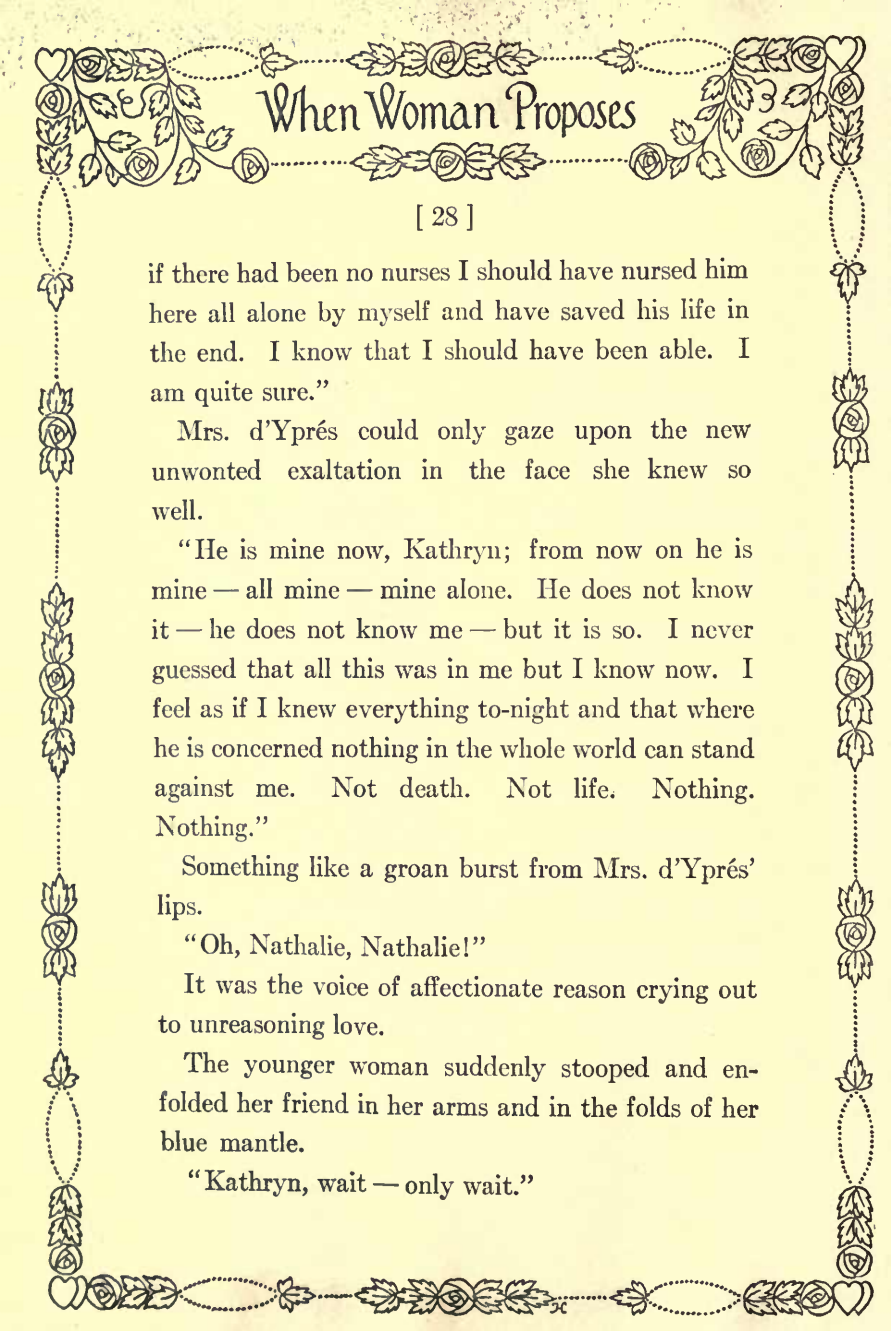
[27]

She paused for a second or two and her empty hands caught into a fold of the blue gown and held it hard.

“It is very likely that he will have brain-fever,— it is very likely that he will be ill — frightfully ill. The doctor did not say so but I could see his thoughts as clearly as if he had screamed them at me. But no matter how ill he is, he will live, — do you hear, Kathryn, he will live. They did not bring him to my house to-night to die, and if all the doctors in the city say that he must die, it is not going to frighten me one bit.”

Mrs. d'Yprés lifted her sadly-disturbed eyes up to the face above; the face above was strangely, earnestly aglow.

“It is fortunate that you were here to-night, Kathryn, fortunate for my new conventional resolves, you know. For I should have kept him anyway — if I had been alone I should have kept him, nothing would have mattered to me. If there had been no one to bring him in I should have found strength to raise him up and carry him myself. If there had been no doctors I should have found the knowledge to have bound up his head properly;



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if there had been no nurses I should have nursed him here all alone by myself and have saved his life in the end. I know that I should have been able. I am quite sure."

Mrs. d'Yprés could only gaze upon the new unwonted exaltation in the face she knew so well.

"He is mine now, Kathryn; from now on he is mine — all mine — mine alone. He does not know it — he does not know me — but it is so. I never guessed that all this was in me but I know now. I feel as if I knew everything to-night and that where he is concerned nothing in the whole world can stand against me. Not death. Not life. Nothing. Nothing."

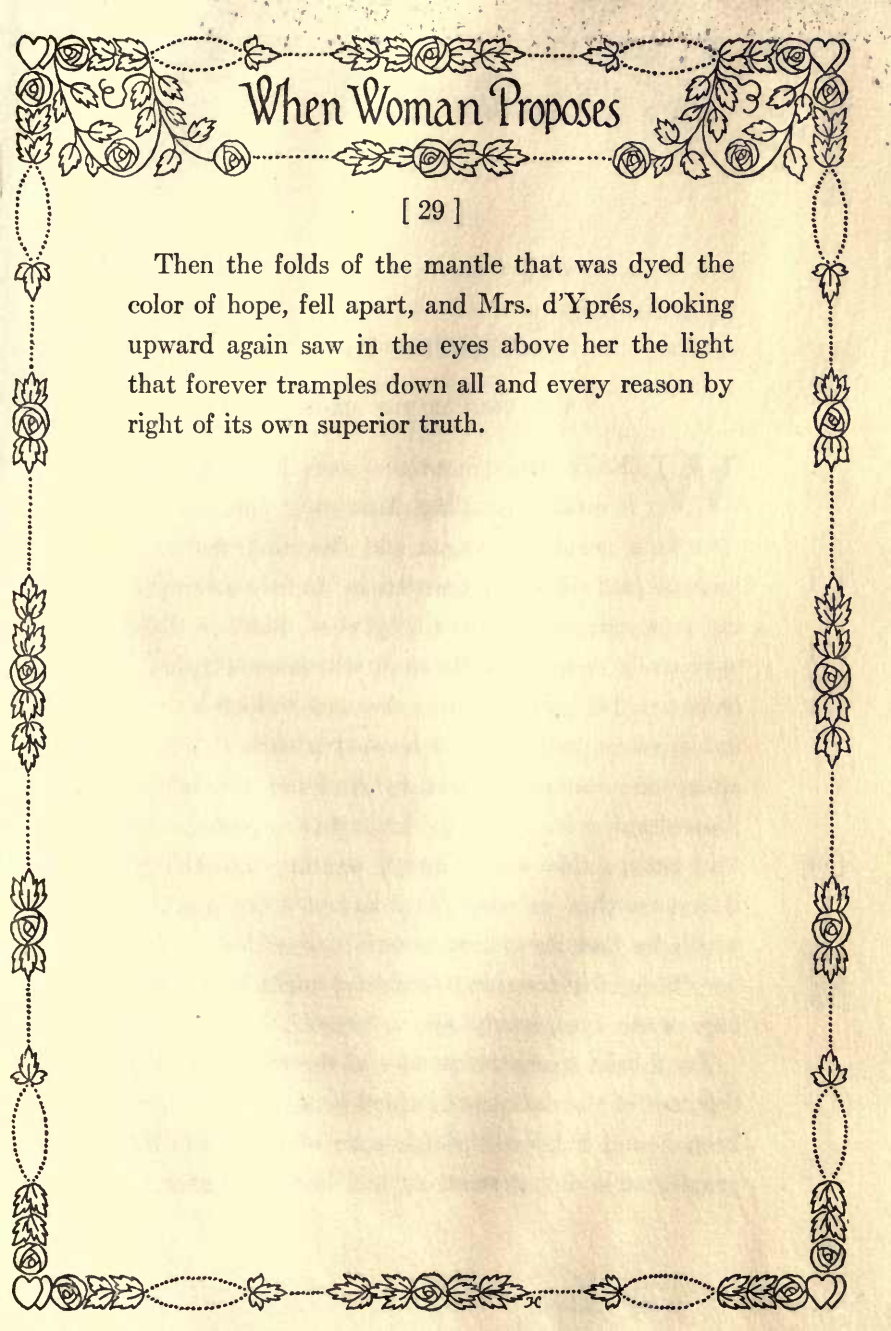
Something like a groan burst from Mrs. d'Yprés' lips.

"Oh, Nathalie, Nathalie!"

It was the voice of affectionate reason crying out to unreasoning love.

The younger woman suddenly stooped and enfolded her friend in her arms and in the folds of her blue mantle.

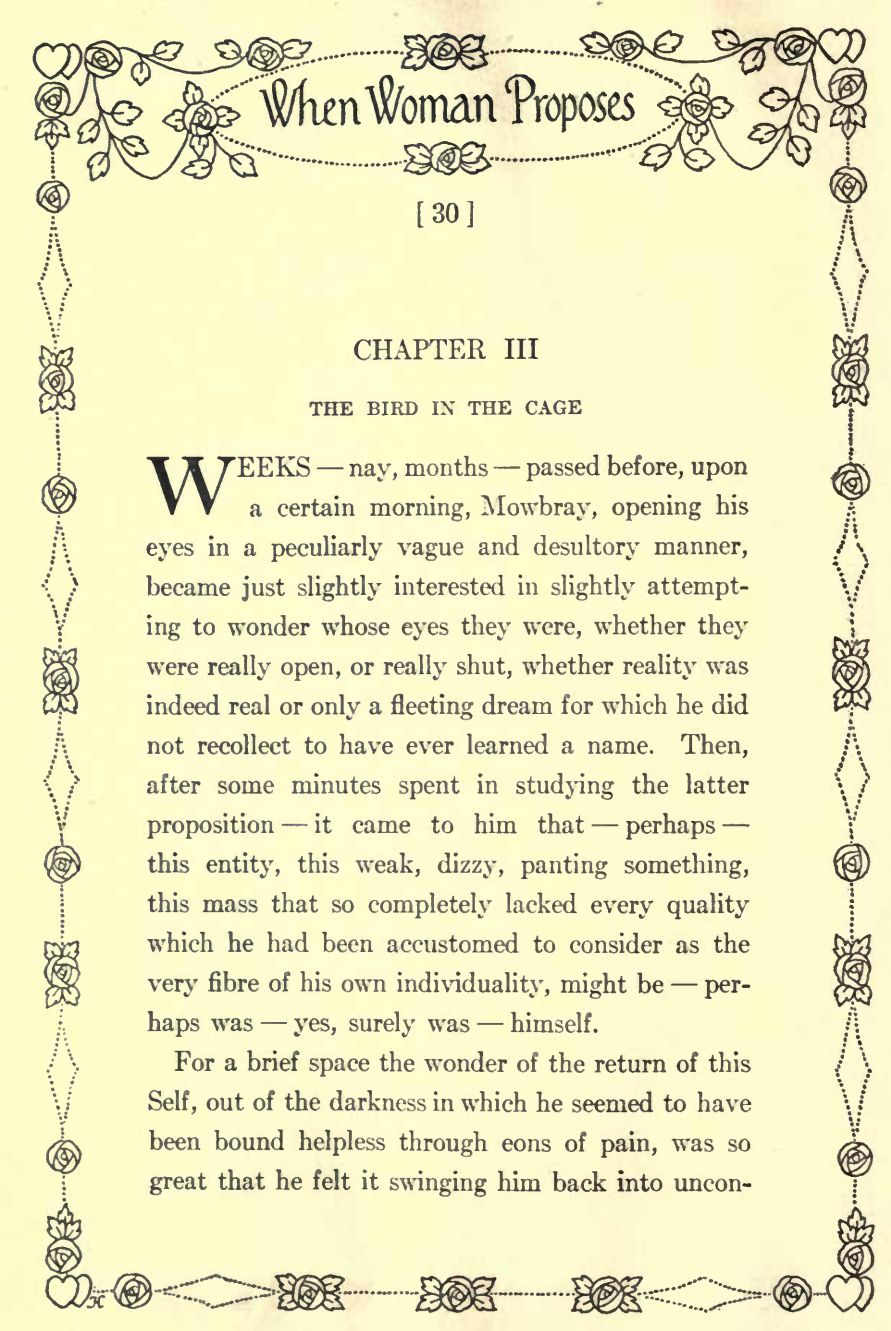
"Kathryn, wait — only wait."



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Then the folds of the mantle that was dyed the color of hope, fell apart, and Mrs. d'Yprés, looking upward again saw in the eyes above her the light that forever tramples down all and every reason by right of its own superior truth.



When Woman Proposes

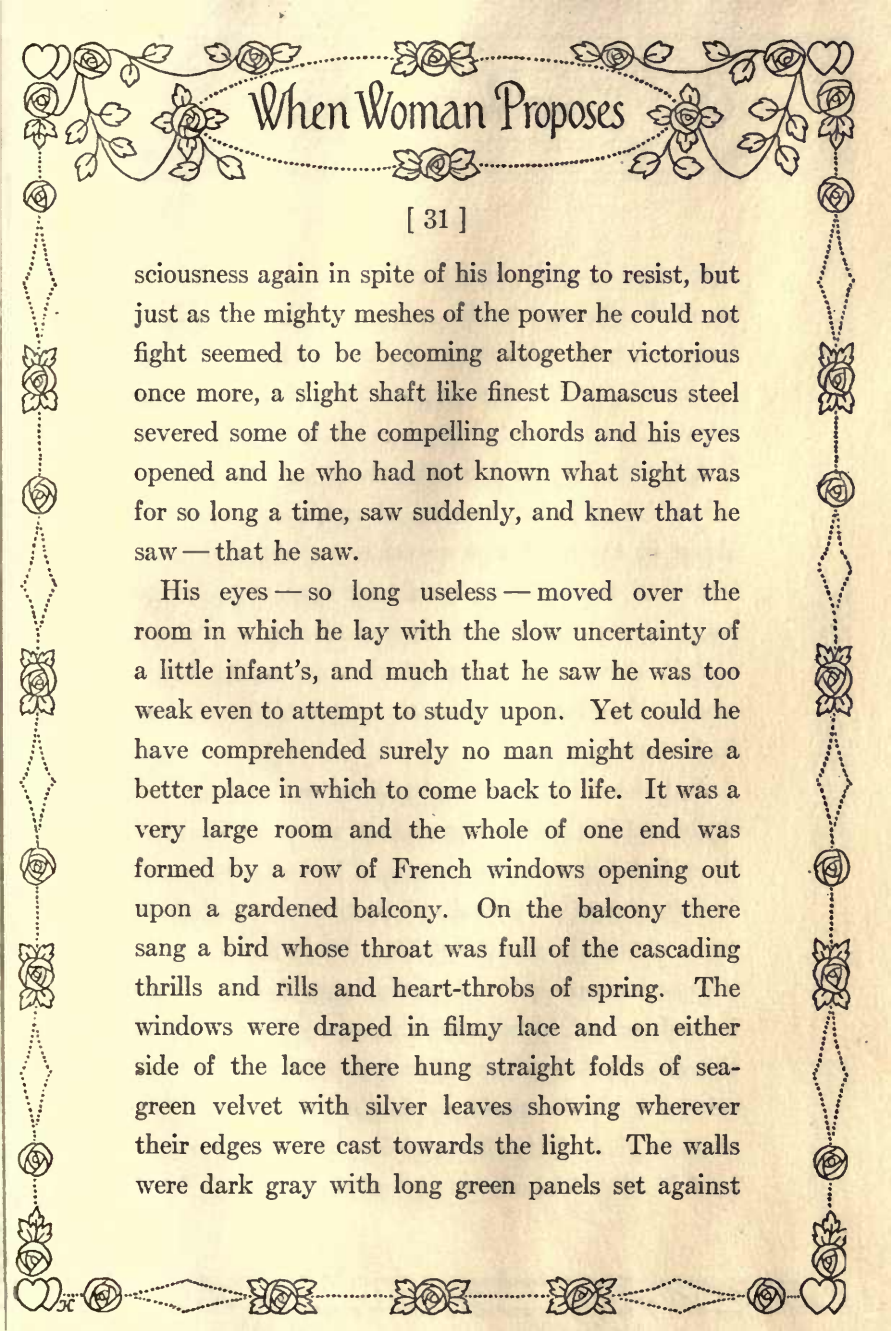
[30]

CHAPTER III

THE BIRD IN THE CAGE

WEEEKS — nay, months — passed before, upon a certain morning, Mowbray, opening his eyes in a peculiarly vague and desultory manner, became just slightly interested in slightly attempting to wonder whose eyes they were, whether they were really open, or really shut, whether reality was indeed real or only a fleeting dream for which he did not recollect to have ever learned a name. Then, after some minutes spent in studying the latter proposition — it came to him that — perhaps — this entity, this weak, dizzy, panting something, this mass that so completely lacked every quality which he had been accustomed to consider as the very fibre of his own individuality, might be — perhaps was — yes, surely was — himself.

For a brief space the wonder of the return of this Self, out of the darkness in which he seemed to have been bound helpless through eons of pain, was so great that he felt it swinging him back into uncon-

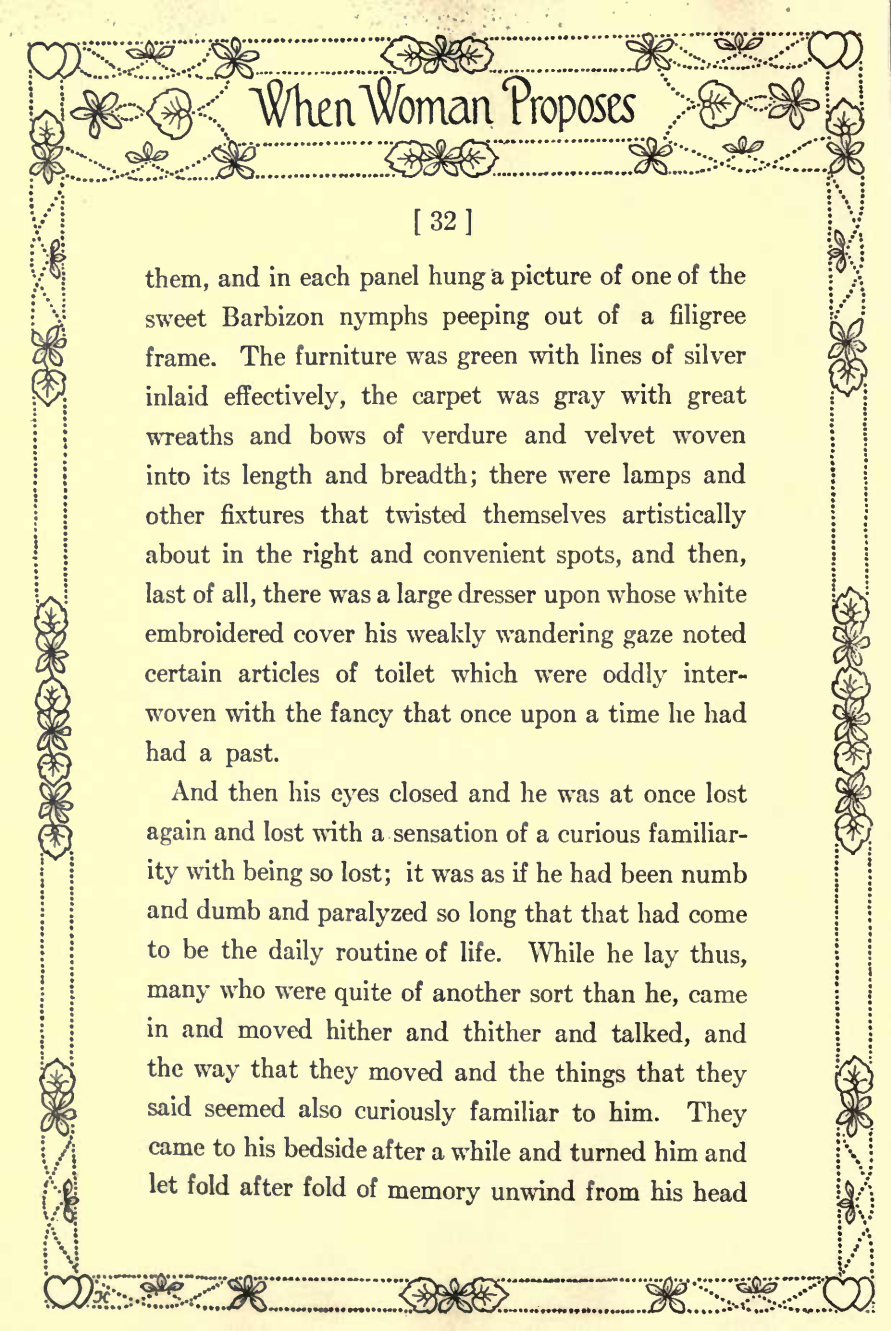


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sciousness again in spite of his longing to resist, but just as the mighty meshes of the power he could not fight seemed to be becoming altogether victorious once more, a slight shaft like finest Damascus steel severed some of the compelling chords and his eyes opened and he who had not known what sight was for so long a time, saw suddenly, and knew that he saw — that he saw.

His eyes — so long useless — moved over the room in which he lay with the slow uncertainty of a little infant's, and much that he saw he was too weak even to attempt to study upon. Yet could he have comprehended surely no man might desire a better place in which to come back to life. It was a very large room and the whole of one end was formed by a row of French windows opening out upon a gardened balcony. On the balcony there sang a bird whose throat was full of the cascading thrills and rills and heart-throbs of spring. The windows were draped in filmy lace and on either side of the lace there hung straight folds of sea-green velvet with silver leaves showing wherever their edges were cast towards the light. The walls were dark gray with long green panels set against

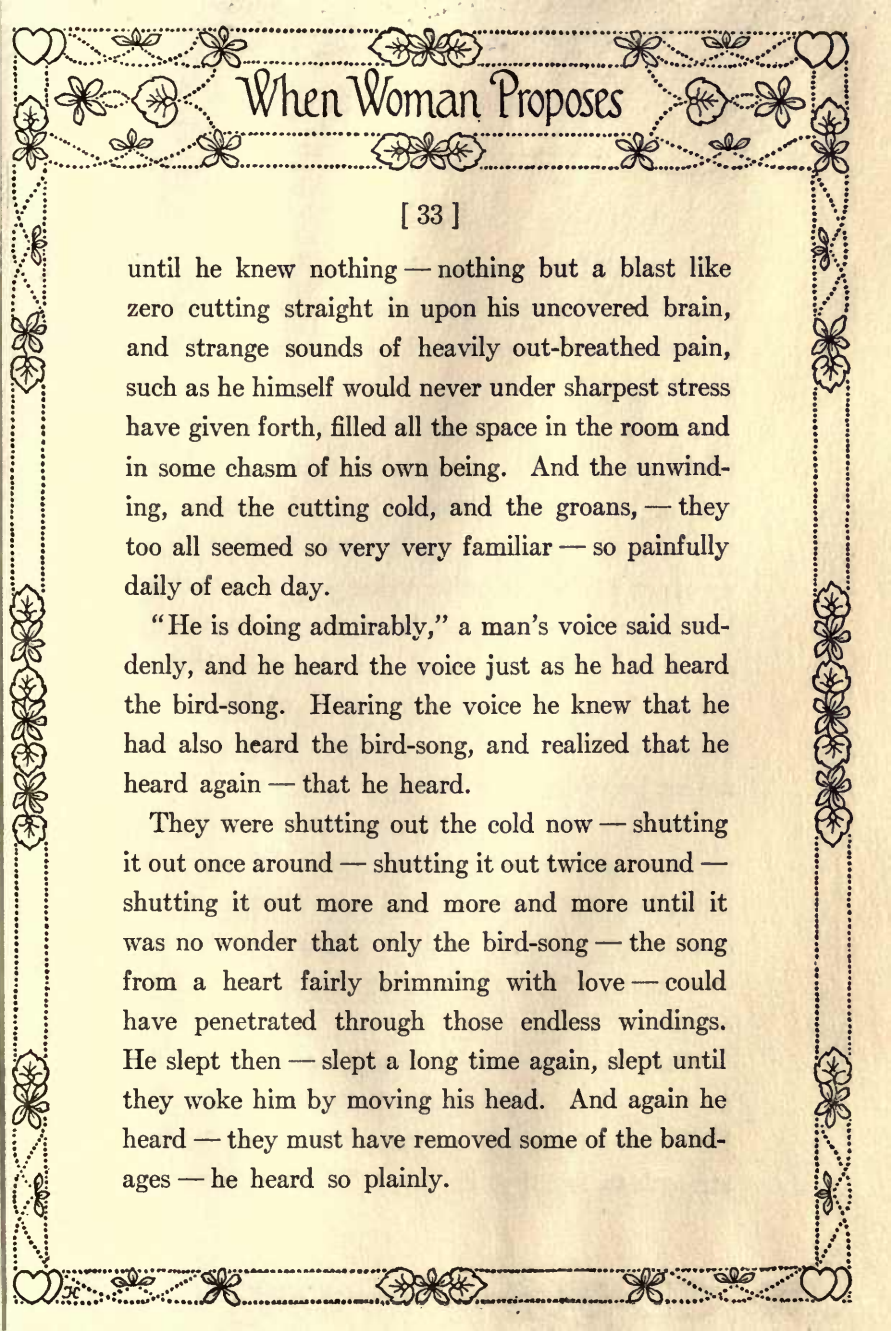


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them, and in each panel hung a picture of one of the sweet Barbizon nymphs peeping out of a filigree frame. The furniture was green with lines of silver inlaid effectively, the carpet was gray with great wreaths and bows of verdure and velvet woven into its length and breadth; there were lamps and other fixtures that twisted themselves artistically about in the right and convenient spots, and then, last of all, there was a large dresser upon whose white embroidered cover his weakly wandering gaze noted certain articles of toilet which were oddly interwoven with the fancy that once upon a time he had had a past.

And then his eyes closed and he was at once lost again and lost with a sensation of a curious familiarity with being so lost; it was as if he had been numb and dumb and paralyzed so long that that had come to be the daily routine of life. While he lay thus, many who were quite of another sort than he, came in and moved hither and thither and talked, and the way that they moved and the things that they said seemed also curiously familiar to him. They came to his bedside after a while and turned him and let fold after fold of memory unwind from his head



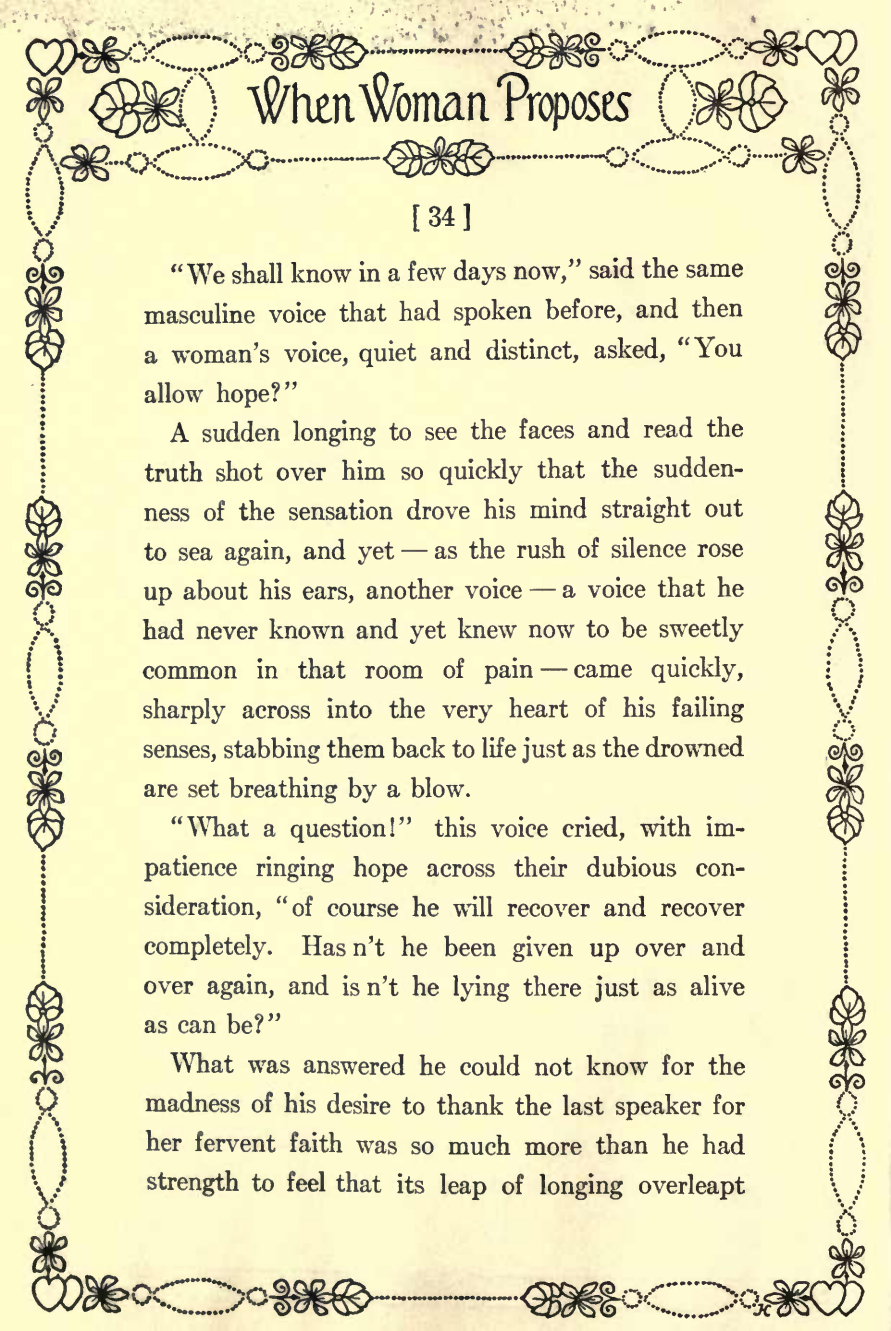
When Woman Proposes

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until he knew nothing — nothing but a blast like zero cutting straight in upon his uncovered brain, and strange sounds of heavily out-breathed pain, such as he himself would never under sharpest stress have given forth, filled all the space in the room and in some chasm of his own being. And the unwinding, and the cutting cold, and the groans, — they too all seemed so very very familiar — so painfully daily of each day.

“He is doing admirably,” a man’s voice said suddenly, and he heard the voice just as he had heard the bird-song. Hearing the voice he knew that he had also heard the bird-song, and realized that he heard again — that he heard.

They were shutting out the cold now — shutting it out once around — shutting it out twice around — shutting it out more and more and more until it was no wonder that only the bird-song — the song from a heart fairly brimming with love — could have penetrated through those endless windings. He slept then — slept a long time again, slept until they woke him by moving his head. And again he heard — they must have removed some of the bandages — he heard so plainly.

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When Woman Proposes

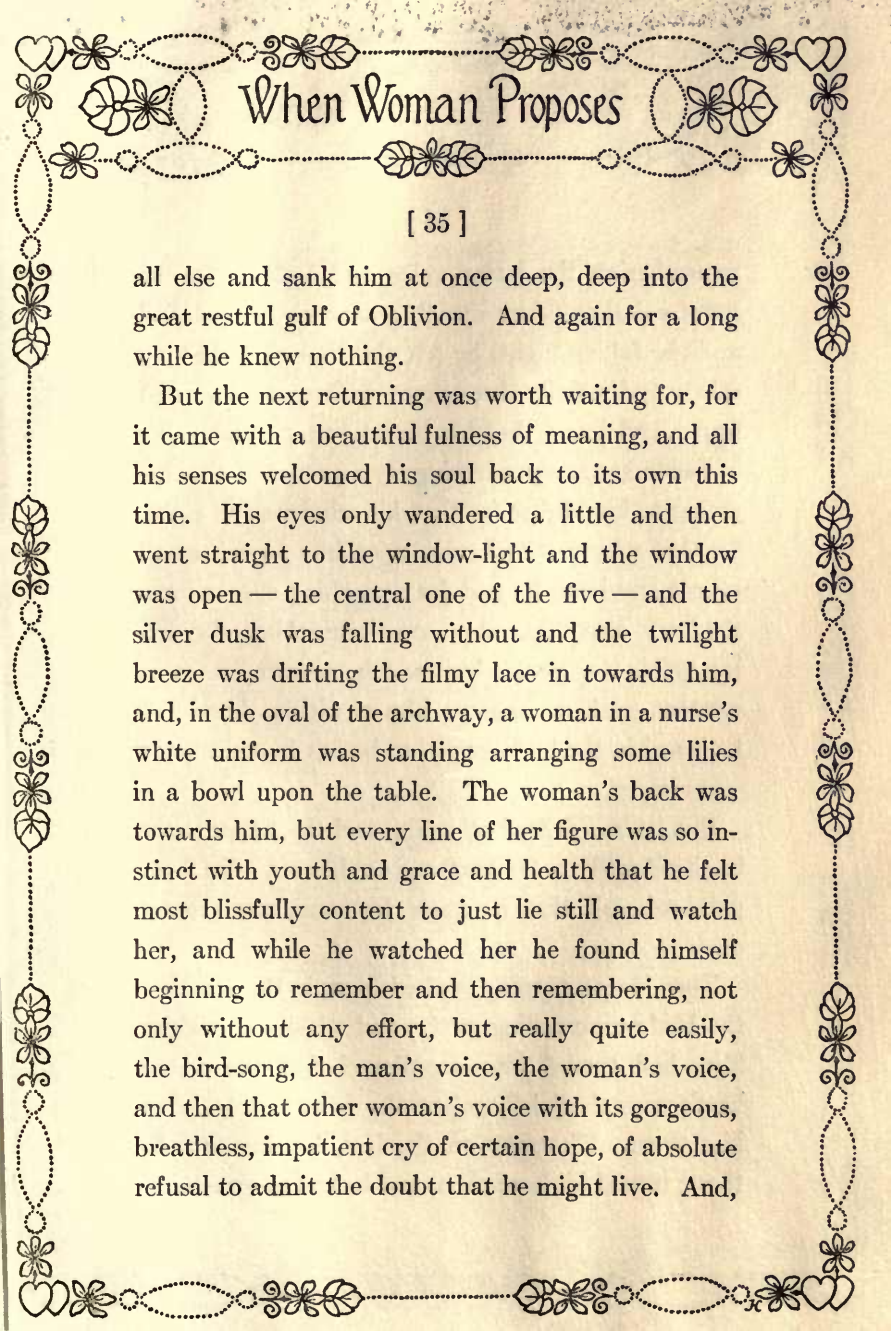
[34]

“We shall know in a few days now,” said the same masculine voice that had spoken before, and then a woman’s voice, quiet and distinct, asked, “You allow hope?”

A sudden longing to see the faces and read the truth shot over him so quickly that the suddenness of the sensation drove his mind straight out to sea again, and yet — as the rush of silence rose up about his ears, another voice — a voice that he had never known and yet knew now to be sweetly common in that room of pain — came quickly, sharply across into the very heart of his failing senses, stabbing them back to life just as the drowned are set breathing by a blow.

“What a question!” this voice cried, with impatience ringing hope across their dubious consideration, “of course he will recover and recover completely. Has n’t he been given up over and over again, and is n’t he lying there just as alive as can be?”

What was answered he could not know for the madness of his desire to thank the last speaker for her fervent faith was so much more than he had strength to feel that its leap of longing overleapt

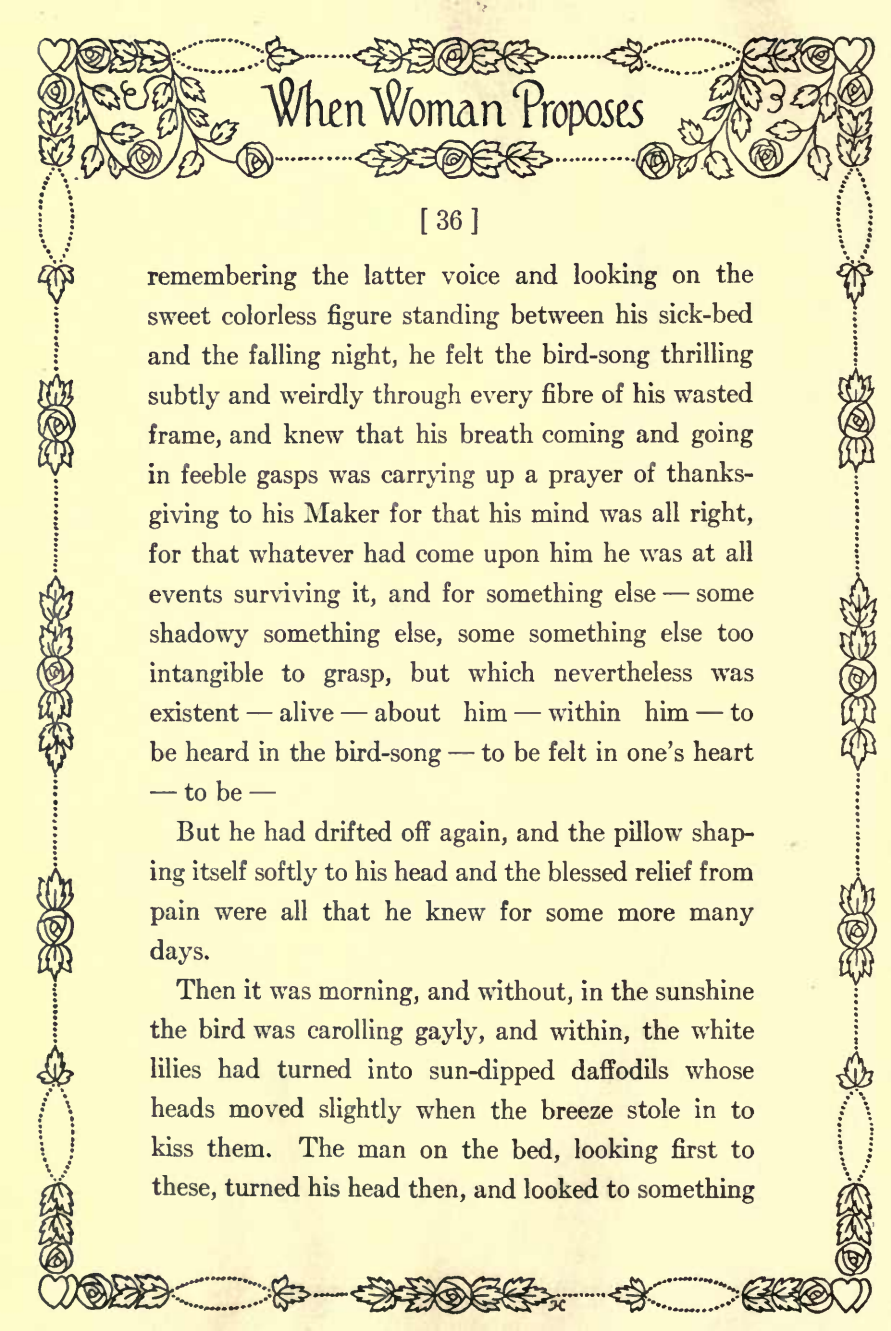


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all else and sank him at once deep, deep into the great restful gulf of Oblivion. And again for a long while he knew nothing.

But the next returning was worth waiting for, for it came with a beautiful fulness of meaning, and all his senses welcomed his soul back to its own this time. His eyes only wandered a little and then went straight to the window-light and the window was open — the central one of the five — and the silver dusk was falling without and the twilight breeze was drifting the filmy lace in towards him, and, in the oval of the archway, a woman in a nurse's white uniform was standing arranging some lilies in a bowl upon the table. The woman's back was towards him, but every line of her figure was so instinct with youth and grace and health that he felt most blissfully content to just lie still and watch her, and while he watched her he found himself beginning to remember and then remembering, not only without any effort, but really quite easily, the bird-song, the man's voice, the woman's voice, and then that other woman's voice with its gorgeous, breathless, impatient cry of certain hope, of absolute refusal to admit the doubt that he might live. And,



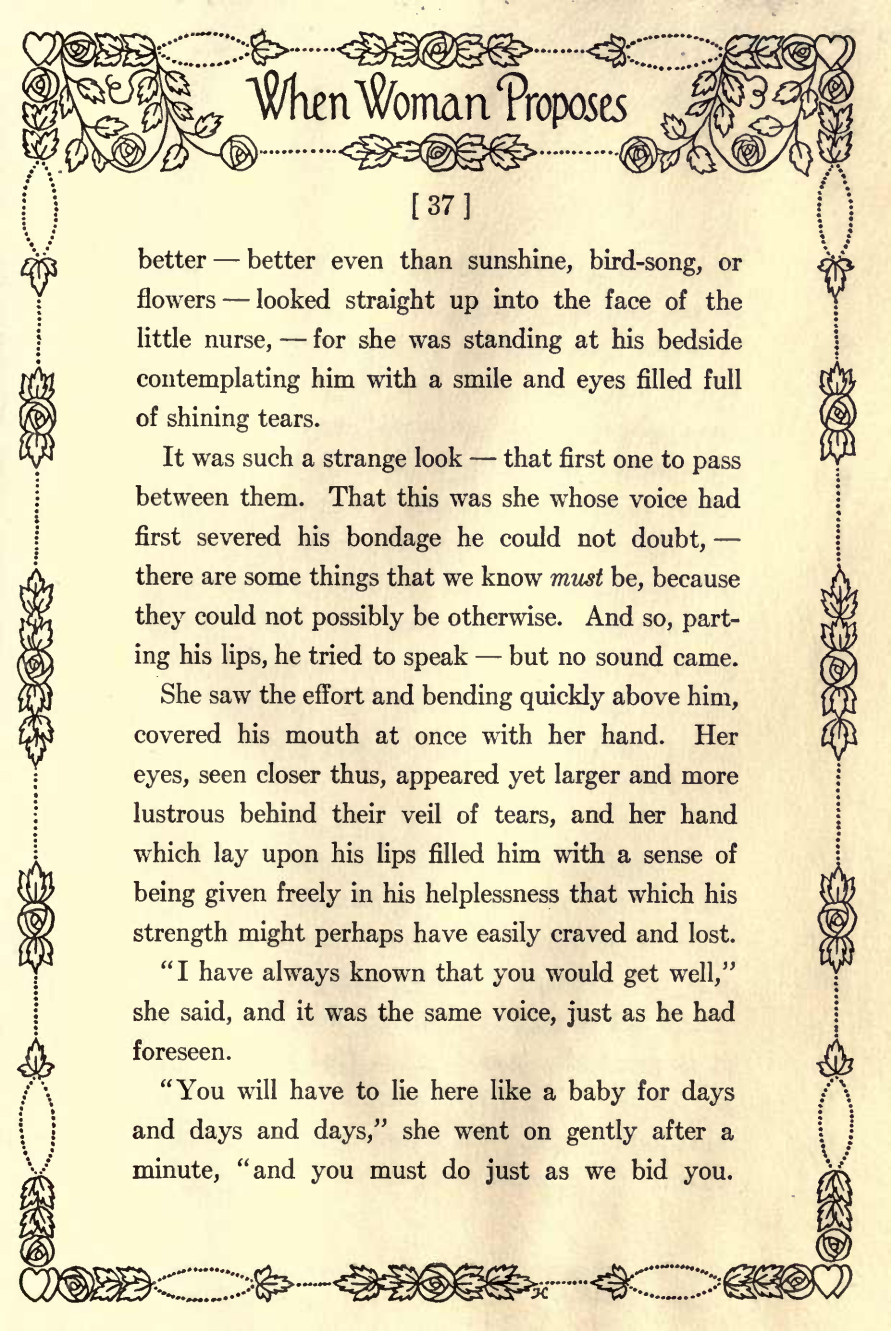
When Woman Proposes

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remembering the latter voice and looking on the sweet colorless figure standing between his sick-bed and the falling night, he felt the bird-song thrilling subtly and weirdly through every fibre of his wasted frame, and knew that his breath coming and going in feeble gasps was carrying up a prayer of thanksgiving to his Maker for that his mind was all right, for that whatever had come upon him he was at all events surviving it, and for something else — some shadowy something else, some something else too intangible to grasp, but which nevertheless was existent — alive — about him — within him — to be heard in the bird-song — to be felt in one's heart — to be —

But he had drifted off again, and the pillow shaping itself softly to his head and the blessed relief from pain were all that he knew for some more many days.

Then it was morning, and without, in the sunshine the bird was carolling gayly, and within, the white lilies had turned into sun-dipped daffodils whose heads moved slightly when the breeze stole in to kiss them. The man on the bed, looking first to these, turned his head then, and looked to something



When Woman Proposes

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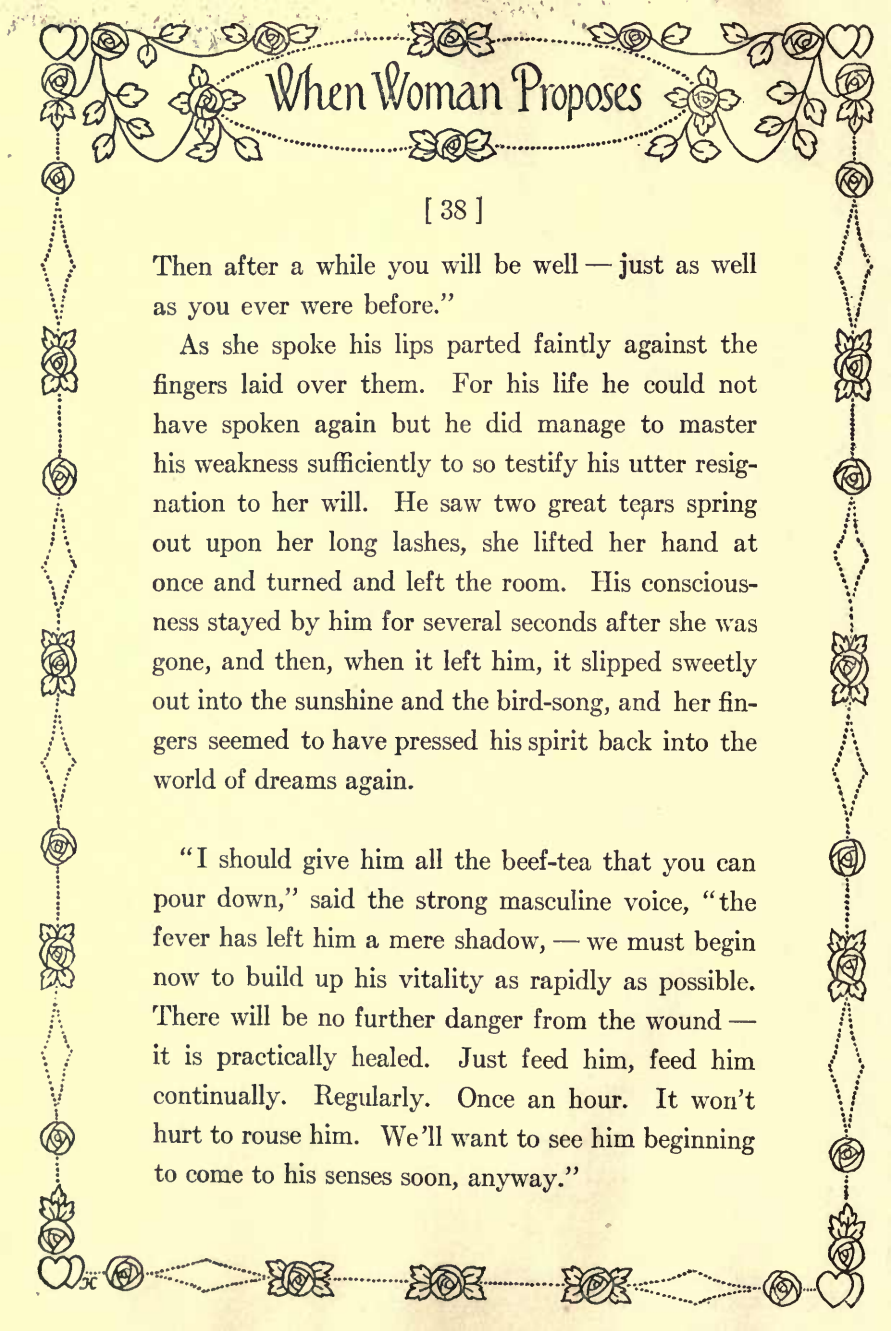
better — better even than sunshine, bird-song, or flowers — looked straight up into the face of the little nurse, — for she was standing at his bedside contemplating him with a smile and eyes filled full of shining tears.

It was such a strange look — that first one to pass between them. That this was she whose voice had first severed his bondage he could not doubt, — there are some things that we know *must* be, because they could not possibly be otherwise. And so, parting his lips, he tried to speak — but no sound came.

She saw the effort and bending quickly above him, covered his mouth at once with her hand. Her eyes, seen closer thus, appeared yet larger and more lustrous behind their veil of tears, and her hand which lay upon his lips filled him with a sense of being given freely in his helplessness that which his strength might perhaps have easily craved and lost.

“I have always known that you would get well,” she said, and it was the same voice, just as he had foreseen.

“You will have to lie here like a baby for days and days and days,” she went on gently after a minute, “and you must do just as we bid you.



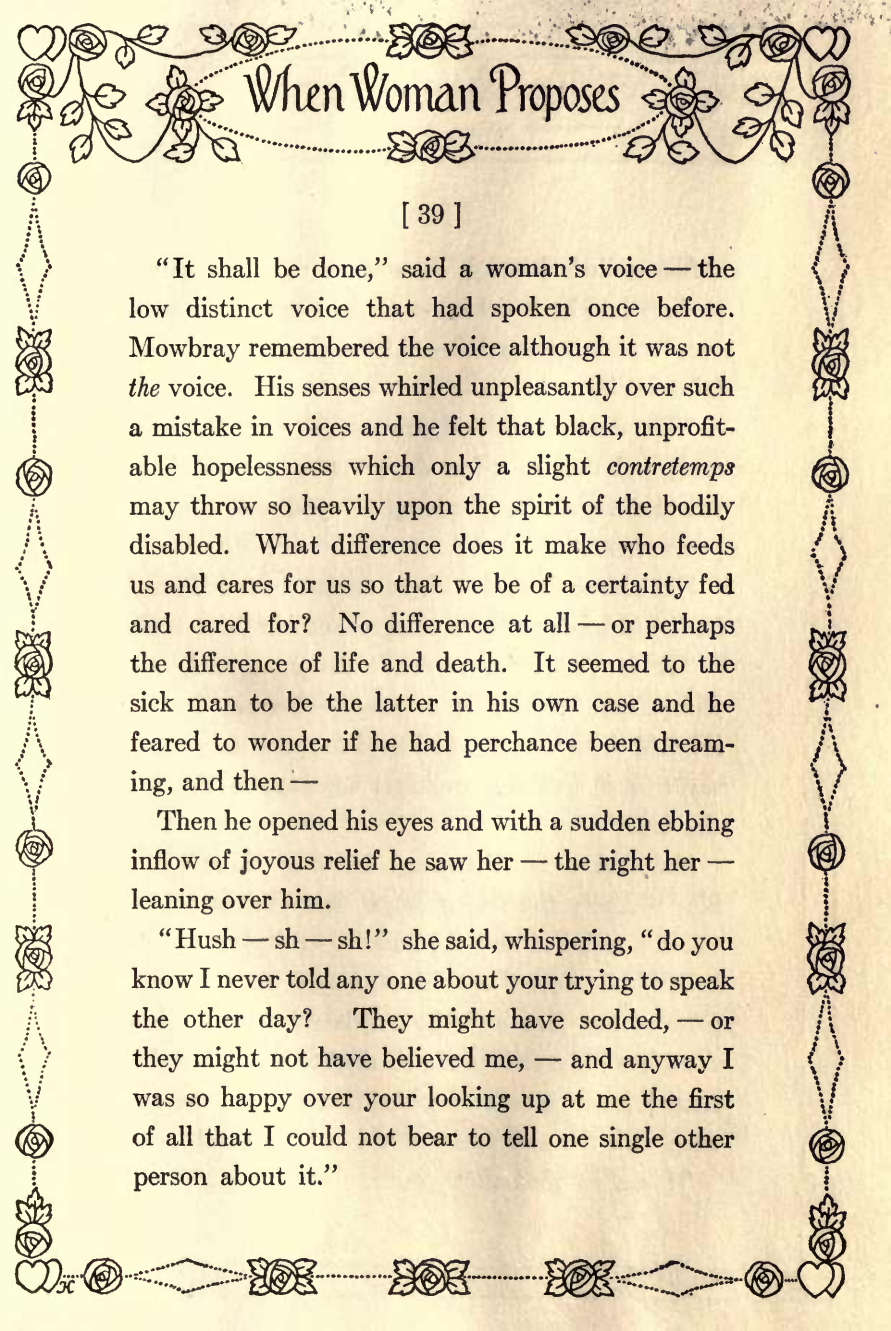
When Woman Proposes

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Then after a while you will be well — just as well as you ever were before.”

As she spoke his lips parted faintly against the fingers laid over them. For his life he could not have spoken again but he did manage to master his weakness sufficiently to so testify his utter resignation to her will. He saw two great tears spring out upon her long lashes, she lifted her hand at once and turned and left the room. His consciousness stayed by him for several seconds after she was gone, and then, when it left him, it slipped sweetly out into the sunshine and the bird-song, and her fingers seemed to have pressed his spirit back into the world of dreams again.

“I should give him all the beef-tea that you can pour down,” said the strong masculine voice, “the fever has left him a mere shadow, — we must begin now to build up his vitality as rapidly as possible. There will be no further danger from the wound — it is practically healed. Just feed him, feed him continually. Regularly. Once an hour. It won’t hurt to rouse him. We’ll want to see him beginning to come to his senses soon, anyway.”



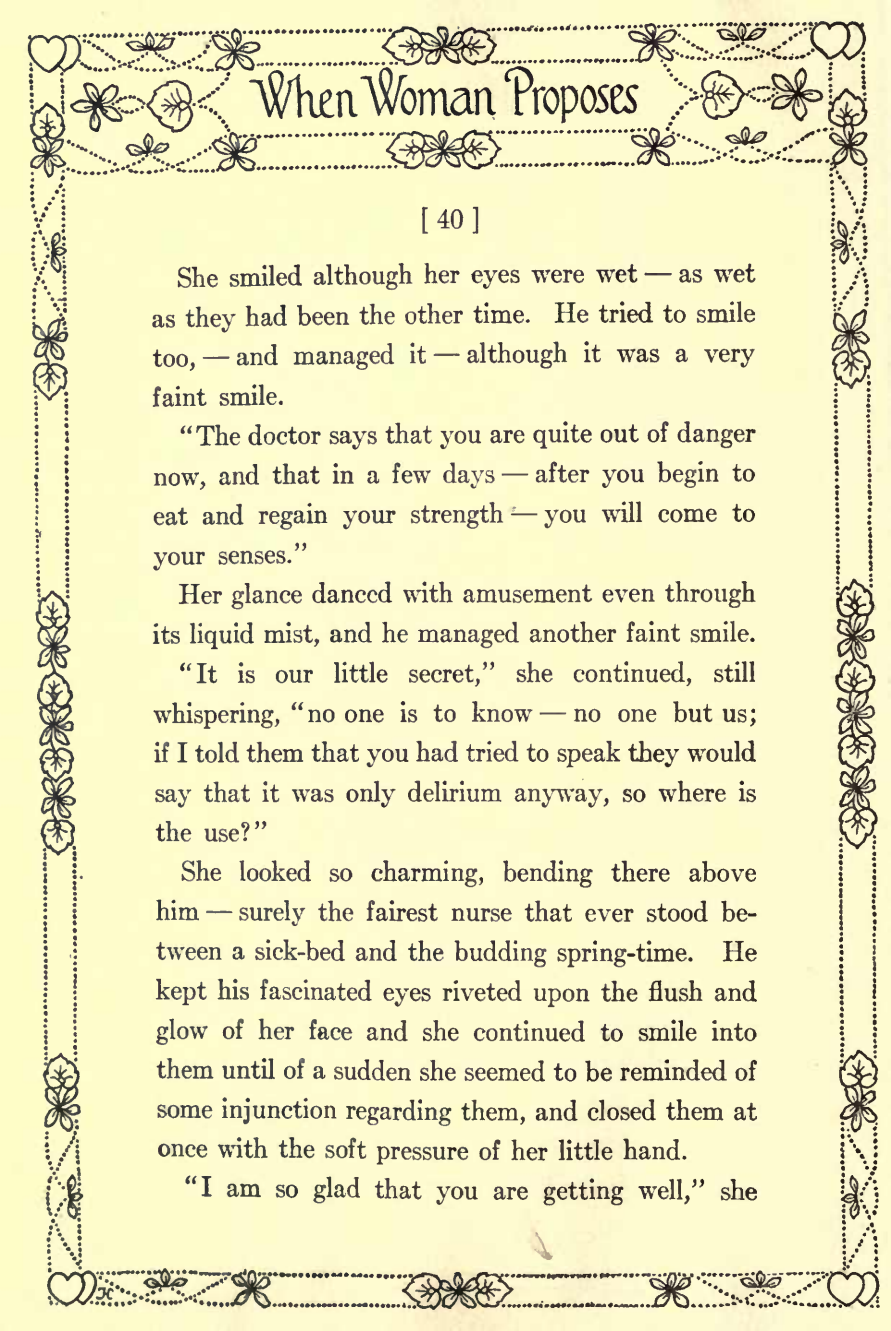
When Woman Proposes

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“It shall be done,” said a woman’s voice — the low distinct voice that had spoken once before. Mowbray remembered the voice although it was not *the* voice. His senses whirled unpleasantly over such a mistake in voices and he felt that black, unprofitable hopelessness which only a slight *contretemps* may throw so heavily upon the spirit of the bodily disabled. What difference does it make who feeds us and cares for us so that we be of a certainty fed and cared for? No difference at all — or perhaps the difference of life and death. It seemed to the sick man to be the latter in his own case and he feared to wonder if he had perchance been dreaming, and then —

Then he opened his eyes and with a sudden ebbing inflow of joyous relief he saw her — the right her — leaning over him.

“Hush — sh — sh!” she said, whispering, “do you know I never told any one about your trying to speak the other day? They might have scolded, — or they might not have believed me, — and anyway I was so happy over your looking up at me the first of all that I could not bear to tell one single other person about it.”

A decorative border surrounds the page, featuring a dotted line with small floral motifs and larger heart and flower designs at the corners and midpoints.

When Woman Proposes

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She smiled although her eyes were wet — as wet as they had been the other time. He tried to smile too, — and managed it — although it was a very faint smile.

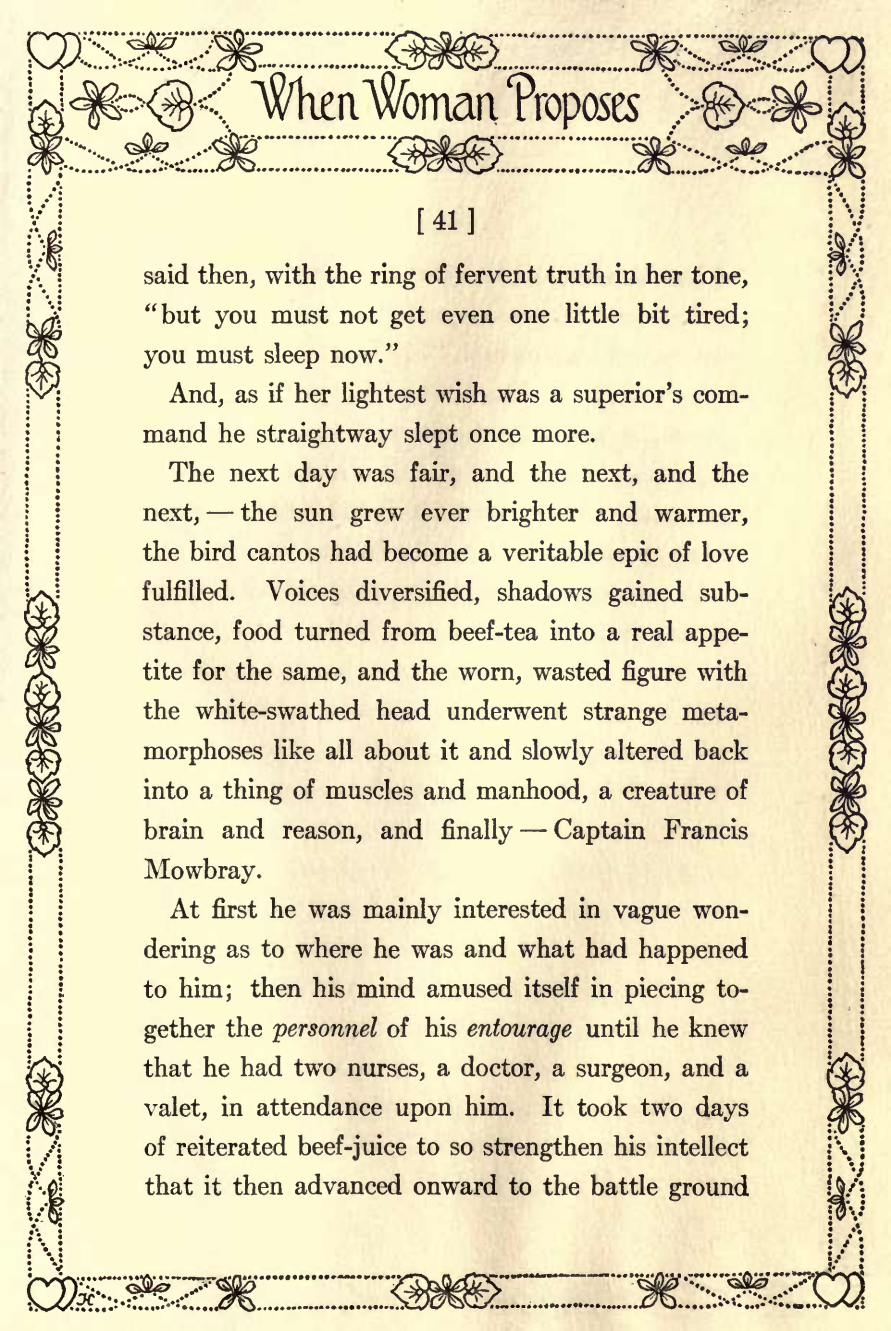
“The doctor says that you are quite out of danger now, and that in a few days — after you begin to eat and regain your strength — you will come to your senses.”

Her glance danced with amusement even through its liquid mist, and he managed another faint smile.

“It is our little secret,” she continued, still whispering, “no one is to know — no one but us; if I told them that you had tried to speak they would say that it was only delirium anyway, so where is the use?”

She looked so charming, bending there above him — surely the fairest nurse that ever stood between a sick-bed and the budding spring-time. He kept his fascinated eyes riveted upon the flush and glow of her face and she continued to smile into them until of a sudden she seemed to be reminded of some injunction regarding them, and closed them at once with the soft pressure of her little hand.

“I am so glad that you are getting well,” she



When Woman Proposes

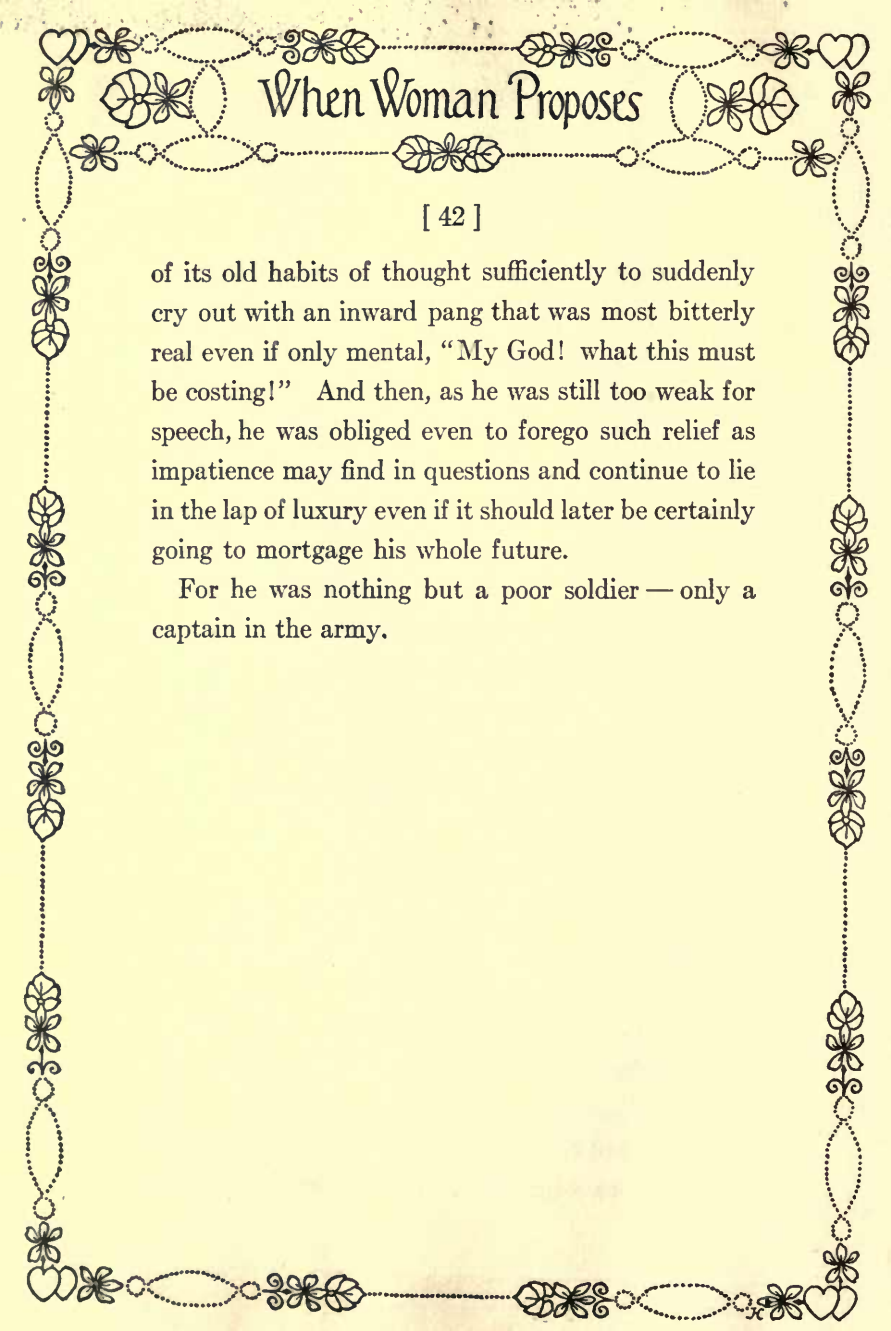
[41]

said then, with the ring of fervent truth in her tone, "but you must not get even one little bit tired; you must sleep now."

And, as if her lightest wish was a superior's command he straightway slept once more.

The next day was fair, and the next, and the next, — the sun grew ever brighter and warmer, the bird cantos had become a veritable epic of love fulfilled. Voices diversified, shadows gained substance, food turned from beef-tea into a real appetite for the same, and the worn, wasted figure with the white-swathed head underwent strange metamorphoses like all about it and slowly altered back into a thing of muscles and manhood, a creature of brain and reason, and finally — Captain Francis Mowbray.

At first he was mainly interested in vague wondering as to where he was and what had happened to him; then his mind amused itself in piecing together the *personnel* of his *entourage* until he knew that he had two nurses, a doctor, a surgeon, and a valet, in attendance upon him. It took two days of reiterated beef-juice to so strengthen his intellect that it then advanced onward to the battle ground

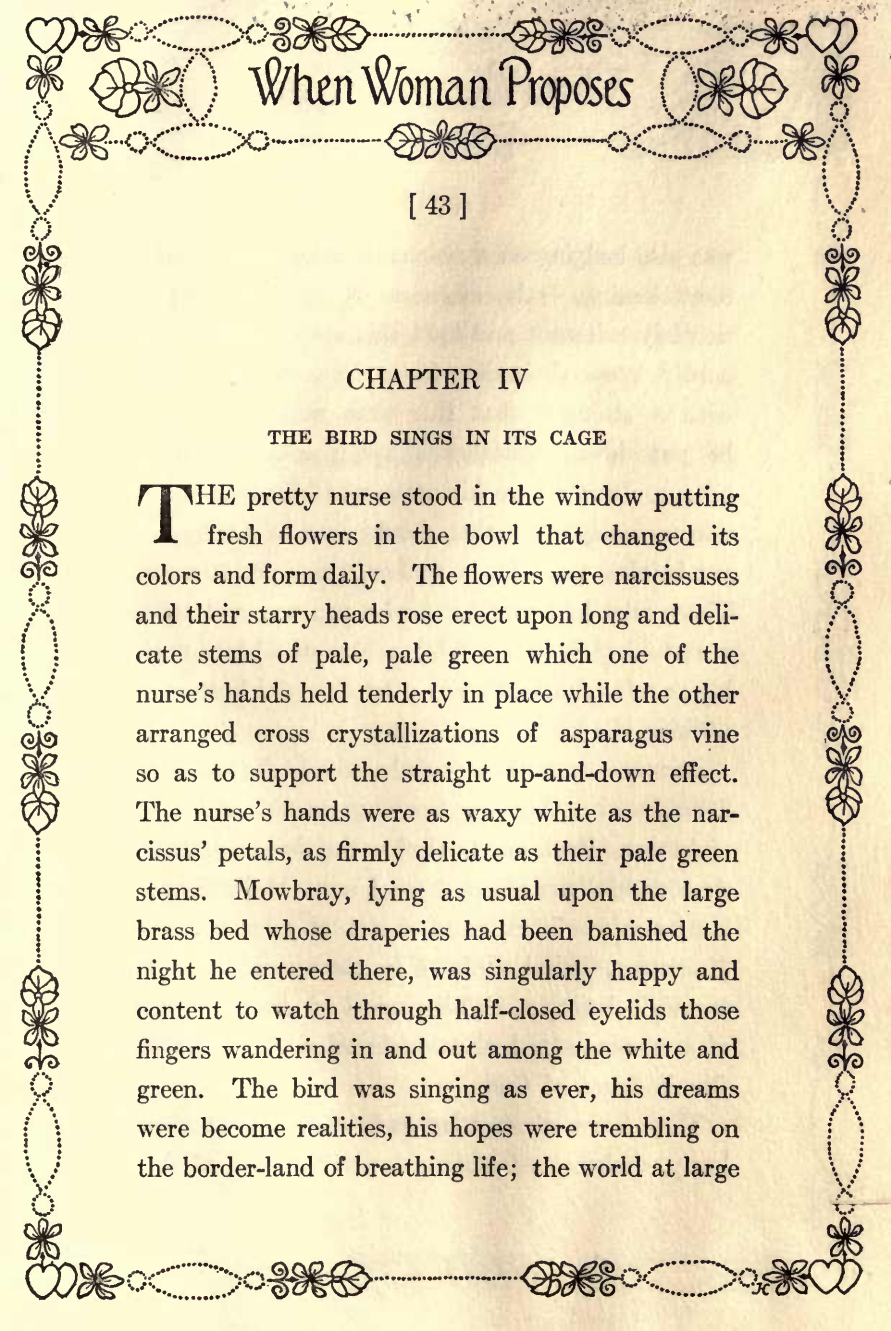


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of its old habits of thought sufficiently to suddenly cry out with an inward pang that was most bitterly real even if only mental, "My God! what this must be costing!" And then, as he was still too weak for speech, he was obliged even to forego such relief as impatience may find in questions and continue to lie in the lap of luxury even if it should later be certainly going to mortgage his whole future.

For he was nothing but a poor soldier — only a captain in the army.



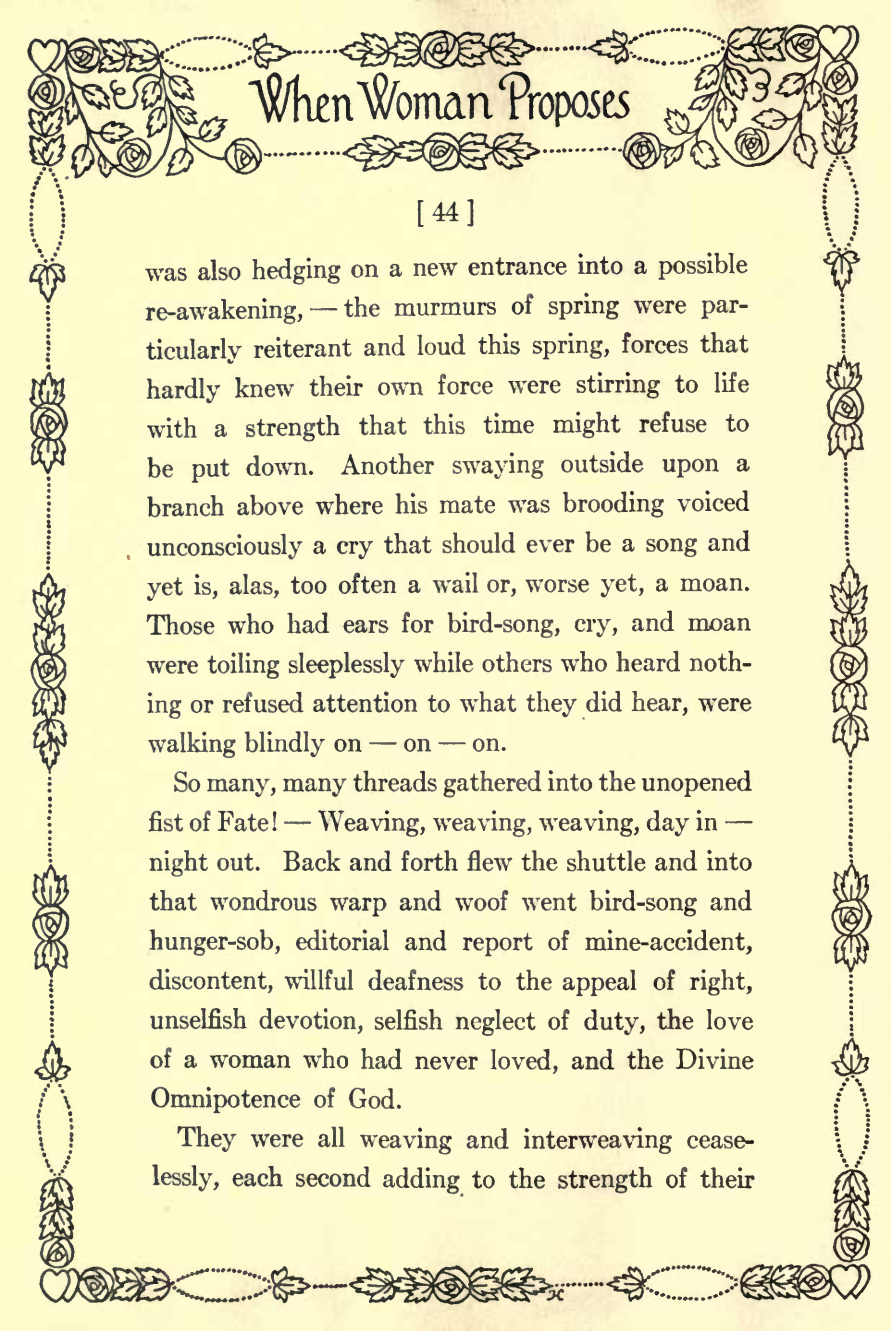
When Woman Proposes

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CHAPTER IV

THE BIRD SINGS IN ITS CAGE

THE pretty nurse stood in the window putting fresh flowers in the bowl that changed its colors and form daily. The flowers were narcissuses and their starry heads rose erect upon long and delicate stems of pale, pale green which one of the nurse's hands held tenderly in place while the other arranged cross crystallizations of asparagus vine so as to support the straight up-and-down effect. The nurse's hands were as waxy white as the narcissus' petals, as firmly delicate as their pale green stems. Mowbray, lying as usual upon the large brass bed whose draperies had been banished the night he entered there, was singularly happy and content to watch through half-closed eyelids those fingers wandering in and out among the white and green. The bird was singing as ever, his dreams were become realities, his hopes were trembling on the border-land of breathing life; the world at large



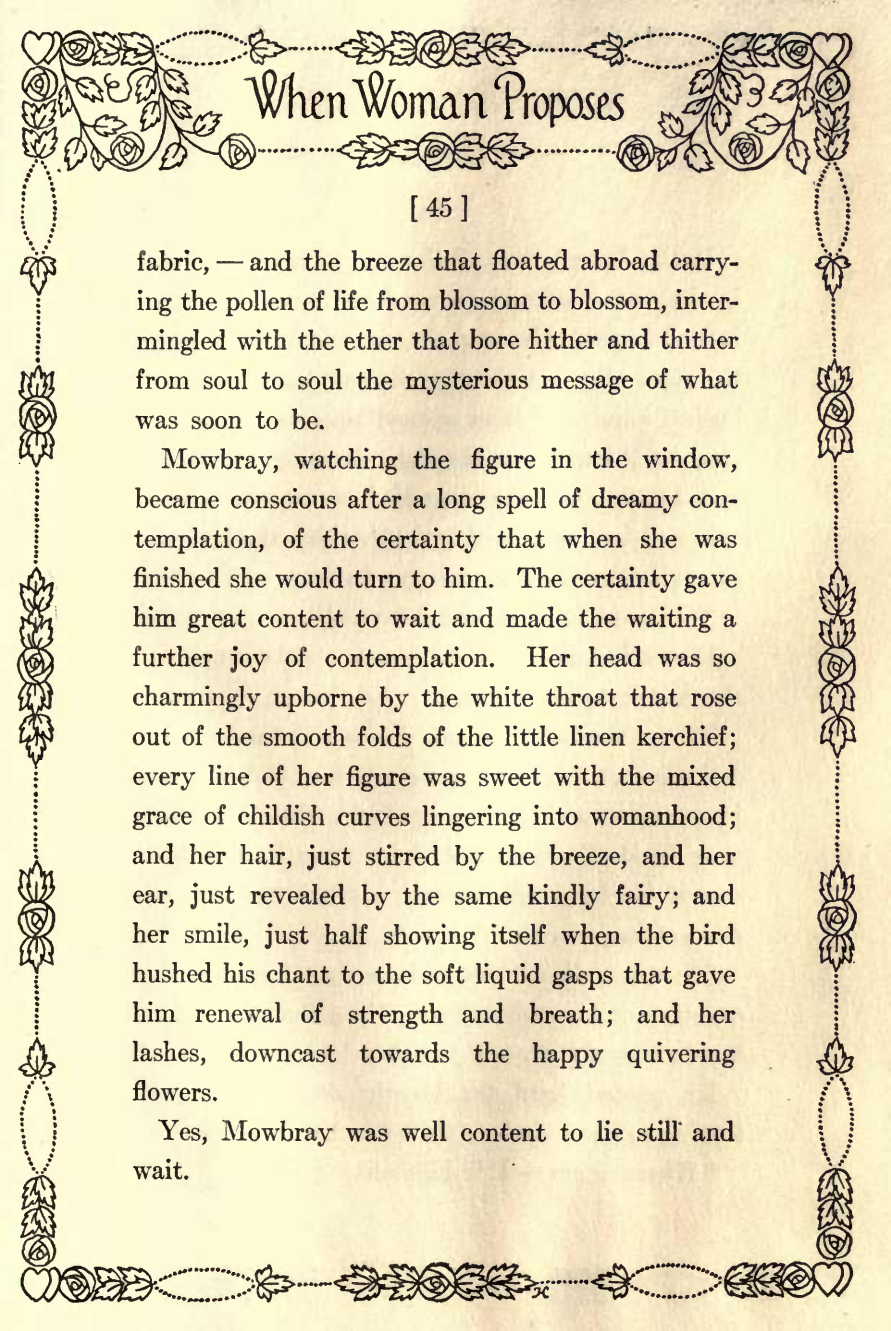
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was also hedging on a new entrance into a possible re-awakening, — the murmurs of spring were particularly reiterant and loud this spring, forces that hardly knew their own force were stirring to life with a strength that this time might refuse to be put down. Another swaying outside upon a branch above where his mate was brooding voiced unconsciously a cry that should ever be a song and yet is, alas, too often a wail or, worse yet, a moan. Those who had ears for bird-song, cry, and moan were toiling sleeplessly while others who heard nothing or refused attention to what they did hear, were walking blindly on — on — on.

So many, many threads gathered into the unopened fist of Fate! — Weaving, weaving, weaving, day in — night out. Back and forth flew the shuttle and into that wondrous warp and woof went bird-song and hunger-sob, editorial and report of mine-accident, discontent, willful deafness to the appeal of right, unselfish devotion, selfish neglect of duty, the love of a woman who had never loved, and the Divine Omnipotence of God.

They were all weaving and interweaving ceaselessly, each second adding to the strength of their



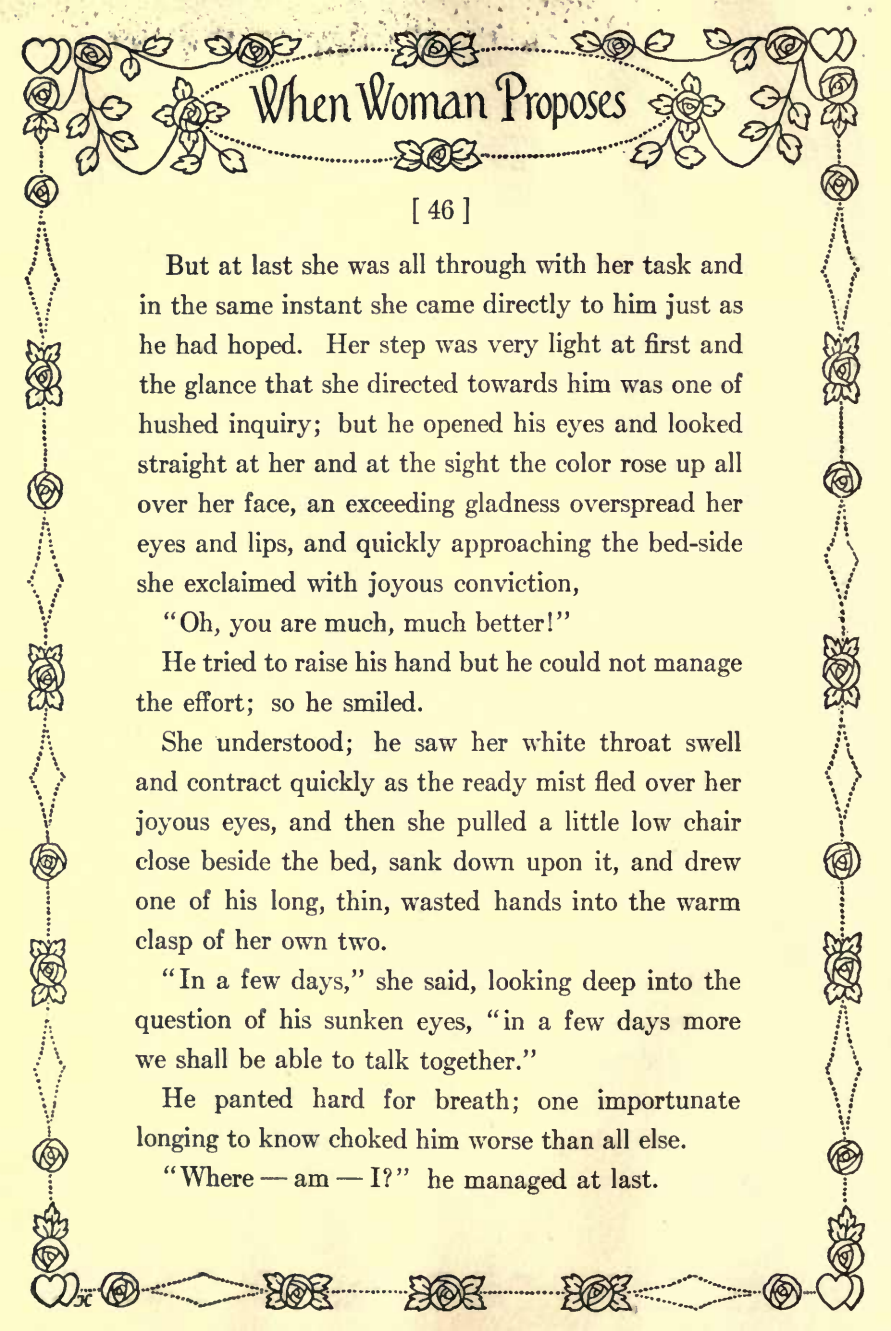
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fabric, — and the breeze that floated abroad carrying the pollen of life from blossom to blossom, intermingled with the ether that bore hither and thither from soul to soul the mysterious message of what was soon to be.

Mowbray, watching the figure in the window, became conscious after a long spell of dreamy contemplation, of the certainty that when she was finished she would turn to him. The certainty gave him great content to wait and made the waiting a further joy of contemplation. Her head was so charmingly upborne by the white throat that rose out of the smooth folds of the little linen kerchief; every line of her figure was sweet with the mixed grace of childish curves lingering into womanhood; and her hair, just stirred by the breeze, and her ear, just revealed by the same kindly fairy; and her smile, just half showing itself when the bird hushed his chant to the soft liquid gasps that gave him renewal of strength and breath; and her lashes, downcast towards the happy quivering flowers.

Yes, Mowbray was well content to lie still and wait.



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But at last she was all through with her task and in the same instant she came directly to him just as he had hoped. Her step was very light at first and the glance that she directed towards him was one of hushed inquiry; but he opened his eyes and looked straight at her and at the sight the color rose up all over her face, an exceeding gladness overspread her eyes and lips, and quickly approaching the bed-side she exclaimed with joyous conviction,

“Oh, you are much, much better!”

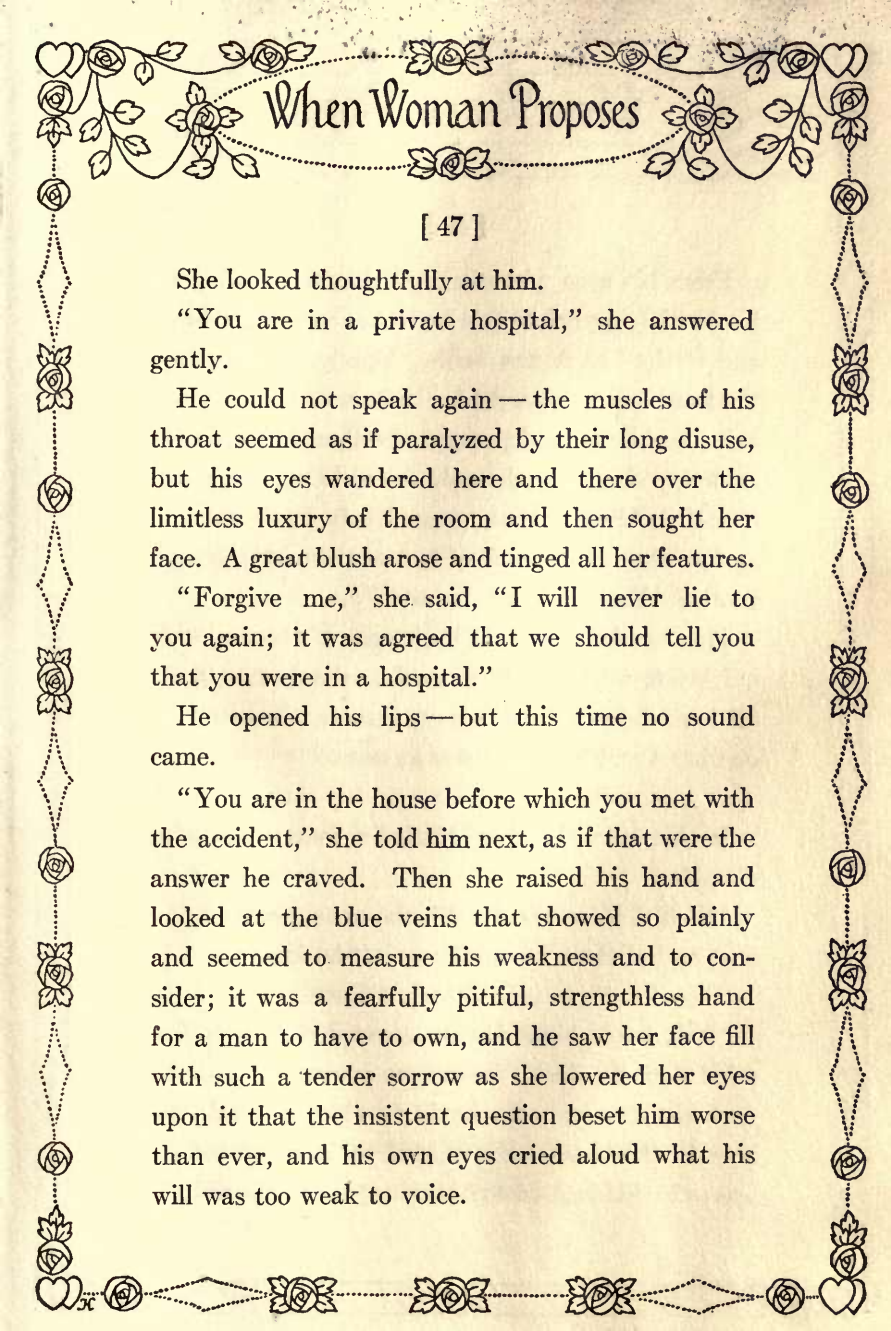
He tried to raise his hand but he could not manage the effort; so he smiled.

She understood; he saw her white throat swell and contract quickly as the ready mist fled over her joyous eyes, and then she pulled a little low chair close beside the bed, sank down upon it, and drew one of his long, thin, wasted hands into the warm clasp of her own two.

“In a few days,” she said, looking deep into the question of his sunken eyes, “in a few days more we shall be able to talk together.”

He panted hard for breath; one importunate longing to know choked him worse than all else.

“Where — am — I?” he managed at last.



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She looked thoughtfully at him.

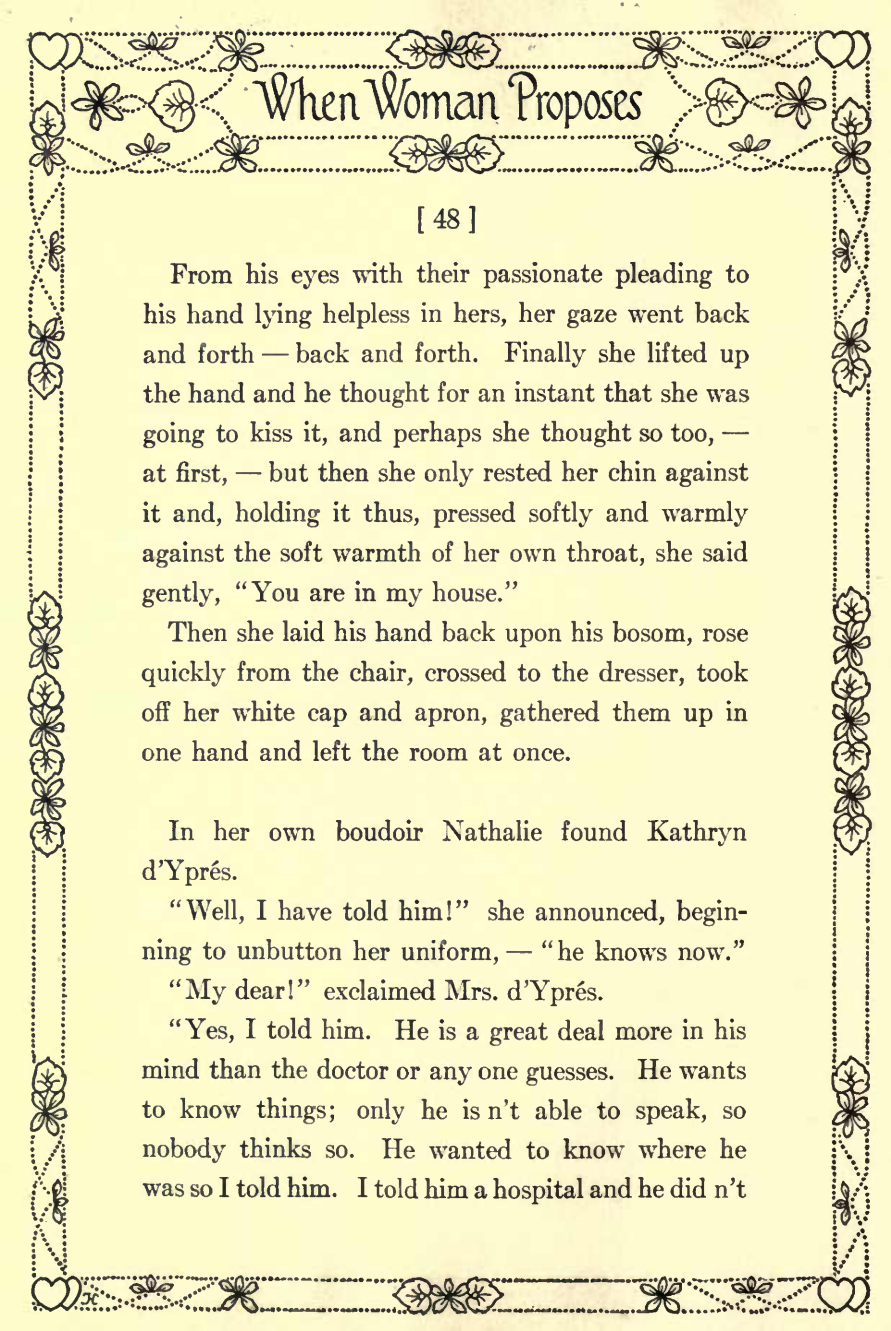
"You are in a private hospital," she answered gently.

He could not speak again — the muscles of his throat seemed as if paralyzed by their long disuse, but his eyes wandered here and there over the limitless luxury of the room and then sought her face. A great blush arose and tinged all her features.

"Forgive me," she said, "I will never lie to you again; it was agreed that we should tell you that you were in a hospital."

He opened his lips—but this time no sound came.

"You are in the house before which you met with the accident," she told him next, as if that were the answer he craved. Then she raised his hand and looked at the blue veins that showed so plainly and seemed to measure his weakness and to consider; it was a fearfully pitiful, strengthless hand for a man to have to own, and he saw her face fill with such a tender sorrow as she lowered her eyes upon it that the insistent question beset him worse than ever, and his own eyes cried aloud what his will was too weak to voice.



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From his eyes with their passionate pleading to his hand lying helpless in hers, her gaze went back and forth — back and forth. Finally she lifted up the hand and he thought for an instant that she was going to kiss it, and perhaps she thought so too, — at first, — but then she only rested her chin against it and, holding it thus, pressed softly and warmly against the soft warmth of her own throat, she said gently, “You are in my house.”

Then she laid his hand back upon his bosom, rose quickly from the chair, crossed to the dresser, took off her white cap and apron, gathered them up in one hand and left the room at once.

In her own boudoir Nathalie found Kathryn d'Yprés.

“Well, I have told him!” she announced, beginning to unbutton her uniform, — “he knows now.”

“My dear!” exclaimed Mrs. d'Yprés.

“Yes, I told him. He is a great deal more in his mind than the doctor or any one guesses. He wants to know things; only he is n't able to speak, so nobody thinks so. He wanted to know where he was so I told him. I told him a hospital and he did n't

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believe it so I told him it was my house. He'll be able to sleep now and that will do him good."

Mrs. d'Yprés' eyes approximated Mowbray's in the force of their further question. Nathalie was as ever responsive.

"It's no use wanting to know what he said because he did n't say anything — he's too weak. But it really is n't necessary for him to say anything because if I can be alone with him I can tell exactly what he would say if he could, and of course it's no strain on him because *I* can answer in words."

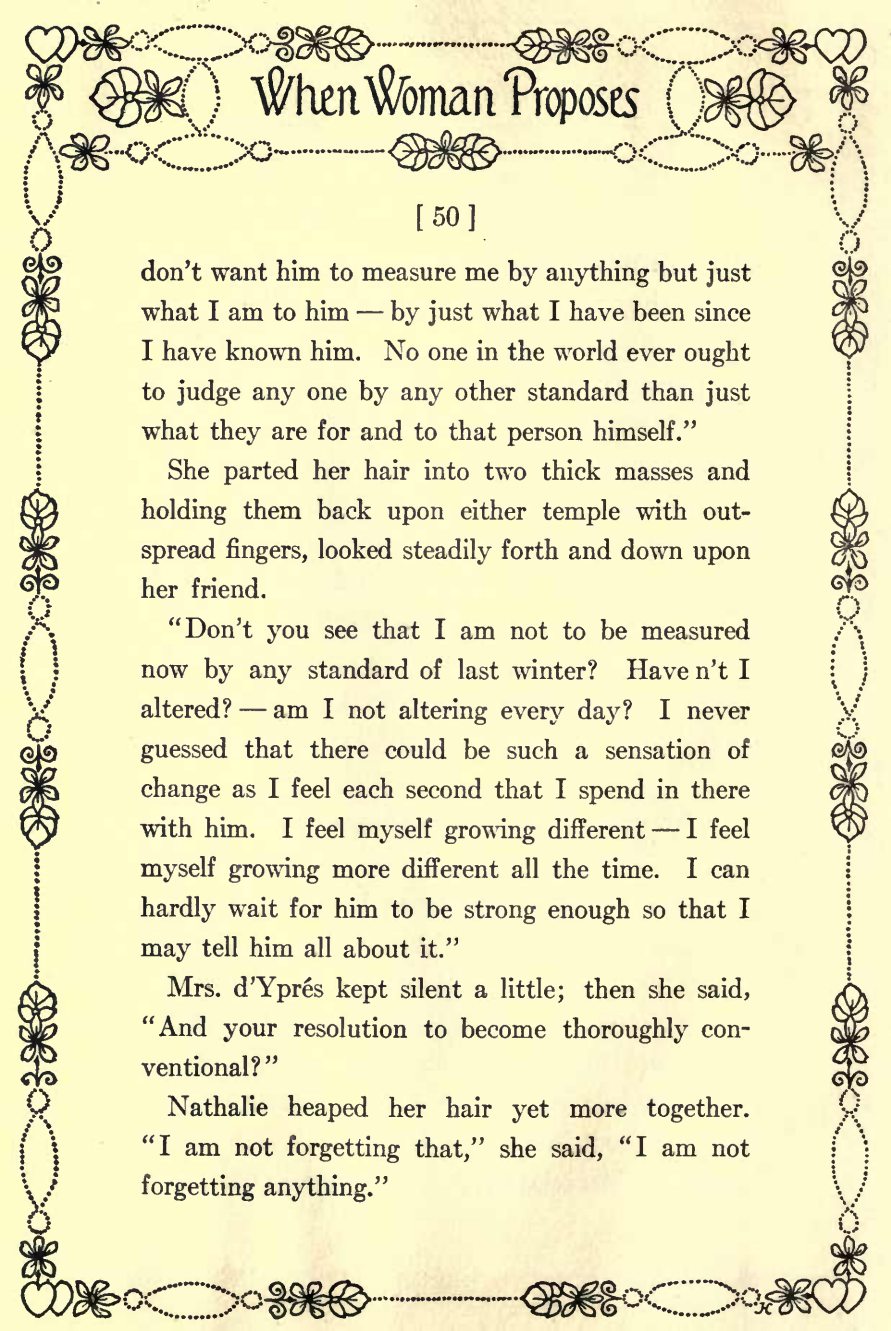
By this time she had shed the uniform and was pulling down the prim little coiffure which went with it.

"Did you tell him who you were," Mrs. d'Yprés asked.

"No; he would n't know who I was anyway."

"He might remember things that were said in the papers, dear."

"Then I don't want him to know who I am; I don't want him to remember me by those things that were said in the papers." She was shaking her hair about her face as she spoke, and her tone verged suddenly towards passionate protest. "I



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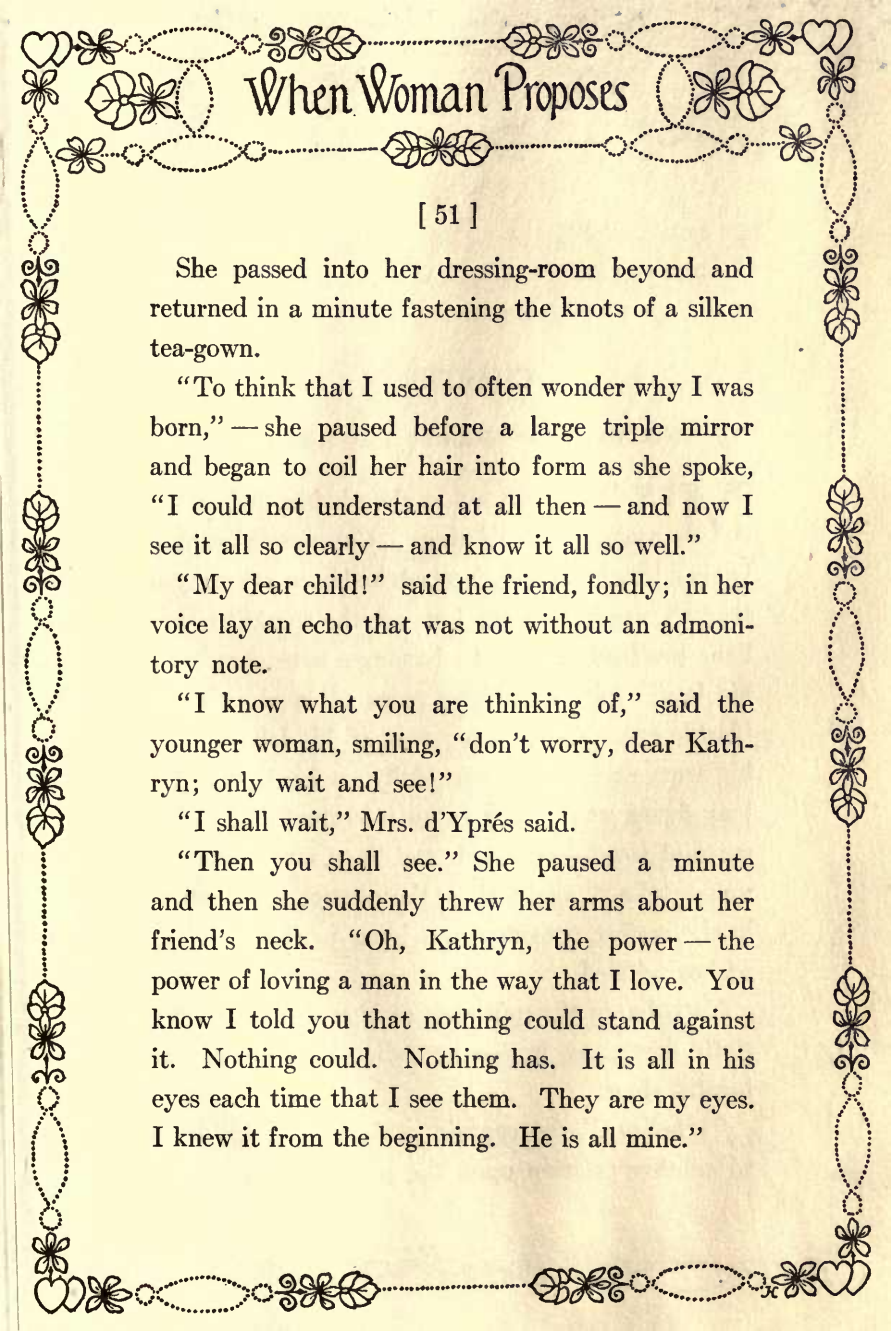
don't want him to measure me by anything but just what I am to him — by just what I have been since I have known him. No one in the world ever ought to judge any one by any other standard than just what they are for and to that person himself."

She parted her hair into two thick masses and holding them back upon either temple with outspread fingers, looked steadily forth and down upon her friend.

"Don't you see that I am not to be measured now by any standard of last winter? Have n't I altered? — am I not altering every day? I never guessed that there could be such a sensation of change as I feel each second that I spend in there with him. I feel myself growing different — I feel myself growing more different all the time. I can hardly wait for him to be strong enough so that I may tell him all about it."

Mrs. d'Yprés kept silent a little; then she said, "And your resolution to become thoroughly conventional?"

Nathalie heaped her hair yet more together. "I am not forgetting that," she said, "I am not forgetting anything."



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She passed into her dressing-room beyond and returned in a minute fastening the knots of a silken tea-gown.

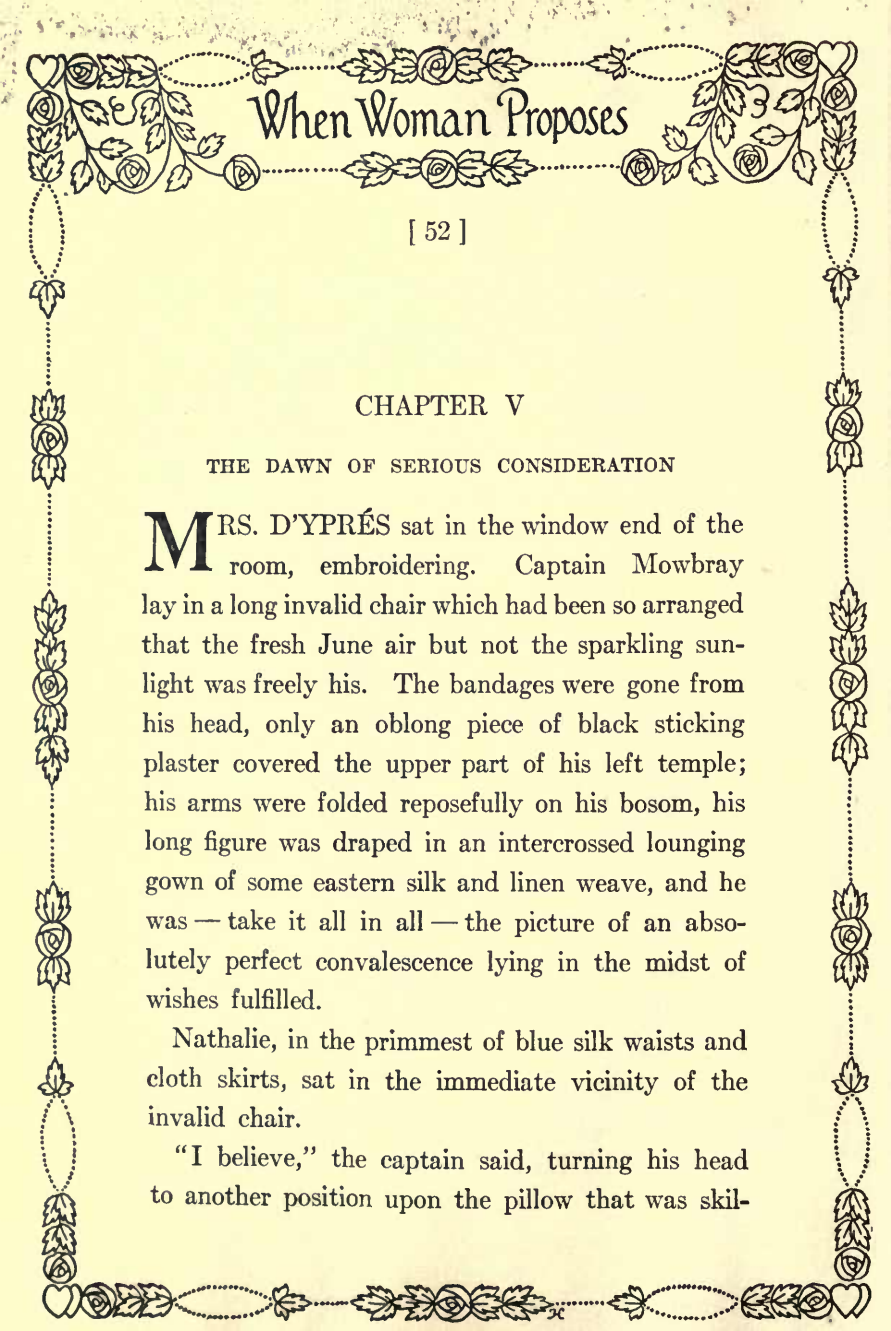
“To think that I used to often wonder why I was born,” — she paused before a large triple mirror and began to coil her hair into form as she spoke, “I could not understand at all then — and now I see it all so clearly — and know it all so well.”

“My dear child!” said the friend, fondly; in her voice lay an echo that was not without an admonitory note.

“I know what you are thinking of,” said the younger woman, smiling, “don’t worry, dear Kathryn; only wait and see!”

“I shall wait,” Mrs. d’Yprés said.

“Then you shall see.” She paused a minute and then she suddenly threw her arms about her friend’s neck. “Oh, Kathryn, the power — the power of loving a man in the way that I love. You know I told you that nothing could stand against it. Nothing could. Nothing has. It is all in his eyes each time that I see them. They are my eyes. I knew it from the beginning. He is all mine.”



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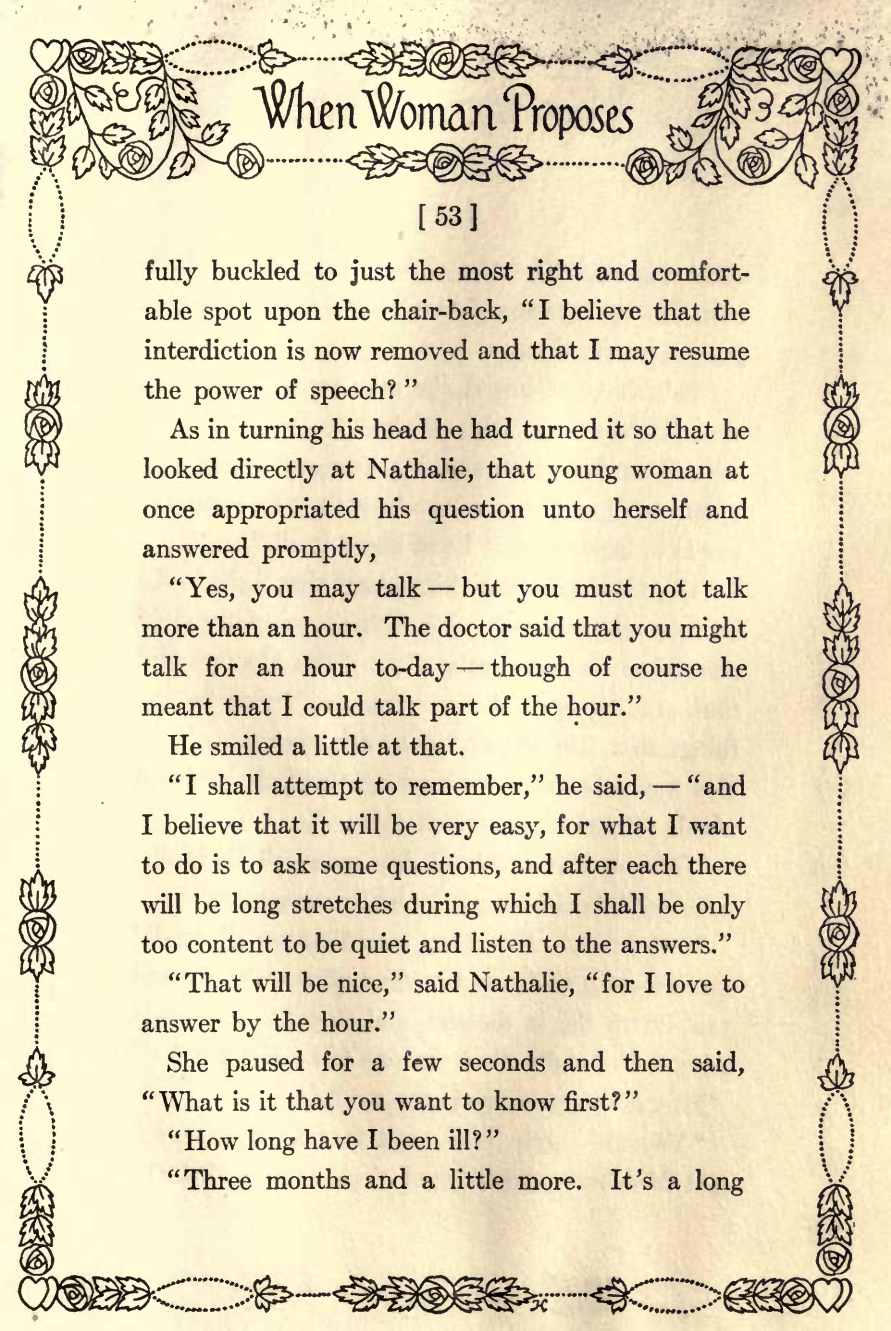
CHAPTER V

THE DAWN OF SERIOUS CONSIDERATION

MRS. D'YPRÉS sat in the window end of the room, embroidering. Captain Mowbray lay in a long invalid chair which had been so arranged that the fresh June air but not the sparkling sunlight was freely his. The bandages were gone from his head, only an oblong piece of black sticking plaster covered the upper part of his left temple; his arms were folded reposefully on his bosom, his long figure was draped in an intercrossed lounging gown of some eastern silk and linen weave, and he was — take it all in all — the picture of an absolutely perfect convalescence lying in the midst of wishes fulfilled.

Nathalie, in the primmest of blue silk waists and cloth skirts, sat in the immediate vicinity of the invalid chair.

“I believe,” the captain said, turning his head to another position upon the pillow that was skil-



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fully buckled to just the most right and comfortable spot upon the chair-back, "I believe that the interdiction is now removed and that I may resume the power of speech?"

As in turning his head he had turned it so that he looked directly at Nathalie, that young woman at once appropriated his question unto herself and answered promptly,

"Yes, you may talk — but you must not talk more than an hour. The doctor said that you might talk for an hour to-day — though of course he meant that I could talk part of the hour."

He smiled a little at that.

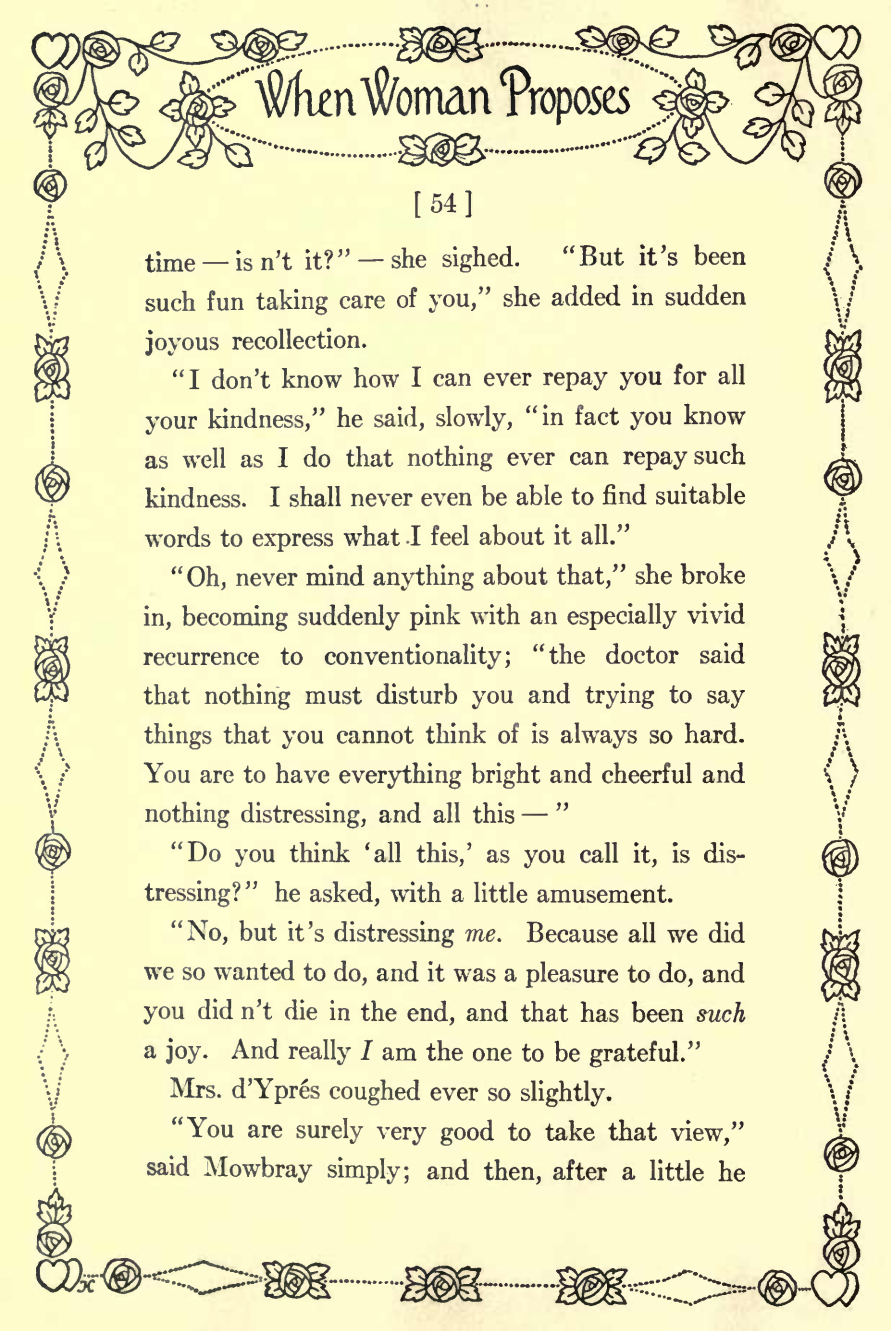
"I shall attempt to remember," he said, — "and I believe that it will be very easy, for what I want to do is to ask some questions, and after each there will be long stretches during which I shall be only too content to be quiet and listen to the answers."

"That will be nice," said Nathalie, "for I love to answer by the hour."

She paused for a few seconds and then said, "What is it that you want to know first?"

"How long have I been ill?"

"Three months and a little more. It's a long



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time — is n't it?" — she sighed. "But it's been such fun taking care of you," she added in sudden joyous recollection.

"I don't know how I can ever repay you for all your kindness," he said, slowly, "in fact you know as well as I do that nothing ever can repay such kindness. I shall never even be able to find suitable words to express what I feel about it all."

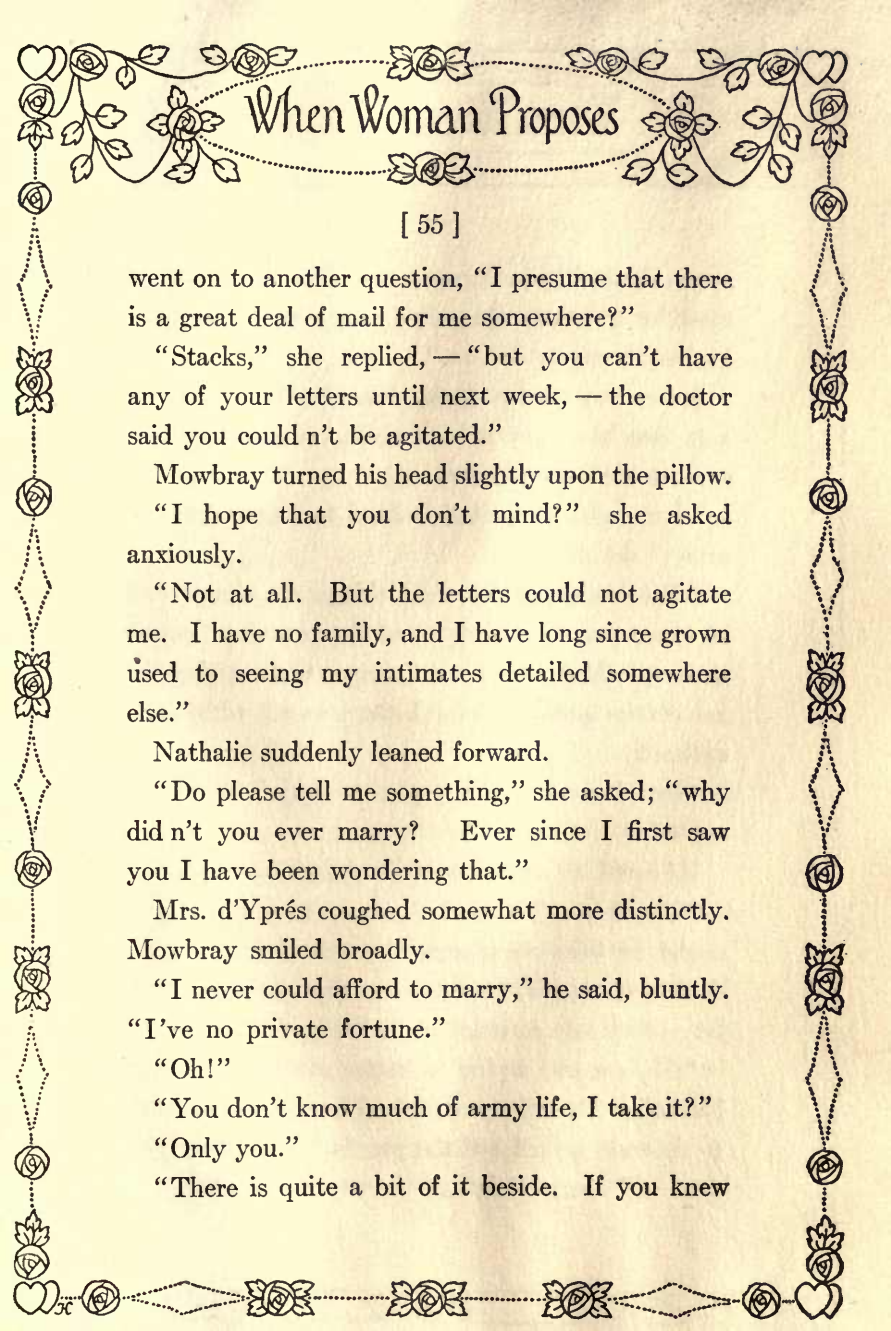
"Oh, never mind anything about that," she broke in, becoming suddenly pink with an especially vivid recurrence to conventionality; "the doctor said that nothing must disturb you and trying to say things that you cannot think of is always so hard. You are to have everything bright and cheerful and nothing distressing, and all this —"

"Do you think 'all this,' as you call it, is distressing?" he asked, with a little amusement.

"No, but it's distressing *me*. Because all we did we so wanted to do, and it was a pleasure to do, and you did n't die in the end, and that has been *such* a joy. And really *I* am the one to be grateful."

Mrs. d'Yprés coughed ever so slightly.

"You are surely very good to take that view," said Mowbray simply; and then, after a little he



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went on to another question, "I presume that there is a great deal of mail for me somewhere?"

"Stacks," she replied, — "but you can't have any of your letters until next week, — the doctor said you could n't be agitated."

Mowbray turned his head slightly upon the pillow.

"I hope that you don't mind?" she asked anxiously.

"Not at all. But the letters could not agitate me. I have no family, and I have long since grown used to seeing my intimates detailed somewhere else."

Nathalie suddenly leaned forward.

"Do please tell me something," she asked; "why did n't you ever marry? Ever since I first saw you I have been wondering that."

Mrs. d'Yprés coughed somewhat more distinctly. Mowbray smiled broadly.

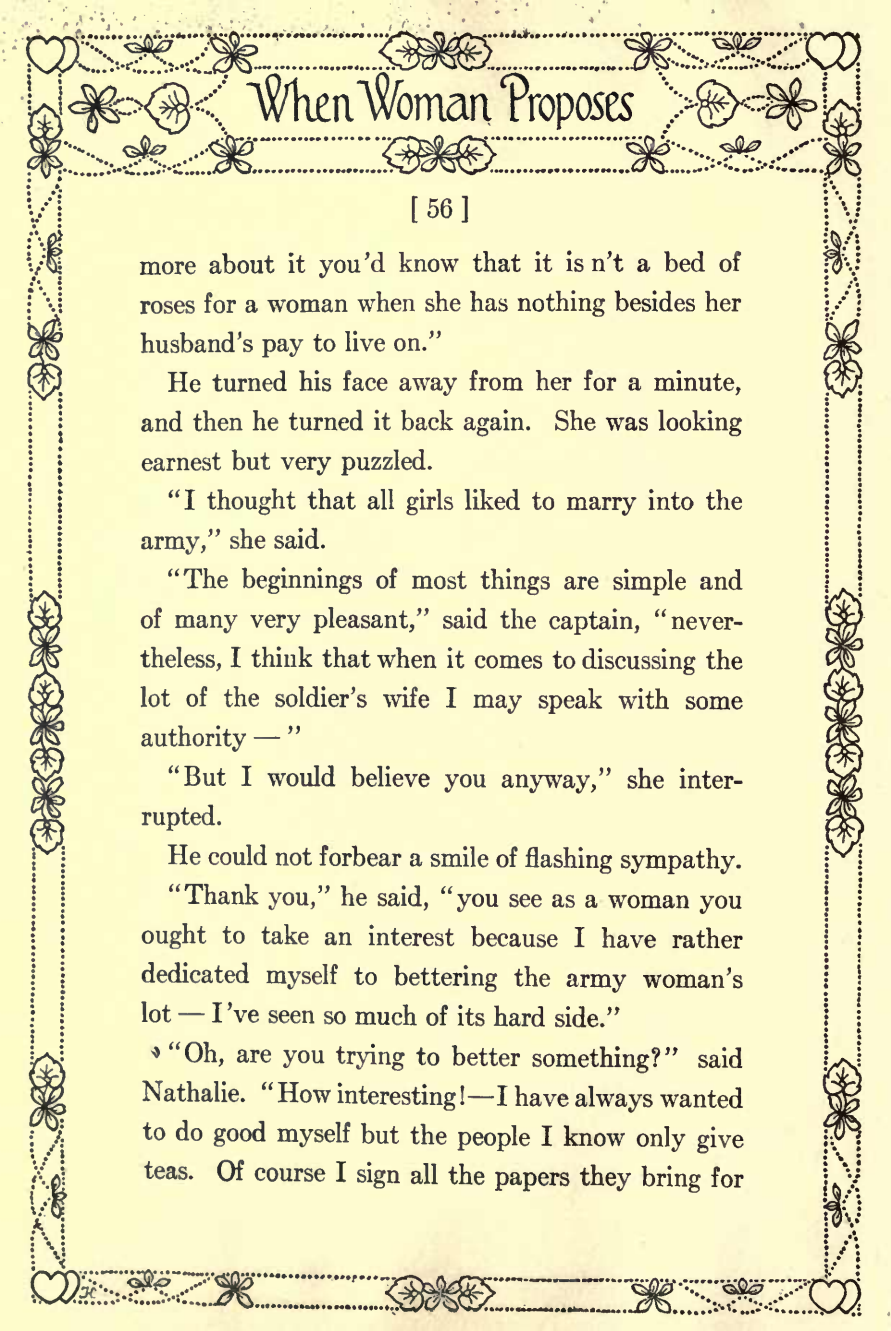
"I never could afford to marry," he said, bluntly. "I've no private fortune."

"Oh!"

"You don't know much of army life, I take it?"

"Only you."

"There is quite a bit of it beside. If you knew



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more about it you'd know that it is n't a bed of roses for a woman when she has nothing besides her husband's pay to live on."

He turned his face away from her for a minute, and then he turned it back again. She was looking earnest but very puzzled.

"I thought that all girls liked to marry into the army," she said.

"The beginnings of most things are simple and of many very pleasant," said the captain, "nevertheless, I think that when it comes to discussing the lot of the soldier's wife I may speak with some authority —"

"But I would believe you anyway," she interrupted.

He could not forbear a smile of flashing sympathy.

"Thank you," he said, "you see as a woman you ought to take an interest because I have rather dedicated myself to bettering the army woman's lot — I've seen so much of its hard side."

♪ "Oh, are you trying to better something?" said Nathalie. "How interesting! — I have always wanted to do good myself but the people I know only give teas. Of course I sign all the papers they bring for

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money always but that is n't like a real man looking right at you and trying to do good — is it? Please tell me all about it."

Again she leaned forward — all her attention fixed upon his face.

"Nathalie," said Mrs. d'Yprés, from her seat by the window, "you must not lead the captain on to talk too much."

"I am not leading him on," retorted Nathalie; "he is lying just as still as ever."

"She is not tiring me," said the invalid; "instead she is inspiring me with more and more strength to ask questions."

"Oh, I thought that it was you who were going to tell me things," she said. "Well, what is it that you want to know next?"

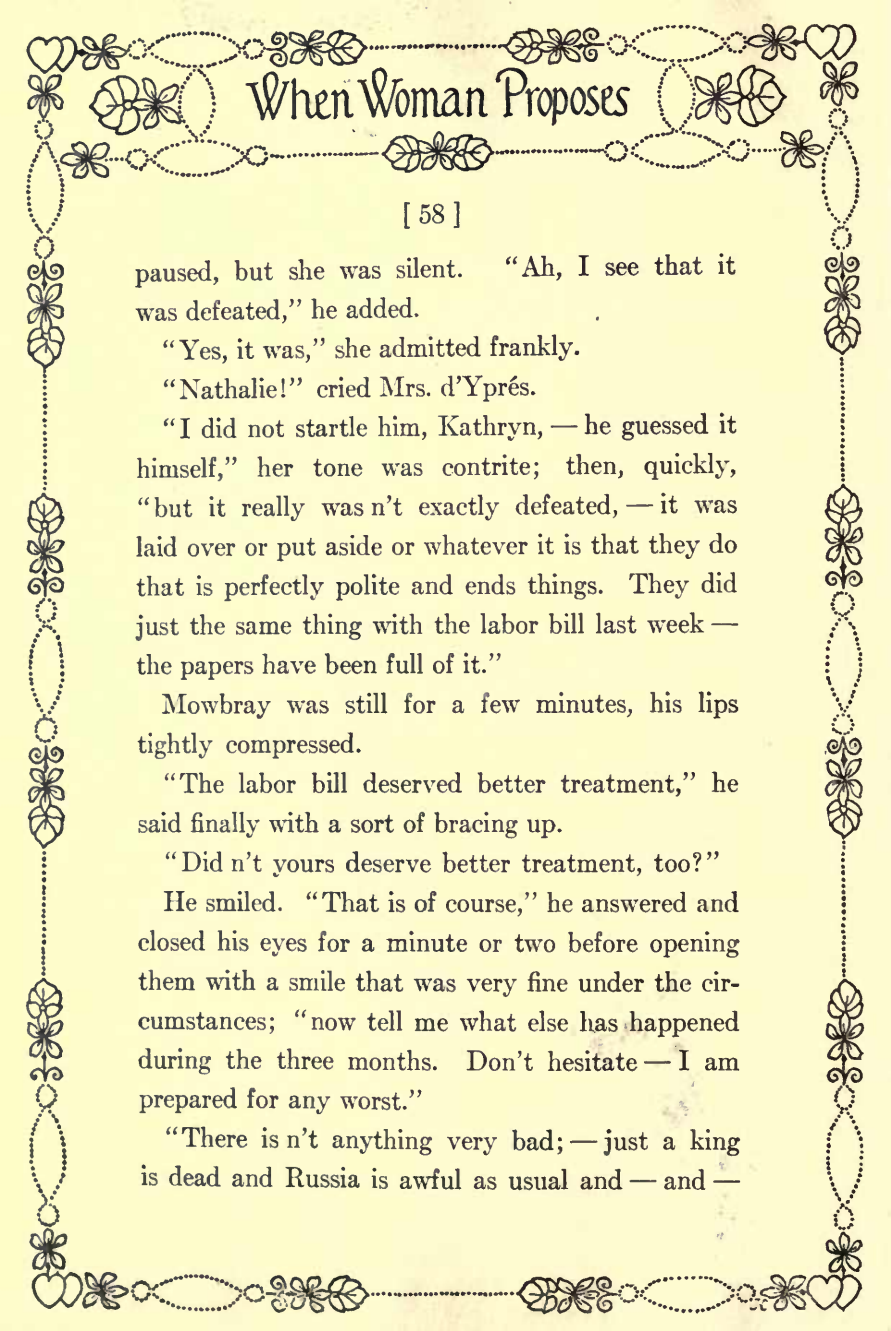
"What I want to know most of all is something that I could hardly expect you to be able to tell me."

"Ask, — perhaps Kathryn will know if I don't."

"There was a bill about the army pay coming up just when —"

"Did you have anything to do with that bill?" her eyes opened widely as she spoke.

"Yes; it was that which brought me here." He



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paused, but she was silent. "Ah, I see that it was defeated," he added.

"Yes, it was," she admitted frankly.

"Nathalie!" cried Mrs. d'Yprés.

"I did not startle him, Kathryn, — he guessed it himself," her tone was contrite; then, quickly, "but it really was n't exactly defeated, — it was laid over or put aside or whatever it is that they do that is perfectly polite and ends things. They did just the same thing with the labor bill last week — the papers have been full of it."

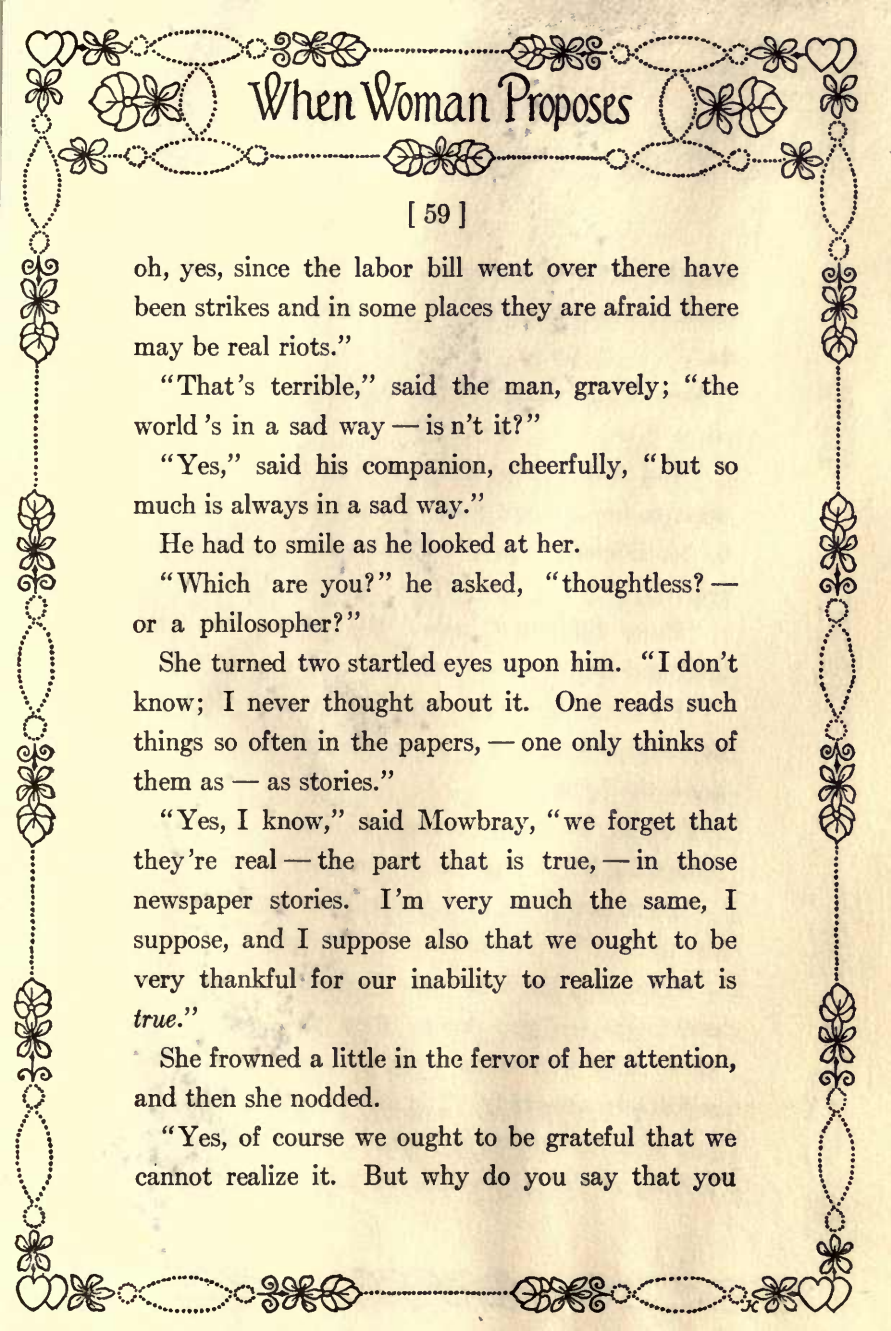
Mowbray was still for a few minutes, his lips tightly compressed.

"The labor bill deserved better treatment," he said finally with a sort of bracing up.

"Did n't yours deserve better treatment, too?"

He smiled. "That is of course," he answered and closed his eyes for a minute or two before opening them with a smile that was very fine under the circumstances; "now tell me what else has happened during the three months. Don't hesitate — I am prepared for any worst."

"There is n't anything very bad; — just a king is dead and Russia is awful as usual and — and —



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oh, yes, since the labor bill went over there have been strikes and in some places they are afraid there may be real riots."

"That's terrible," said the man, gravely; "the world's in a sad way — is n't it?"

"Yes," said his companion, cheerfully, "but so much is always in a sad way."

He had to smile as he looked at her.

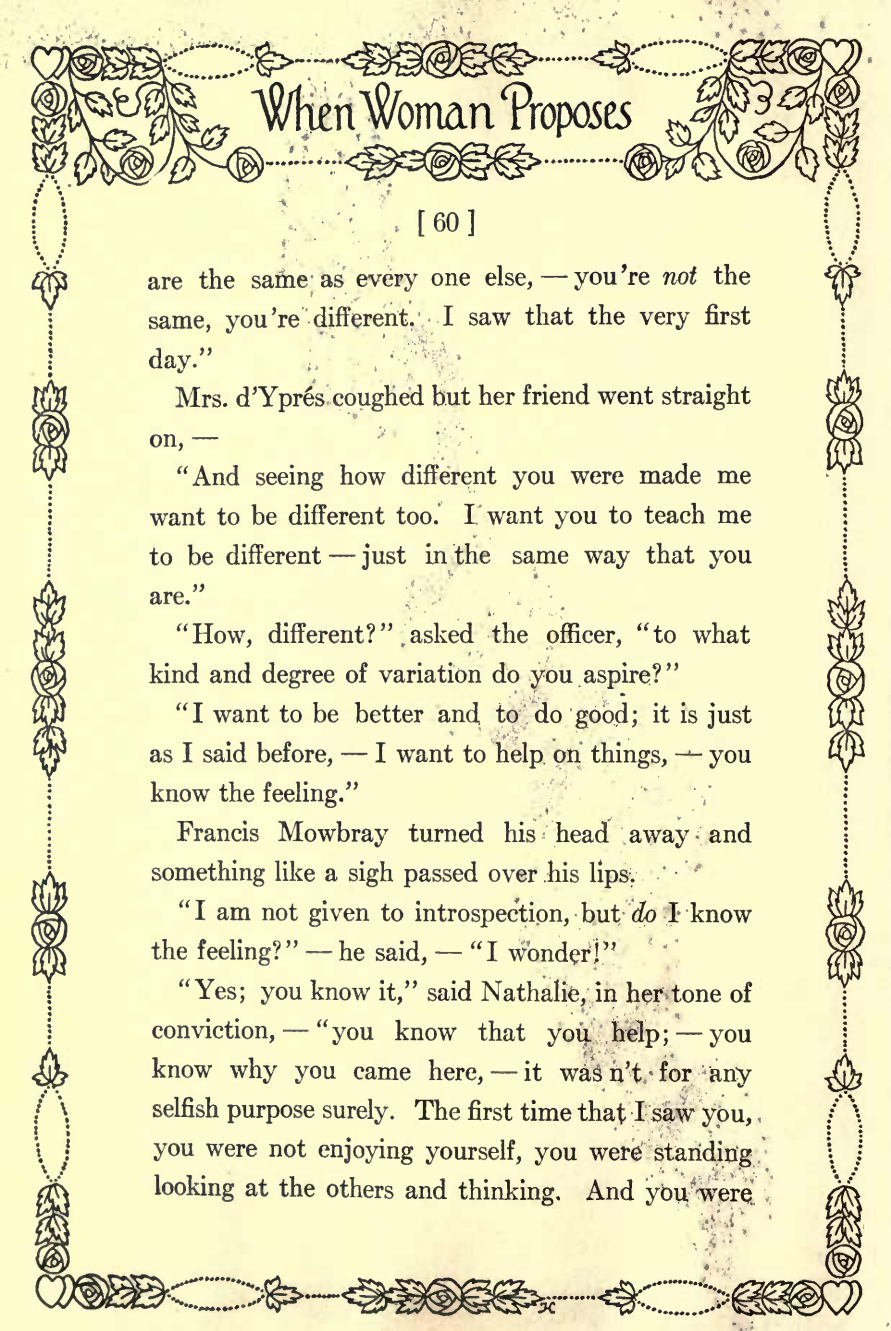
"Which are you?" he asked, "thoughtless? — or a philosopher?"

She turned two startled eyes upon him. "I don't know; I never thought about it. One reads such things so often in the papers, — one only thinks of them as — as stories."

"Yes, I know," said Mowbray, "we forget that they're real — the part that is true, — in those newspaper stories. I'm very much the same, I suppose, and I suppose also that we ought to be very thankful for our inability to realize what is *true*."

She frowned a little in the fervor of her attention, and then she nodded.

"Yes, of course we ought to be grateful that we cannot realize it. But why do you say that you



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are the same as every one else, — you're *not* the same, you're different. I saw that the very first day."

Mrs. d'Yprés coughed but her friend went straight on, —

"And seeing how different you were made me want to be different too. I want you to teach me to be different — just in the same way that you are."

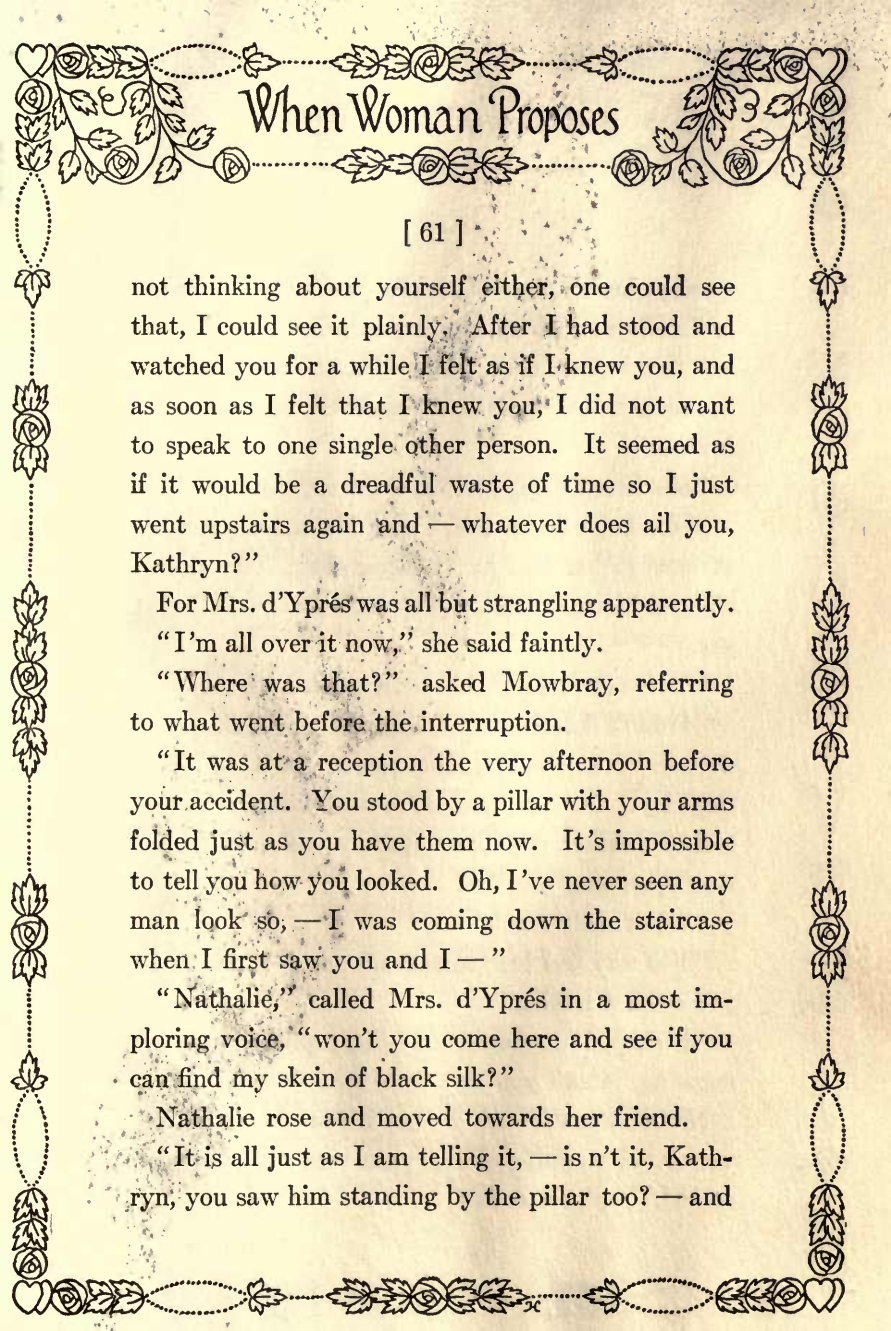
"How, different?" asked the officer, "to what kind and degree of variation do you aspire?"

"I want to be better and to do good; it is just as I said before, — I want to help on things, — you know the feeling."

Francis Mowbray turned his head away and something like a sigh passed over his lips.

"I am not given to introspection, but *do* I know the feeling?" — he said, — "I wonder!"

"Yes; you know it," said Nathalie, in her tone of conviction, — "you know that you help; — you know why you came here, — it was n't for any selfish purpose surely. The first time that I saw you, you were not enjoying yourself, you were standing looking at the others and thinking. And you were



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not thinking about yourself either, one could see that, I could see it plainly. After I had stood and watched you for a while I felt as if I knew you, and as soon as I felt that I knew you, I did not want to speak to one single other person. It seemed as if it would be a dreadful waste of time so I just went upstairs again and — whatever does ail you, Kathryn?”

For Mrs. d'Yprés was all but strangling apparently. “I'm all over it now,” she said faintly.

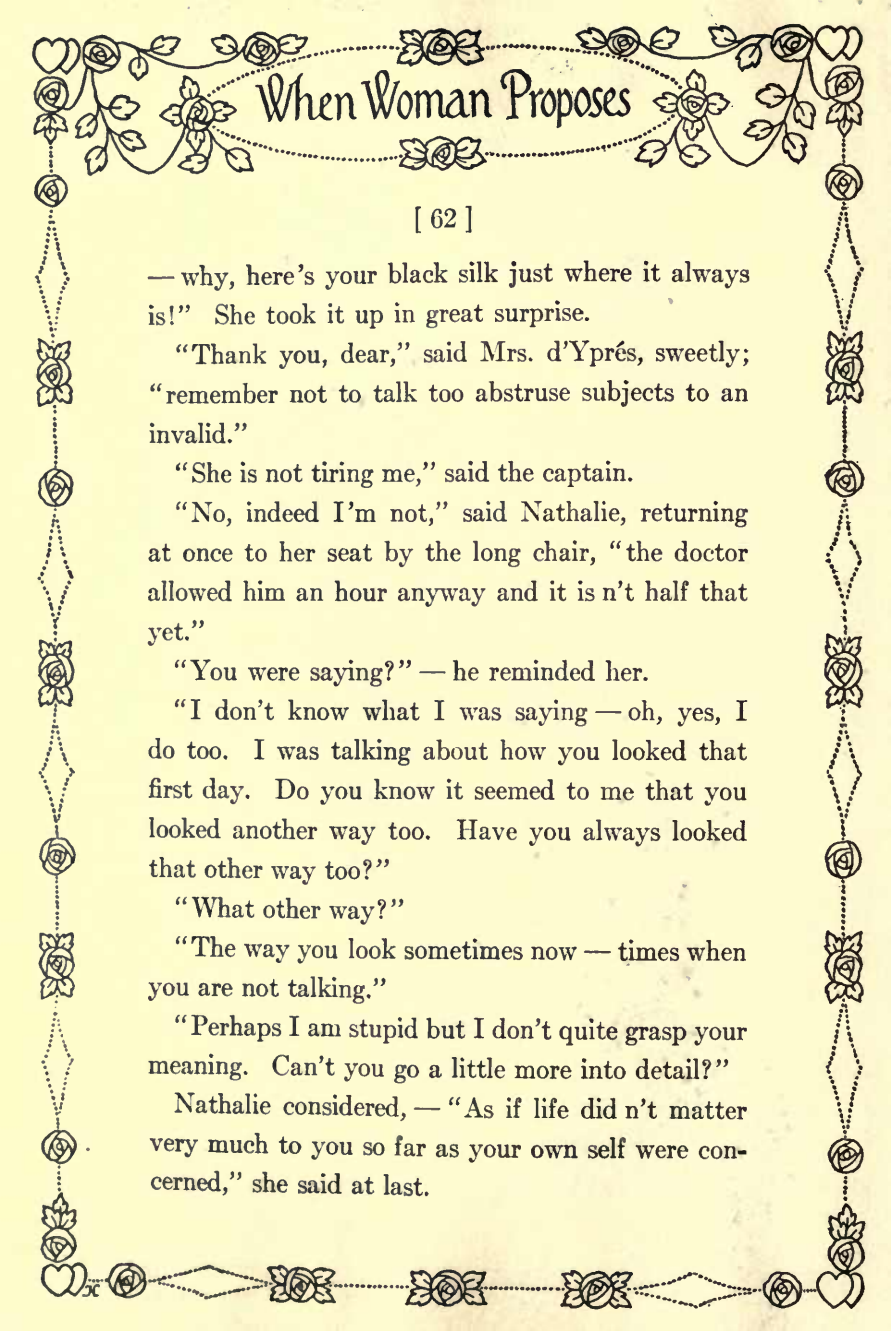
“Where was that?” asked Mowbray, referring to what went before the interruption.

“It was at a reception the very afternoon before your accident. You stood by a pillar with your arms folded just as you have them now. It's impossible to tell you how you looked. Oh, I've never seen any man look so, — I was coming down the staircase when I first saw you and I — ”

“Nathalie,” called Mrs. d'Yprés in a most imploring voice, “won't you come here and see if you can find my skein of black silk?”

Nathalie rose and moved towards her friend.

“It is all just as I am telling it, — is n't it, Kathryn, you saw him standing by the pillar too? — and



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— why, here's your black silk just where it always is!" She took it up in great surprise.

"Thank you, dear," said Mrs. d'Yprés, sweetly; "remember not to talk too abstruse subjects to an invalid."

"She is not tiring me," said the captain.

"No, indeed I'm not," said Nathalie, returning at once to her seat by the long chair, "the doctor allowed him an hour anyway and it is n't half that yet."

"You were saying?" — he reminded her.

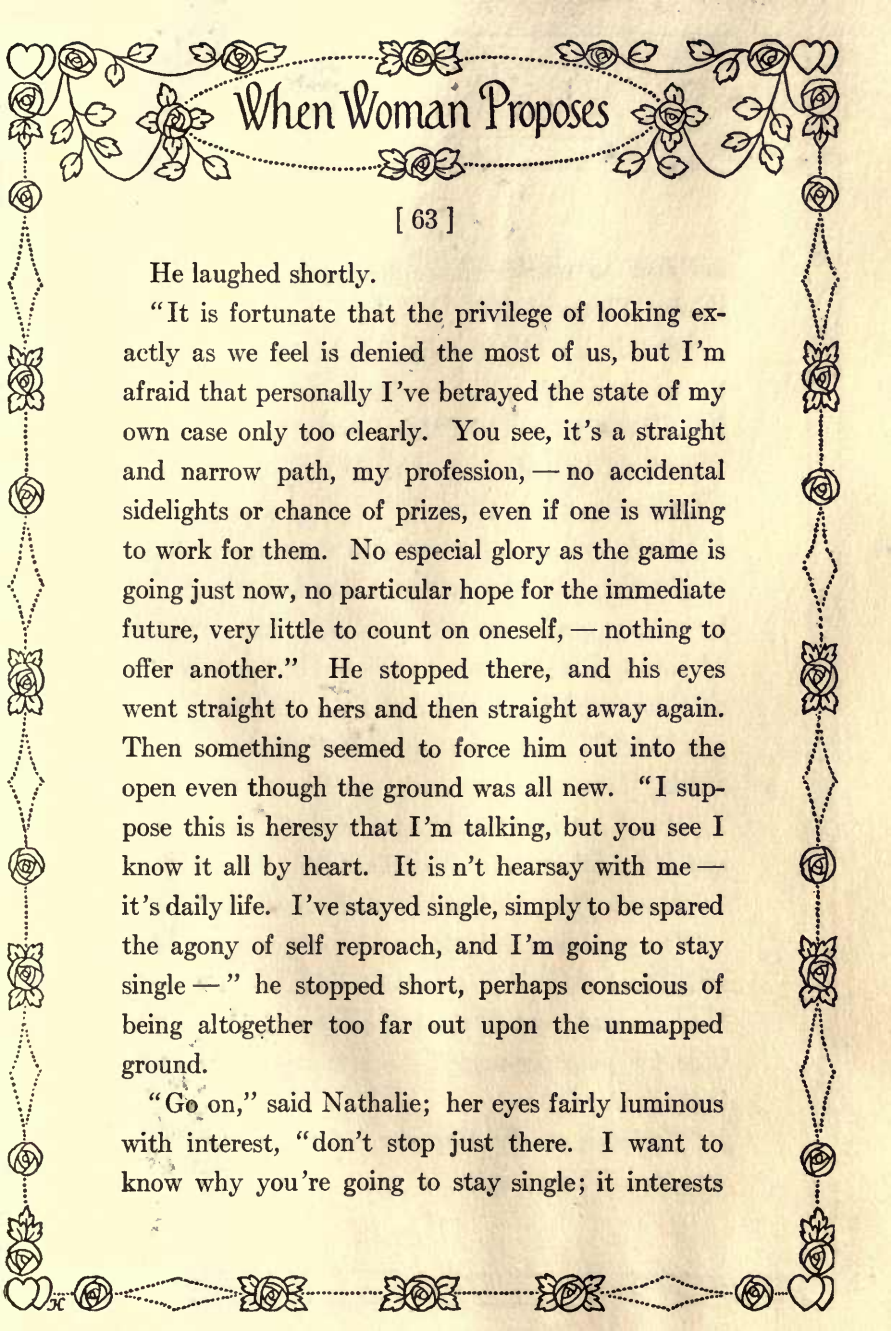
"I don't know what I was saying — oh, yes, I do too. I was talking about how you looked that first day. Do you know it seemed to me that you looked another way too. Have you always looked that other way too?"

"What other way?"

"The way you look sometimes now — times when you are not talking."

"Perhaps I am stupid but I don't quite grasp your meaning. Can't you go a little more into detail?"

Nathalie considered, — "As if life did n't matter very much to you so far as your own self were concerned," she said at last.



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He laughed shortly.

"It is fortunate that the privilege of looking exactly as we feel is denied the most of us, but I'm afraid that personally I've betrayed the state of my own case only too clearly. You see, it's a straight and narrow path, my profession, — no accidental sidelights or chance of prizes, even if one is willing to work for them. No especial glory as the game is going just now, no particular hope for the immediate future, very little to count on oneself, — nothing to offer another." He stopped there, and his eyes went straight to hers and then straight away again. Then something seemed to force him out into the open even though the ground was all new. "I suppose this is heresy that I'm talking, but you see I know it all by heart. It is n't hearsay with me — it's daily life. I've stayed single, simply to be spared the agony of self reproach, and I'm going to stay single —" he stopped short, perhaps conscious of being altogether too far out upon the unmapped ground.

"Go on," said Nathalie; her eyes fairly luminous with interest, "don't stop just there. I want to know why you're going to stay single; it interests

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me ever so much — more than you can possibly think. Please go on.”

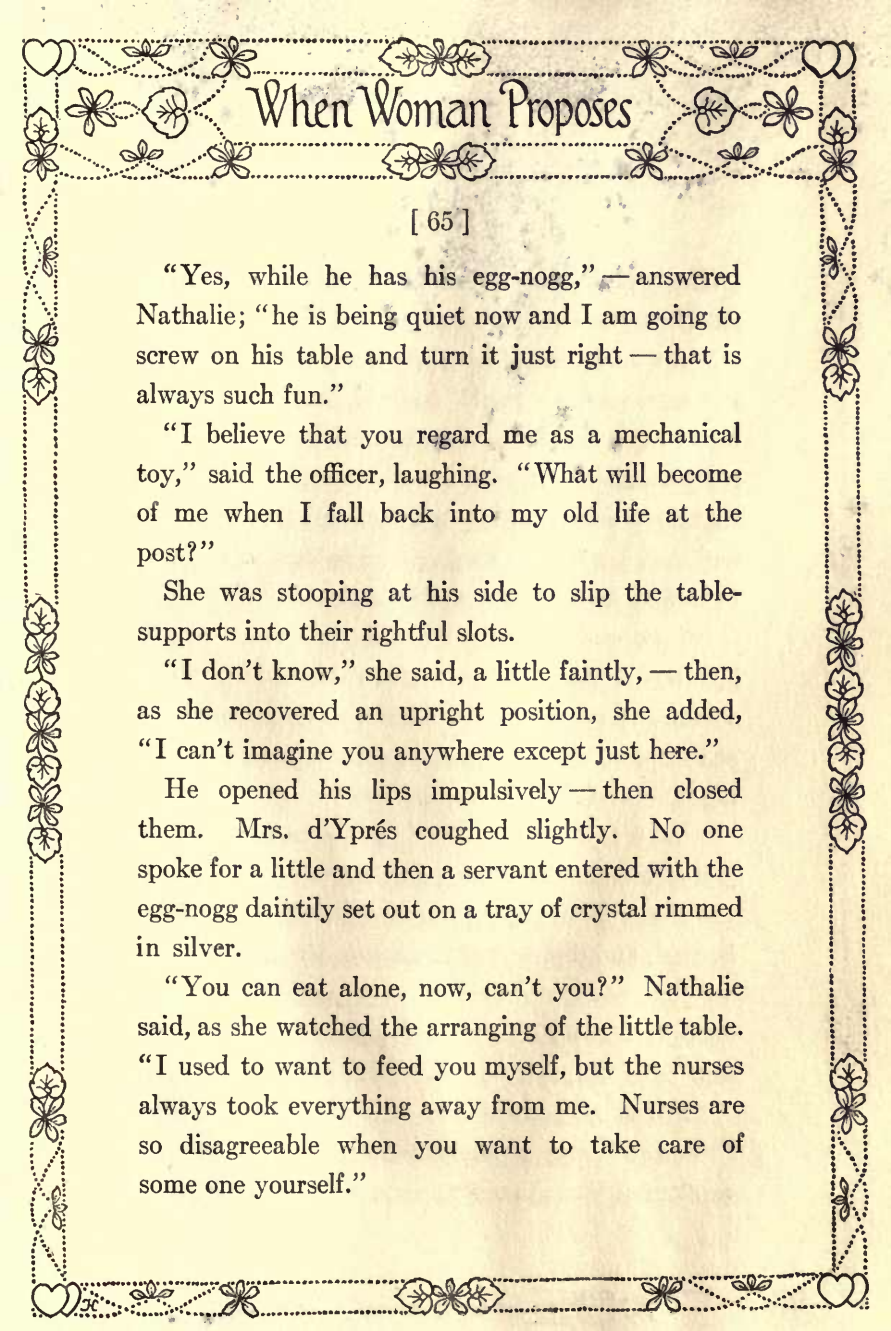
“But it is n’t interesting,” said Mowbray, “on the contrary it’s selfish — almost sordid. And yet it is n’t really for myself that I care — it’s only that I’m afraid to undertake a battle that strength and courage won’t count in. You see, as a single man I’m fairly well off, my reasonable wants are provided for, and my efficiency as an officer is not impaired by money considerations. But as a married man without any outside resources — but of course you’re not interested in all this and I don’t blame you if you have n’t listened to any of it after the first ten words,” he stopped suddenly again.

“But I am interested,” she cried, “I’ve listened and I’ve understood. Was that all in the bill?”

“It was n’t worded in just that way.”

“Do you know I think that I could understand a great deal more if you would trouble to tell me.” She rose and went to the bell as she spoke — “It’s time for your egg-nogg,” she remarked parenthetically as she did so.

“Nathalie, do let Captain Mowbray rest.” It was Mrs. d’Yprés’ voice.



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“Yes, while he has his egg-nogg,” — answered Nathalie; “he is being quiet now and I am going to screw on his table and turn it just right — that is always such fun.”

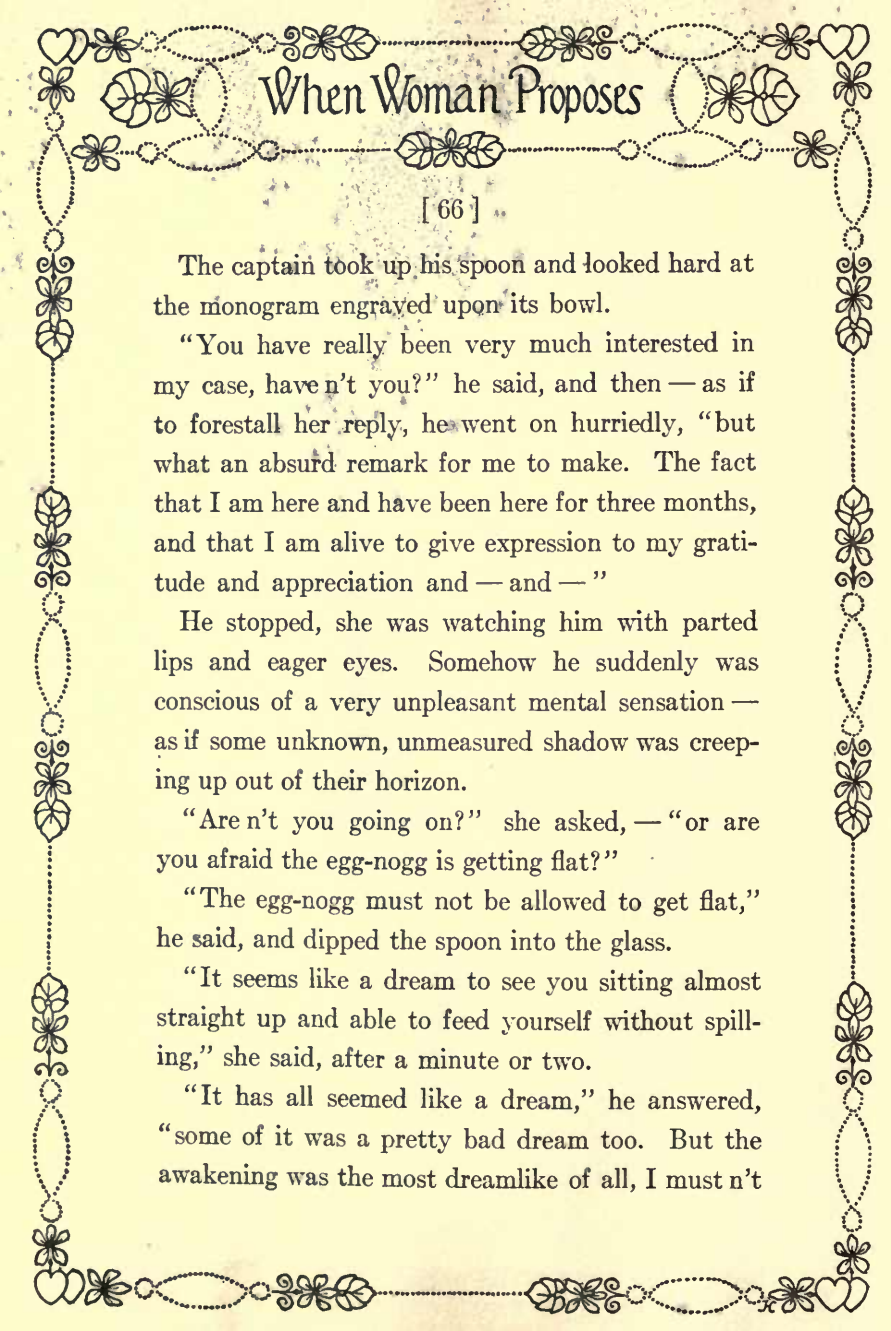
“I believe that you regard me as a mechanical toy,” said the officer, laughing. “What will become of me when I fall back into my old life at the post?”

She was stooping at his side to slip the table-supports into their rightful slots.

“I don’t know,” she said, a little faintly, — then, as she recovered an upright position, she added, “I can’t imagine you anywhere except just here.”

He opened his lips impulsively — then closed them. Mrs. d’Yprés coughed slightly. No one spoke for a little and then a servant entered with the egg-nogg daintily set out on a tray of crystal rimmed in silver.

“You can eat alone, now, can’t you?” Nathalie said, as she watched the arranging of the little table. “I used to want to feed you myself, but the nurses always took everything away from me. Nurses are so disagreeable when you want to take care of some one yourself.”



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The captain took up his spoon and looked hard at the monogram engraved upon its bowl.

"You have really been very much interested in my case, have n't you?" he said, and then — as if to forestall her reply, he went on hurriedly, "but what an absurd remark for me to make. The fact that I am here and have been here for three months, and that I am alive to give expression to my gratitude and appreciation and — and —"

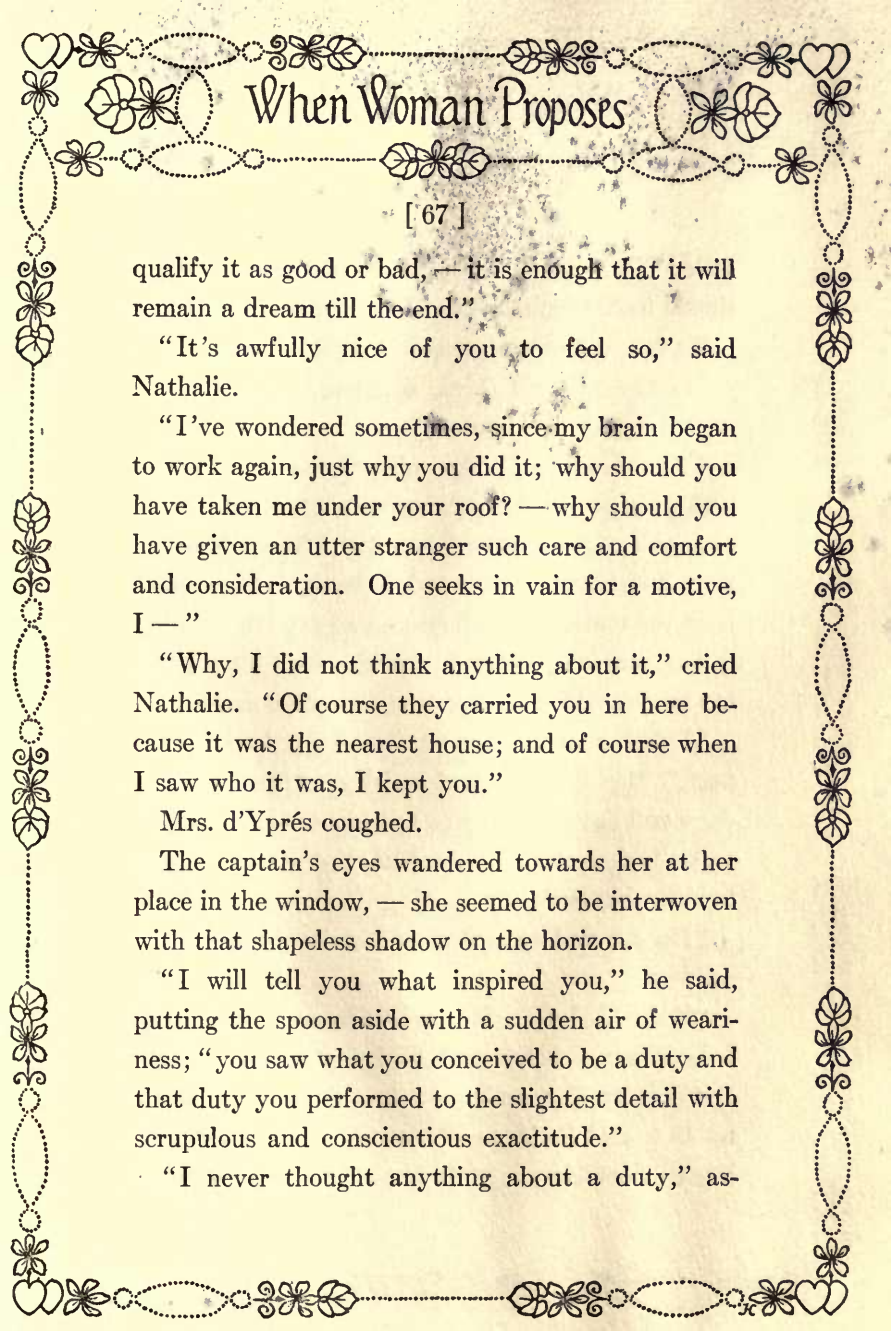
He stopped, she was watching him with parted lips and eager eyes. Somehow he suddenly was conscious of a very unpleasant mental sensation — as if some unknown, unmeasured shadow was creeping up out of their horizon.

"Are n't you going on?" she asked, — "or are you afraid the egg-nogg is getting flat?"

"The egg-nogg must not be allowed to get flat," he said, and dipped the spoon into the glass.

"It seems like a dream to see you sitting almost straight up and able to feed yourself without spilling," she said, after a minute or two.

"It has all seemed like a dream," he answered, "some of it was a pretty bad dream too. But the awakening was the most dreamlike of all, I must n't

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qualify it as good or bad, — it is enough that it will remain a dream till the end.”

“It’s awfully nice of you to feel so,” said Nathalie.

“I’ve wondered sometimes, since my brain began to work again, just why you did it; why should you have taken me under your roof? — why should you have given an utter stranger such care and comfort and consideration. One seeks in vain for a motive, I —”

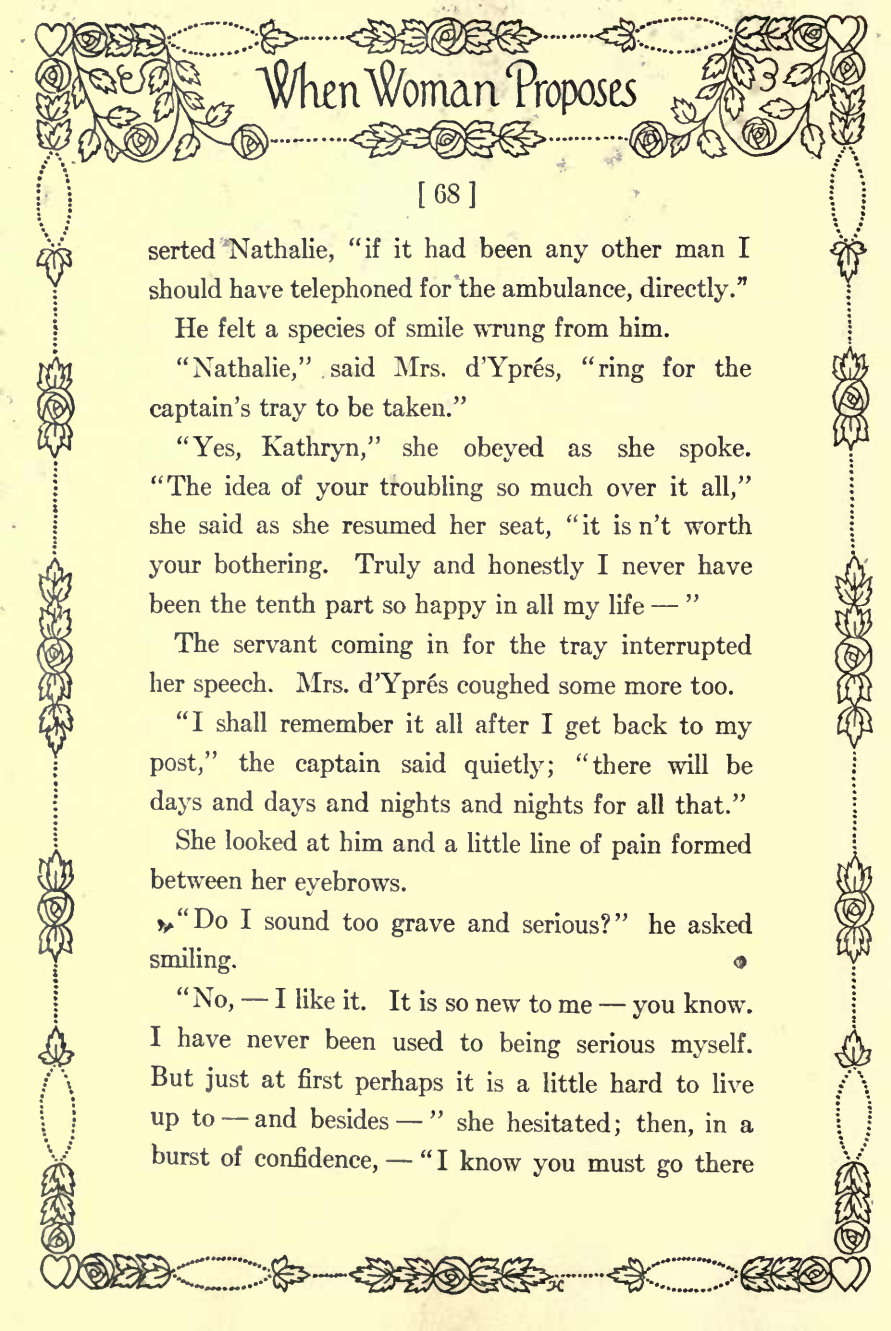
“Why, I did not think anything about it,” cried Nathalie. “Of course they carried you in here because it was the nearest house; and of course when I saw who it was, I kept you.”

Mrs. d’Yprés coughed.

The captain’s eyes wandered towards her at her place in the window, — she seemed to be interwoven with that shapeless shadow on the horizon.

“I will tell you what inspired you,” he said, putting the spoon aside with a sudden air of weariness; “you saw what you conceived to be a duty and that duty you performed to the slightest detail with scrupulous and conscientious exactitude.”

“I never thought anything about a duty,” as-



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served Nathalie, "if it had been any other man I should have telephoned for the ambulance, directly."

He felt a species of smile wrung from him.

"Nathalie," said Mrs. d'Yprés, "ring for the captain's tray to be taken."

"Yes, Kathryn," she obeyed as she spoke. "The idea of your troubling so much over it all," she said as she resumed her seat, "it is n't worth your bothering. Truly and honestly I never have been the tenth part so happy in all my life —"

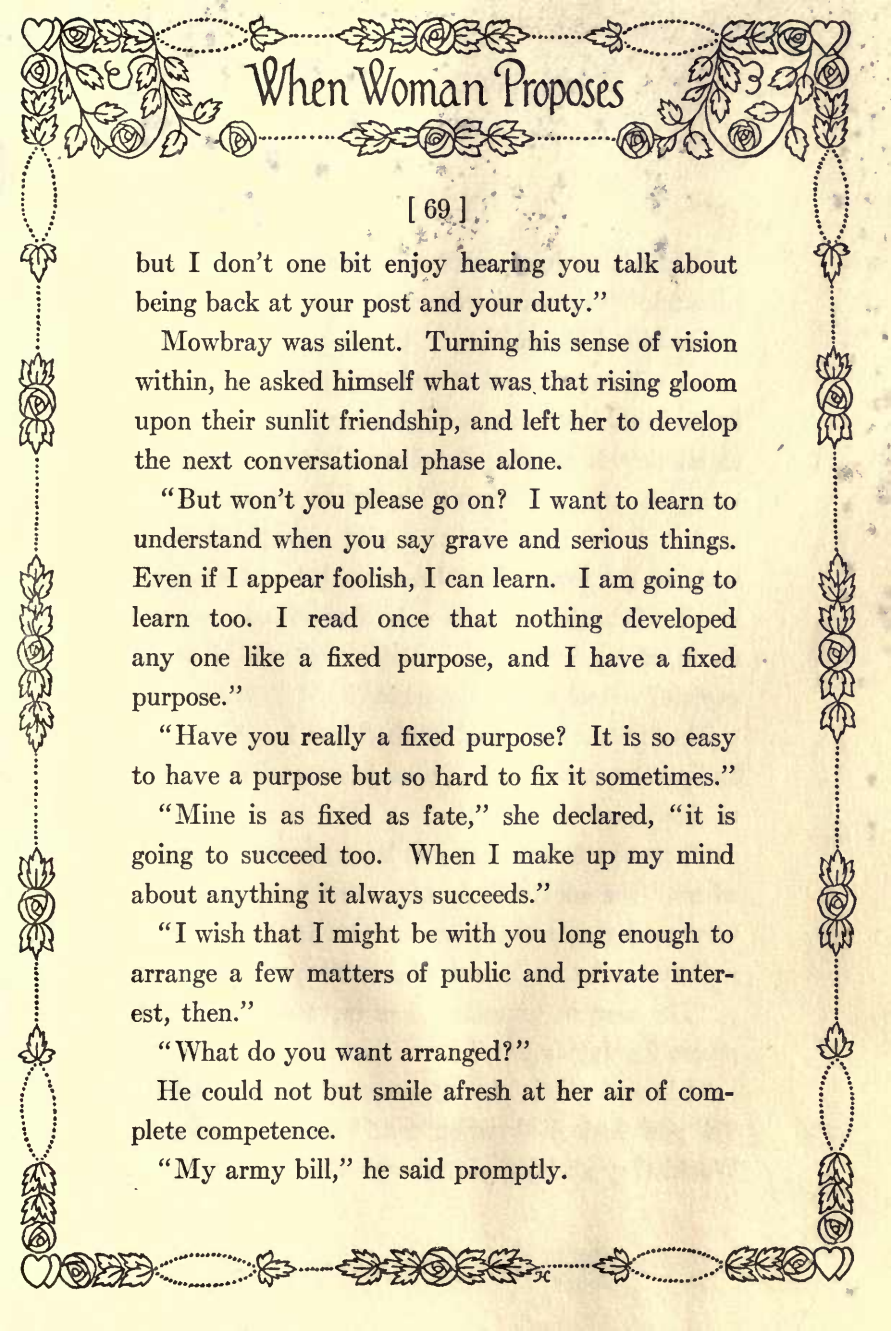
The servant coming in for the tray interrupted her speech. Mrs. d'Yprés coughed some more too.

"I shall remember it all after I get back to my post," the captain said quietly; "there will be days and days and nights and nights for all that."

She looked at him and a little line of pain formed between her eyebrows.

"Do I sound too grave and serious?" he asked smiling.

"No, — I like it. It is so new to me — you know. I have never been used to being serious myself. But just at first perhaps it is a little hard to live up to — and besides —" she hesitated; then, in a burst of confidence, — "I know you must go there



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but I don't one bit enjoy hearing you talk about being back at your post and your duty."

Mowbray was silent. Turning his sense of vision within, he asked himself what was that rising gloom upon their sunlit friendship, and left her to develop the next conversational phase alone.

"But won't you please go on? I want to learn to understand when you say grave and serious things. Even if I appear foolish, I can learn. I am going to learn too. I read once that nothing developed any one like a fixed purpose, and I have a fixed purpose."

"Have you really a fixed purpose? It is so easy to have a purpose but so hard to fix it sometimes."

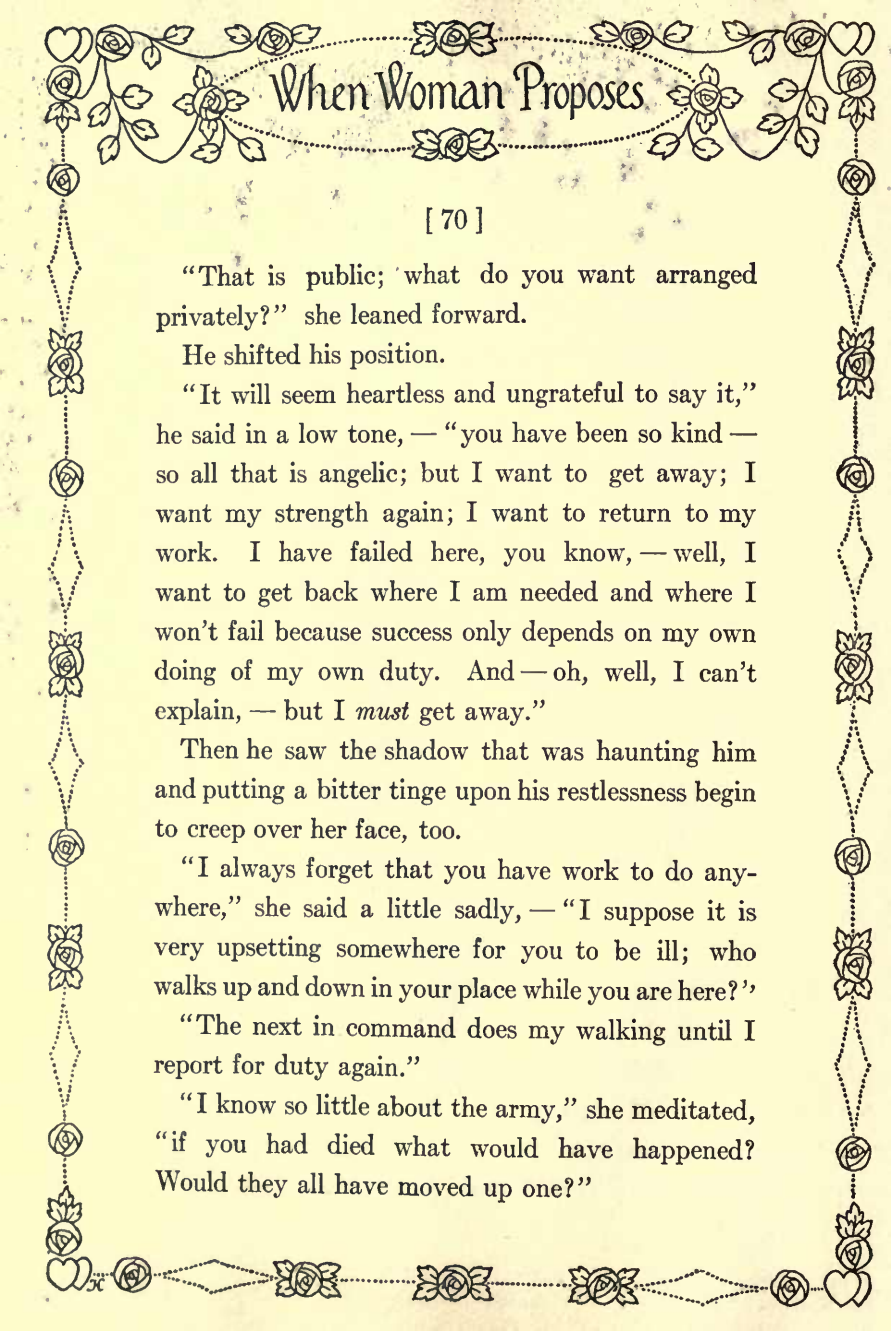
"Mine is as fixed as fate," she declared, "it is going to succeed too. When I make up my mind about anything it always succeeds."

"I wish that I might be with you long enough to arrange a few matters of public and private interest, then."

"What do you want arranged?"

He could not but smile afresh at her air of complete competence.

"My army bill," he said promptly.



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“That is public; what do you want arranged privately?” she leaned forward.

He shifted his position.

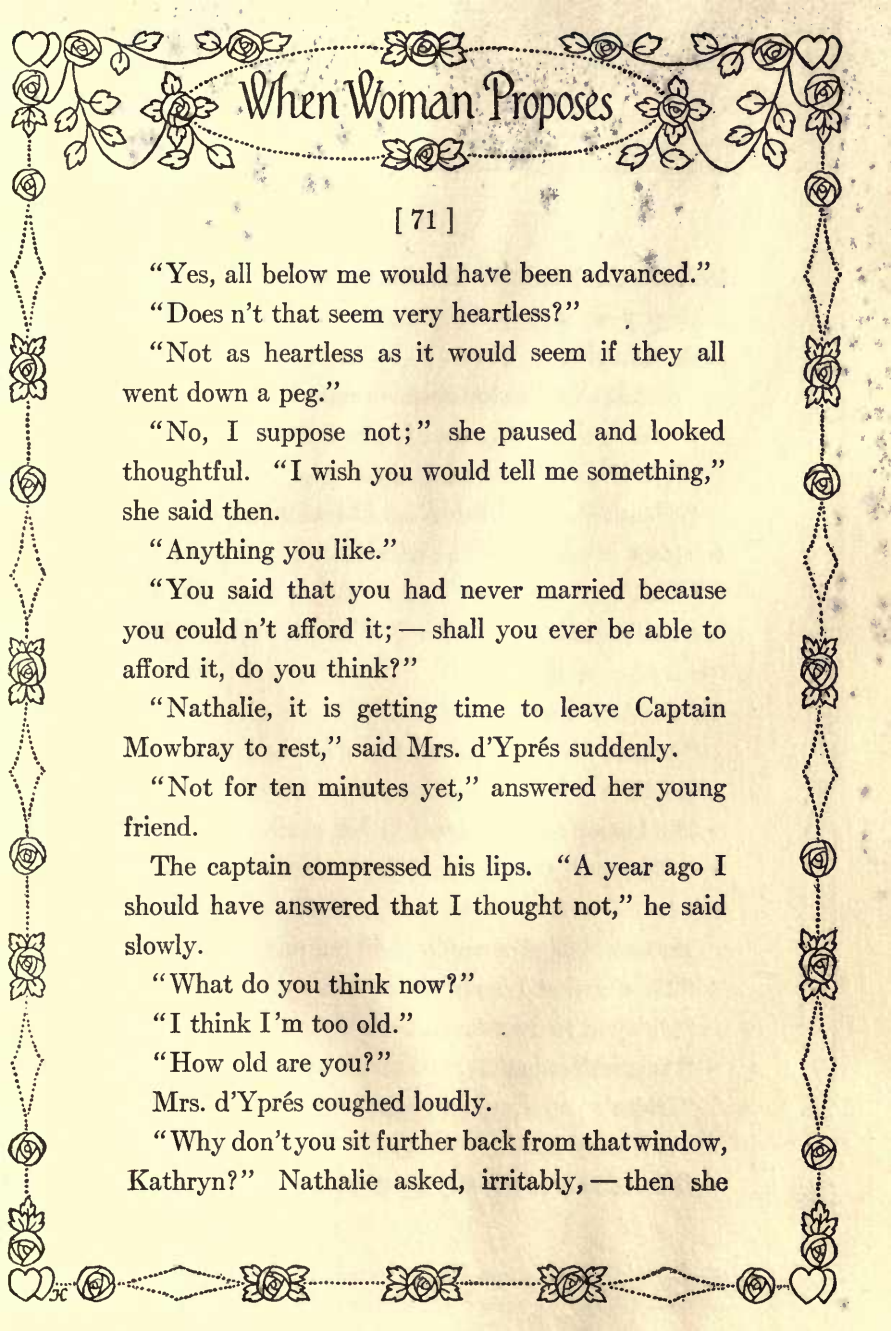
“It will seem heartless and ungrateful to say it,” he said in a low tone, — “you have been so kind — so all that is angelic; but I want to get away; I want my strength again; I want to return to my work. I have failed here, you know, — well, I want to get back where I am needed and where I won’t fail because success only depends on my own doing of my own duty. And — oh, well, I can’t explain, — but I *must* get away.”

Then he saw the shadow that was haunting him and putting a bitter tinge upon his restlessness begin to creep over her face, too.

“I always forget that you have work to do anywhere,” she said a little sadly, — “I suppose it is very upsetting somewhere for you to be ill; who walks up and down in your place while you are here?”

“The next in command does my walking until I report for duty again.”

“I know so little about the army,” she meditated, “if you had died what would have happened? Would they all have moved up one?”



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"Yes, all below me would have been advanced."

"Does n't that seem very heartless?"

"Not as heartless as it would seem if they all went down a peg."

"No, I suppose not;" she paused and looked thoughtful. "I wish you would tell me something," she said then.

"Anything you like."

"You said that you had never married because you could n't afford it; — shall you ever be able to afford it, do you think?"

"Nathalie, it is getting time to leave Captain Mowbray to rest," said Mrs. d'Yprés suddenly.

"Not for ten minutes yet," answered her young friend.

The captain compressed his lips. "A year ago I should have answered that I thought not," he said slowly.

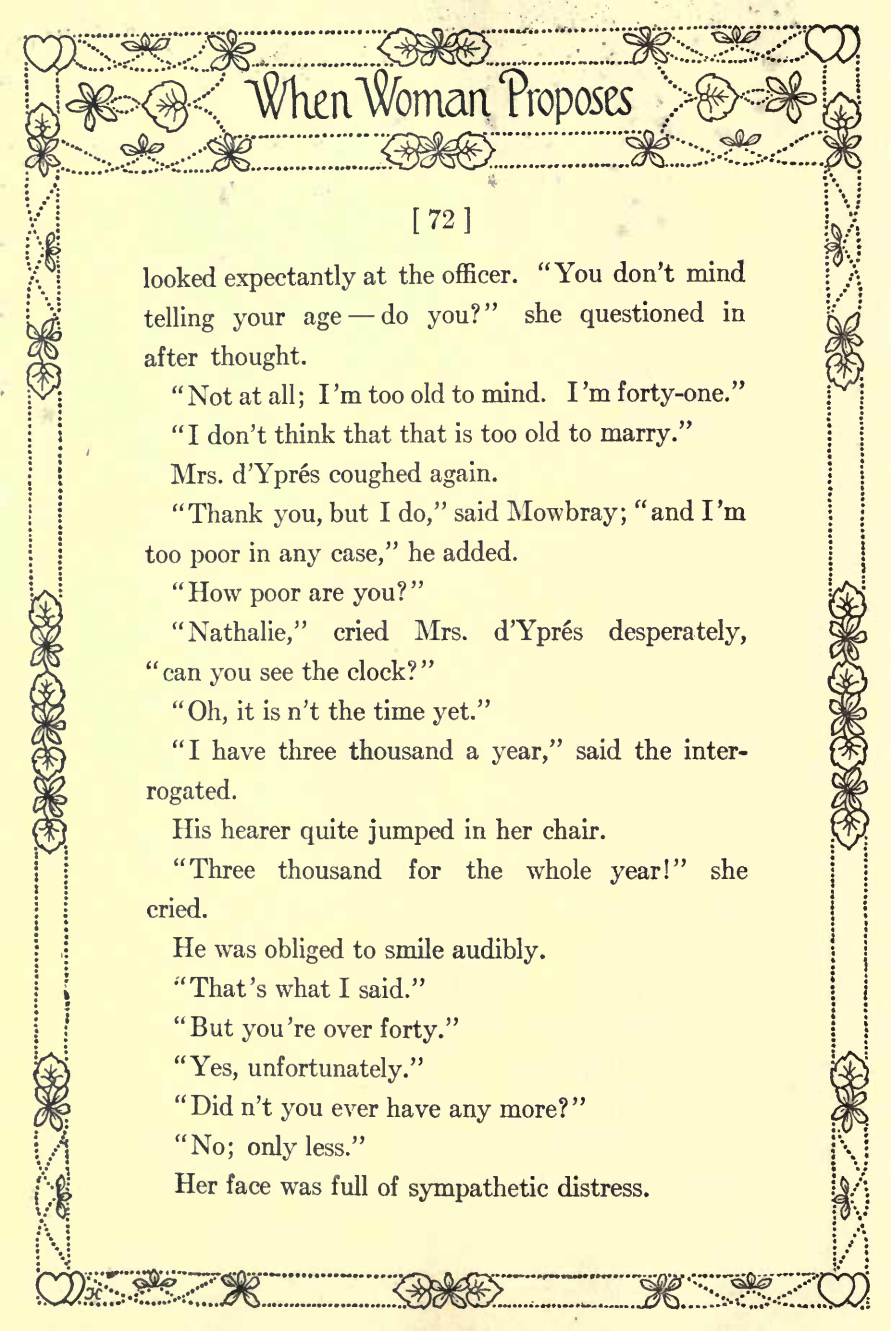
"What do you think now?"

"I think I'm too old."

"How old are you?"

Mrs. d'Yprés coughed loudly.

"Why don't you sit further back from that window, Kathryn?" Nathalie asked, irritably, — then she



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looked expectantly at the officer. "You don't mind telling your age — do you?" she questioned in after thought.

"Not at all; I'm too old to mind. I'm forty-one."

"I don't think that that is too old to marry."

Mrs. d'Yprés coughed again.

"Thank you, but I do," said Mowbray; "and I'm too poor in any case," he added.

"How poor are you?"

"Nathalie," cried Mrs. d'Yprés desperately, "can you see the clock?"

"Oh, it is n't the time yet."

"I have three thousand a year," said the interrogated.

His hearer quite jumped in her chair.

"Three thousand for the whole year!" she cried.

He was obliged to smile audibly.

"That's what I said."

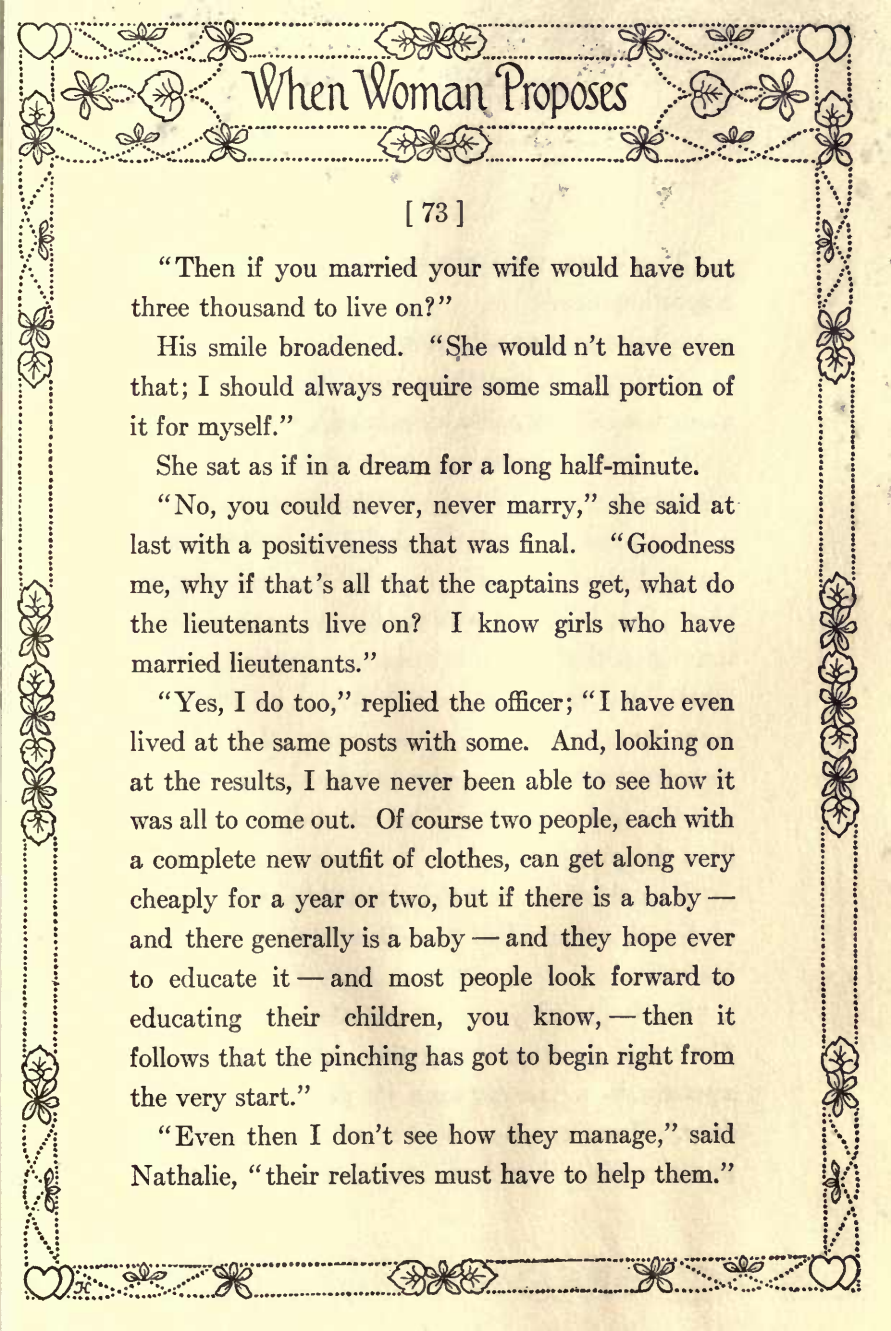
"But you're over forty."

"Yes, unfortunately."

"Did n't you ever have any more?"

"No; only less."

Her face was full of sympathetic distress.



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“Then if you married your wife would have but three thousand to live on?”

His smile broadened. “She would n’t have even that; I should always require some small portion of it for myself.”

She sat as if in a dream for a long half-minute.

“No, you could never, never marry,” she said at last with a positiveness that was final. “Goodness me, why if that’s all that the captains get, what do the lieutenants live on? I know girls who have married lieutenants.”

“Yes, I do too,” replied the officer; “I have even lived at the same posts with some. And, looking on at the results, I have never been able to see how it was all to come out. Of course two people, each with a complete new outfit of clothes, can get along very cheaply for a year or two, but if there is a baby — and there generally is a baby — and they hope ever to educate it — and most people look forward to educating their children, you know, — then it follows that the pinching has got to begin right from the very start.”

“Even then I don’t see how they manage,” said Nathalie, “their relatives must have to help them.”



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"That's no very pleasant outlook for a self-respecting man."

Nathalie paid no attention to his remark.

"I think that something ought to be done," she announced slowly and with great decision.

"Of course something ought to be done," said Mowbray. "Don't I lie here helpless as an evidence of how much I personally desire to see something done? I should never be here if I had not come on about that bill; that was my testimony to my own conviction that something not only ought to — but must — be done. Merely refusing to drag any more human beings into the swamp of straitened circumstances is only a negative manner of helping out the bad situation. The real help must come from the government."

"I should think that there would have been a lot of dissatisfaction when the bill was put aside," said Nathalie.

"There probably was," said the officer, dryly; "but any governmental action catches the army squarely in a vice between its patriotism and its duty. However, you may be quite sure that there was dissatisfaction, I can certify to that even if



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I have n't been able to see any of the papers lately."

"There was plenty of trouble when the labor bill did n't pass, anyway," said Nathalie, "there were columns and columns about it. Mr. Lefevre came here three times. I saw his picture in the *Telegram*. He did n't look at all like his caricatures; he looked ever so pleasant; I liked his face tremendously."

"Not many people look like their caricatures," said Mowbray, sententiously.

There was a pause.

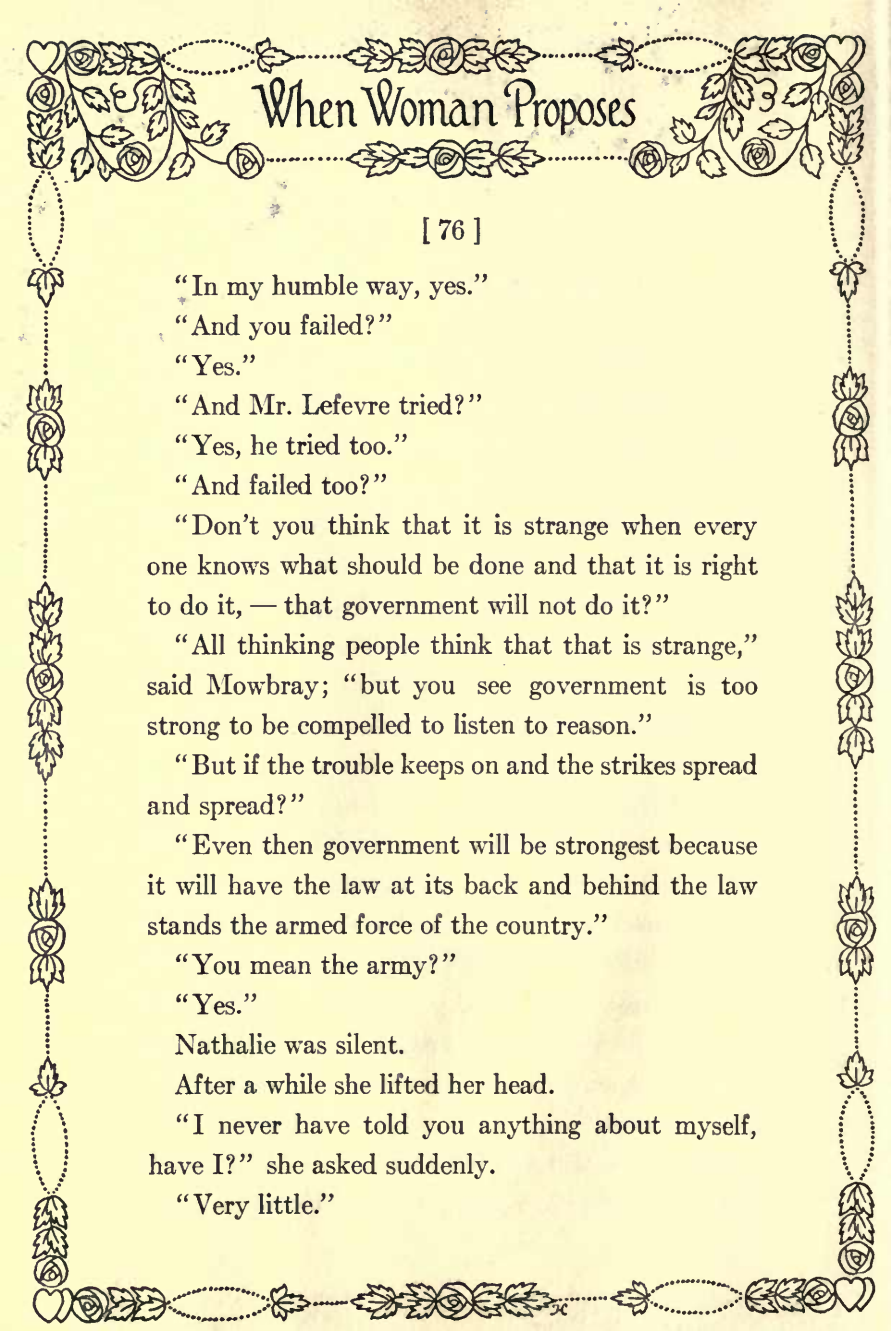
"I wonder how it will all come out!" Nathalie said finally.

"I wonder too," said the captain.

She leaned her elbow forward on her crossed knee, supported her chin amid her outspread fingers, and stared steadily at the floor. "I wonder," she said, after a while, "who will be the one to help most. Ever so many will help, you know, but some one person will come forward and help most. When big things happen it is always some one person who does the most."

The officer said nothing.

"You tried to help, did n't you?" she questioned.



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"In my humble way, yes."

"And you failed?"

"Yes."

"And Mr. Lefevre tried?"

"Yes, he tried too."

"And failed too?"

"Don't you think that it is strange when every one knows what should be done and that it is right to do it, — that government will not do it?"

"All thinking people think that that is strange," said Mowbray; "but you see government is too strong to be compelled to listen to reason."

"But if the trouble keeps on and the strikes spread and spread?"

"Even then government will be strongest because it will have the law at its back and behind the law stands the armed force of the country."

"You mean the army?"

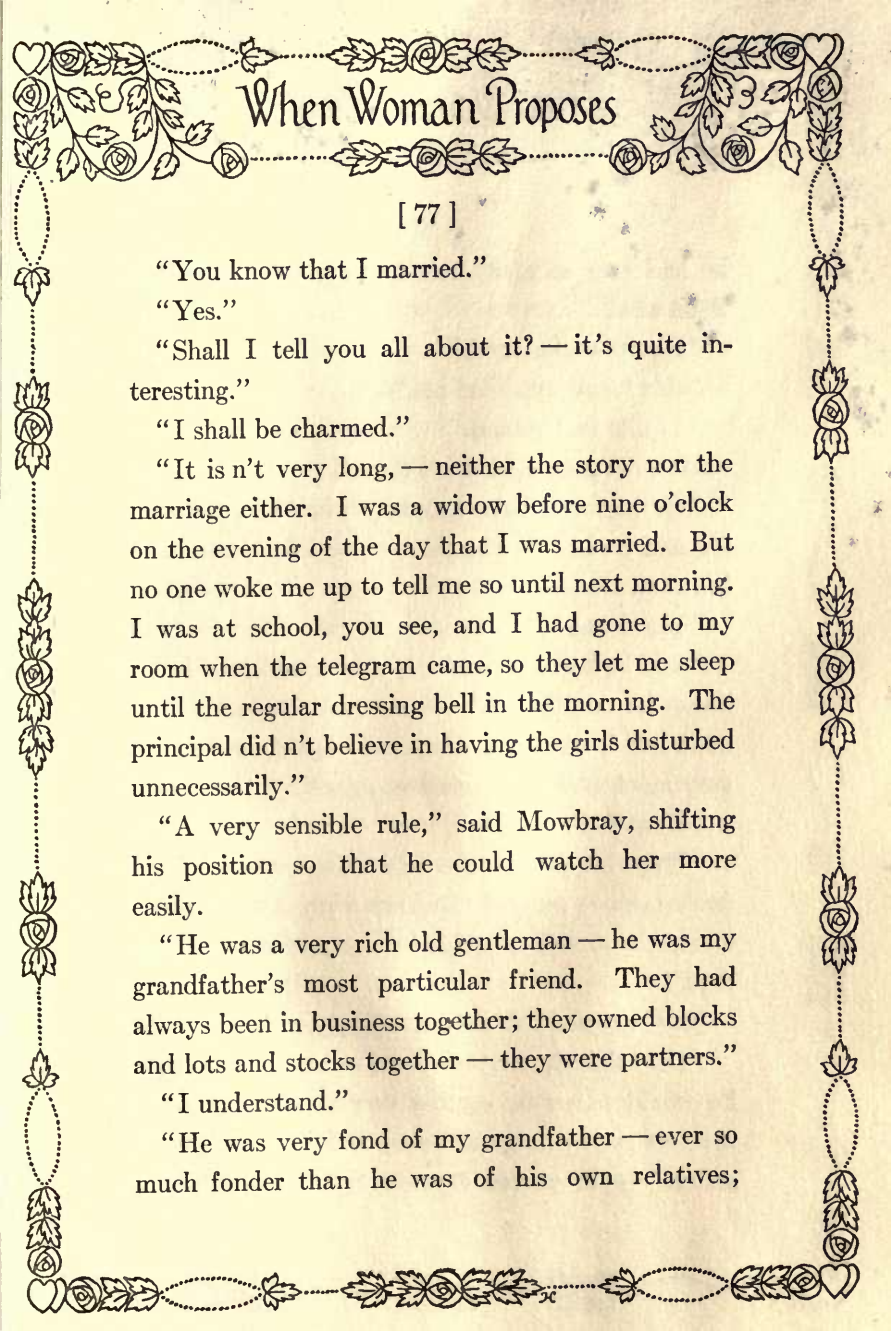
"Yes."

Nathalie was silent.

After a while she lifted her head.

"I never have told you anything about myself, have I?" she asked suddenly.

"Very little."



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"You know that I married."

"Yes."

"Shall I tell you all about it? — it's quite interesting."

"I shall be charmed."

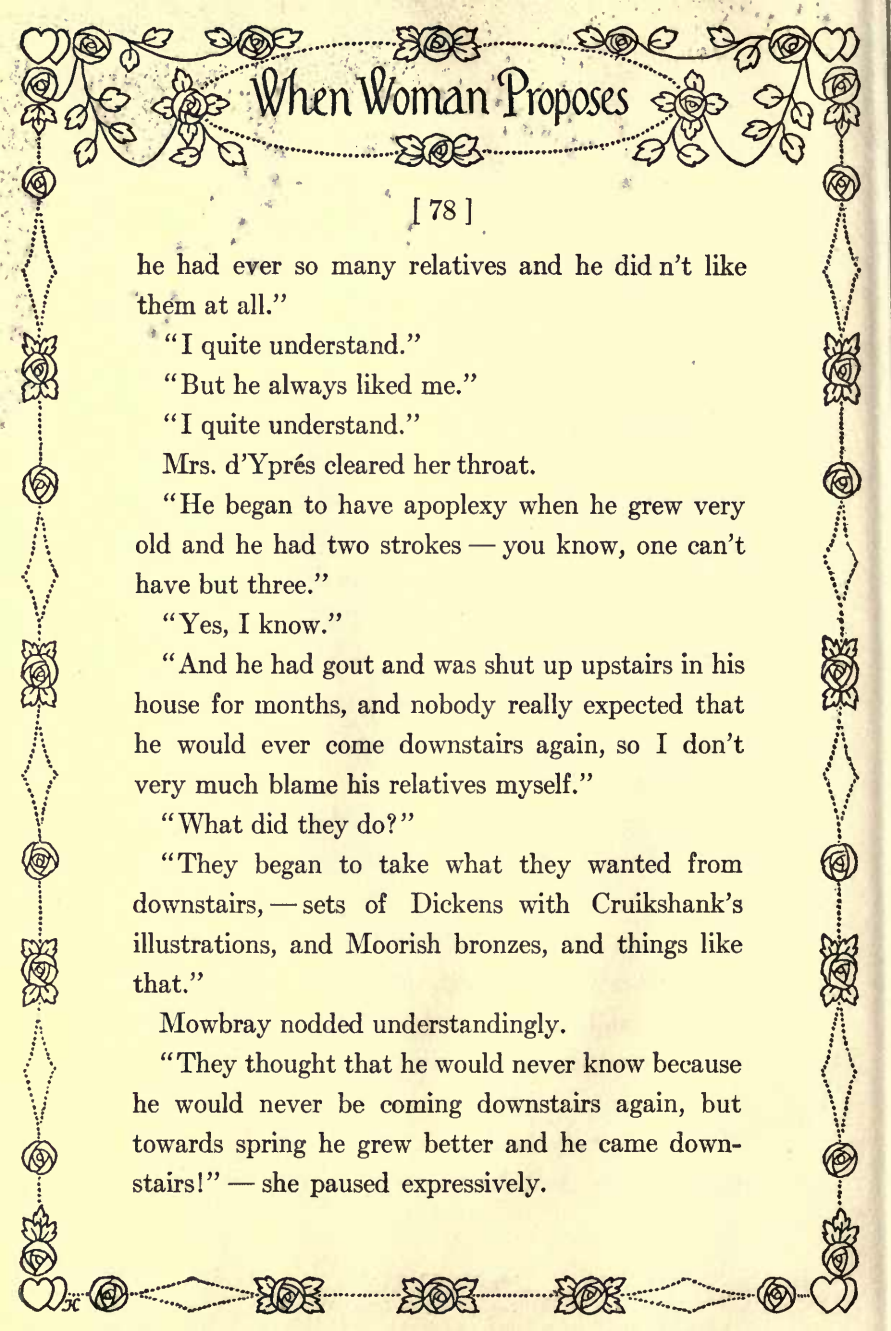
"It is n't very long, — neither the story nor the marriage either. I was a widow before nine o'clock on the evening of the day that I was married. But no one woke me up to tell me so until next morning. I was at school, you see, and I had gone to my room when the telegram came, so they let me sleep until the regular dressing bell in the morning. The principal did n't believe in having the girls disturbed unnecessarily."

"A very sensible rule," said Mowbray, shifting his position so that he could watch her more easily.

"He was a very rich old gentleman — he was my grandfather's most particular friend. They had always been in business together; they owned blocks and lots and stocks together — they were partners."

"I understand."

"He was very fond of my grandfather — ever so much fonder than he was of his own relatives;



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he had ever so many relatives and he did n't like them at all."

"I quite understand."

"But he always liked me."

"I quite understand."

Mrs. d'Yprés cleared her throat.

"He began to have apoplexy when he grew very old and he had two strokes — you know, one can't have but three."

"Yes, I know."

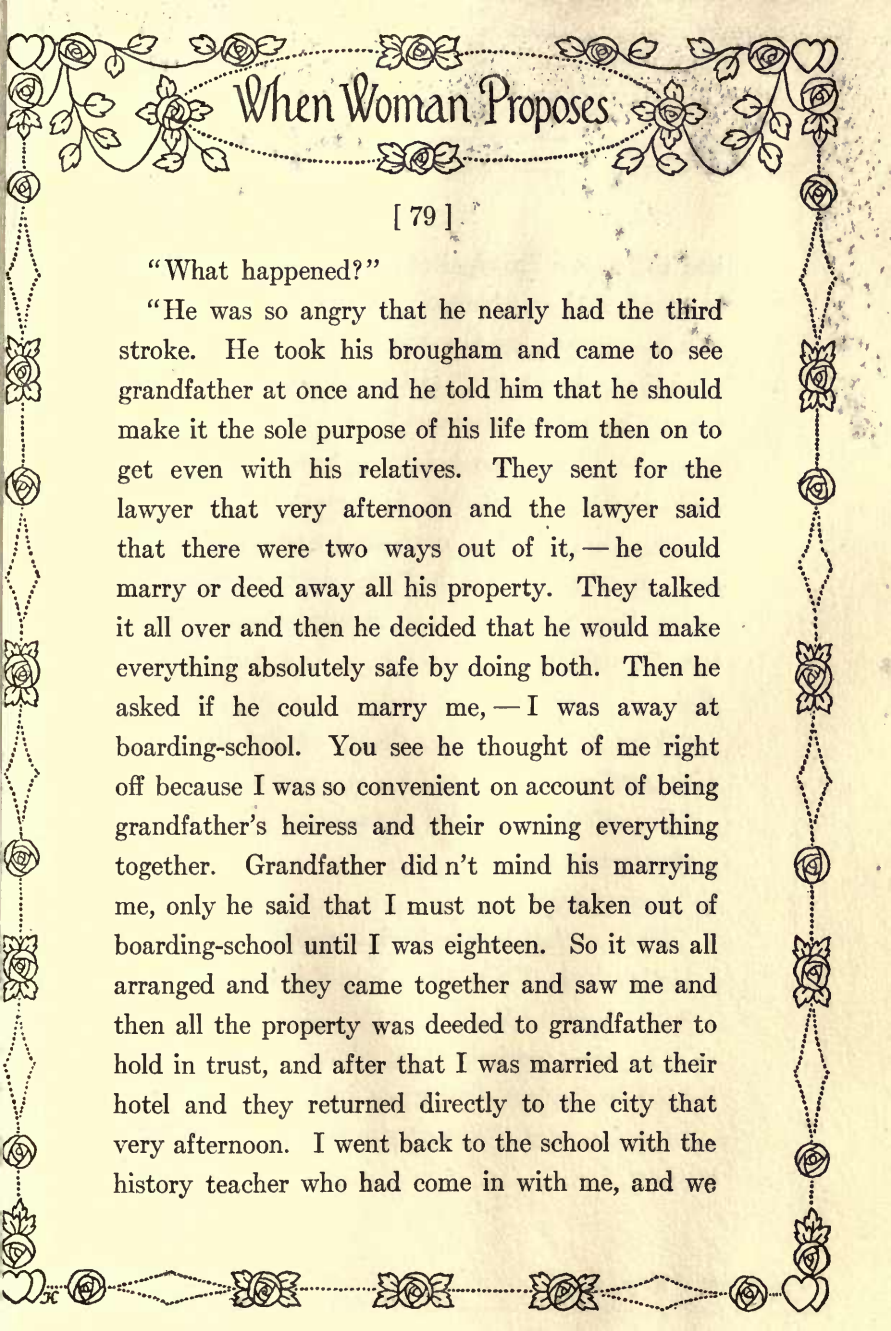
"And he had gout and was shut up upstairs in his house for months, and nobody really expected that he would ever come downstairs again, so I don't very much blame his relatives myself."

"What did they do?"

"They began to take what they wanted from downstairs, — sets of Dickens with Cruikshank's illustrations, and Moorish bronzes, and things like that."

Mowbray nodded understandingly.

"They thought that he would never know because he would never be coming downstairs again, but towards spring he grew better and he came downstairs!" — she paused expressively.

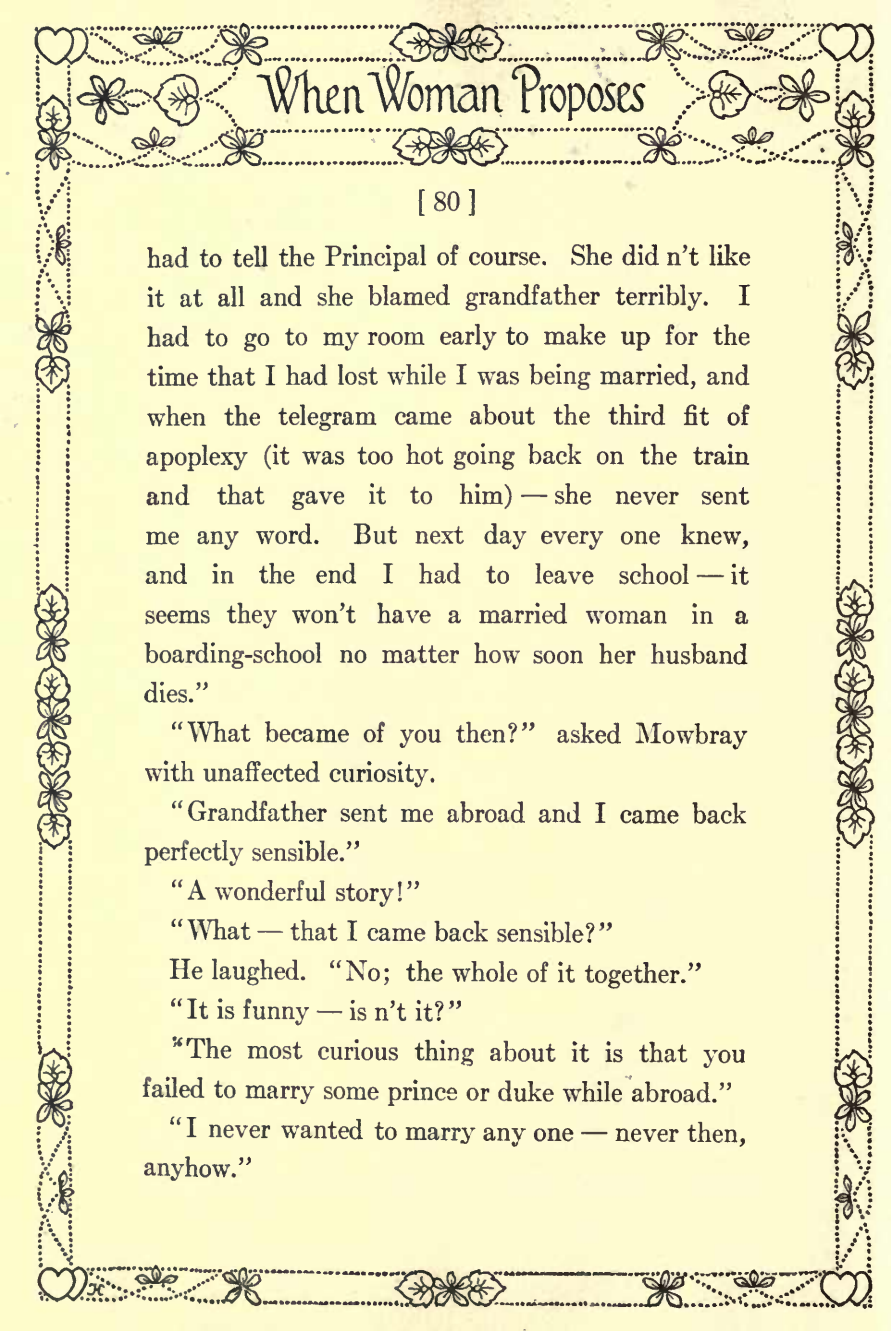


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“What happened?”

“He was so angry that he nearly had the third stroke. He took his brougham and came to see grandfather at once and he told him that he should make it the sole purpose of his life from then on to get even with his relatives. They sent for the lawyer that very afternoon and the lawyer said that there were two ways out of it, — he could marry or deed away all his property. They talked it all over and then he decided that he would make everything absolutely safe by doing both. Then he asked if he could marry me, — I was away at boarding-school. You see he thought of me right off because I was so convenient on account of being grandfather's heiress and their owning everything together. Grandfather did n't mind his marrying me, only he said that I must not be taken out of boarding-school until I was eighteen. So it was all arranged and they came together and saw me and then all the property was deeded to grandfather to hold in trust, and after that I was married at their hotel and they returned directly to the city that very afternoon. I went back to the school with the history teacher who had come in with me, and we



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had to tell the Principal of course. She did n't like it at all and she blamed grandfather terribly. I had to go to my room early to make up for the time that I had lost while I was being married, and when the telegram came about the third fit of apoplexy (it was too hot going back on the train and that gave it to him) — she never sent me any word. But next day every one knew, and in the end I had to leave school — it seems they won't have a married woman in a boarding-school no matter how soon her husband dies."

"What became of you then?" asked Mowbray with unaffected curiosity.

"Grandfather sent me abroad and I came back perfectly sensible."

"A wonderful story!"

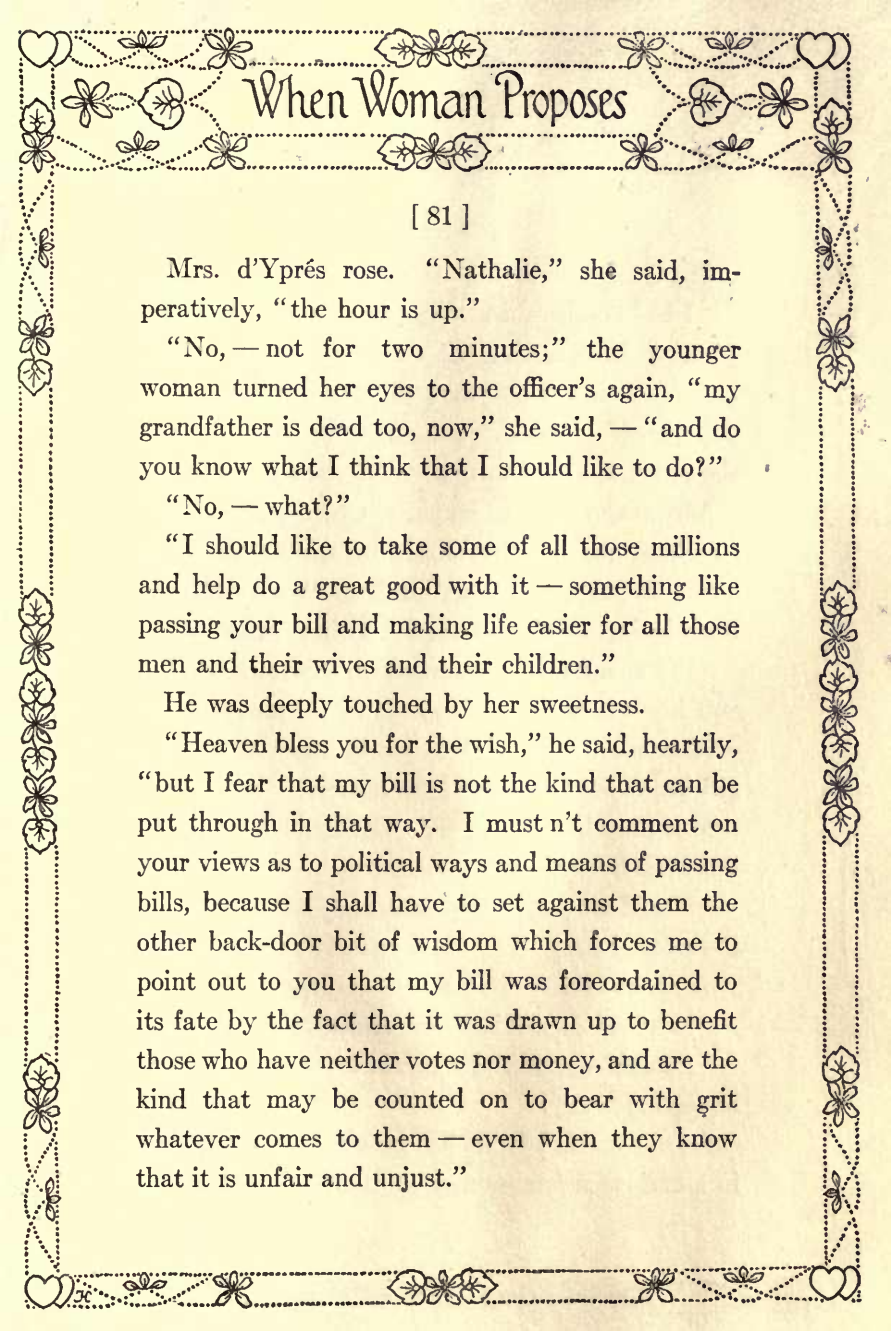
"What — that I came back sensible?"

He laughed. "No; the whole of it together."

"It is funny — is n't it?"

"The most curious thing about it is that you failed to marry some prince or duke while abroad."

"I never wanted to marry any one — never then, anyhow."



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Mrs. d'Yprés rose. "Nathalie," she said, imperatively, "the hour is up."

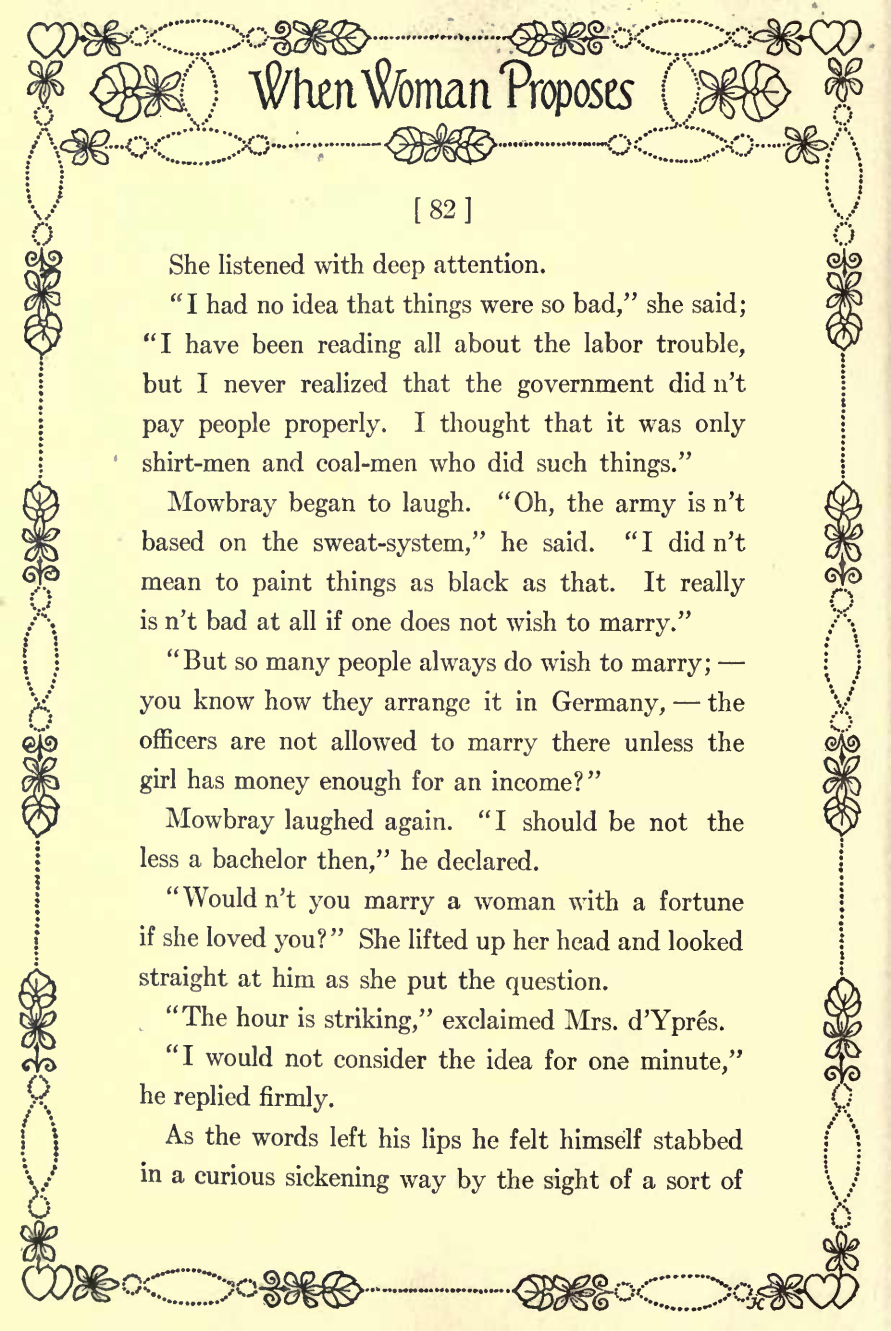
"No, — not for two minutes;" the younger woman turned her eyes to the officer's again, "my grandfather is dead too, now," she said, — "and do you know what I think that I should like to do?"

"No, — what?"

"I should like to take some of all those millions and help do a great good with it — something like passing your bill and making life easier for all those men and their wives and their children."

He was deeply touched by her sweetness.

"Heaven bless you for the wish," he said, heartily, "but I fear that my bill is not the kind that can be put through in that way. I must n't comment on your views as to political ways and means of passing bills, because I shall have to set against them the other back-door bit of wisdom which forces me to point out to you that my bill was foreordained to its fate by the fact that it was drawn up to benefit those who have neither votes nor money, and are the kind that may be counted on to bear with grit whatever comes to them — even when they know that it is unfair and unjust."



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She listened with deep attention.

"I had no idea that things were so bad," she said; "I have been reading all about the labor trouble, but I never realized that the government did n't pay people properly. I thought that it was only shirt-men and coal-men who did such things."

Mowbray began to laugh. "Oh, the army is n't based on the sweat-system," he said. "I did n't mean to paint things as black as that. It really is n't bad at all if one does not wish to marry."

"But so many people always do wish to marry; — you know how they arrange it in Germany, — the officers are not allowed to marry there unless the girl has money enough for an income?"

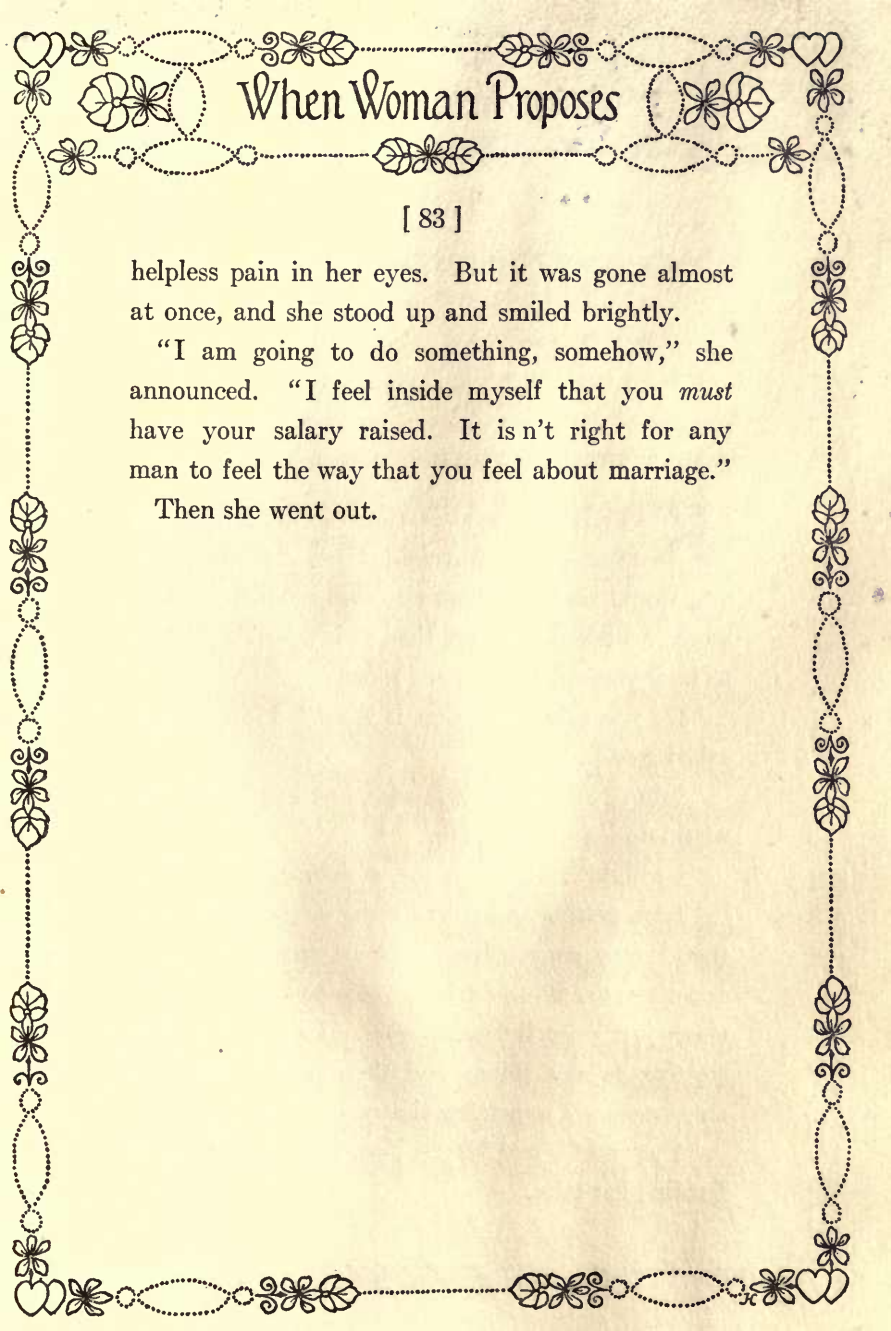
Mowbray laughed again. "I should be not the less a bachelor then," he declared.

"Would n't you marry a woman with a fortune if she loved you?" She lifted up her head and looked straight at him as she put the question.

"The hour is striking," exclaimed Mrs. d'Yprés.

"I would not consider the idea for one minute," he replied firmly.

As the words left his lips he felt himself stabbed in a curious sickening way by the sight of a sort of

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helpless pain in her eyes. But it was gone almost at once, and she stood up and smiled brightly.

“I am going to do something, somehow,” she announced. “I feel inside myself that you *must* have your salary raised. It is n’t right for any man to feel the way that you feel about marriage.”

Then she went out.

CHAPTER VI

THE BIRD FLUTTERS ABOUT A BIT

KATHRYN," said Nathalie to her friend, one afternoon a fortnight later, "I wish that you would sit somewhere else this evening. Somewhere a little further off than it is possible for you to be if you are in the same room."

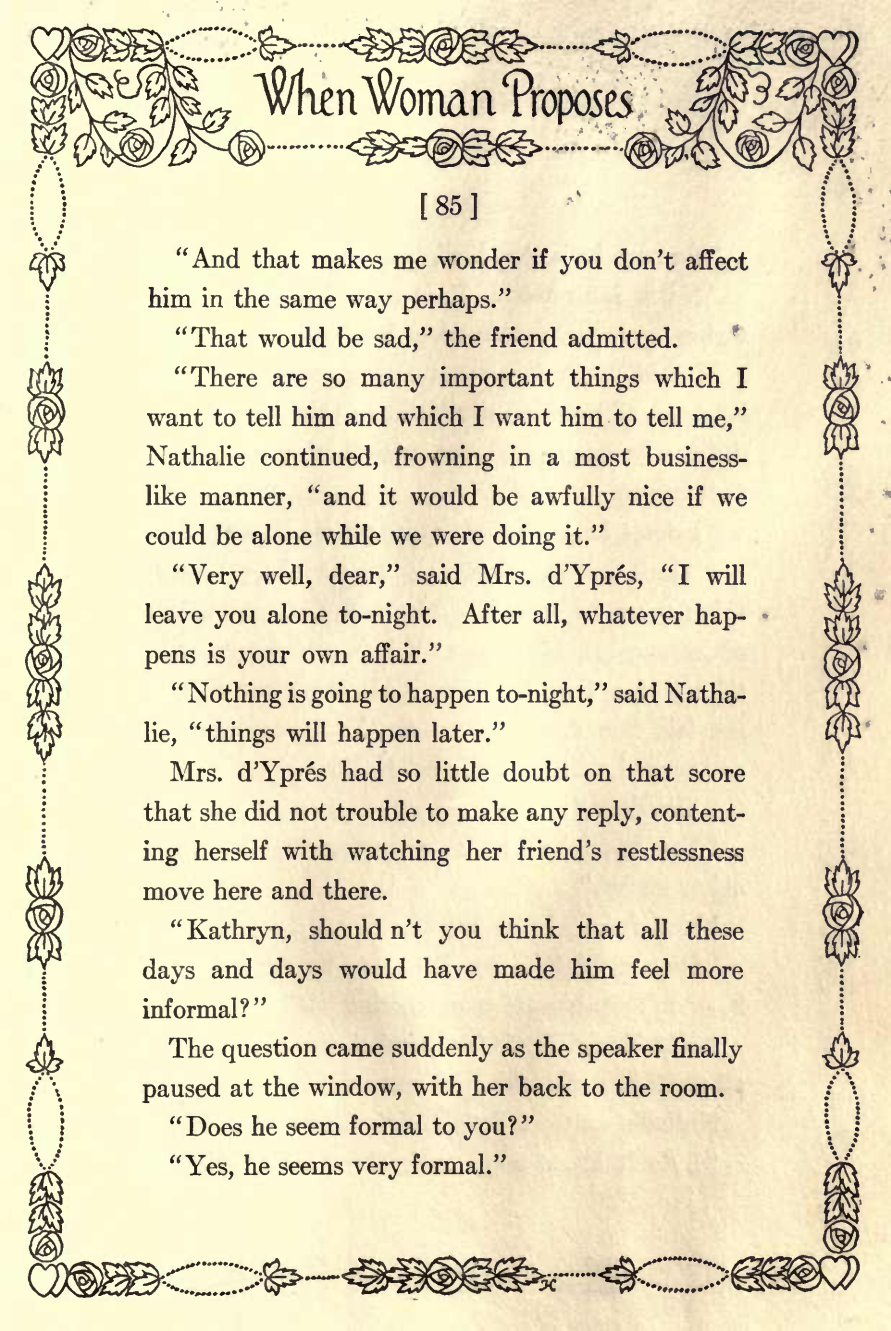
"Do you think that that is wise?" Mrs. d'Yprés asked gently.

"I don't know that it is wise, but I wish that you would do it just the same."

"I will do it if you ask me, of course."

"I am getting so used to being conventional now that I stay conventional without any thinking, — and then too it would be so nice to talk with him alone just once before he goes. I am continually starting to say things and then being obliged to stop because I remember that you are there."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. d'Yprés, sincere sympathy flooding her tone.



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"And that makes me wonder if you don't affect him in the same way perhaps."

"That would be sad," the friend admitted.

"There are so many important things which I want to tell him and which I want him to tell me," Nathalie continued, frowning in a most business-like manner, "and it would be awfully nice if we could be alone while we were doing it."

"Very well, dear," said Mrs. d'Yprés, "I will leave you alone to-night. After all, whatever happens is your own affair."

"Nothing is going to happen to-night," said Nathalie, "things will happen later."

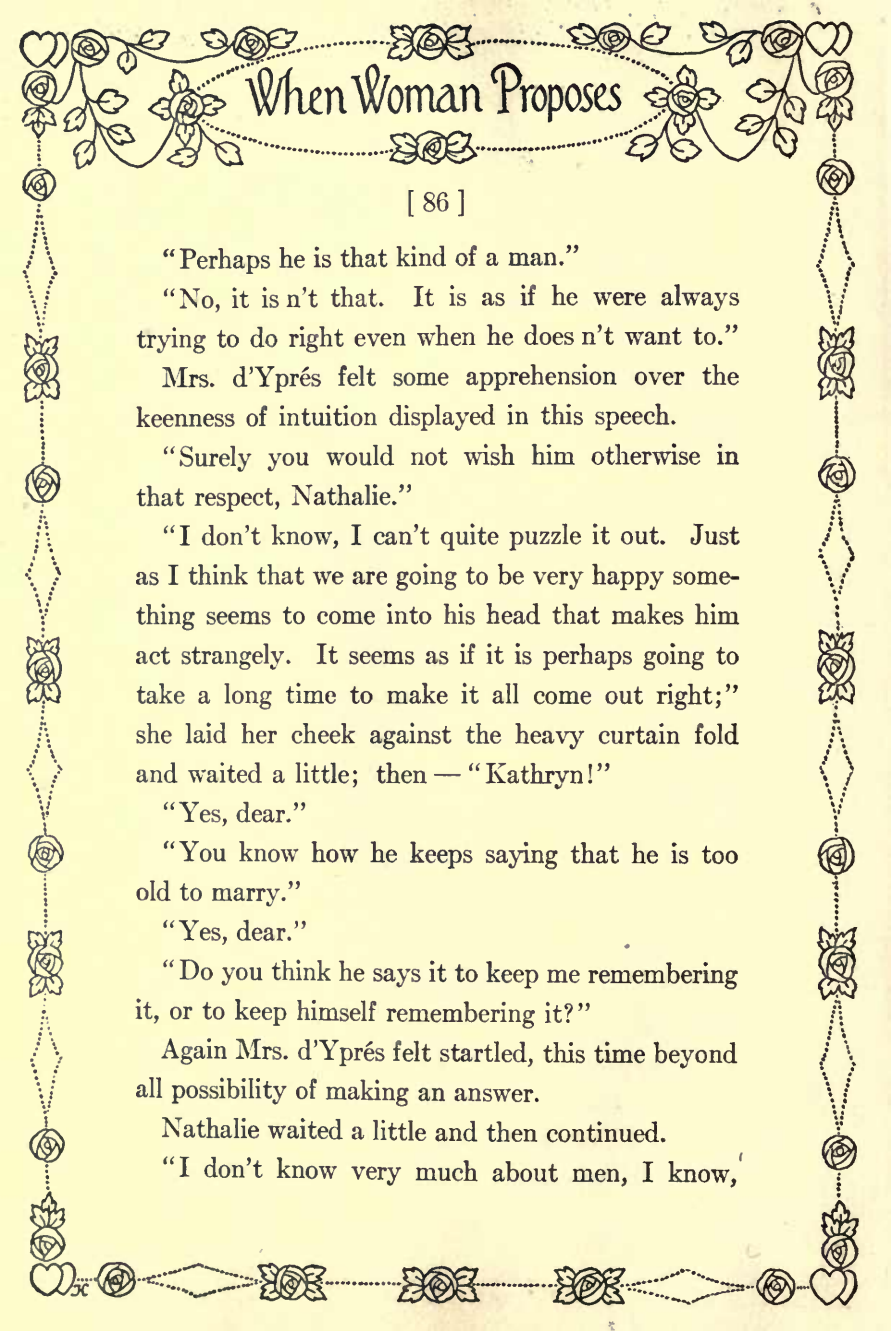
Mrs. d'Yprés had so little doubt on that score that she did not trouble to make any reply, contenting herself with watching her friend's restlessness move here and there.

"Kathryn, should n't you think that all these days and days would have made him feel more informal?"

The question came suddenly as the speaker finally paused at the window, with her back to the room.

"Does he seem formal to you?"

"Yes, he seems very formal."



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"Perhaps he is that kind of a man."

"No, it is n't that. It is as if he were always trying to do right even when he does n't want to."

Mrs. d'Yprés felt some apprehension over the keenness of intuition displayed in this speech.

"Surely you would not wish him otherwise in that respect, Nathalie."

"I don't know, I can't quite puzzle it out. Just as I think that we are going to be very happy something seems to come into his head that makes him act strangely. It seems as if it is perhaps going to take a long time to make it all come out right;" she laid her cheek against the heavy curtain fold and waited a little; then — "Kathryn!"

"Yes, dear."

"You know how he keeps saying that he is too old to marry."

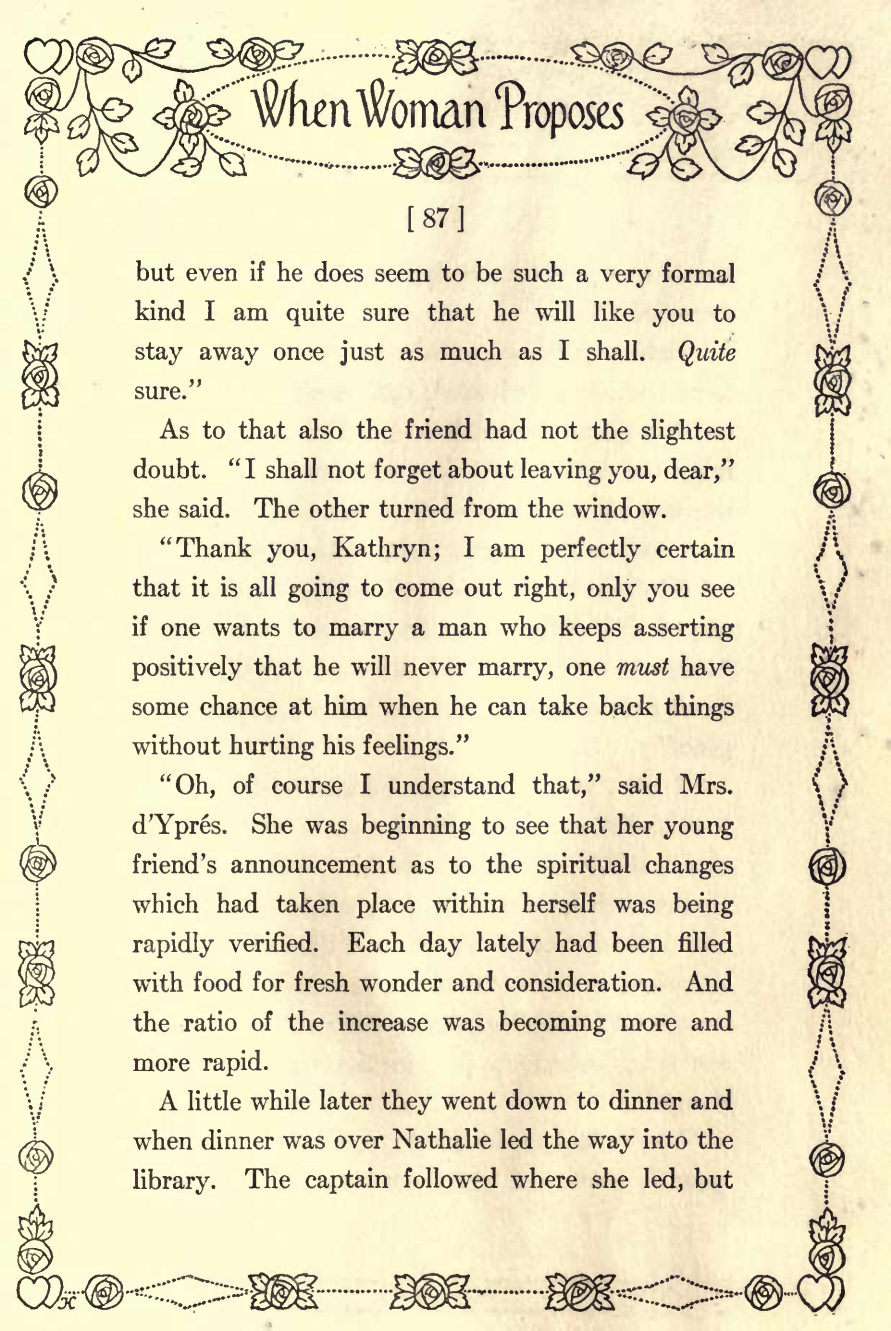
"Yes, dear."

"Do you think he says it to keep me remembering it, or to keep himself remembering it?"

Again Mrs. d'Yprés felt startled, this time beyond all possibility of making an answer.

Nathalie waited a little and then continued.

"I don't know very much about men, I know,



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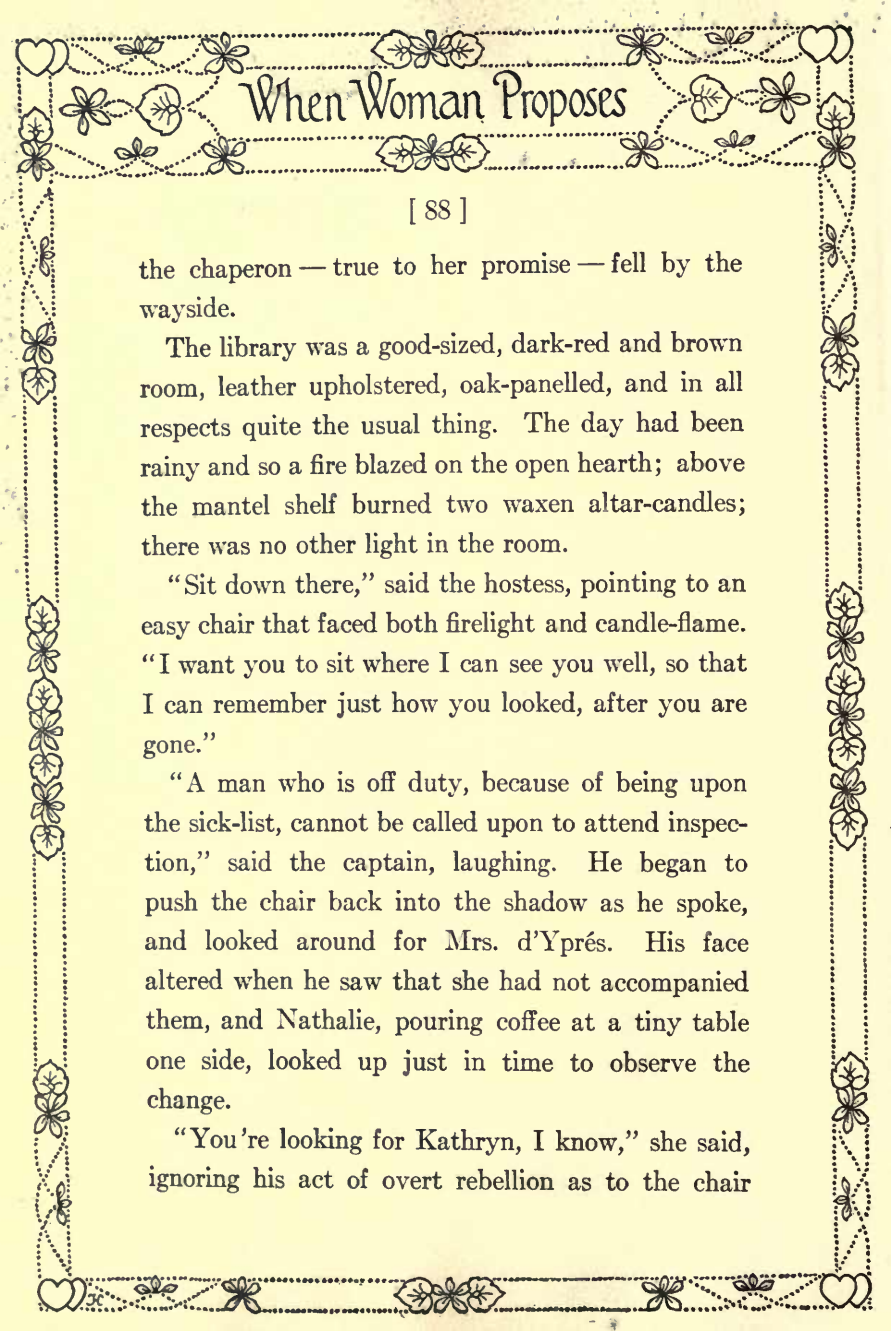
but even if he does seem to be such a very formal kind I am quite sure that he will like you to stay away once just as much as I shall. *Quite* sure."

As to that also the friend had not the slightest doubt. "I shall not forget about leaving you, dear," she said. The other turned from the window.

"Thank you, Kathryn; I am perfectly certain that it is all going to come out right, only you see if one wants to marry a man who keeps asserting positively that he will never marry, one *must* have some chance at him when he can take back things without hurting his feelings."

"Oh, of course I understand that," said Mrs. d'Yprés. She was beginning to see that her young friend's announcement as to the spiritual changes which had taken place within herself was being rapidly verified. Each day lately had been filled with food for fresh wonder and consideration. And the ratio of the increase was becoming more and more rapid.

A little while later they went down to dinner and when dinner was over Nathalie led the way into the library. The captain followed where she led, but



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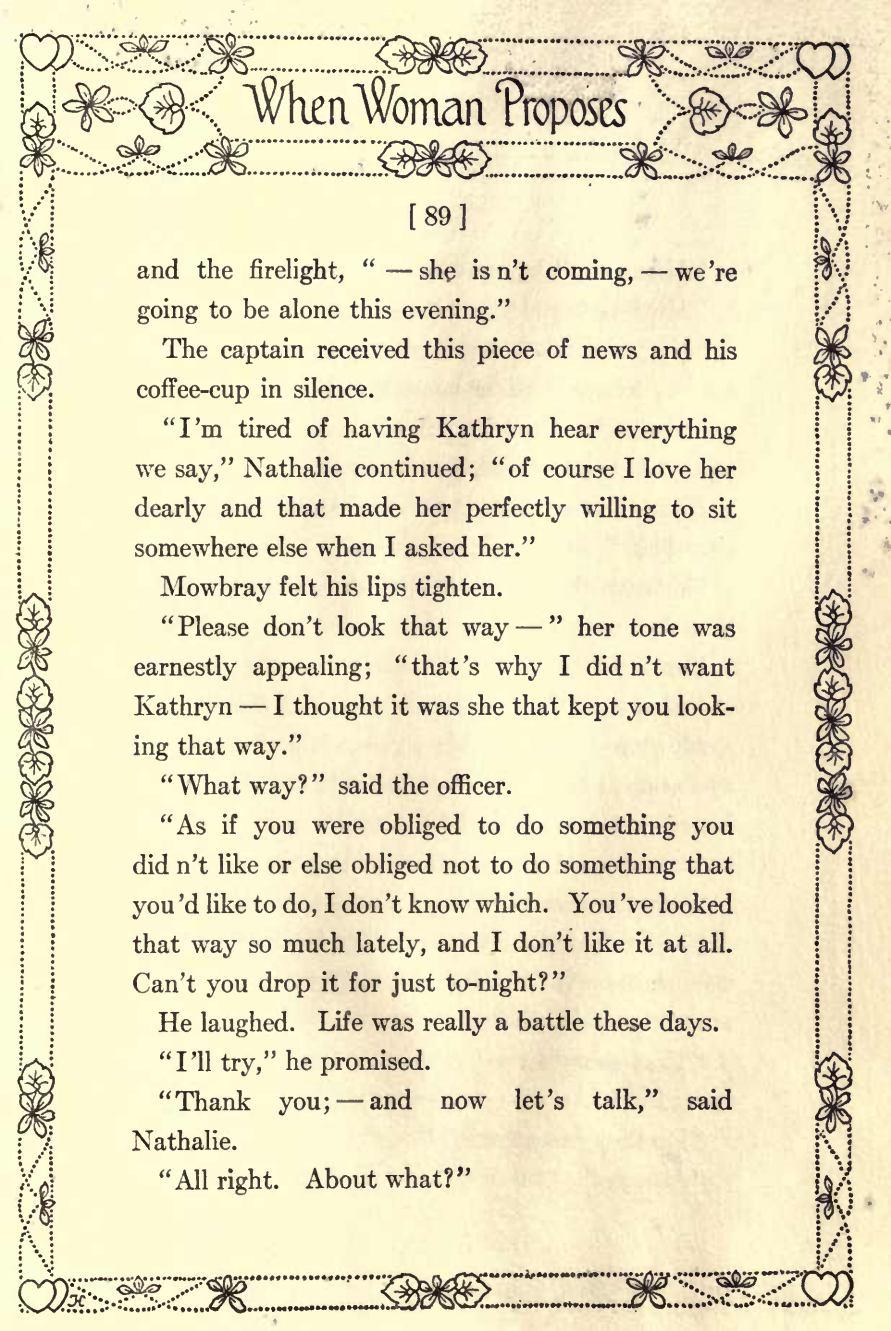
the chaperon — true to her promise — fell by the wayside.

The library was a good-sized, dark-red and brown room, leather upholstered, oak-panelled, and in all respects quite the usual thing. The day had been rainy and so a fire blazed on the open hearth; above the mantel shelf burned two waxen altar-candles; there was no other light in the room.

“Sit down there,” said the hostess, pointing to an easy chair that faced both firelight and candle-flame. “I want you to sit where I can see you well, so that I can remember just how you looked, after you are gone.”

“A man who is off duty, because of being upon the sick-list, cannot be called upon to attend inspection,” said the captain, laughing. He began to push the chair back into the shadow as he spoke, and looked around for Mrs. d’Yprés. His face altered when he saw that she had not accompanied them, and Nathalie, pouring coffee at a tiny table one side, looked up just in time to observe the change.

“You’re looking for Kathryn, I know,” she said, ignoring his act of overt rebellion as to the chair



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and the firelight, " — she is n't coming, — we're going to be alone this evening."

The captain received this piece of news and his coffee-cup in silence.

"I'm tired of having Kathryn hear everything we say," Nathalie continued; "of course I love her dearly and that made her perfectly willing to sit somewhere else when I asked her."

Mowbray felt his lips tighten.

"Please don't look that way —" her tone was earnestly appealing; "that's why I did n't want Kathryn — I thought it was she that kept you looking that way."

"What way?" said the officer.

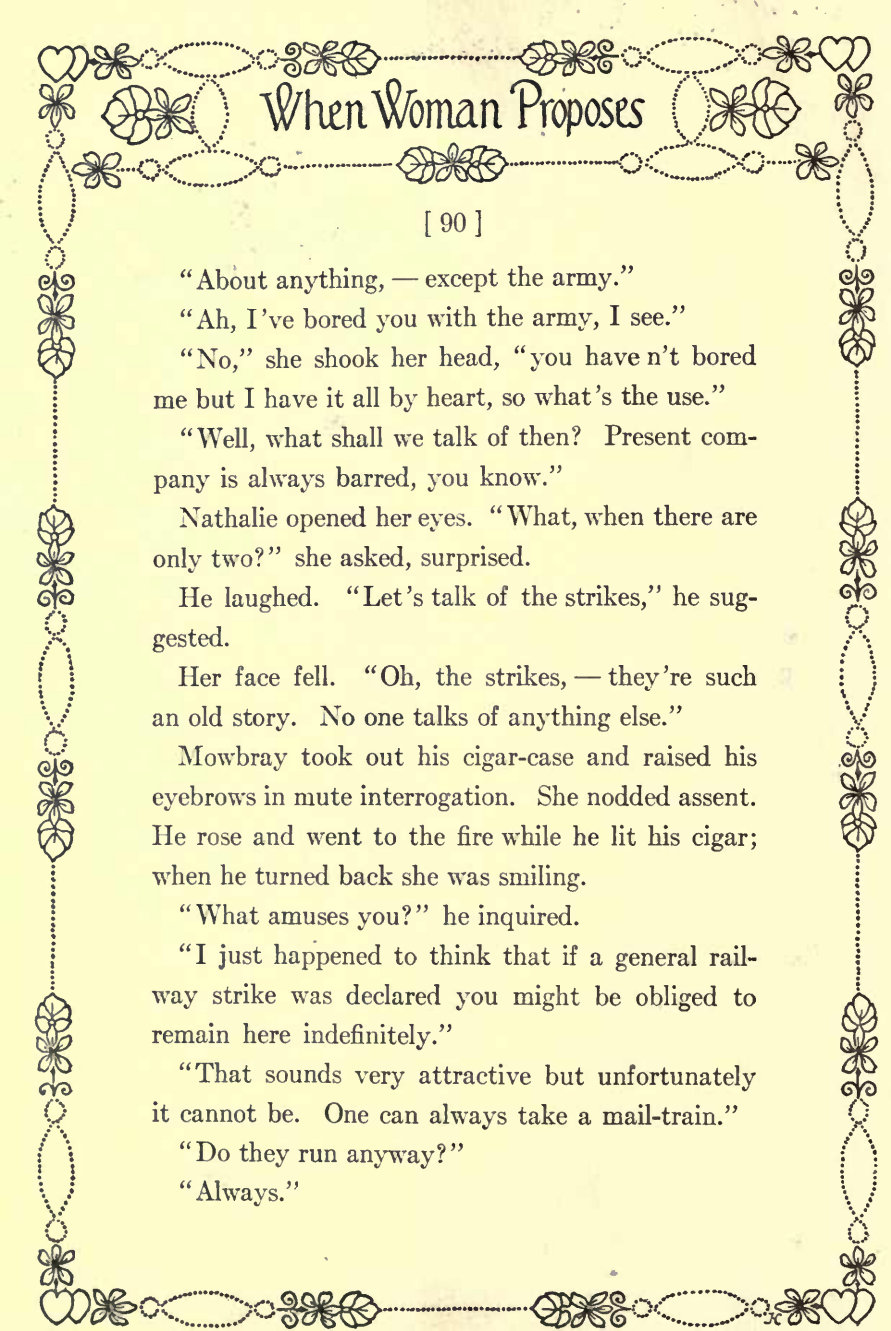
"As if you were obliged to do something you did n't like or else obliged not to do something that you'd like to do, I don't know which. You've looked that way so much lately, and I don't like it at all. Can't you drop it for just to-night?"

He laughed. Life was really a battle these days.

"I'll try," he promised.

"Thank you; — and now let's talk," said Nathalie.

"All right. About what?"



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"About anything, — except the army."

"Ah, I've bored you with the army, I see."

"No," she shook her head, "you have n't bored me but I have it all by heart, so what's the use."

"Well, what shall we talk of then? Present company is always barred, you know."

Nathalie opened her eyes. "What, when there are only two?" she asked, surprised.

He laughed. "Let's talk of the strikes," he suggested.

Her face fell. "Oh, the strikes, — they're such an old story. No one talks of anything else."

Mowbray took out his cigar-case and raised his eyebrows in mute interrogation. She nodded assent. He rose and went to the fire while he lit his cigar; when he turned back she was smiling.

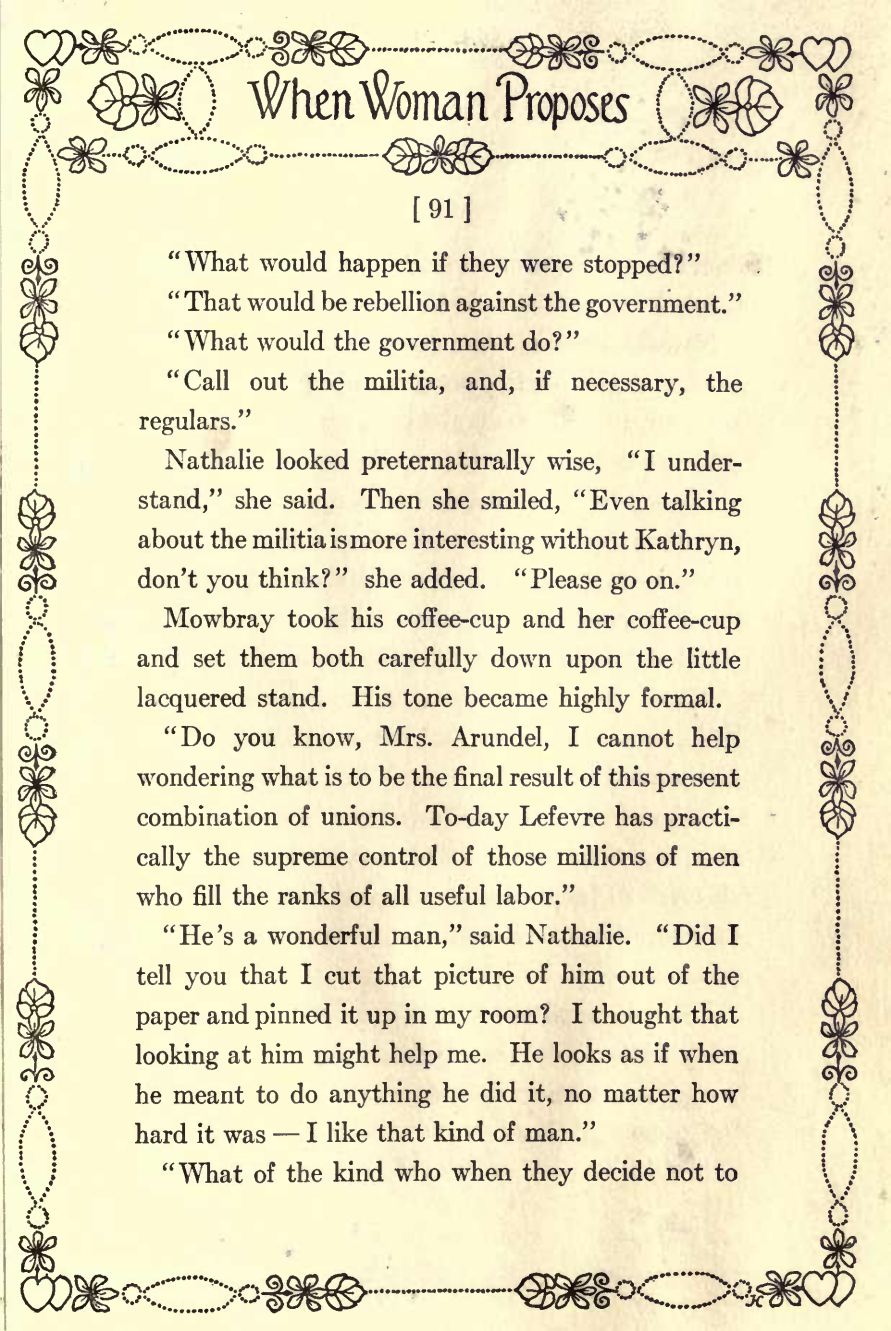
"What amuses you?" he inquired.

"I just happened to think that if a general railway strike was declared you might be obliged to remain here indefinitely."

"That sounds very attractive but unfortunately it cannot be. One can always take a mail-train."

"Do they run anyway?"

"Always."



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“What would happen if they were stopped?”

“That would be rebellion against the government.”

“What would the government do?”

“Call out the militia, and, if necessary, the regulars.”

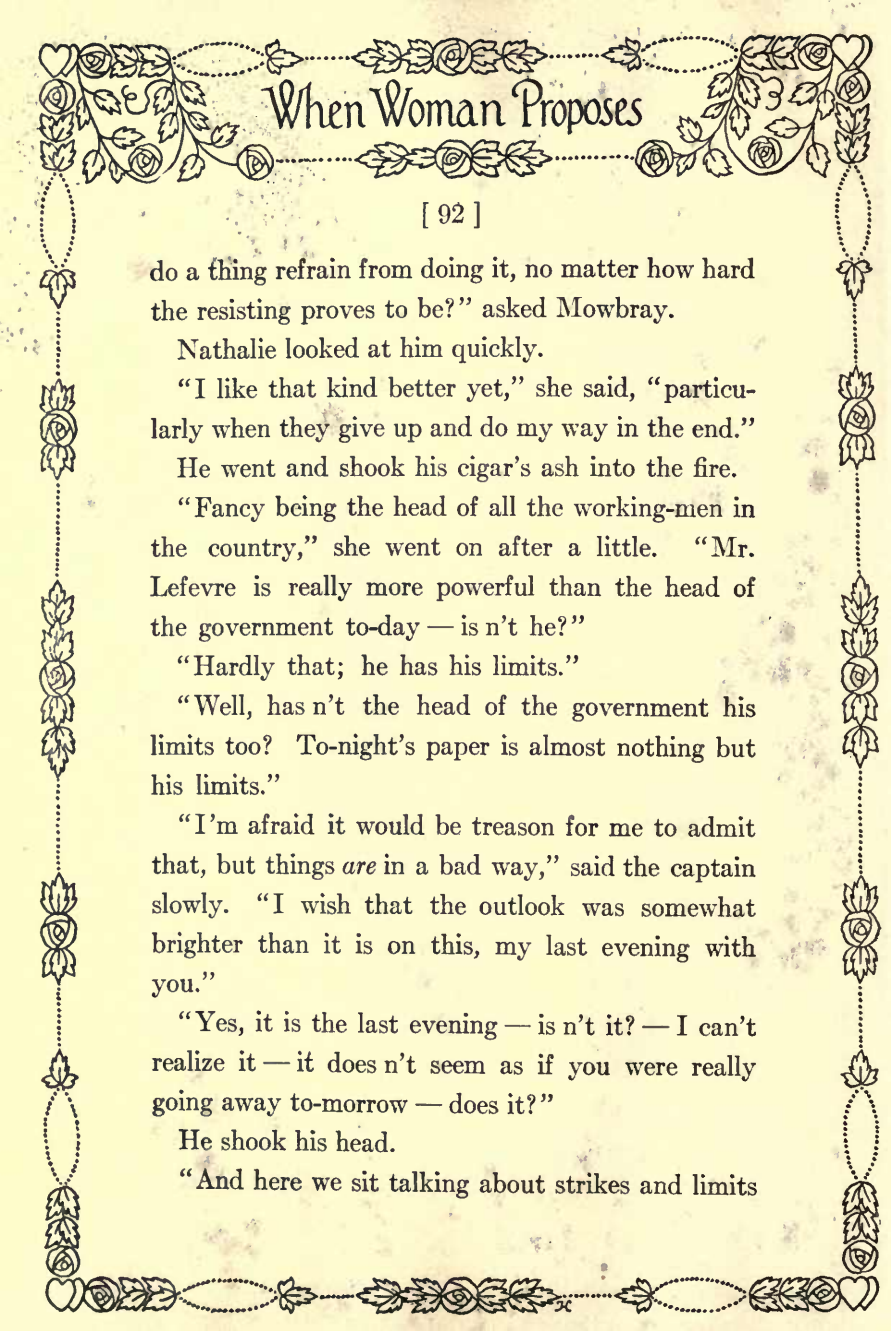
Nathalie looked preternaturally wise, “I understand,” she said. Then she smiled, “Even talking about the militia is more interesting without Kathryn, don’t you think?” she added. “Please go on.”

Mowbray took his coffee-cup and her coffee-cup and set them both carefully down upon the little lacquered stand. His tone became highly formal.

“Do you know, Mrs. Arundel, I cannot help wondering what is to be the final result of this present combination of unions. To-day Lefevre has practically the supreme control of those millions of men who fill the ranks of all useful labor.”

“He’s a wonderful man,” said Nathalie. “Did I tell you that I cut that picture of him out of the paper and pinned it up in my room? I thought that looking at him might help me. He looks as if when he meant to do anything he did it, no matter how hard it was — I like that kind of man.”

“What of the kind who when they decide not to



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do a thing refrain from doing it, no matter how hard the resisting proves to be?" asked Mowbray.

Nathalie looked at him quickly.

"I like that kind better yet," she said, "particularly when they give up and do my way in the end."

He went and shook his cigar's ash into the fire.

"Fancy being the head of all the working-men in the country," she went on after a little. "Mr. Lefevre is really more powerful than the head of the government to-day — is n't he?"

"Hardly that; he has his limits."

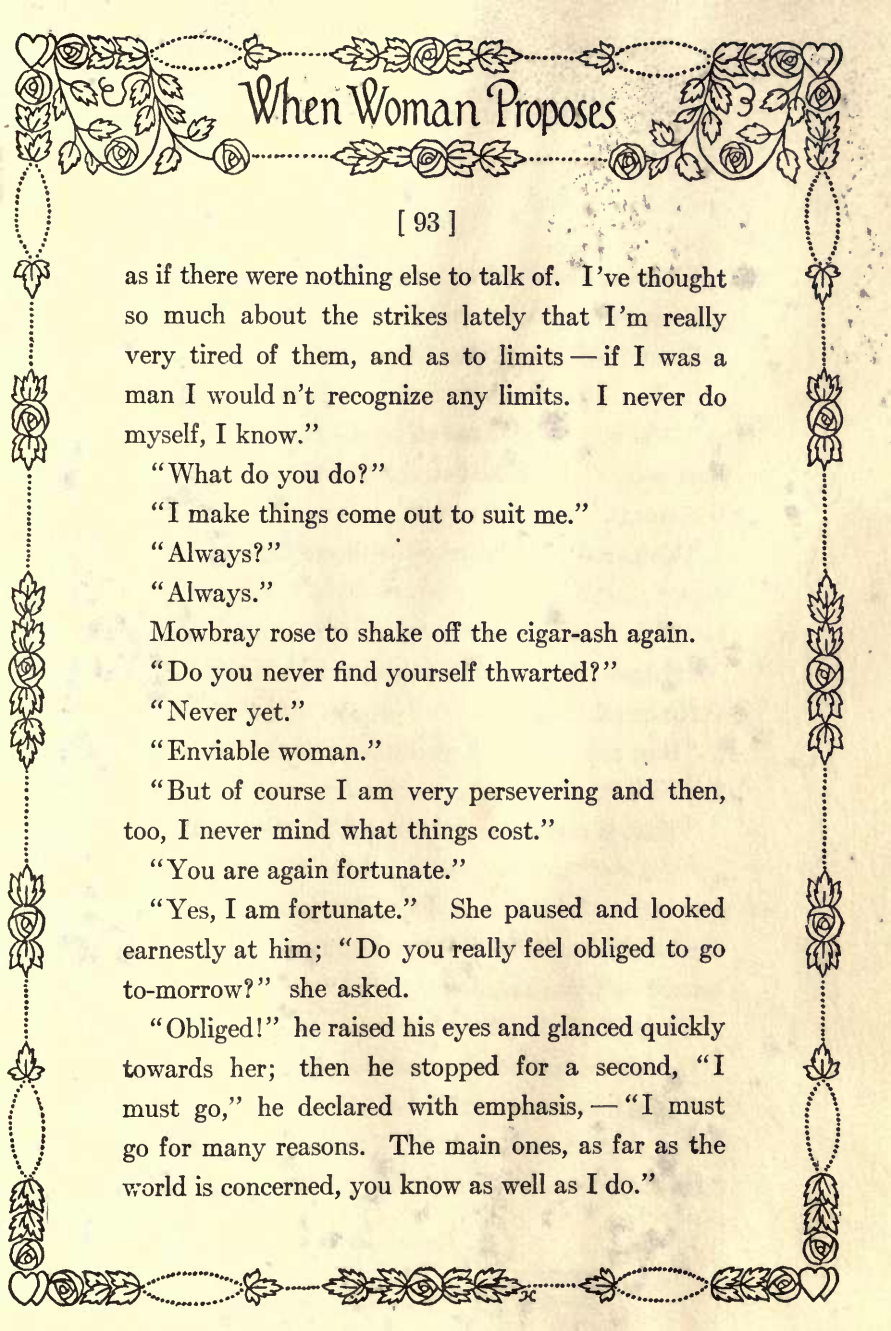
"Well, has n't the head of the government his limits too? To-night's paper is almost nothing but his limits."

"I'm afraid it would be treason for me to admit that, but things *are* in a bad way," said the captain slowly. "I wish that the outlook was somewhat brighter than it is on this, my last evening with you."

"Yes, it is the last evening — is n't it? — I can't realize it — it does n't seem as if you were really going away to-morrow — does it?"

He shook his head.

"And here we sit talking about strikes and limits



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as if there were nothing else to talk of. I've thought so much about the strikes lately that I'm really very tired of them, and as to limits — if I was a man I would n't recognize any limits. I never do myself, I know."

"What do you do?"

"I make things come out to suit me."

"Always?"

"Always."

Mowbray rose to shake off the cigar-ash again.

"Do you never find yourself thwarted?"

"Never yet."

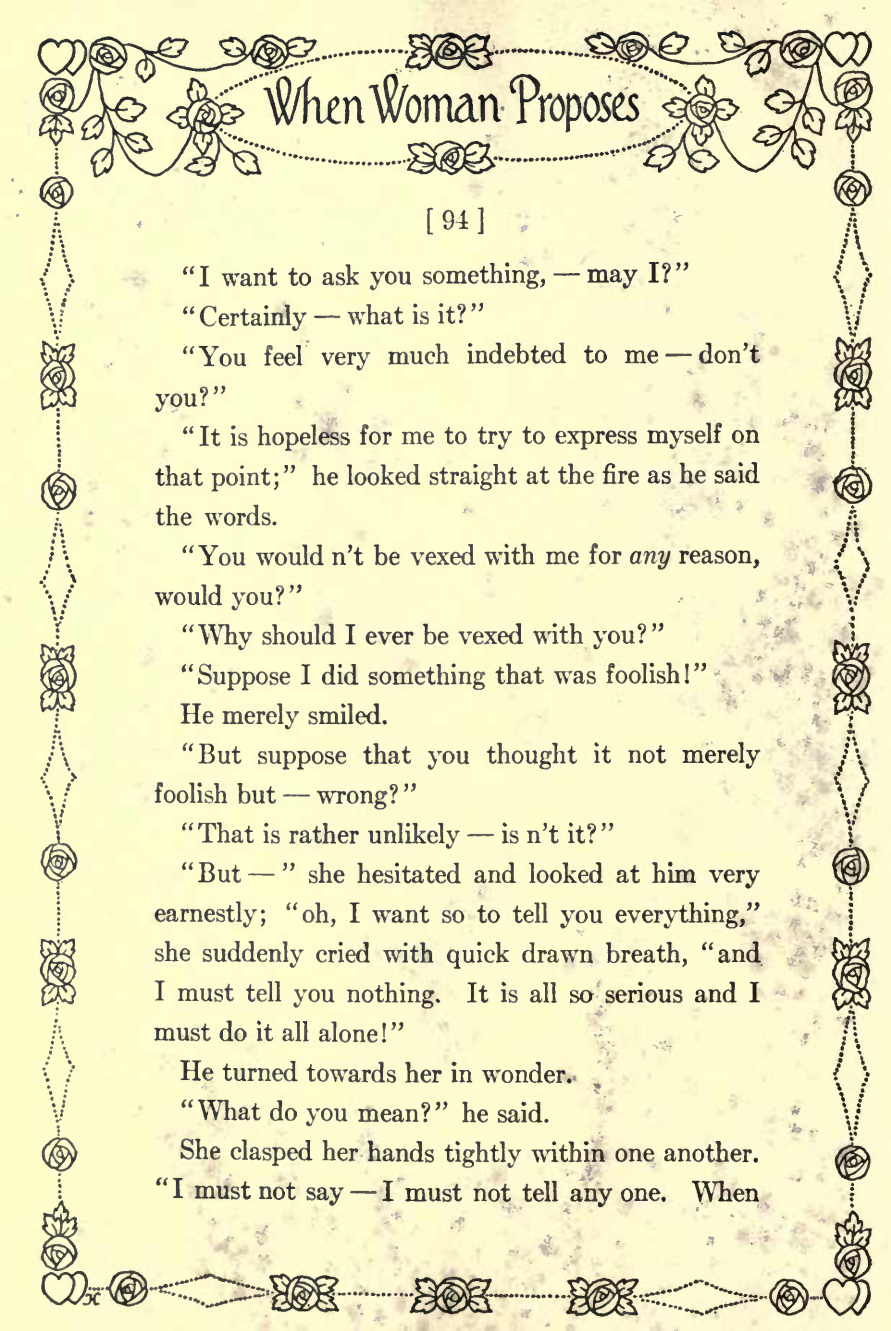
"Enviably woman."

"But of course I am very persevering and then, too, I never mind what things cost."

"You are again fortunate."

"Yes, I am fortunate." She paused and looked earnestly at him; "Do you really feel obliged to go to-morrow?" she asked.

"Obliged!" he raised his eyes and glanced quickly towards her; then he stopped for a second, "I must go," he declared with emphasis, — "I must go for many reasons. The main ones, as far as the world is concerned, you know as well as I do."



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"I want to ask you something, — may I?"

"Certainly — what is it?"

"You feel very much indebted to me — don't you?"

"It is hopeless for me to try to express myself on that point;" he looked straight at the fire as he said the words.

"You would n't be vexed with me for *any* reason, would you?"

"Why should I ever be vexed with you?"

"Suppose I did something that was foolish!"

He merely smiled.

"But suppose that you thought it not merely foolish but — wrong?"

"That is rather unlikely — is n't it?"

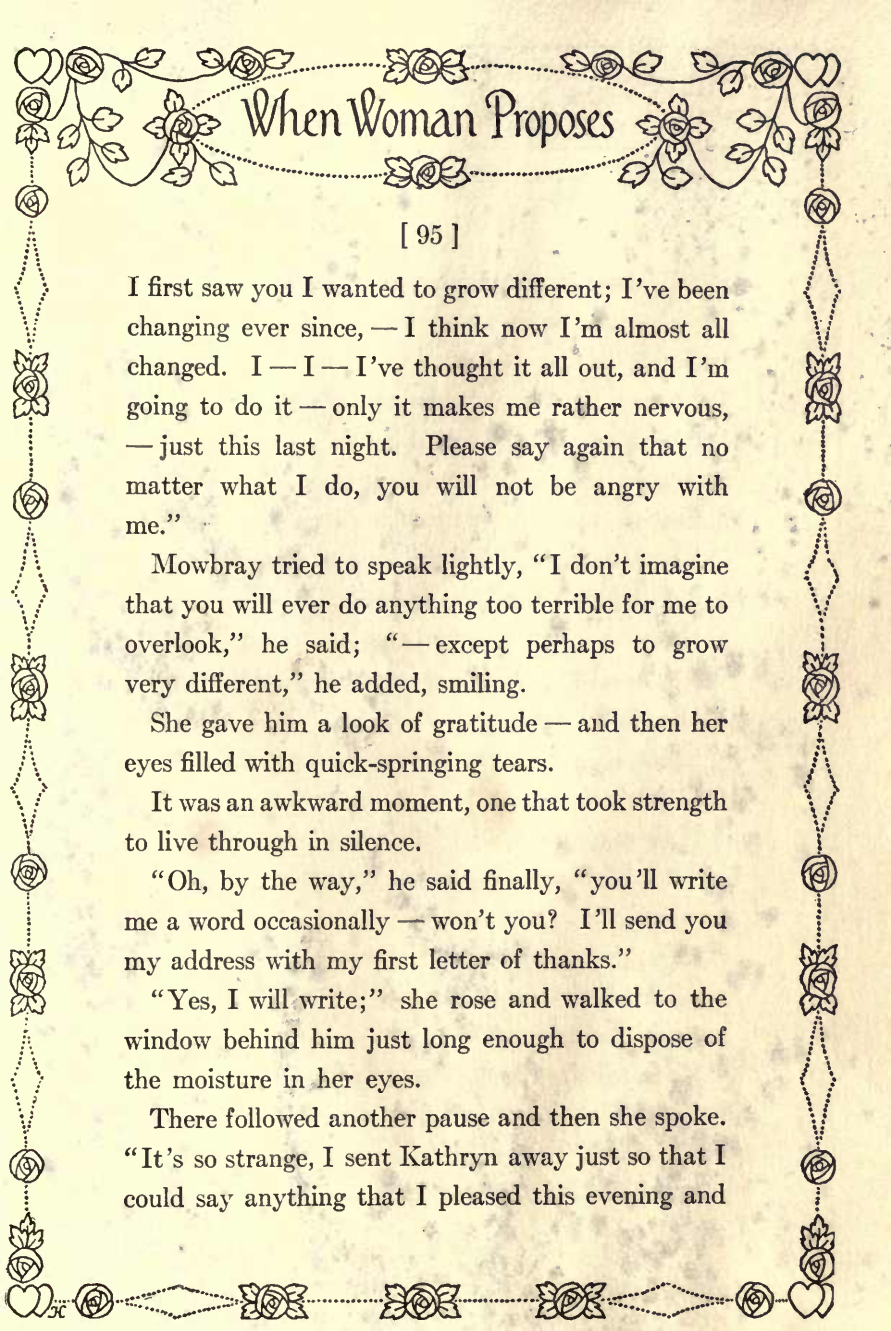
"But —" she hesitated and looked at him very earnestly; "oh, I want so to tell you everything," she suddenly cried with quick drawn breath, "and I must tell you nothing. It is all so serious and I must do it all alone!"

He turned towards her in wonder.

"What do you mean?" he said.

She clasped her hands tightly within one another.

"I must not say — I must not tell any one. When



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I first saw you I wanted to grow different; I've been changing ever since, — I think now I'm almost all changed. I — I — I've thought it all out, and I'm going to do it — only it makes me rather nervous, — just this last night. Please say again that no matter what I do, you will not be angry with me."

Mowbray tried to speak lightly, "I don't imagine that you will ever do anything too terrible for me to overlook," he said; "— except perhaps to grow very different," he added, smiling.

She gave him a look of gratitude — and then her eyes filled with quick-springing tears.

It was an awkward moment, one that took strength to live through in silence.

"Oh, by the way," he said finally, "you'll write me a word occasionally — won't you? I'll send you my address with my first letter of thanks."

"Yes, I will write;" she rose and walked to the window behind him just long enough to dispose of the moisture in her eyes.

There followed another pause and then she spoke. "It's so strange, I sent Kathryn away just so that I could say anything that I pleased this evening and

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now, instead of wanting to say things, I keep thinking more and more about to-morrow."

He bit his lip. It is hard to be the man and burning to say the things and then to be gagged by an immutable code of personal honor.

But her next remark relieved the stress by giving a most unexpected turn to the conversation.

"I really am so busy thinking of to-morrow that I almost forget that you are here."

He felt completely taken aback. "That is flattering; I'm glad that I do not interrupt your thoughts."

She smiled a little.

"When you go away to-morrow I am going away too," she said.

He was conscious of another mental start.

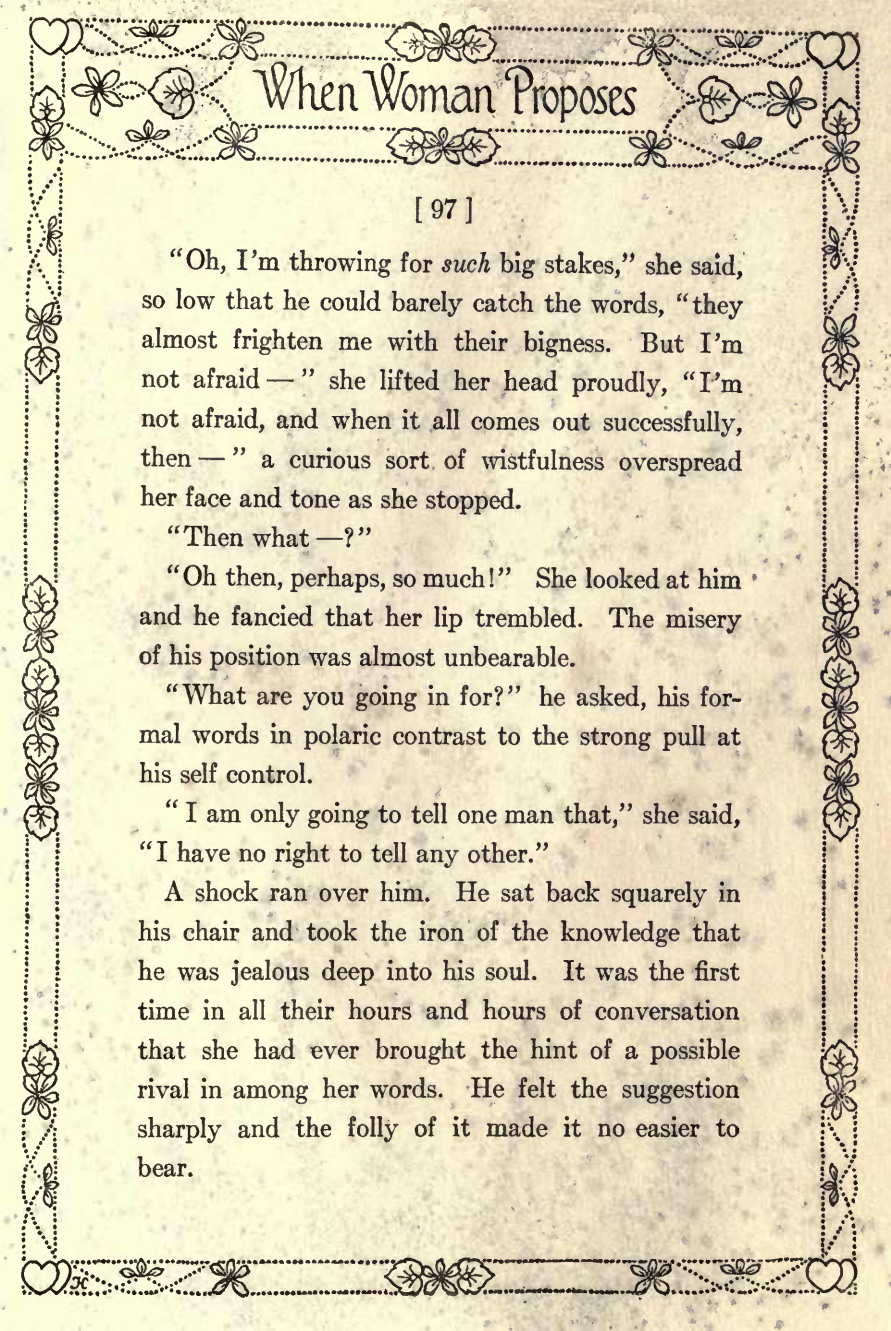
"Am I fortunate enough to be taking your way?" he asked.

"No; you go west, and I go north." She thought a minute and then she said, "If you knew where I am going to-morrow!"

He laughed. "Is it pleasure or business?"

"Don't laugh. It is business. It is terribly serious business."

"I shall be interested to know the results," he added.



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"Oh, I'm throwing for *such* big stakes," she said, so low that he could barely catch the words, "they almost frighten me with their bigness. But I'm not afraid —" she lifted her head proudly, "I'm not afraid, and when it all comes out successfully, then —" a curious sort of wistfulness overspread her face and tone as she stopped.

"Then what —?"

"Oh then, perhaps, so much!" She looked at him and he fancied that her lip trembled. The misery of his position was almost unbearable.

"What are you going in for?" he asked, his formal words in polaric contrast to the strong pull at his self control.

"I am only going to tell one man that," she said, "I have no right to tell any other."

A shock ran over him. He sat back squarely in his chair and took the iron of the knowledge that he was jealous deep into his soul. It was the first time in all their hours and hours of conversation that she had ever brought the hint of a possible rival in among her words. He felt the suggestion sharply and the folly of it made it no easier to bear.

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"I wish to-morrow were over!" she said, presently.

"Yes, I do too."

"But it will be hard after you are gone."

"It is kind of you to say so."

"How many days will it take you to get back to the fort?"

"Three."

"You know there are floods."

"So I read in the evening paper."

She lapsed into silence again and he tried to convince himself that her allusion to the other man did not really affect him at all. As if a poor and proud devil had any right to care whom any woman talked of! — But luck was so tough for some after all.

"Do let us try to talk a little about ourselves now," she said, turning towards him with a smile; "it is the last night and I keep saying over and over again that Kathryn is n't here. I do wish we could talk some about ourselves."

It was impossible to think her a coquette, — her sweet ingenuous face forbade such an unworthy suspicion.

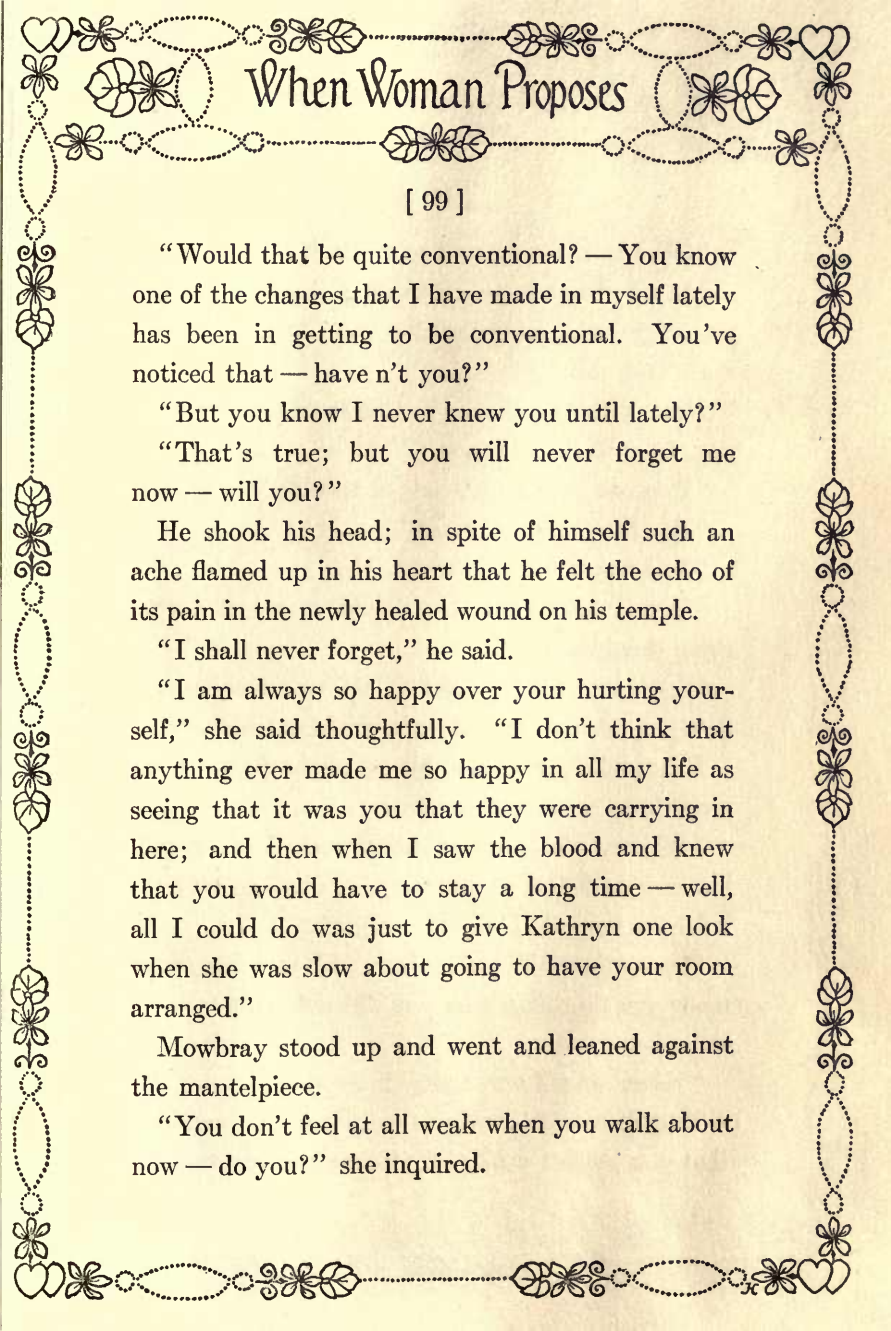
"Let us talk of you," he suggested.



*"I am always so happy
over your hurting yourself,"
she said thoughtfully.*

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“Would that be quite conventional? — You know one of the changes that I have made in myself lately has been in getting to be conventional. You’ve noticed that — have n’t you?”

“But you know I never knew you until lately?”

“That’s true; but you will never forget me now — will you?”

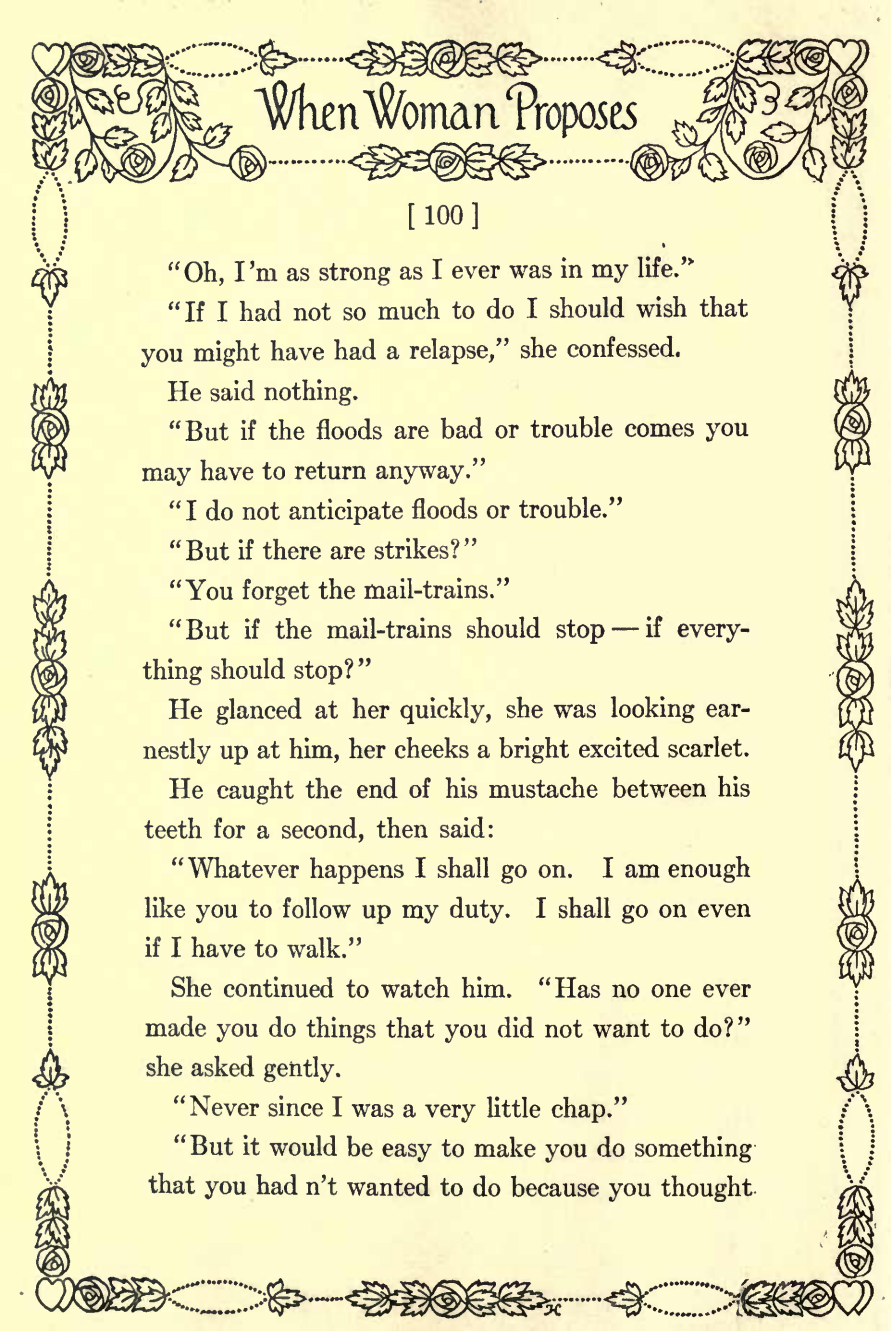
He shook his head; in spite of himself such an ache flamed up in his heart that he felt the echo of its pain in the newly healed wound on his temple.

“I shall never forget,” he said.

“I am always so happy over your hurting yourself,” she said thoughtfully. “I don’t think that anything ever made me so happy in all my life as seeing that it was you that they were carrying in here; and then when I saw the blood and knew that you would have to stay a long time — well, all I could do was just to give Kathryn one look when she was slow about going to have your room arranged.”

Mowbray stood up and went and leaned against the mantelpiece.

“You don’t feel at all weak when you walk about now — do you?” she inquired.



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“Oh, I’m as strong as I ever was in my life.”

“If I had not so much to do I should wish that you might have had a relapse,” she confessed.

He said nothing.

“But if the floods are bad or trouble comes you may have to return anyway.”

“I do not anticipate floods or trouble.”

“But if there are strikes?”

“You forget the mail-trains.”

“But if the mail-trains should stop — if everything should stop?”

He glanced at her quickly, she was looking earnestly up at him, her cheeks a bright excited scarlet.

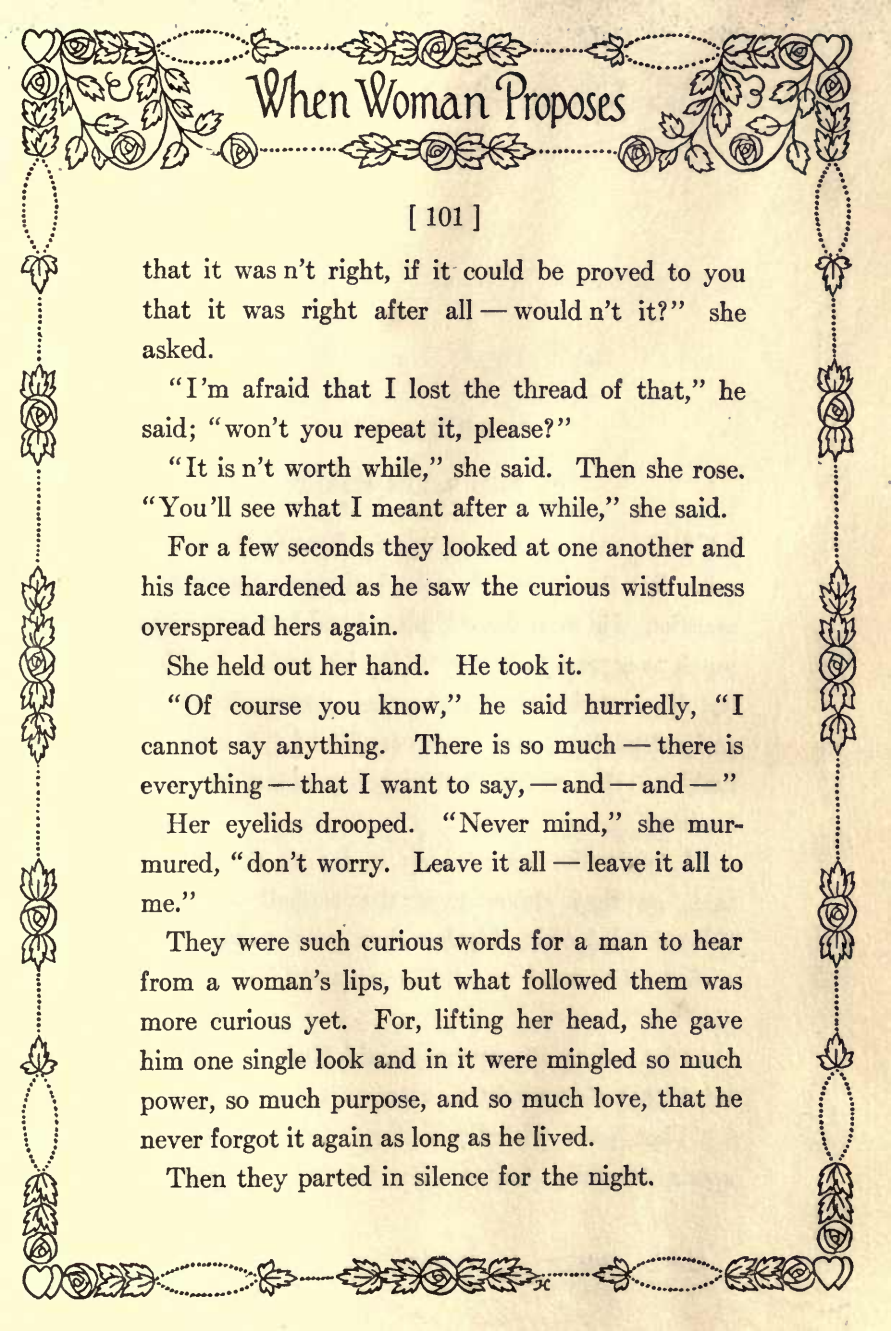
He caught the end of his mustache between his teeth for a second, then said:

“Whatever happens I shall go on. I am enough like you to follow up my duty. I shall go on even if I have to walk.”

She continued to watch him. “Has no one ever made you do things that you did not want to do?” she asked gently.

“Never since I was a very little chap.”

“But it would be easy to make you do something that you had n’t wanted to do because you thought.



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that it was n't right, if it could be proved to you that it was right after all — would n't it?" she asked.

"I'm afraid that I lost the thread of that," he said; "won't you repeat it, please?"

"It is n't worth while," she said. Then she rose. "You'll see what I meant after a while," she said.

For a few seconds they looked at one another and his face hardened as he saw the curious wistfulness overspread hers again.

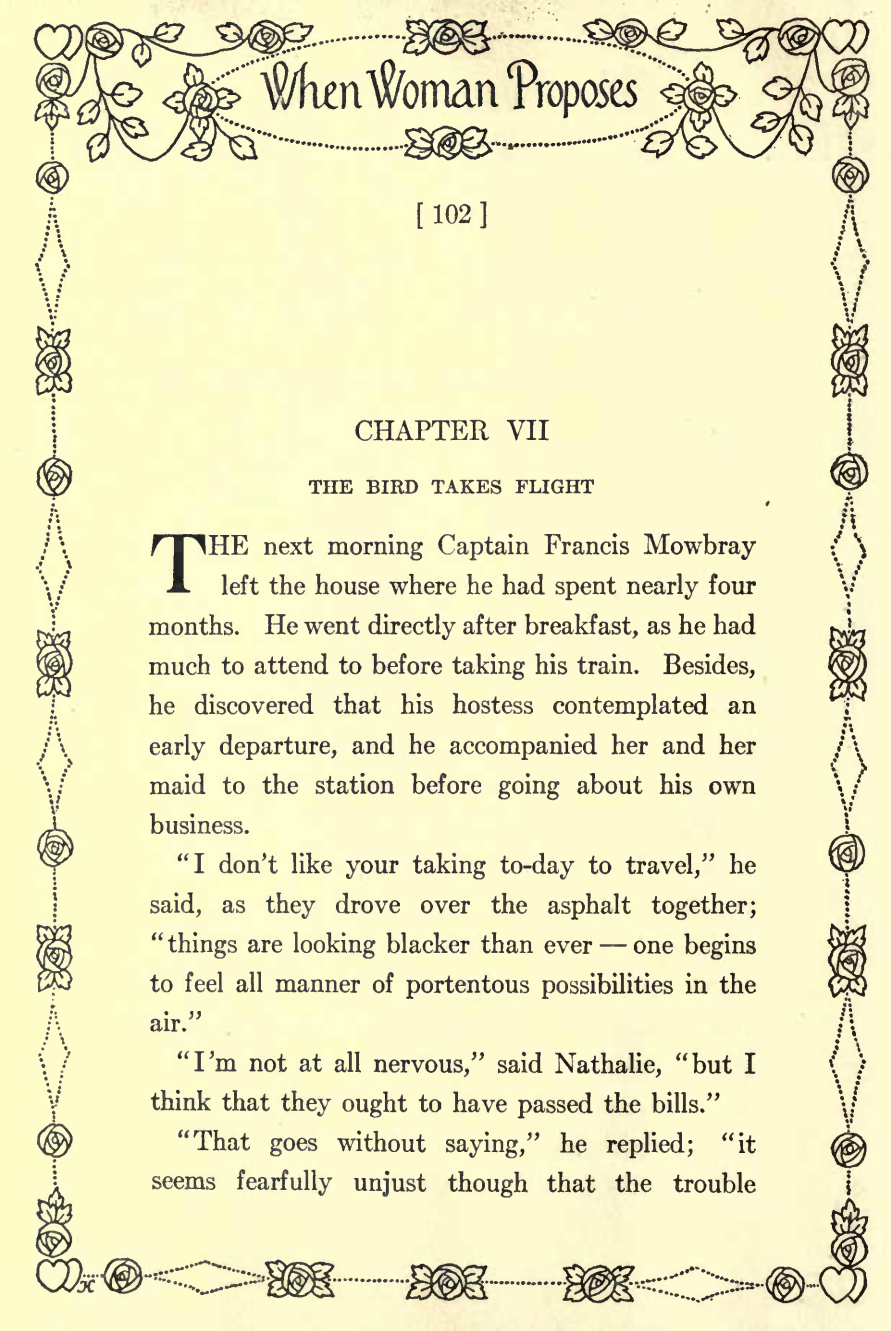
She held out her hand. He took it.

"Of course you know," he said hurriedly, "I cannot say anything. There is so much — there is everything — that I want to say, — and — and —"

Her eyelids drooped. "Never mind," she murmured, "don't worry. Leave it all — leave it all to me."

They were such curious words for a man to hear from a woman's lips, but what followed them was more curious yet. For, lifting her head, she gave him one single look and in it were mingled so much power, so much purpose, and so much love, that he never forgot it again as long as he lived.

Then they parted in silence for the night.



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CHAPTER VII

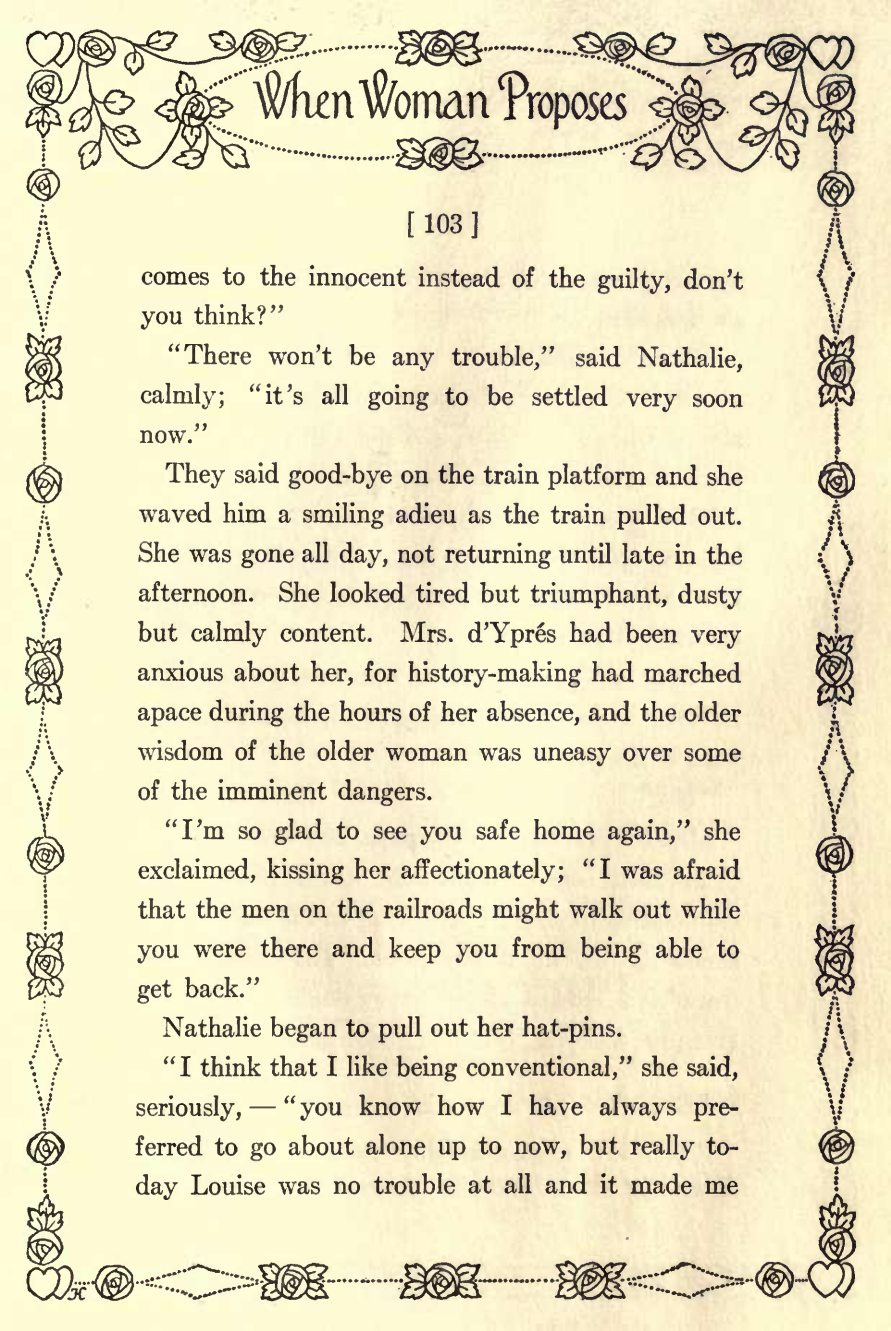
THE BIRD TAKES FLIGHT

THE next morning Captain Francis Mowbray left the house where he had spent nearly four months. He went directly after breakfast, as he had much to attend to before taking his train. Besides, he discovered that his hostess contemplated an early departure, and he accompanied her and her maid to the station before going about his own business.

“I don’t like your taking to-day to travel,” he said, as they drove over the asphalt together; “things are looking blacker than ever — one begins to feel all manner of portentous possibilities in the air.”

“I’m not at all nervous,” said Nathalie, “but I think that they ought to have passed the bills.”

“That goes without saying,” he replied; “it seems fearfully unjust though that the trouble



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comes to the innocent instead of the guilty, don't you think?"

"There won't be any trouble," said Nathalie, calmly; "it's all going to be settled very soon now."

They said good-bye on the train platform and she waved him a smiling adieu as the train pulled out. She was gone all day, not returning until late in the afternoon. She looked tired but triumphant, dusty but calmly content. Mrs. d'Yprés had been very anxious about her, for history-making had marched apace during the hours of her absence, and the older wisdom of the older woman was uneasy over some of the imminent dangers.

"I'm so glad to see you safe home again," she exclaimed, kissing her affectionately; "I was afraid that the men on the railroads might walk out while you were there and keep you from being able to get back."

Nathalie began to pull out her hat-pins.

"I think that I like being conventional," she said, seriously, — "you know how I have always preferred to go about alone up to now, but really to-day Louise was no trouble at all and it made me

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feel so proper and above reproach, knowing that she was with me."

"What did you do?"

"Oh, I left her in the ladies' waiting-room of the station when I got there, and she waited until I was ready to get her for the coming back."

"Did you see an afternoon paper? The headlines are terrible, — they say Lefevre has declared that he will call out every working-man in the country, if necessary."

"Dear me," said Nathalie, composedly.

"Did you read the message that he sent to the head of the government?"

"No."

Mrs. d'Yprés took up the paper and turned herself to the light; she did not see the sudden change from carelessness to strained attention in the other's face as she did so, but it was there. The paper was a five o'clock edition and in letters doubly leaded was given the following brief communication:

"Sir:

"You are unquestionably aware of the great discontent that prevails throughout our nation

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because of the failure of the lawmaking bodies to pass bills to regulate by a minimum wage the wages of the industrial forces of the country, and to increase the pay of the army officers and enlisted men. My judgment is that if these bills are not enacted into law at an early date serious industrial difficulties may arise.

“Trusting that you may use your high and good offices in the interest of these beneficent measures, I am, with great respect,

“Yours truly,

“RALPH LEFEVRE,

“*President United Working Men.*”

“It’s a nice letter,” said Nathalie, when the reading terminated. “What did they do about it?”

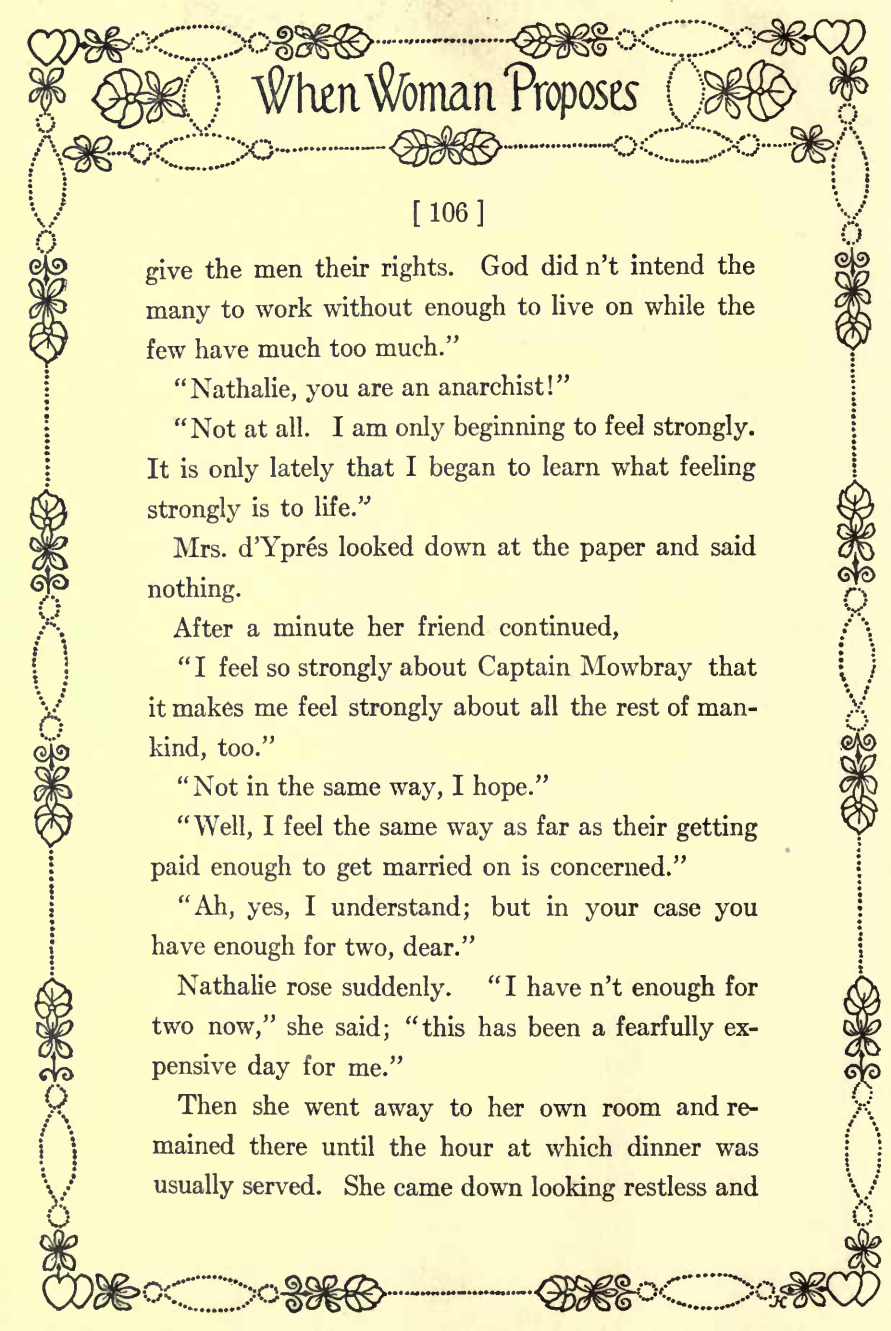
“Nothing yet. The Executive sent it to the session and the session laid it over for consideration.”

A curious smile encircled Nathalie’s mouth.

“I hope that Mr. Lefevre will keep his word,” she said slowly.

“Oh, that would mean so much suffering and trouble.”

“Why does n’t the government act then and



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give the men their rights. God did n't intend the many to work without enough to live on while the few have much too much."

"Nathalie, you are an anarchist!"

"Not at all. I am only beginning to feel strongly. It is only lately that I began to learn what feeling strongly is to life."

Mrs. d'Yprés looked down at the paper and said nothing.

After a minute her friend continued,

"I feel so strongly about Captain Mowbray that it makes me feel strongly about all the rest of mankind, too."

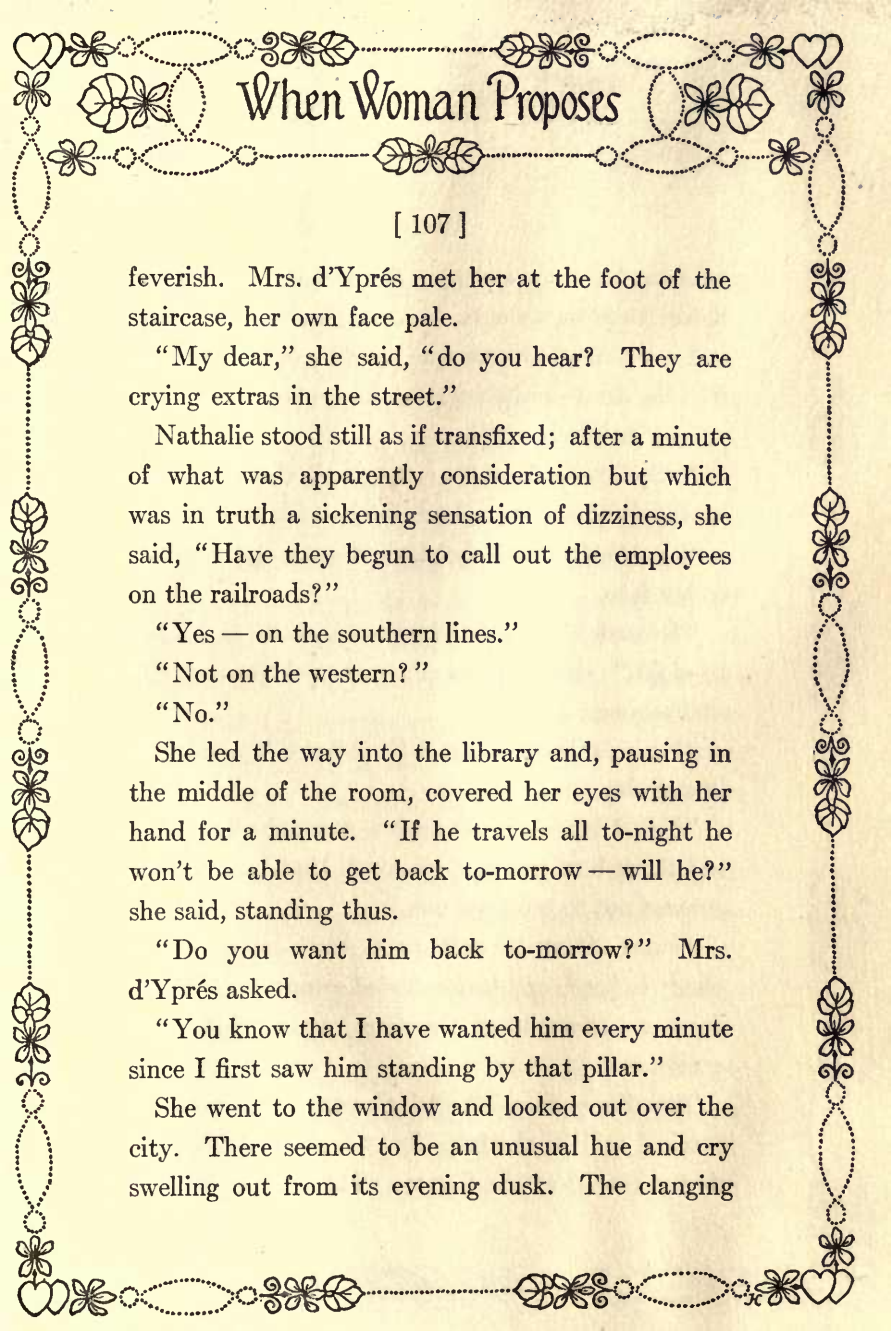
"Not in the same way, I hope."

"Well, I feel the same way as far as their getting paid enough to get married on is concerned."

"Ah, yes, I understand; but in your case you have enough for two, dear."

Nathalie rose suddenly. "I have n't enough for two now," she said; "this has been a fearfully expensive day for me."

Then she went away to her own room and remained there until the hour at which dinner was usually served. She came down looking restless and



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feverish. Mrs. d'Yprés met her at the foot of the staircase, her own face pale.

"My dear," she said, "do you hear? They are crying extras in the street."

Nathalie stood still as if transfixed; after a minute of what was apparently consideration but which was in truth a sickening sensation of dizziness, she said, "Have they begun to call out the employees on the railroads?"

"Yes — on the southern lines."

"Not on the western?"

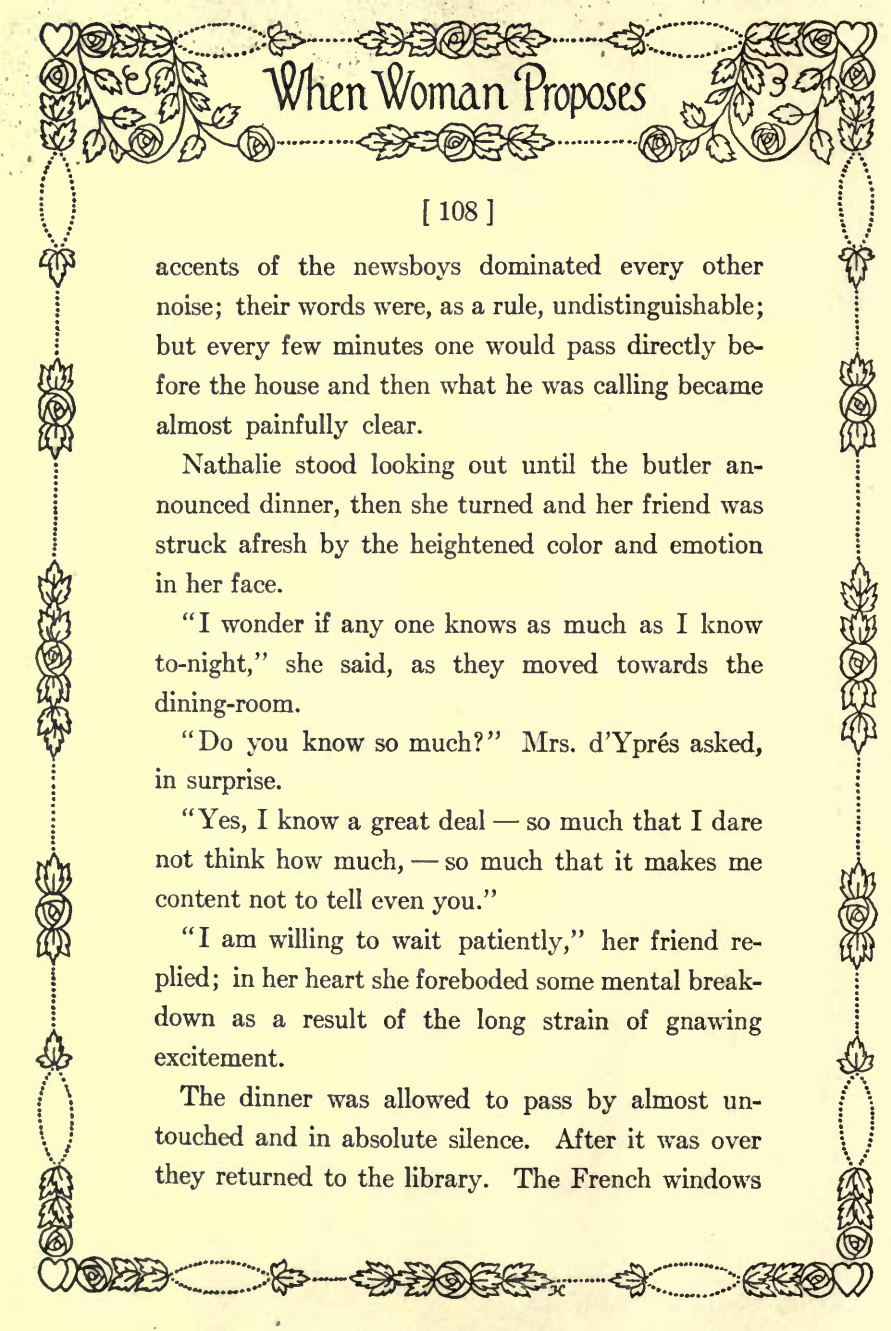
"No."

She led the way into the library and, pausing in the middle of the room, covered her eyes with her hand for a minute. "If he travels all to-night he won't be able to get back to-morrow — will he?" she said, standing thus.

"Do you want him back to-morrow?" Mrs. d'Yprés asked.

"You know that I have wanted him every minute since I first saw him standing by that pillar."

She went to the window and looked out over the city. There seemed to be an unusual hue and cry swelling out from its evening dusk. The clanging



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accents of the newsboys dominated every other noise; their words were, as a rule, undistinguishable; but every few minutes one would pass directly before the house and then what he was calling became almost painfully clear.

Nathalie stood looking out until the butler announced dinner, then she turned and her friend was struck afresh by the heightened color and emotion in her face.

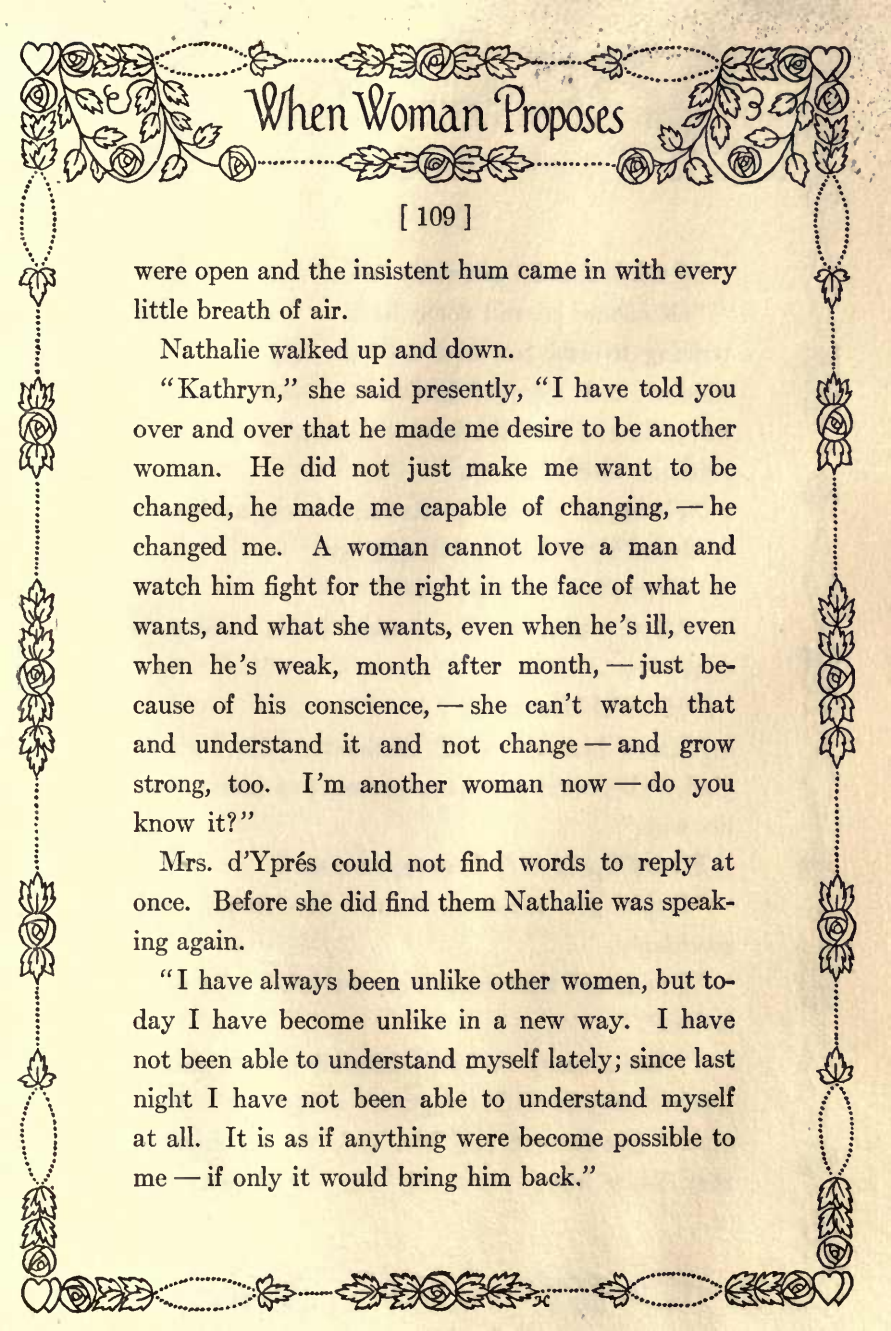
"I wonder if any one knows as much as I know to-night," she said, as they moved towards the dining-room.

"Do you know so much?" Mrs. d'Yprés asked, in surprise.

"Yes, I know a great deal — so much that I dare not think how much, — so much that it makes me content not to tell even you."

"I am willing to wait patiently," her friend replied; in her heart she foreboded some mental breakdown as a result of the long strain of gnawing excitement.

The dinner was allowed to pass by almost untouched and in absolute silence. After it was over they returned to the library. The French windows



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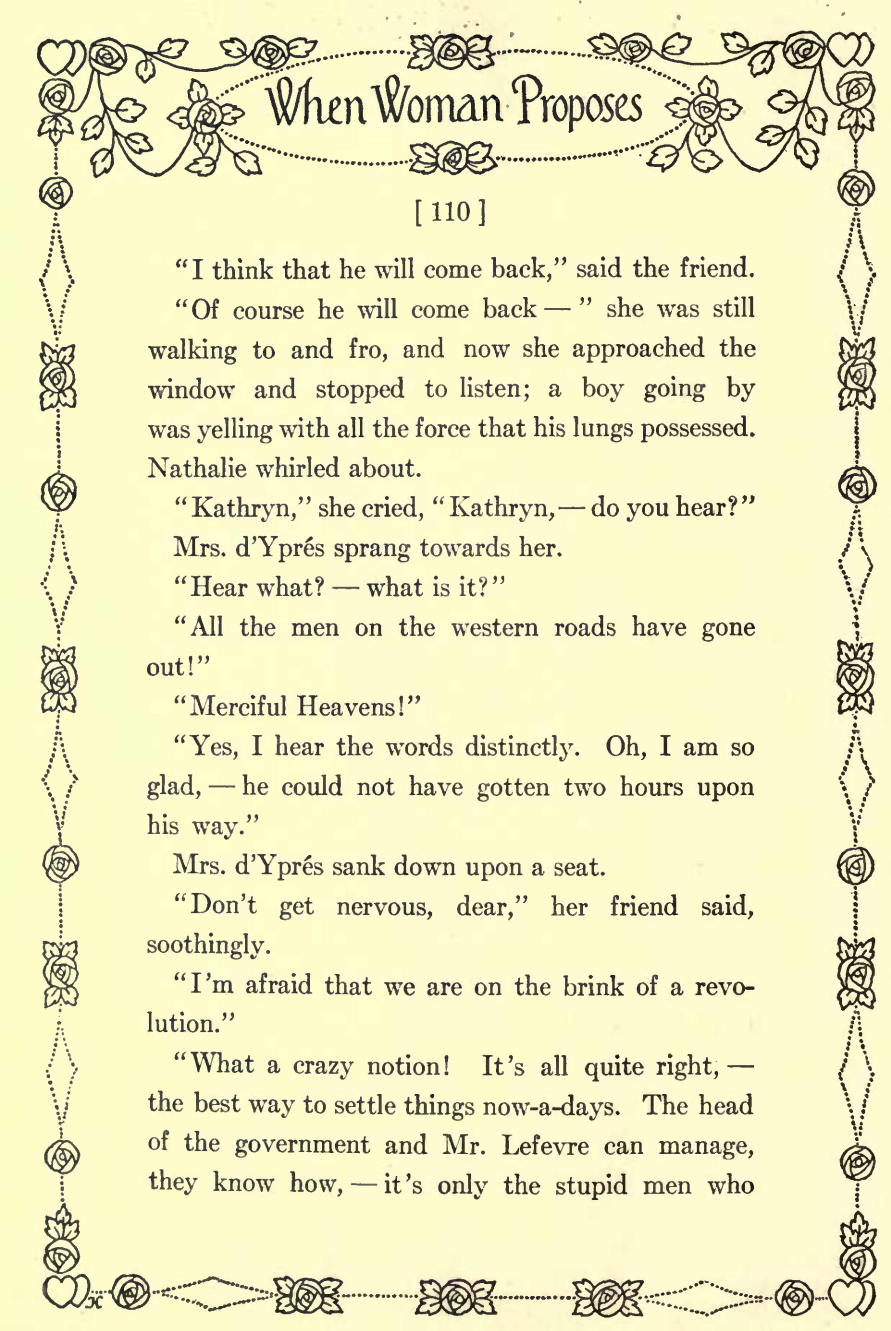
were open and the insistent hum came in with every little breath of air.

Nathalie walked up and down.

“Kathryn,” she said presently, “I have told you over and over that he made me desire to be another woman. He did not just make me want to be changed, he made me capable of changing, — he changed me. A woman cannot love a man and watch him fight for the right in the face of what he wants, and what she wants, even when he’s ill, even when he’s weak, month after month, — just because of his conscience, — she can’t watch that and understand it and not change — and grow strong, too. I’m another woman now — do you know it?”

Mrs. d’Yprés could not find words to reply at once. Before she did find them Nathalie was speaking again.

“I have always been unlike other women, but to-day I have become unlike in a new way. I have not been able to understand myself lately; since last night I have not been able to understand myself at all. It is as if anything were become possible to me — if only it would bring him back.”



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"I think that he will come back," said the friend.

"Of course he will come back —" she was still walking to and fro, and now she approached the window and stopped to listen; a boy going by was yelling with all the force that his lungs possessed. Nathalie whirled about.

"Kathryn," she cried, "Kathryn,— do you hear?"

Mrs. d'Yprés sprang towards her.

"Hear what? — what is it?"

"All the men on the western roads have gone out!"

"Merciful Heavens!"

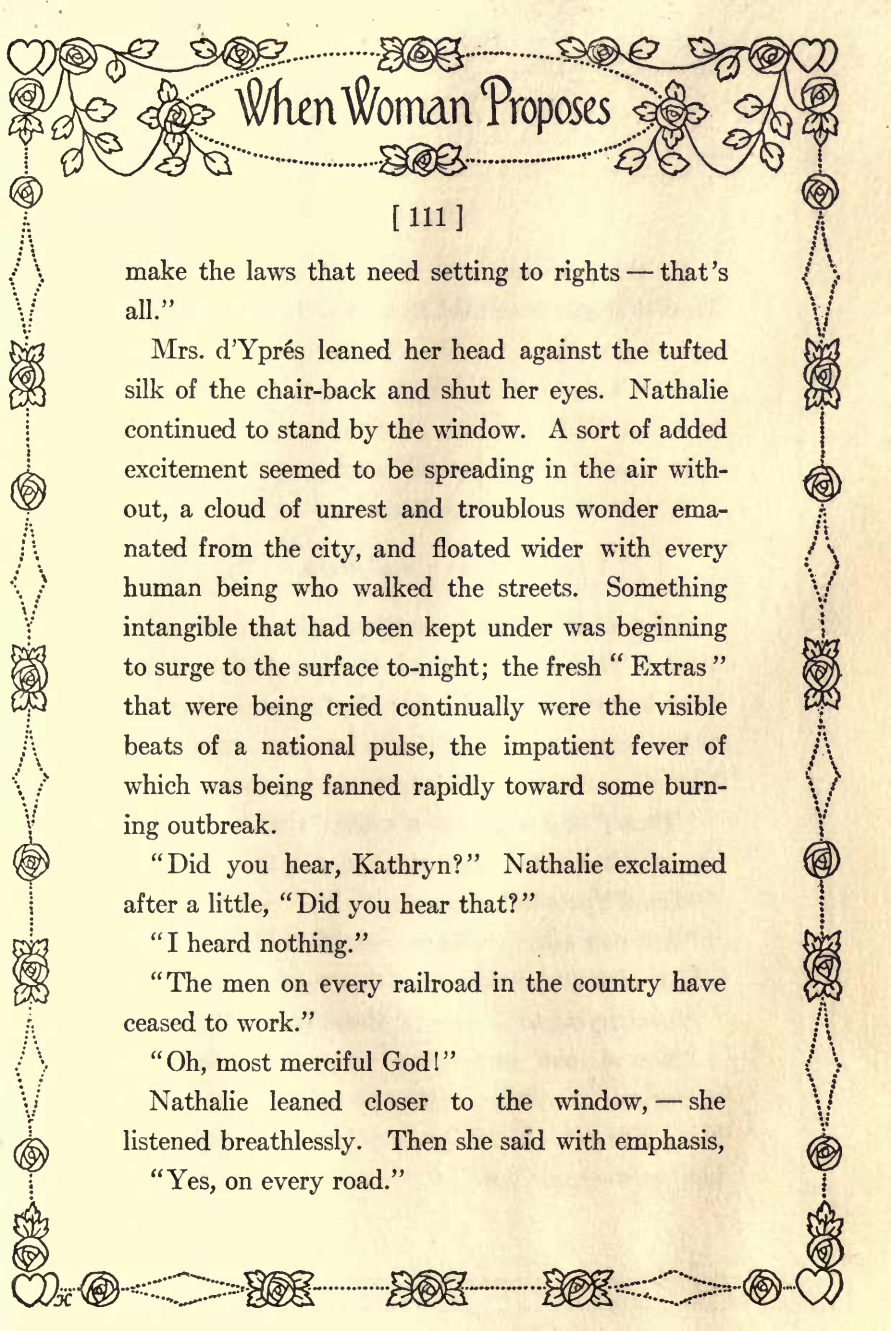
"Yes, I hear the words distinctly. Oh, I am so glad, — he could not have gotten two hours upon his way."

Mrs. d'Yprés sank down upon a seat.

"Don't get nervous, dear," her friend said, soothingly.

"I'm afraid that we are on the brink of a revolution."

"What a crazy notion! It's all quite right, — the best way to settle things now-a-days. The head of the government and Mr. Lefevre can manage, they know how, — it's only the stupid men who



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make the laws that need setting to rights — that's all."

Mrs. d'Yprés leaned her head against the tufted silk of the chair-back and shut her eyes. Nathalie continued to stand by the window. A sort of added excitement seemed to be spreading in the air without, a cloud of unrest and troublous wonder emanated from the city, and floated wider with every human being who walked the streets. Something intangible that had been kept under was beginning to surge to the surface to-night; the fresh "Extras" that were being cried continually were the visible beats of a national pulse, the impatient fever of which was being fanned rapidly toward some burning outbreak.

"Did you hear, Kathryn?" Nathalie exclaimed after a little, "Did you hear that?"

"I heard nothing."

"The men on every railroad in the country have ceased to work."

"Oh, most merciful God!"

Nathalie leaned closer to the window, — she listened breathlessly. Then she said with emphasis,

"Yes, on every road."

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At that moment the door-bell rang violently. Mrs. d'Yprés screamed hysterically, and Nathalie turned sharply.

"Don't do that, Kathryn, — nothing is going to hurt you."

The butler came in with a telegram. It was for Mrs. Arundel. She tore it open.

"I am going on a mail-train. — M."

She read it aloud to her friend without any comment. Then she returned to the window; men were hurrying towards the city's centre, stopping to buy papers each time that a new extra was cried. Nathalie watched it all with vivid interest.

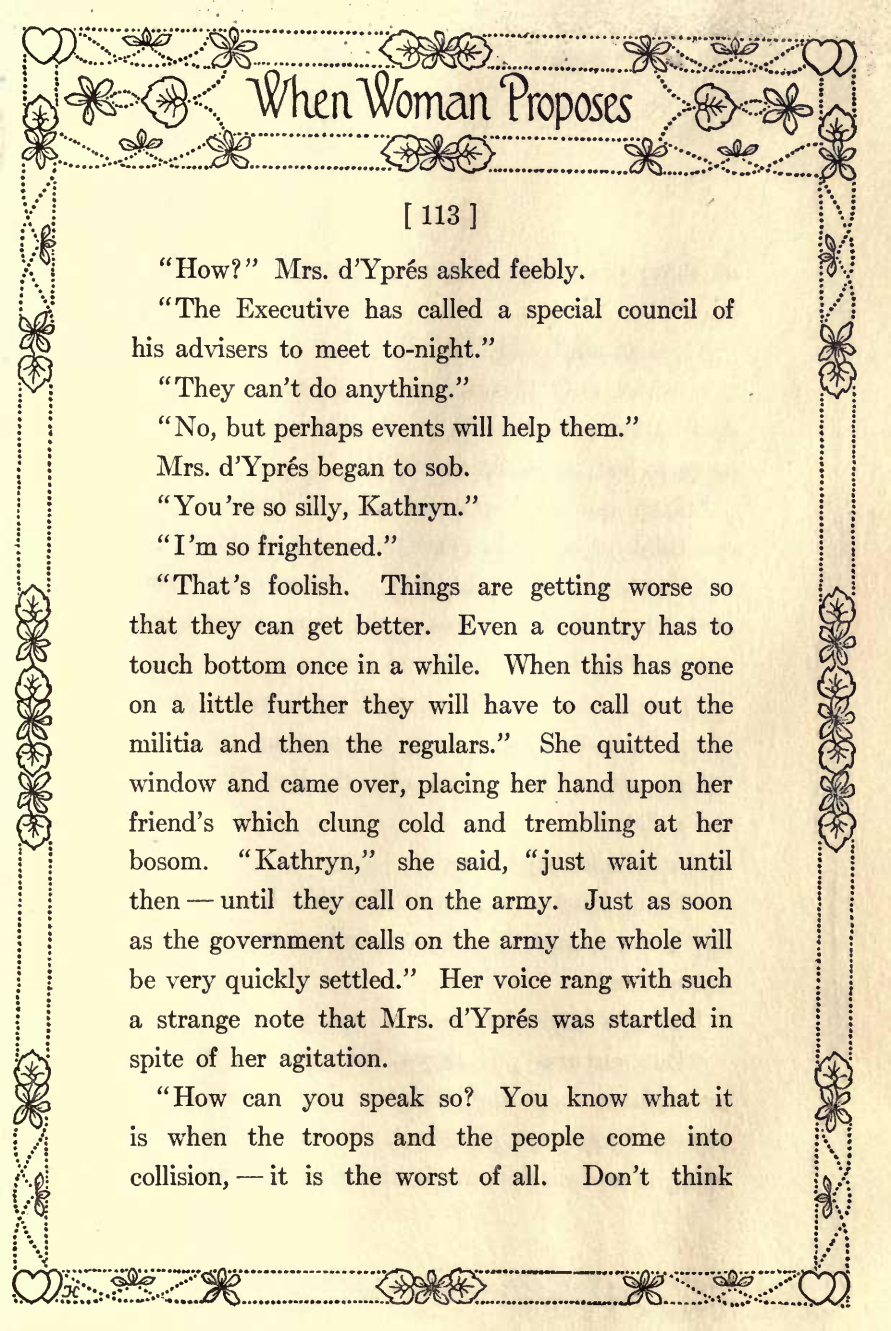
"There," she said after a while, "that is the third boy who has called that, so it must be true."

Mrs. d'Yprés did not reply.

"Are you asleep or have you fainted?" Nathalie asked, without turning from the window.

"I am trying to be calm;" the other's voice shook.

"You're not succeeding very well. Don't be so nervous, Kathryn, — it is all going to be for the best; it is only that it is the only way. It is beginning to work out now."



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“How?” Mrs. d’Yprés asked feebly.

“The Executive has called a special council of his advisers to meet to-night.”

“They can’t do anything.”

“No, but perhaps events will help them.”

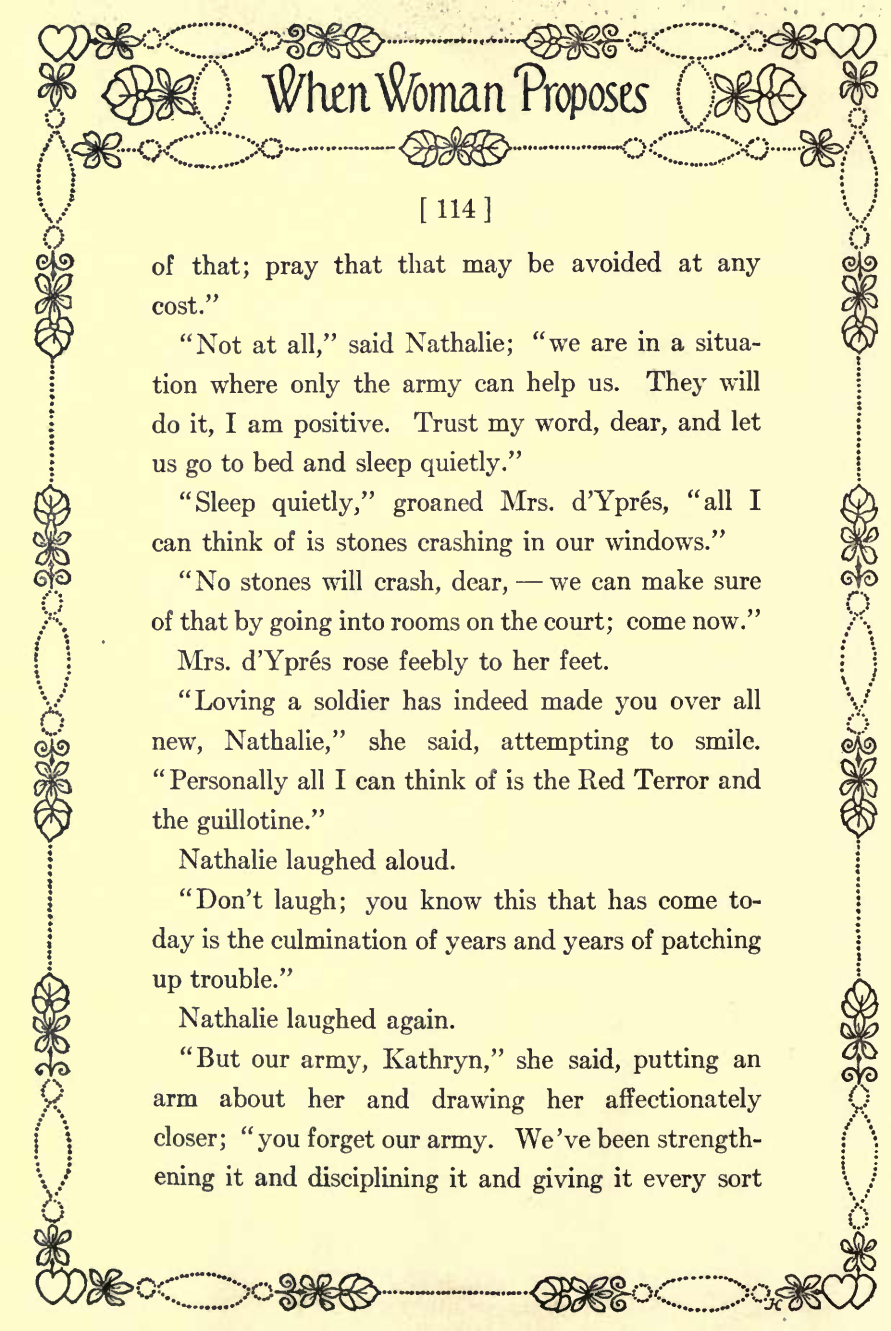
Mrs. d’Yprés began to sob.

“You’re so silly, Kathryn.”

“I’m so frightened.”

“That’s foolish. Things are getting worse so that they can get better. Even a country has to touch bottom once in a while. When this has gone on a little further they will have to call out the militia and then the regulars.” She quitted the window and came over, placing her hand upon her friend’s which clung cold and trembling at her bosom. “Kathryn,” she said, “just wait until then — until they call on the army. Just as soon as the government calls on the army the whole will be very quickly settled.” Her voice rang with such a strange note that Mrs. d’Yprés was startled in spite of her agitation.

“How can you speak so? You know what it is when the troops and the people come into collision, — it is the worst of all. Don’t think



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of that; pray that that may be avoided at any cost."

"Not at all," said Nathalie; "we are in a situation where only the army can help us. They will do it, I am positive. Trust my word, dear, and let us go to bed and sleep quietly."

"Sleep quietly," groaned Mrs. d'Yprés, "all I can think of is stones crashing in our windows."

"No stones will crash, dear, — we can make sure of that by going into rooms on the court; come now."

Mrs. d'Yprés rose feebly to her feet.

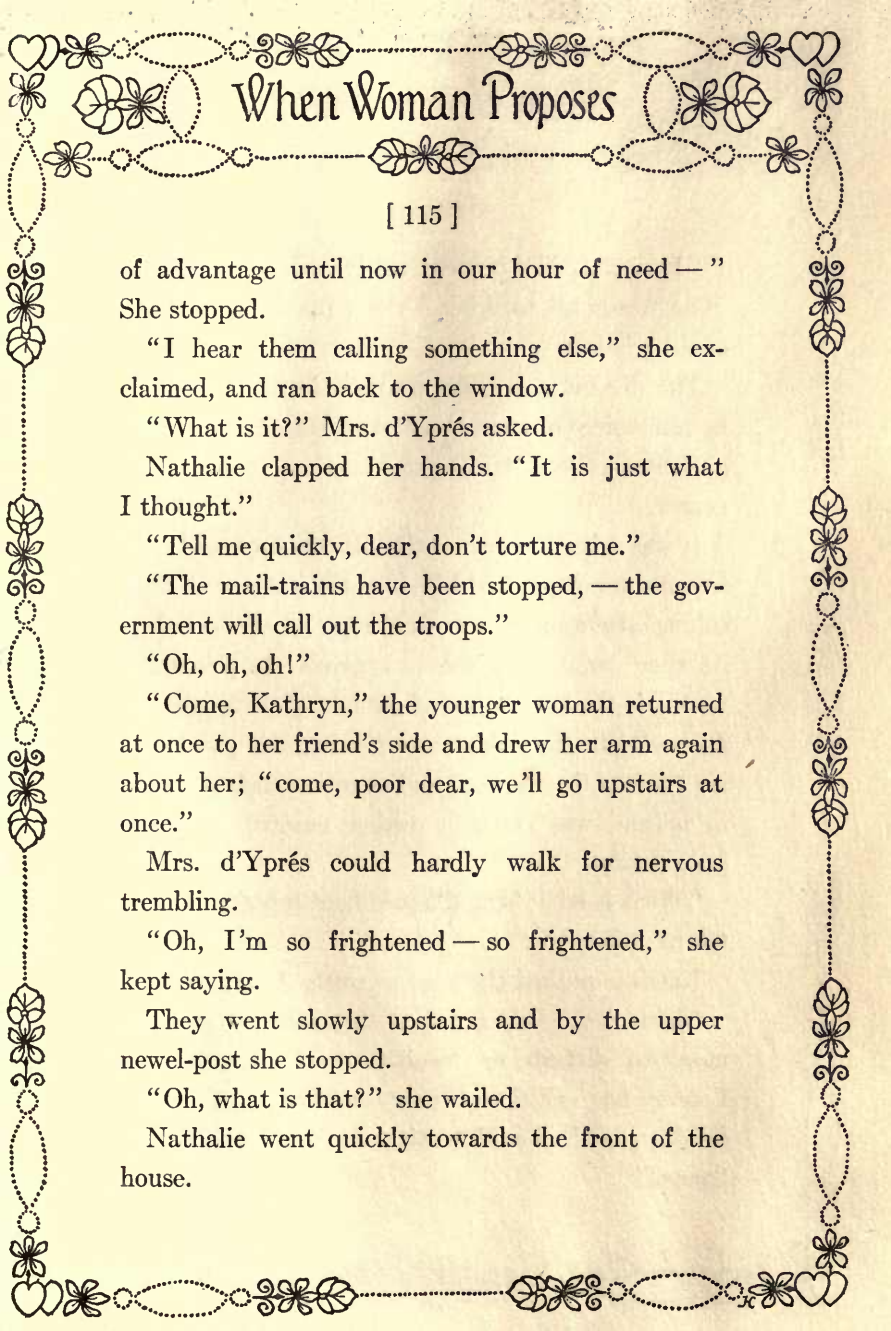
"Loving a soldier has indeed made you over all new, Nathalie," she said, attempting to smile. "Personally all I can think of is the Red Terror and the guillotine."

Nathalie laughed aloud.

"Don't laugh; you know this that has come to-day is the culmination of years and years of patching up trouble."

Nathalie laughed again.

"But our army, Kathryn," she said, putting an arm about her and drawing her affectionately closer; "you forget our army. We've been strengthening it and disciplining it and giving it every sort



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of advantage until now in our hour of need — ”
She stopped.

“I hear them calling something else,” she exclaimed, and ran back to the window.

“What is it?” Mrs. d’Yprés asked.

Nathalie clapped her hands. “It is just what I thought.”

“Tell me quickly, dear, don’t torture me.”

“The mail-trains have been stopped, — the government will call out the troops.”

“Oh, oh, oh!”

“Come, Kathryn,” the younger woman returned at once to her friend’s side and drew her arm again about her; “come, poor dear, we’ll go upstairs at once.”

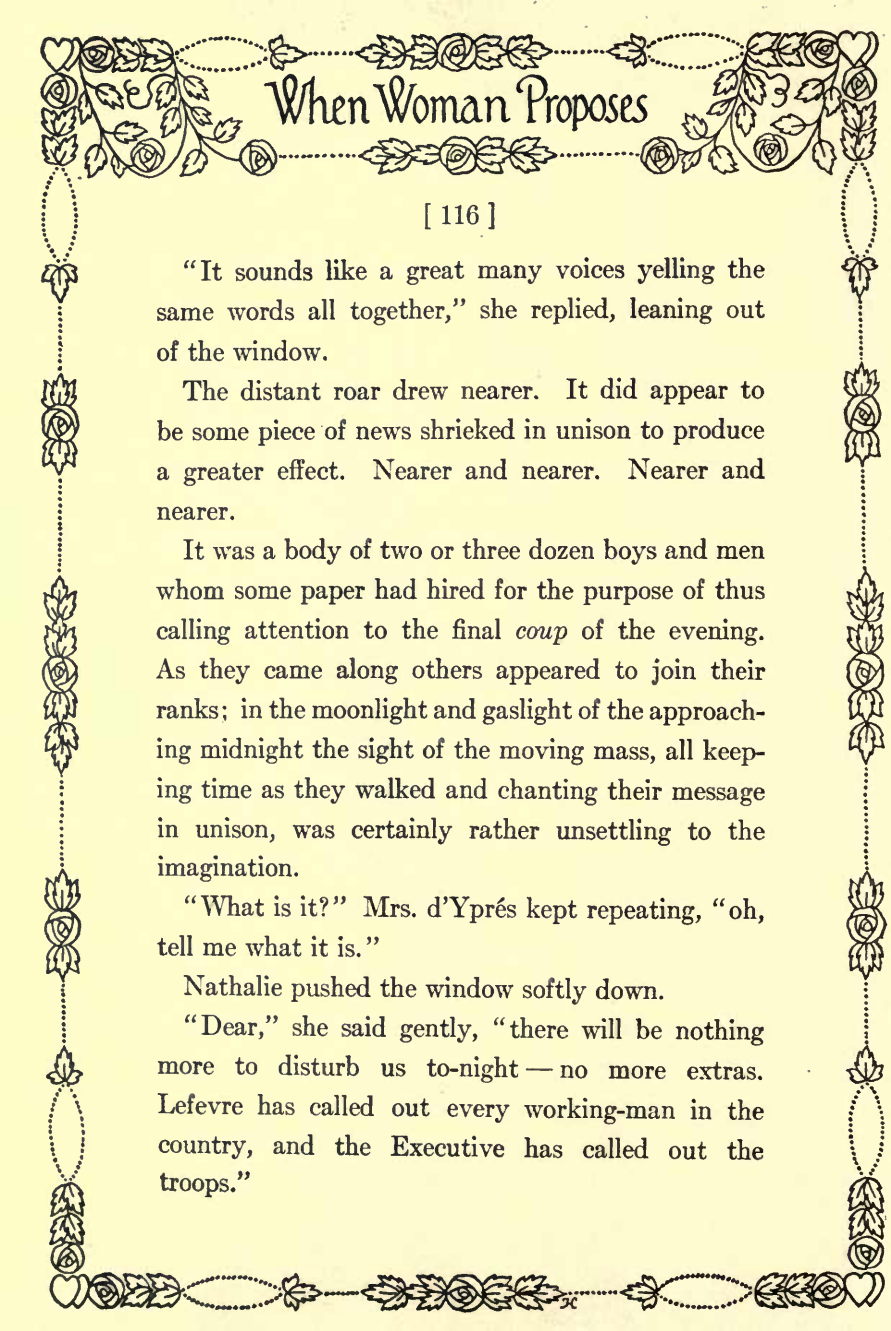
Mrs. d’Yprés could hardly walk for nervous trembling.

“Oh, I’m so frightened — so frightened,” she kept saying.

They went slowly upstairs and by the upper newel-post she stopped.

“Oh, what is that?” she wailed.

Nathalie went quickly towards the front of the house.



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“It sounds like a great many voices yelling the same words all together,” she replied, leaning out of the window.

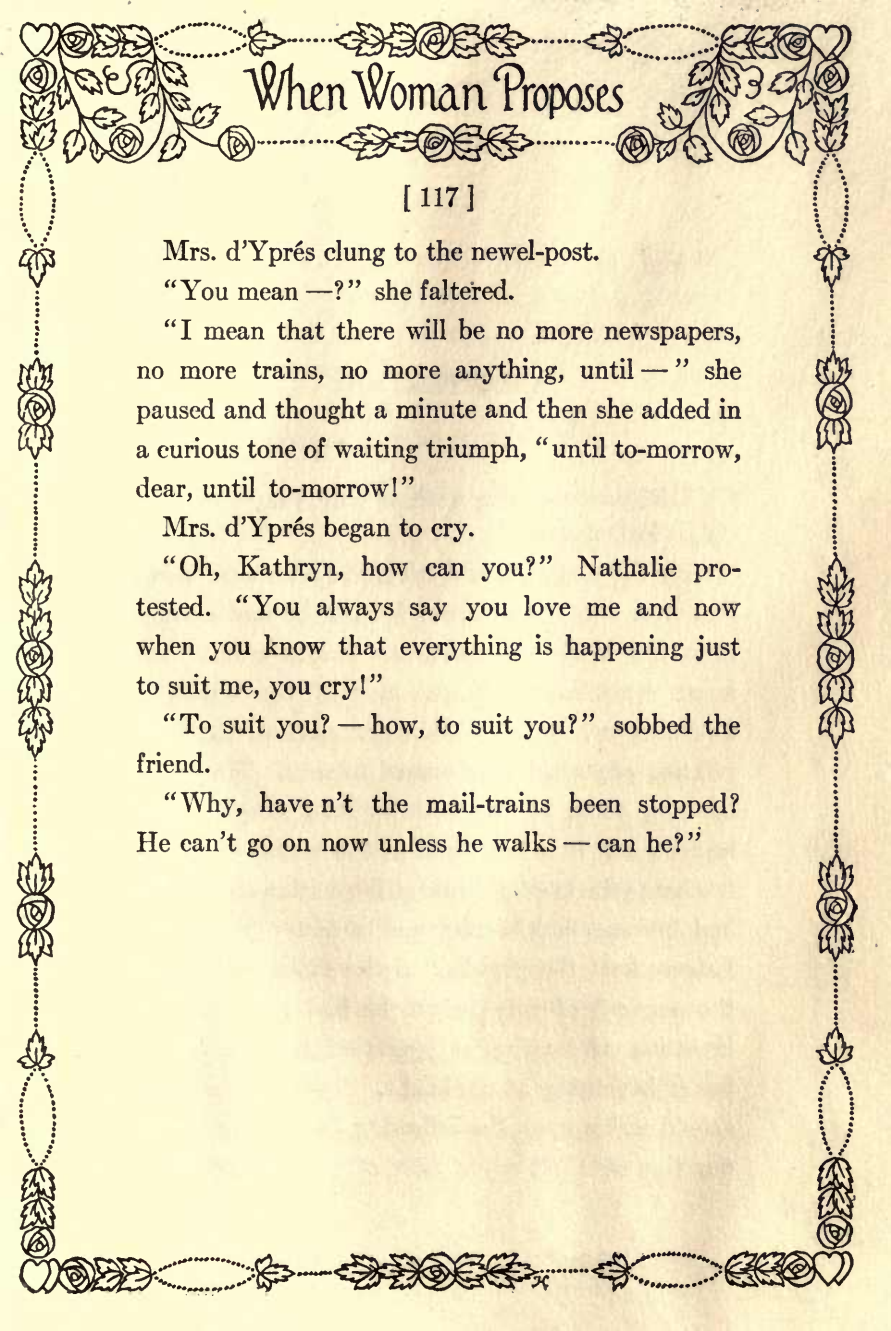
The distant roar drew nearer. It did appear to be some piece of news shrieked in unison to produce a greater effect. Nearer and nearer. Nearer and nearer.

It was a body of two or three dozen boys and men whom some paper had hired for the purpose of thus calling attention to the final *coup* of the evening. As they came along others appeared to join their ranks; in the moonlight and gaslight of the approaching midnight the sight of the moving mass, all keeping time as they walked and chanting their message in unison, was certainly rather unsettling to the imagination.

“What is it?” Mrs. d’Yprés kept repeating, “oh, tell me what it is.”

Nathalie pushed the window softly down.

“Dear,” she said gently, “there will be nothing more to disturb us to-night — no more extras. Lefevre has called out every working-man in the country, and the Executive has called out the troops.”



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Mrs. d'Yprés clung to the newel-post.

"You mean —?" she faltered.

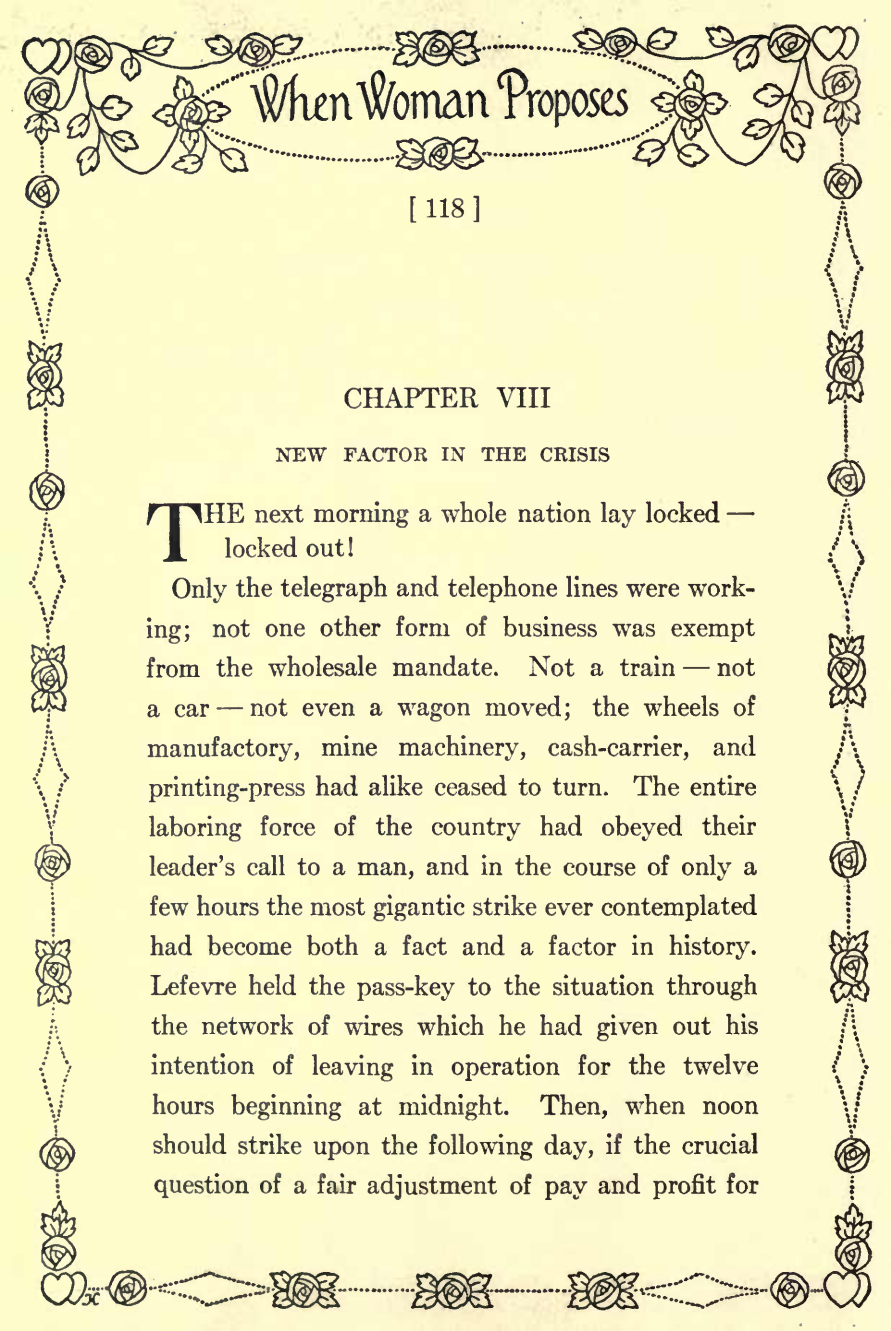
"I mean that there will be no more newspapers, no more trains, no more anything, until —" she paused and thought a minute and then she added in a curious tone of waiting triumph, "until to-morrow, dear, until to-morrow!"

Mrs. d'Yprés began to cry.

"Oh, Kathryn, how can you?" Nathalie protested. "You always say you love me and now when you know that everything is happening just to suit me, you cry!"

"To suit you? — how, to suit you?" sobbed the friend.

"Why, have n't the mail-trains been stopped? He can't go on now unless he walks — can he?"



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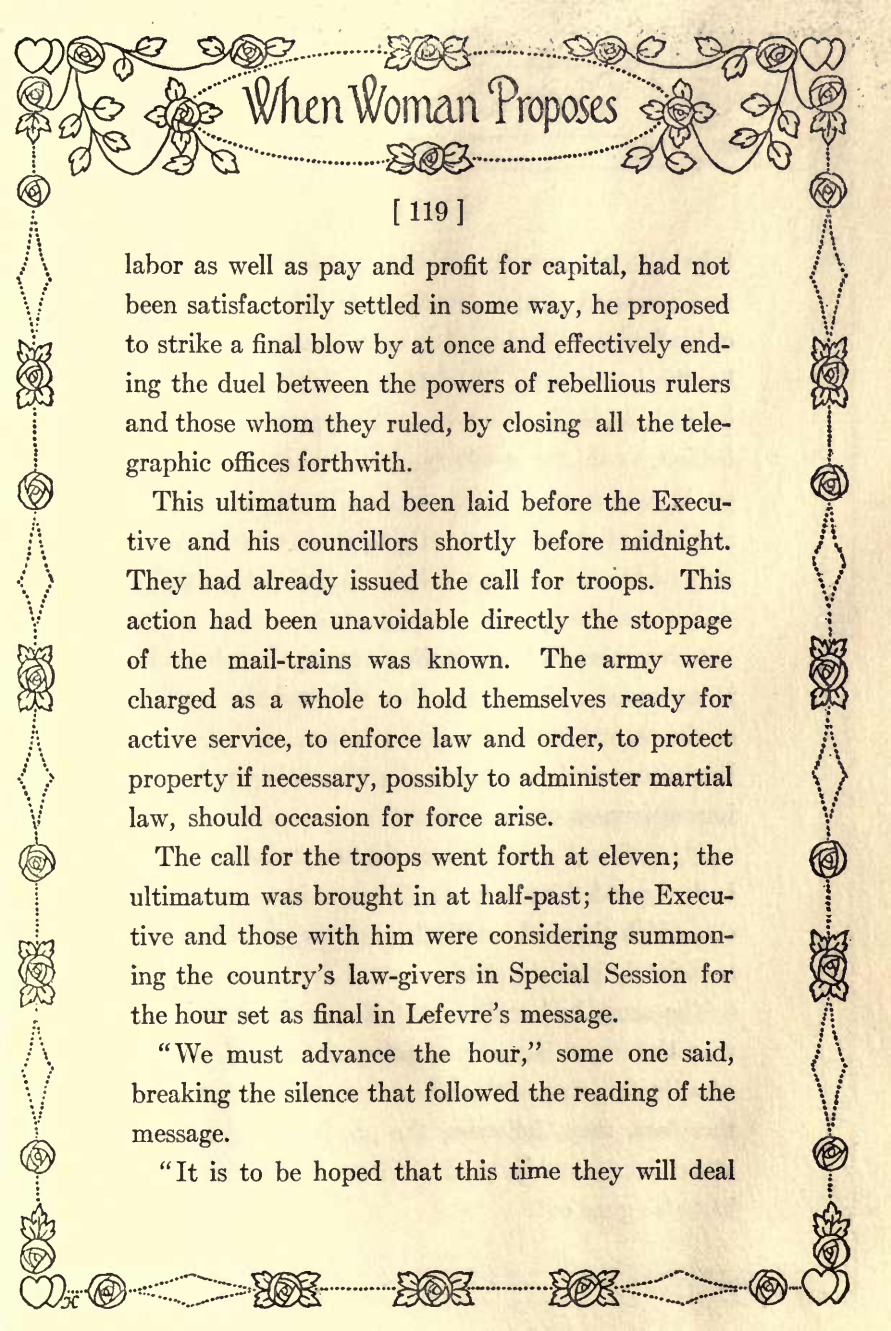
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CHAPTER VIII

NEW FACTOR IN THE CRISIS

THE next morning a whole nation lay locked —
locked out!

Only the telegraph and telephone lines were working; not one other form of business was exempt from the wholesale mandate. Not a train — not a car — not even a wagon moved; the wheels of manufactory, mine machinery, cash-carrier, and printing-press had alike ceased to turn. The entire laboring force of the country had obeyed their leader's call to a man, and in the course of only a few hours the most gigantic strike ever contemplated had become both a fact and a factor in history. Lefevre held the pass-key to the situation through the network of wires which he had given out his intention of leaving in operation for the twelve hours beginning at midnight. Then, when noon should strike upon the following day, if the crucial question of a fair adjustment of pay and profit for



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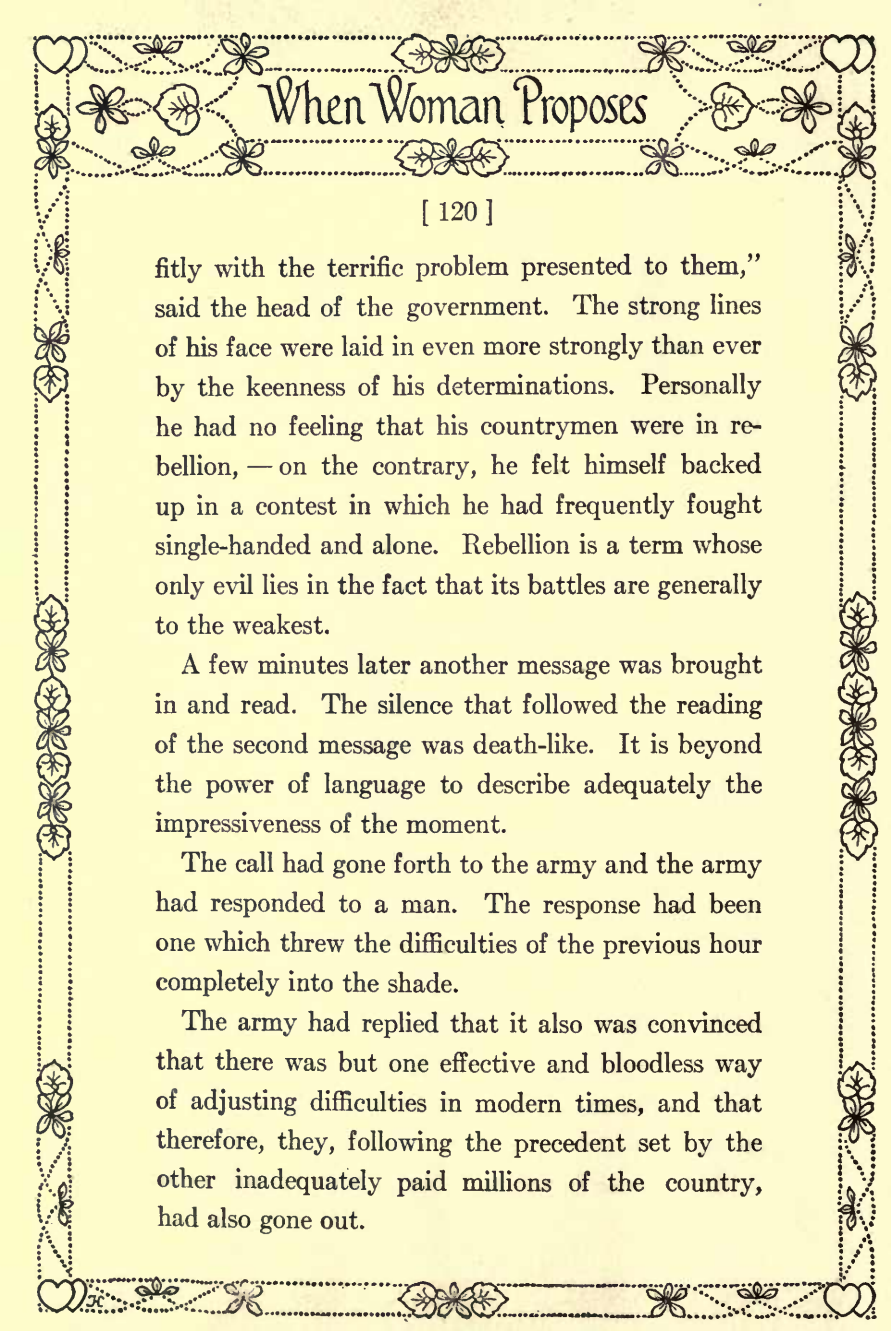
labor as well as pay and profit for capital, had not been satisfactorily settled in some way, he proposed to strike a final blow by at once and effectively ending the duel between the powers of rebellious rulers and those whom they ruled, by closing all the telegraphic offices forthwith.

This ultimatum had been laid before the Executive and his councillors shortly before midnight. They had already issued the call for troops. This action had been unavoidable directly the stoppage of the mail-trains was known. The army were charged as a whole to hold themselves ready for active service, to enforce law and order, to protect property if necessary, possibly to administer martial law, should occasion for force arise.

The call for the troops went forth at eleven; the ultimatum was brought in at half-past; the Executive and those with him were considering summoning the country's law-givers in Special Session for the hour set as final in Lefevre's message.

"We must advance the hour," some one said, breaking the silence that followed the reading of the message.

"It is to be hoped that this time they will deal



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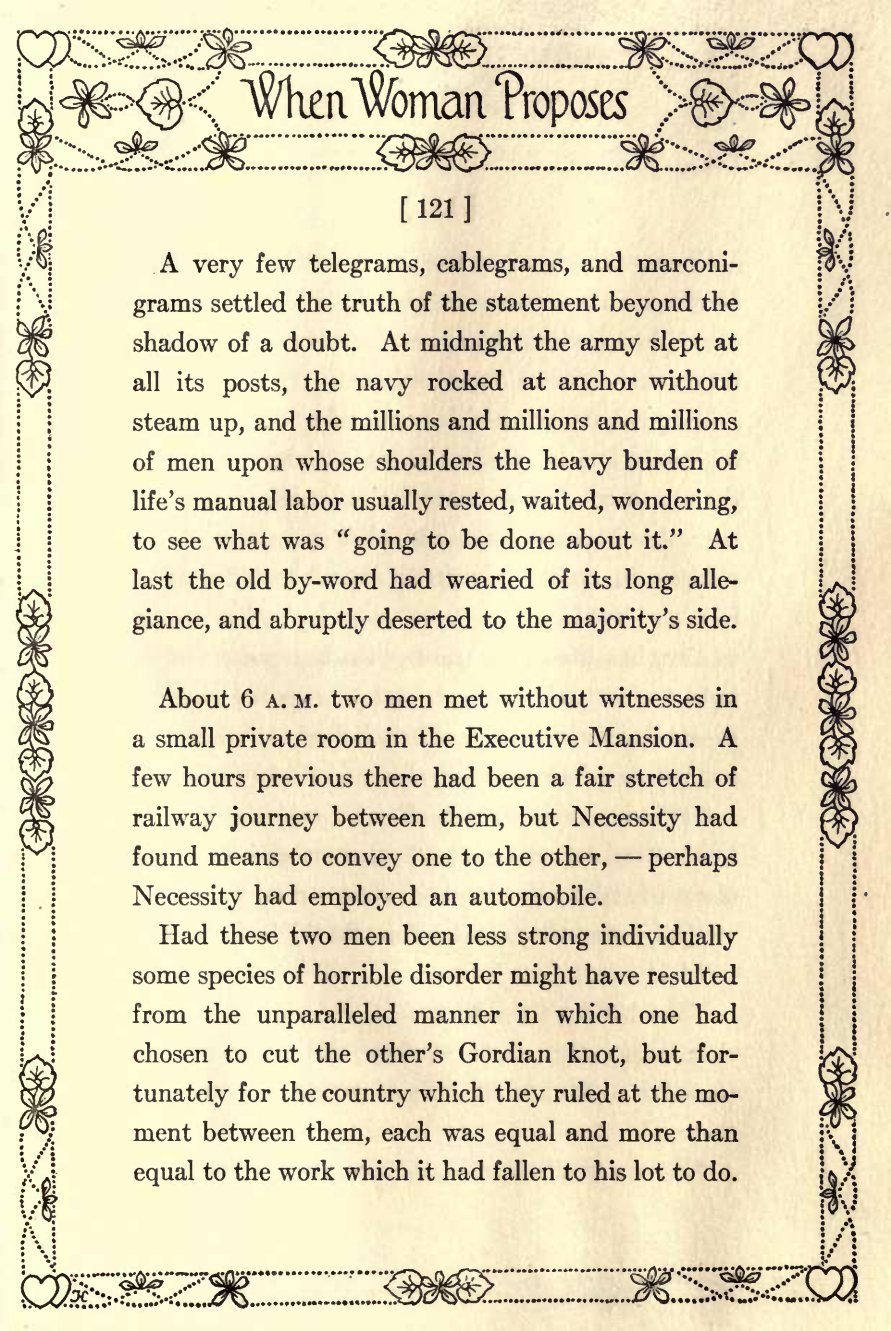
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fitly with the terrific problem presented to them," said the head of the government. The strong lines of his face were laid in even more strongly than ever by the keenness of his determinations. Personally he had no feeling that his countrymen were in rebellion, — on the contrary, he felt himself backed up in a contest in which he had frequently fought single-handed and alone. Rebellion is a term whose only evil lies in the fact that its battles are generally to the weakest.

A few minutes later another message was brought in and read. The silence that followed the reading of the second message was death-like. It is beyond the power of language to describe adequately the impressiveness of the moment.

The call had gone forth to the army and the army had responded to a man. The response had been one which threw the difficulties of the previous hour completely into the shade.

The army had replied that it also was convinced that there was but one effective and bloodless way of adjusting difficulties in modern times, and that therefore, they, following the precedent set by the other inadequately paid millions of the country, had also gone out.



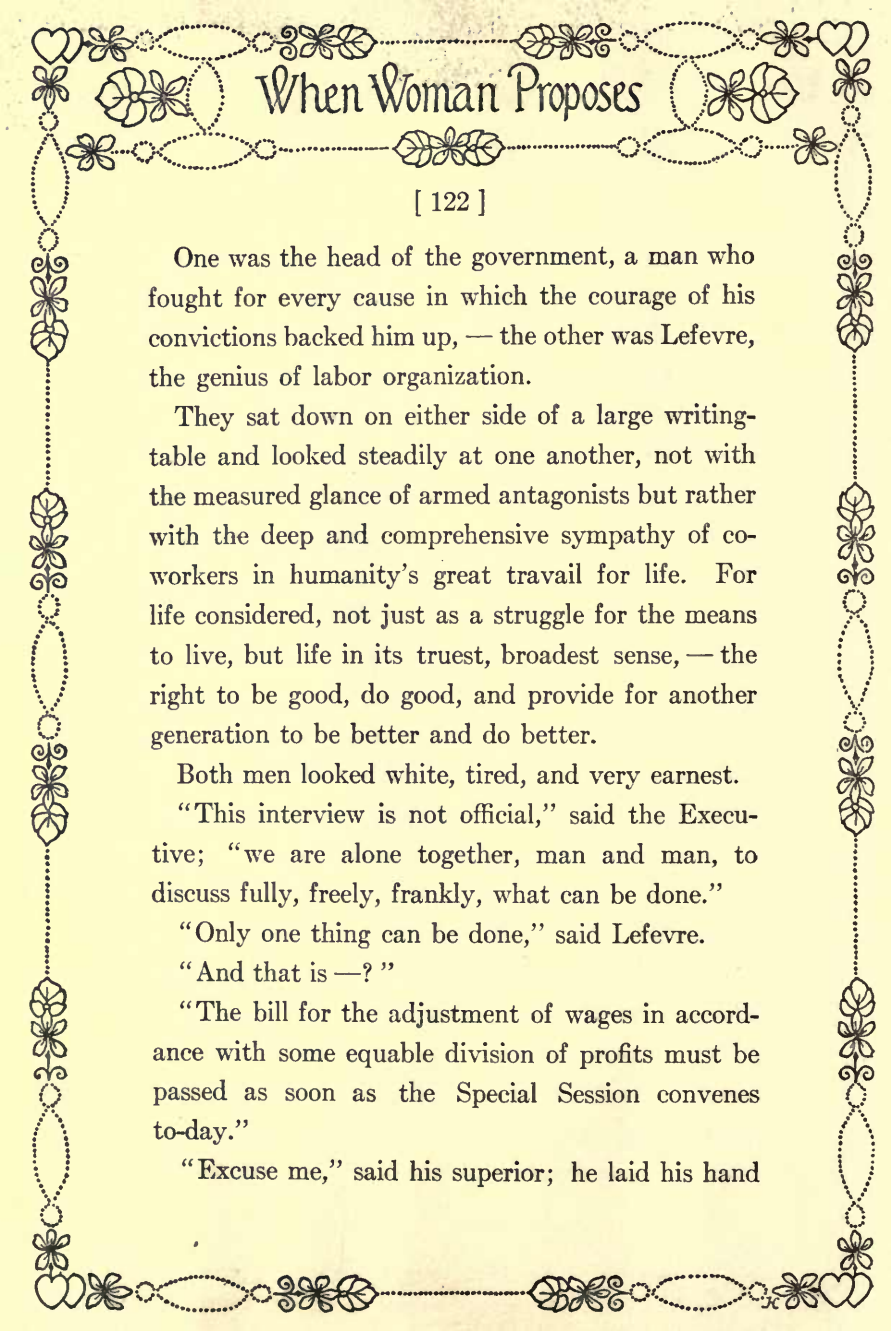
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A very few telegrams, cablegrams, and marconigrams settled the truth of the statement beyond the shadow of a doubt. At midnight the army slept at all its posts, the navy rocked at anchor without steam up, and the millions and millions and millions of men upon whose shoulders the heavy burden of life's manual labor usually rested, waited, wondering, to see what was "going to be done about it." At last the old by-word had wearied of its long allegiance, and abruptly deserted to the majority's side.

About 6 A. M. two men met without witnesses in a small private room in the Executive Mansion. A few hours previous there had been a fair stretch of railway journey between them, but Necessity had found means to convey one to the other, — perhaps Necessity had employed an automobile.

Had these two men been less strong individually some species of horrible disorder might have resulted from the unparalleled manner in which one had chosen to cut the other's Gordian knot, but fortunately for the country which they ruled at the moment between them, each was equal and more than equal to the work which it had fallen to his lot to do.



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One was the head of the government, a man who fought for every cause in which the courage of his convictions backed him up, — the other was Lefevre, the genius of labor organization.

They sat down on either side of a large writing-table and looked steadily at one another, not with the measured glance of armed antagonists but rather with the deep and comprehensive sympathy of co-workers in humanity's great travail for life. For life considered, not just as a struggle for the means to live, but life in its truest, broadest sense, — the right to be good, do good, and provide for another generation to be better and do better.

Both men looked white, tired, and very earnest.

"This interview is not official," said the Executive; "we are alone together, man and man, to discuss fully, freely, frankly, what can be done."

"Only one thing can be done," said Lefevre.

"And that is —?"

"The bill for the adjustment of wages in accordance with some equitable division of profits must be passed as soon as the Special Session convenes to-day."

"Excuse me," said his superior; he laid his hand



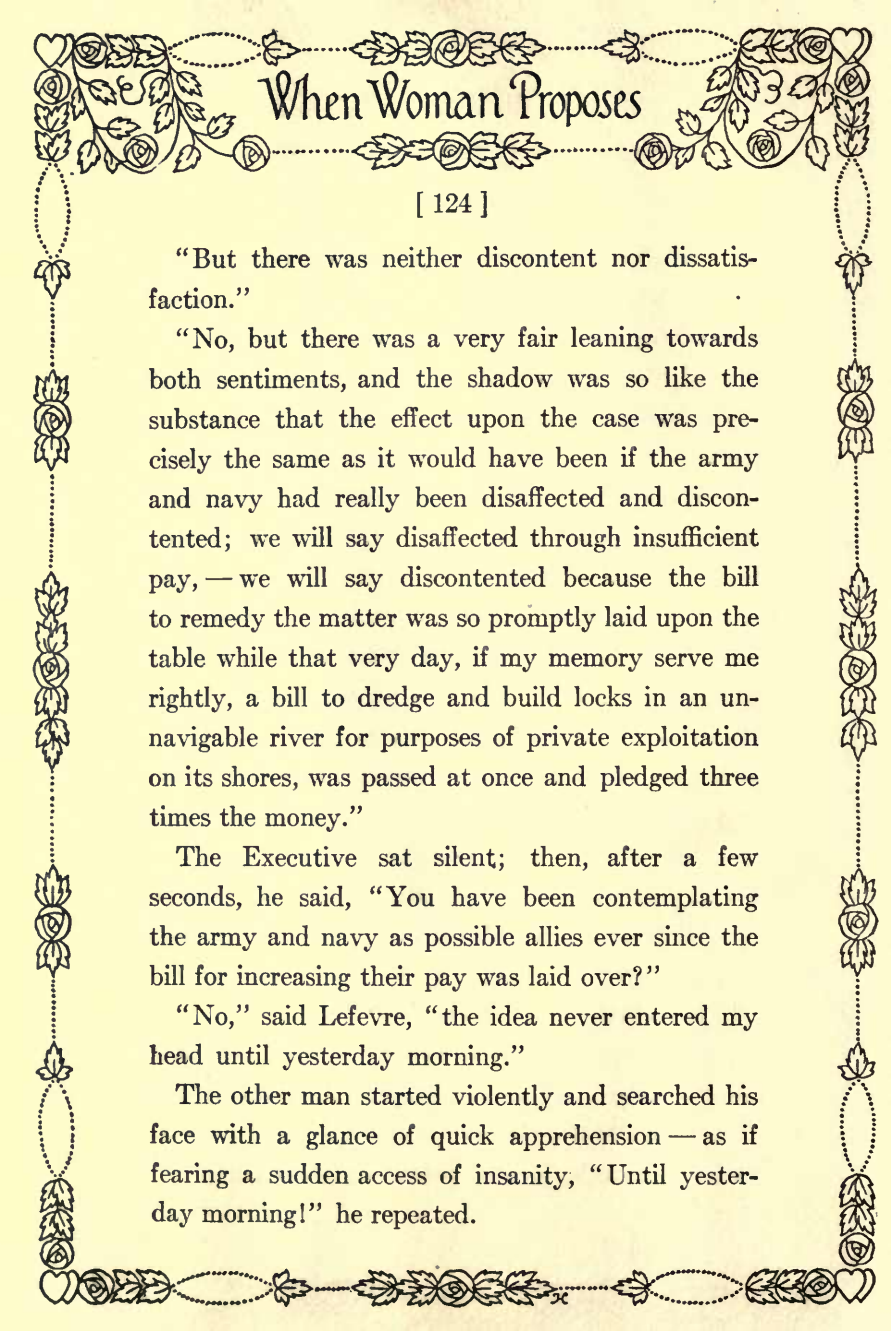
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upon the table and clenched his fist closely, "excuse me, but that bill has become secondary in the present difficulty. When I received your first message yesterday afternoon I gathered no faintest suspicion of its actual purport from its wording. The last blow found me totally unprepared. The whole burden of the crisis is in my eyes a mere nothing beside the action of the sworn servants of the government itself. As I said before, we are alone, you are a man of honor, I am the same. I ask you then to satisfy me first of all by telling me how and by what means you so completely — so suddenly, in so astonishing and overwhelming a manner, gained control of the entire body of our military and naval force. Day before yesterday there were no more brave and loyal citizens in the world than the soldiers and sailors of our country; last night they planted their bayonets and pikes against the very heart of their motherland."

Lefevre smiled.

"The explanation is very simple," he said: "opportunity is ever the instrument of wisdom and the soul of enterprise. I simply showed the army their opportunity — they seized it; that is all."



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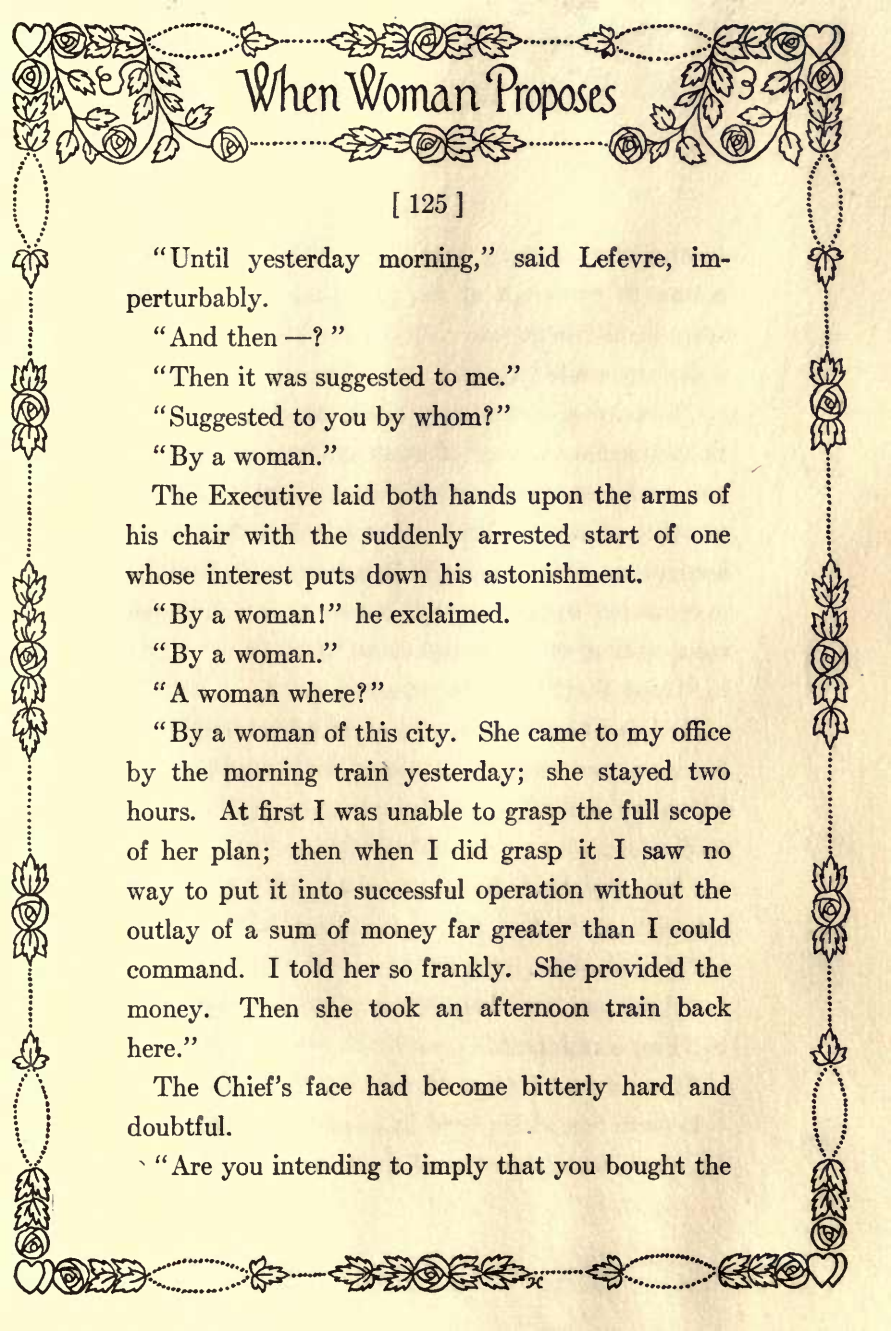
“But there was neither discontent nor dissatisfaction.”

“No, but there was a very fair leaning towards both sentiments, and the shadow was so like the substance that the effect upon the case was precisely the same as it would have been if the army and navy had really been disaffected and discontented; we will say disaffected through insufficient pay, — we will say discontented because the bill to remedy the matter was so promptly laid upon the table while that very day, if my memory serve me rightly, a bill to dredge and build locks in an un-navigable river for purposes of private exploitation on its shores, was passed at once and pledged three times the money.”

The Executive sat silent; then, after a few seconds, he said, “You have been contemplating the army and navy as possible allies ever since the bill for increasing their pay was laid over?”

“No,” said Lefevre, “the idea never entered my head until yesterday morning.”

The other man started violently and searched his face with a glance of quick apprehension — as if fearing a sudden access of insanity, “Until yesterday morning!” he repeated.



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"Until yesterday morning," said Lefevre, imperturbably.

"And then —?"

"Then it was suggested to me."

"Suggested to you by whom?"

"By a woman."

The Executive laid both hands upon the arms of his chair with the suddenly arrested start of one whose interest puts down his astonishment.

"By a woman!" he exclaimed.

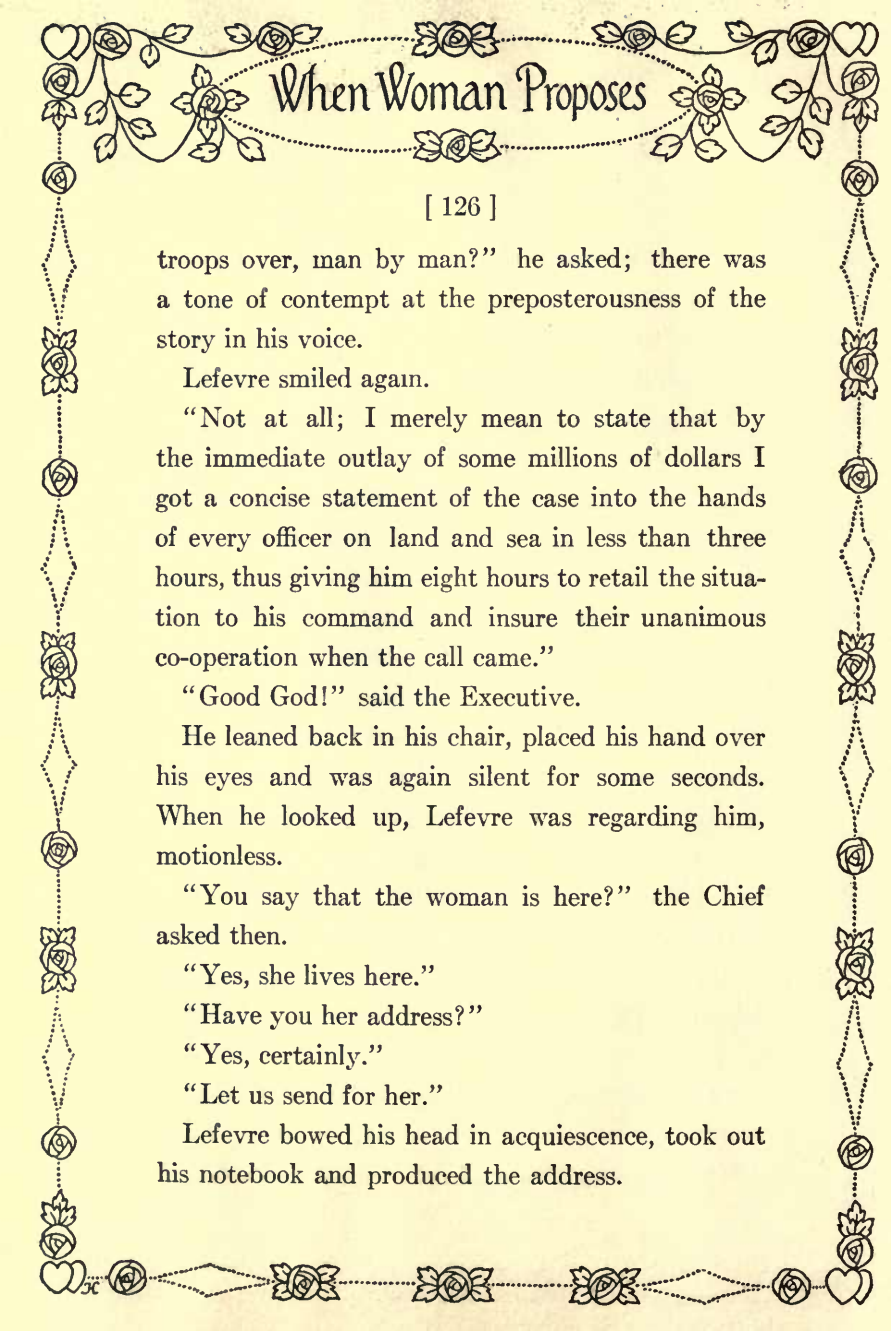
"By a woman."

"A woman where?"

"By a woman of this city. She came to my office by the morning train yesterday; she stayed two hours. At first I was unable to grasp the full scope of her plan; then when I did grasp it I saw no way to put it into successful operation without the outlay of a sum of money far greater than I could command. I told her so frankly. She provided the money. Then she took an afternoon train back here."

The Chief's face had become bitterly hard and doubtful.

"Are you intending to imply that you bought the



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troops over, man by man?" he asked; there was a tone of contempt at the preposterousness of the story in his voice.

Lefevre smiled again.

"Not at all; I merely mean to state that by the immediate outlay of some millions of dollars I got a concise statement of the case into the hands of every officer on land and sea in less than three hours, thus giving him eight hours to retail the situation to his command and insure their unanimous co-operation when the call came."

"Good God!" said the Executive.

He leaned back in his chair, placed his hand over his eyes and was again silent for some seconds. When he looked up, Lefevre was regarding him, motionless.

"You say that the woman is here?" the Chief asked then.

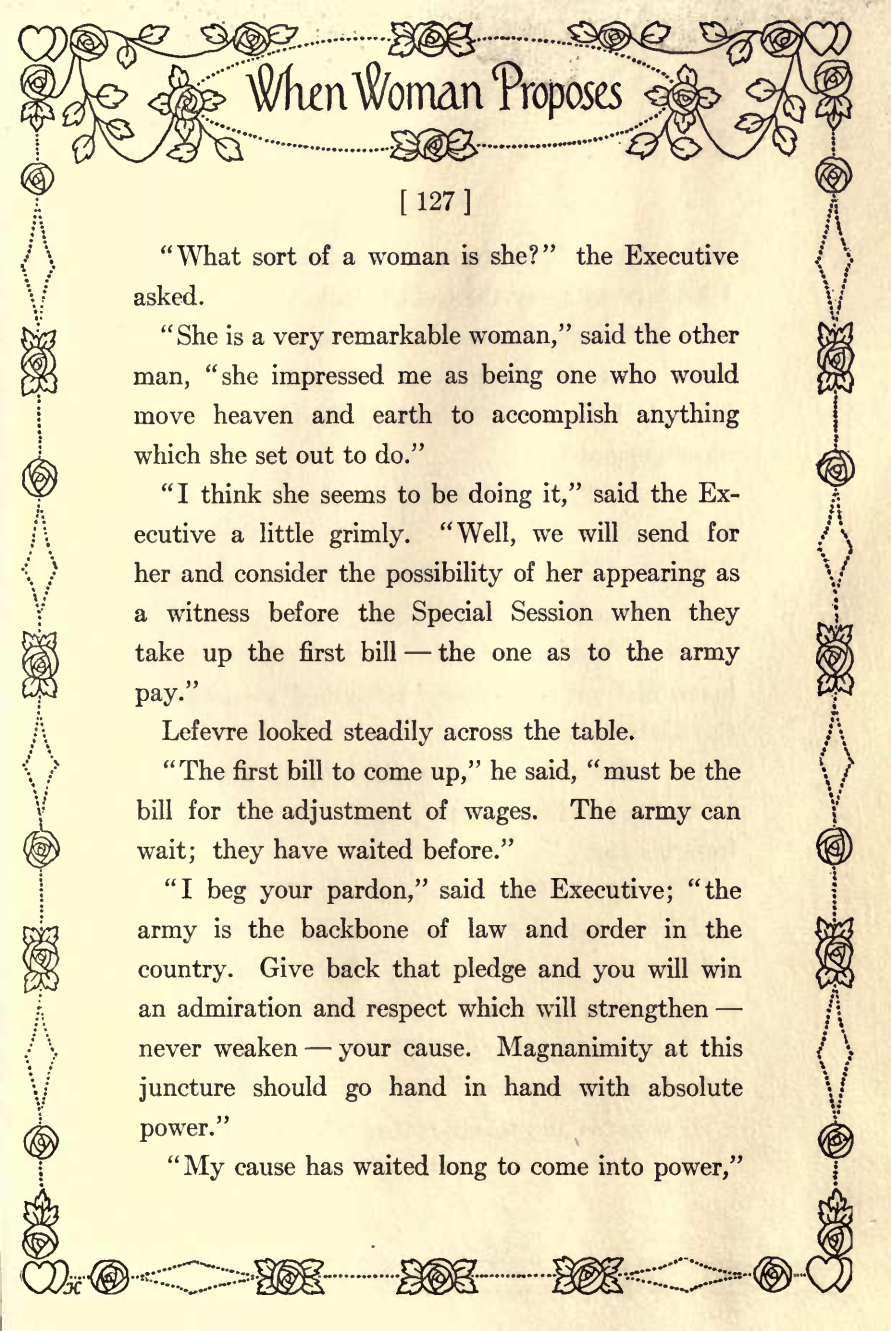
"Yes, she lives here."

"Have you her address?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Let us send for her."

Lefevre bowed his head in acquiescence, took out his notebook and produced the address.



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“What sort of a woman is she?” the Executive asked.

“She is a very remarkable woman,” said the other man, “she impressed me as being one who would move heaven and earth to accomplish anything which she set out to do.”

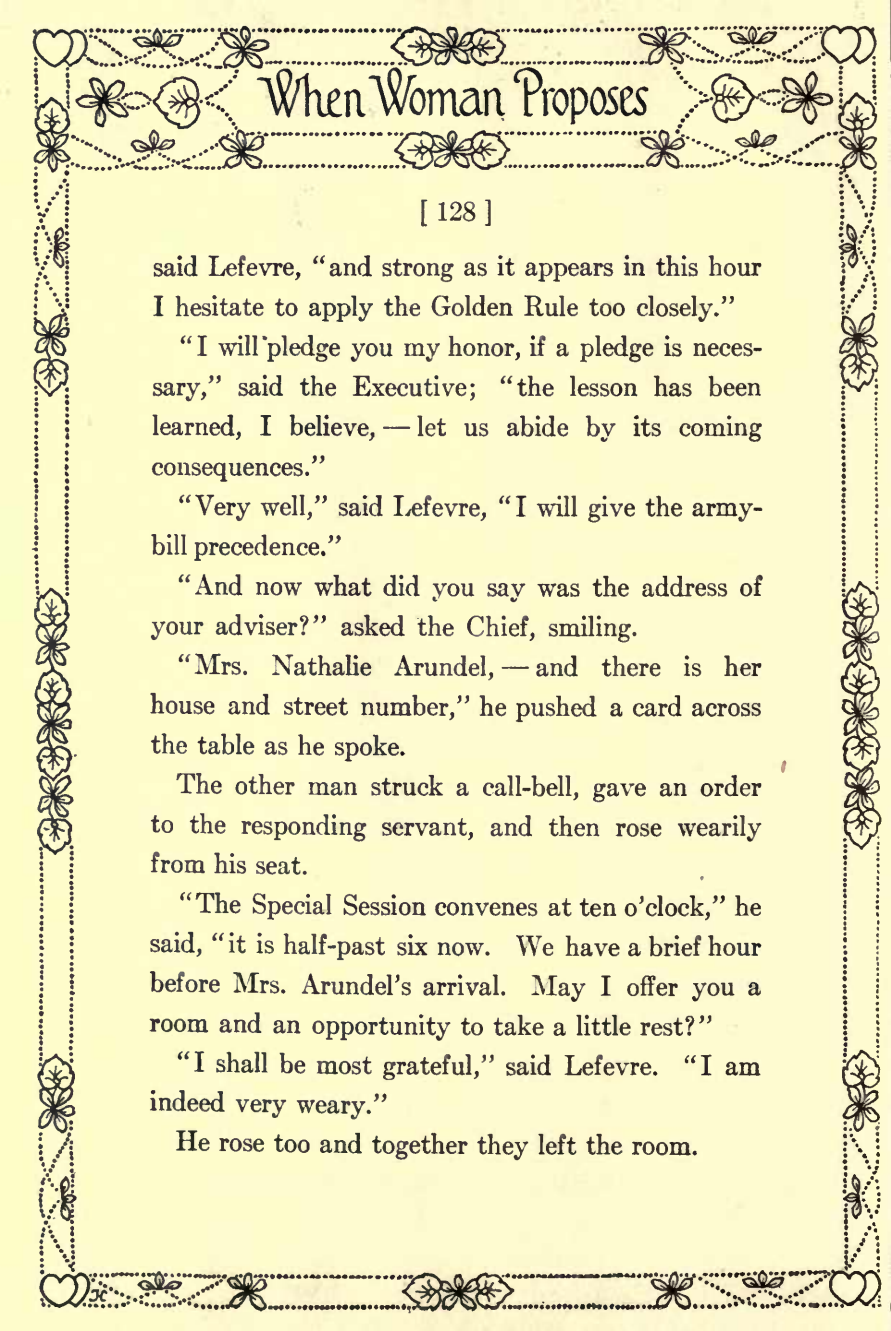
“I think she seems to be doing it,” said the Executive a little grimly. “Well, we will send for her and consider the possibility of her appearing as a witness before the Special Session when they take up the first bill—the one as to the army pay.”

Lefevre looked steadily across the table.

“The first bill to come up,” he said, “must be the bill for the adjustment of wages. The army can wait; they have waited before.”

“I beg your pardon,” said the Executive; “the army is the backbone of law and order in the country. Give back that pledge and you will win an admiration and respect which will strengthen—never weaken—your cause. Magnanimity at this juncture should go hand in hand with absolute power.”

“My cause has waited long to come into power,”



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said Lefevre, "and strong as it appears in this hour I hesitate to apply the Golden Rule too closely."

"I will pledge you my honor, if a pledge is necessary," said the Executive; "the lesson has been learned, I believe, — let us abide by its coming consequences."

"Very well," said Lefevre, "I will give the army-bill precedence."

"And now what did you say was the address of your adviser?" asked the Chief, smiling.

"Mrs. Nathalie Arundel, — and there is her house and street number," he pushed a card across the table as he spoke.

The other man struck a call-bell, gave an order to the responding servant, and then rose wearily from his seat.

"The Special Session convenes at ten o'clock," he said, "it is half-past six now. We have a brief hour before Mrs. Arundel's arrival. May I offer you a room and an opportunity to take a little rest?"

"I shall be most grateful," said Lefevre. "I am indeed very weary."

He rose too and together they left the room.

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CHAPTER IX

ONE SOLDIER REPORTS FOR DUTY

MRS. D'YPRÉS went in herself to wake Nathalie. The latter was sleeping very soundly, as if each resting minute was balancing her account against the troublous ones of the previous day. The older woman envied the younger, her own nerves were of the sort which naturally gain repose with the return of daylight, but she was uneasy over the deathly hush in the streets. To her the contrast with the uproar of the previous evening was ominous indeed.

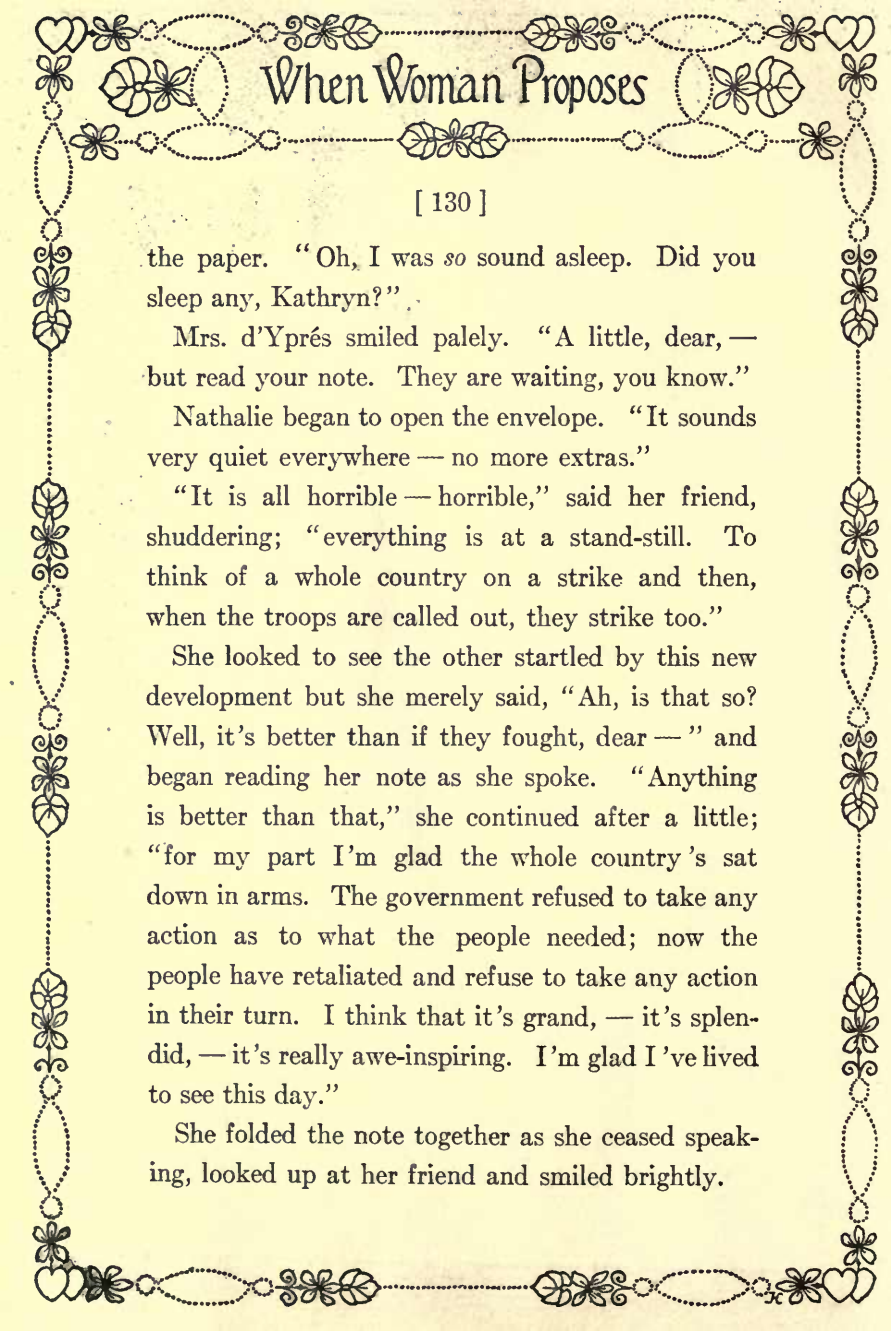
“My dear, there is a message.”

Nathalie opened her eyes at once.

“A message — from whom?”

“From the Government House, and they are waiting.”

“So early,” — she sat up and pushed back her hair with one hand while she held out the other for



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the paper. "Oh, I was *so* sound asleep. Did you sleep any, Kathryn?"

Mrs. d'Yprés smiled palely. "A little, dear, — but read your note. They are waiting, you know."

Nathalie began to open the envelope. "It sounds very quiet everywhere — no more extras."

"It is all horrible — horrible," said her friend, shuddering; "everything is at a stand-still. To think of a whole country on a strike and then, when the troops are called out, they strike too."

She looked to see the other startled by this new development but she merely said, "Ah, is that so? Well, it's better than if they fought, dear —" and began reading her note as she spoke. "Anything is better than that," she continued after a little; "for my part I'm glad the whole country's sat down in arms. The government refused to take any action as to what the people needed; now the people have retaliated and refuse to take any action in their turn. I think that it's grand, — it's splendid, — it's really awe-inspiring. I'm glad I've lived to see this day."

She folded the note together as she ceased speaking, looked up at her friend and smiled brightly.



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"I am summoned to Government House at once," she said, "the head of the government has Mr. Lefevre there to consult as to the Special Session to-day, and they want me to join them as soon as I can."

"Nathalie!" cried Mrs. d'Yprés astounded, — "the — they —" she faltered to a full stop, completely overcome.

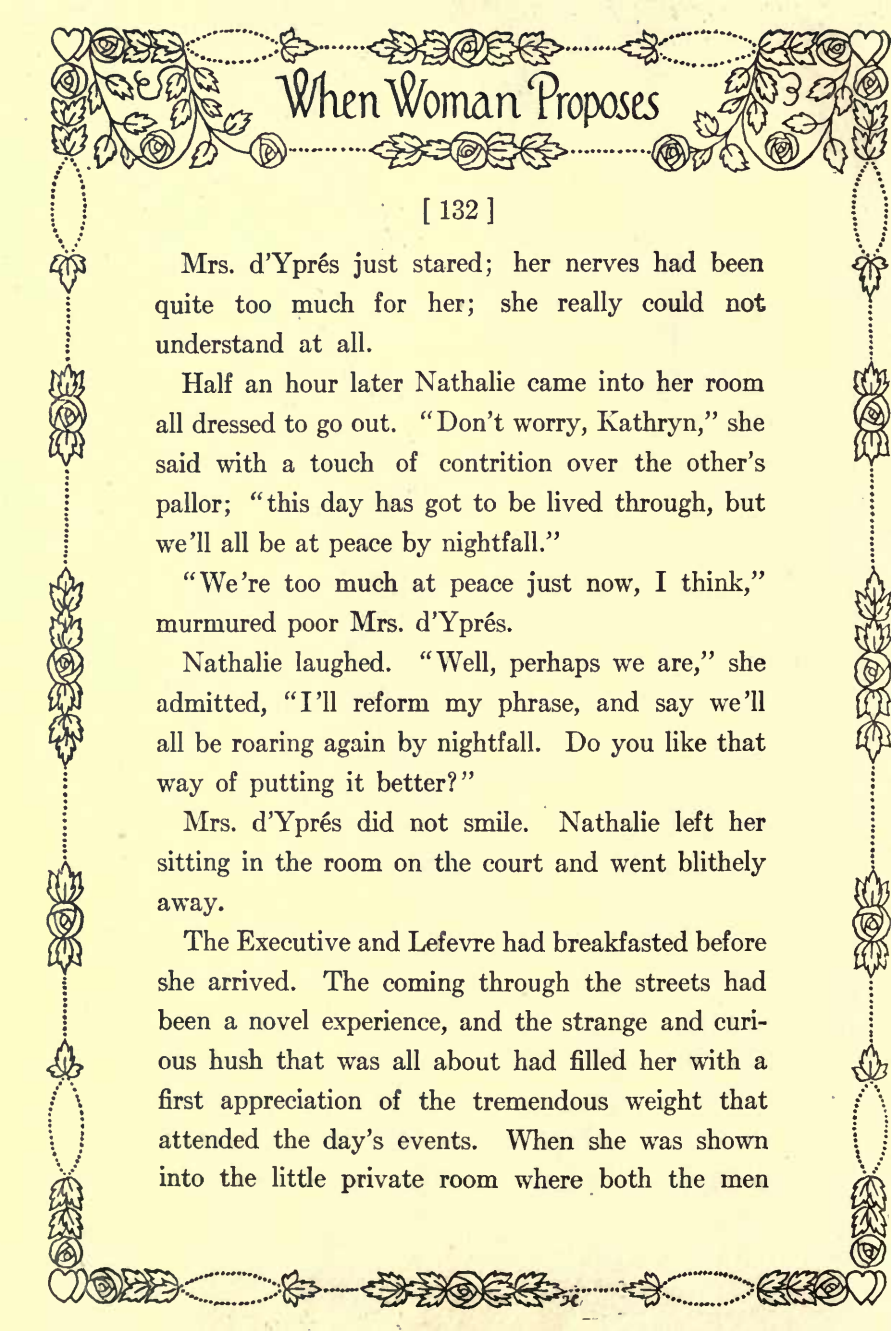
"I wish you'd call Louise, please," said the younger woman; "don't look like that, Kathryn, — nothing is the matter."

Mrs. d'Yprés stumbled in the direction of the bell.

"I want to get dressed as soon as I can. The Special Session convenes at ten o'clock and we want time to talk over things first."

"My dear," said her friend, "have you lost your senses or have I lost mine?"

Nathalie slipped out of bed and reached for her dressing-gown, "I have n't lost my senses," she said. "I am simply revelling in thinking how many I've got. A woman needs them all when she begins to take active steps towards getting a captain's pay increased to where he will consider that he can marry."



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Mrs. d'Yprés just stared; her nerves had been quite too much for her; she really could not understand at all.

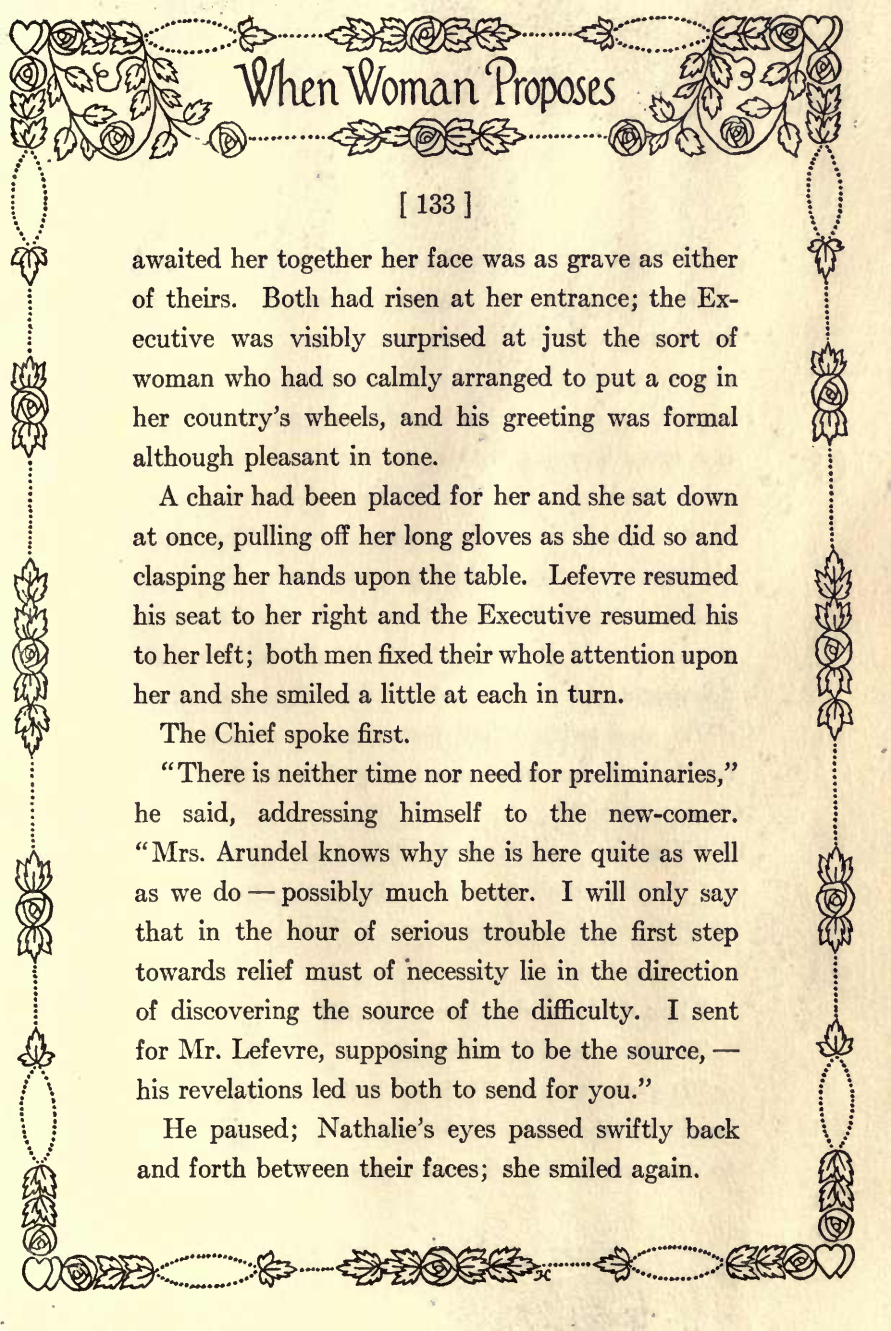
Half an hour later Nathalie came into her room all dressed to go out. "Don't worry, Kathryn," she said with a touch of contrition over the other's pallor; "this day has got to be lived through, but we'll all be at peace by nightfall."

"We're too much at peace just now, I think," murmured poor Mrs. d'Yprés.

Nathalie laughed. "Well, perhaps we are," she admitted, "I'll reform my phrase, and say we'll all be roaring again by nightfall. Do you like that way of putting it better?"

Mrs. d'Yprés did not smile. Nathalie left her sitting in the room on the court and went blithely away.

The Executive and Lefevre had breakfasted before she arrived. The coming through the streets had been a novel experience, and the strange and curious hush that was all about had filled her with a first appreciation of the tremendous weight that attended the day's events. When she was shown into the little private room where both the men



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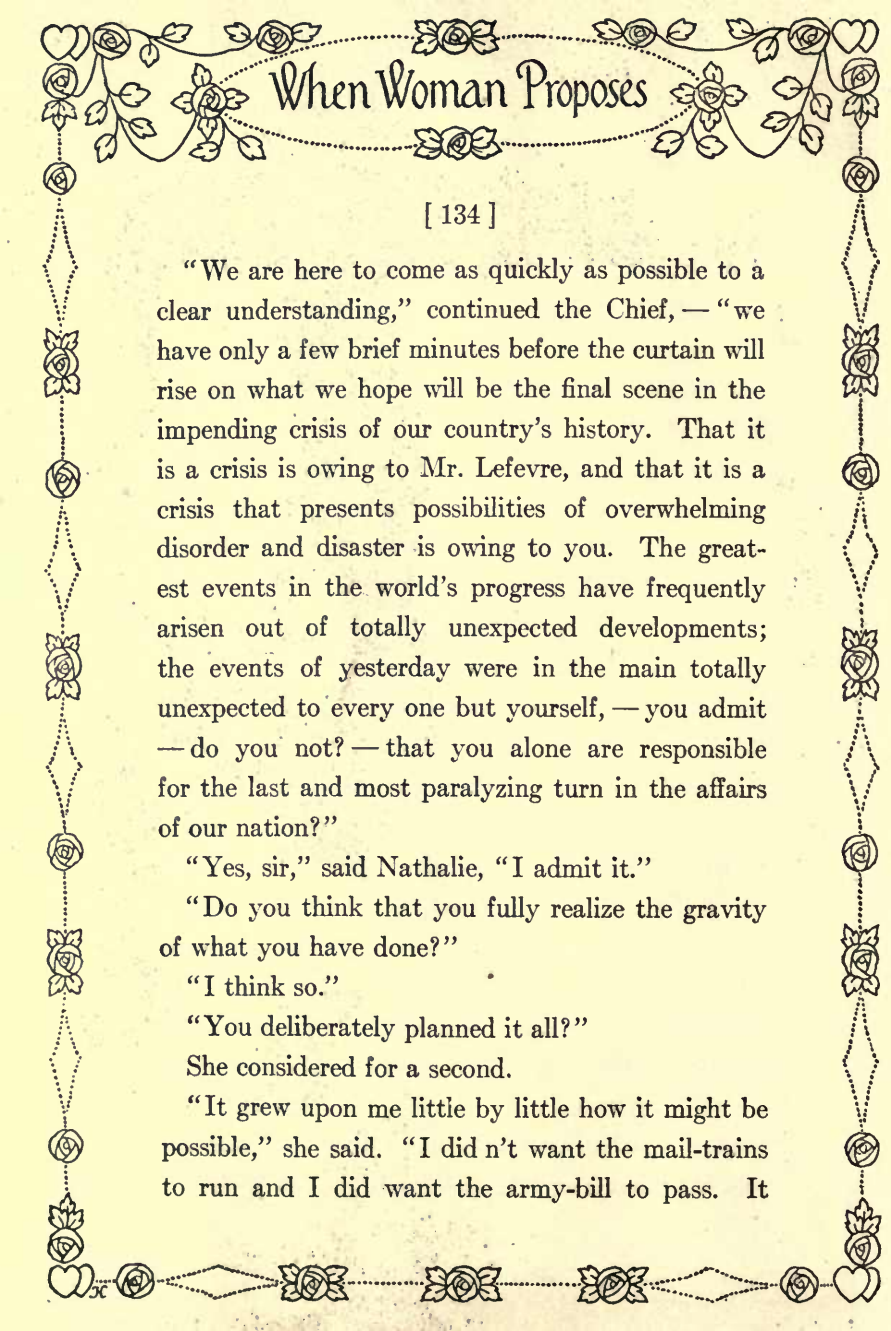
awaited her together her face was as grave as either of theirs. Both had risen at her entrance; the Executive was visibly surprised at just the sort of woman who had so calmly arranged to put a cog in her country's wheels, and his greeting was formal although pleasant in tone.

A chair had been placed for her and she sat down at once, pulling off her long gloves as she did so and clasping her hands upon the table. Lefevre resumed his seat to her right and the Executive resumed his to her left; both men fixed their whole attention upon her and she smiled a little at each in turn.

The Chief spoke first.

"There is neither time nor need for preliminaries," he said, addressing himself to the new-comer. "Mrs. Arundel knows why she is here quite as well as we do — possibly much better. I will only say that in the hour of serious trouble the first step towards relief must of necessity lie in the direction of discovering the source of the difficulty. I sent for Mr. Lefevre, supposing him to be the source, — his revelations led us both to send for you."

He paused; Nathalie's eyes passed swiftly back and forth between their faces; she smiled again.



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“We are here to come as quickly as possible to a clear understanding,” continued the Chief, — “we have only a few brief minutes before the curtain will rise on what we hope will be the final scene in the impending crisis of our country’s history. That it is a crisis is owing to Mr. Lefevre, and that it is a crisis that presents possibilities of overwhelming disorder and disaster is owing to you. The greatest events in the world’s progress have frequently arisen out of totally unexpected developments; the events of yesterday were in the main totally unexpected to every one but yourself, — you admit — do you not? — that you alone are responsible for the last and most paralyzing turn in the affairs of our nation?”

“Yes, sir,” said Nathalie, “I admit it.”

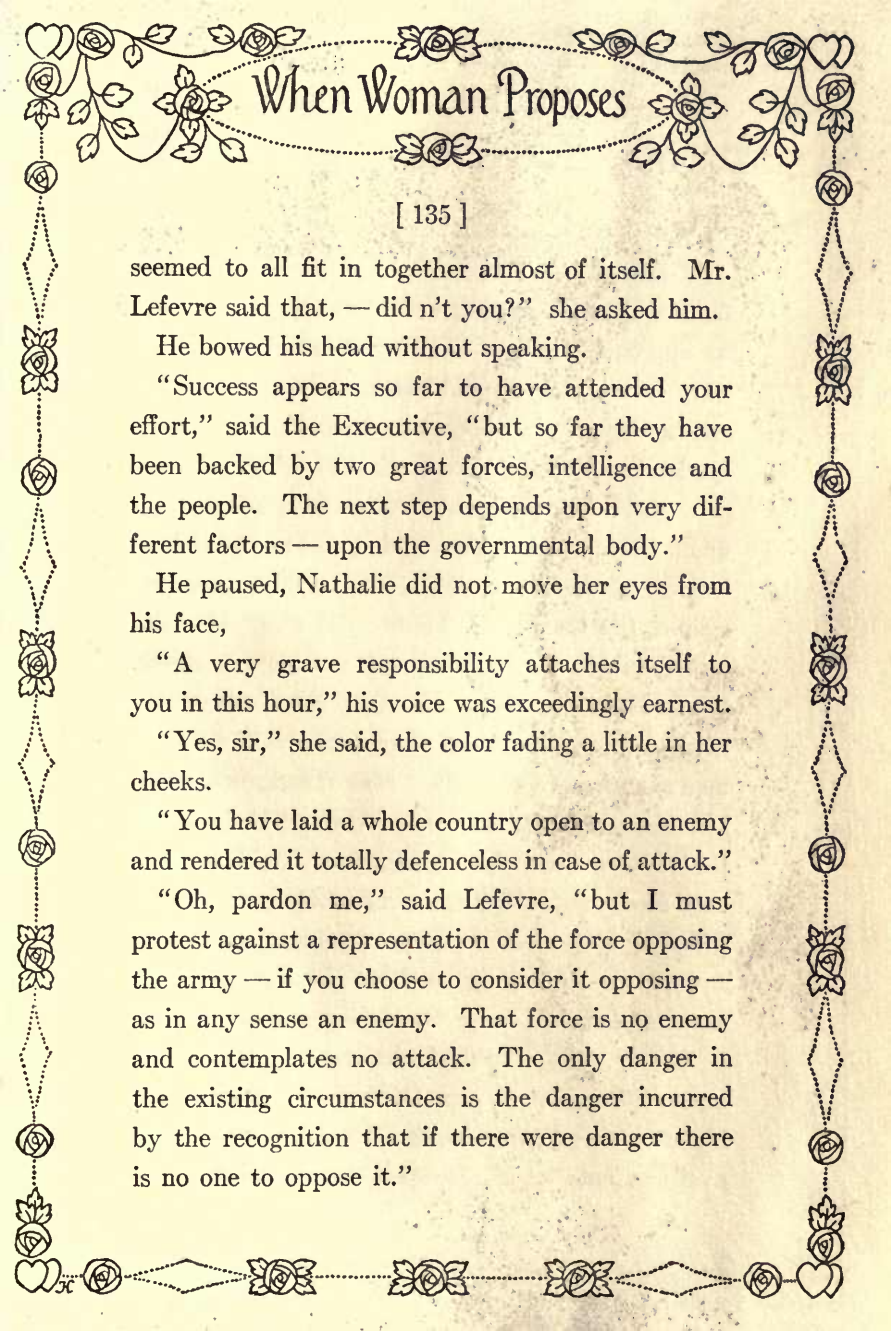
“Do you think that you fully realize the gravity of what you have done?”

“I think so.”

“You deliberately planned it all?”

She considered for a second.

“It grew upon me little by little how it might be possible,” she said. “I did n’t want the mail-trains to run and I did want the army-bill to pass. It



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seemed to all fit in together almost of itself. Mr. Lefevre said that, — did n't you?" she asked him.

He bowed his head without speaking.

"Success appears so far to have attended your effort," said the Executive, "but so far they have been backed by two great forces, intelligence and the people. The next step depends upon very different factors — upon the governmental body."

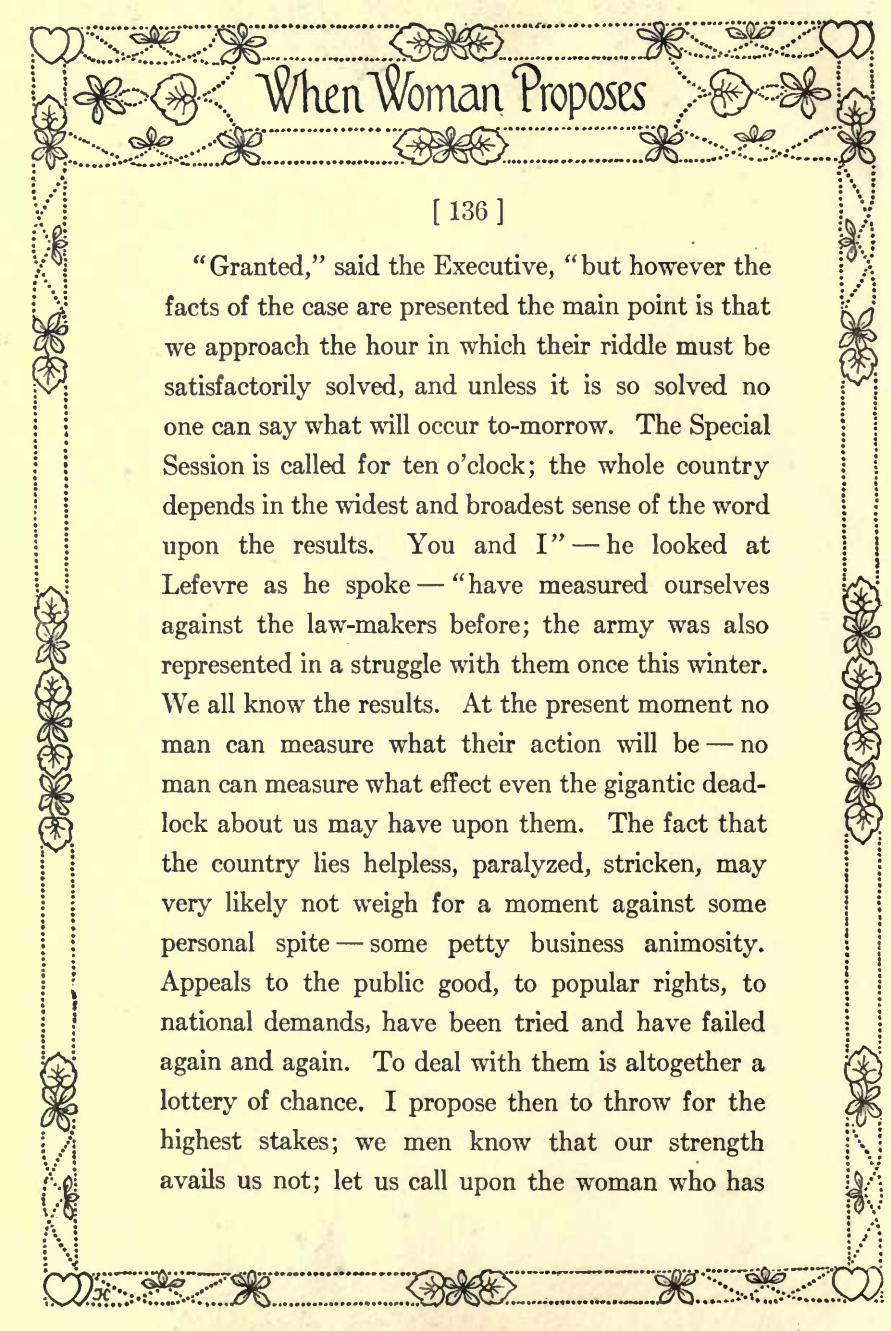
He paused, Nathalie did not move her eyes from his face,

"A very grave responsibility attaches itself to you in this hour," his voice was exceedingly earnest.

"Yes, sir," she said, the color fading a little in her cheeks.

"You have laid a whole country open to an enemy and rendered it totally defenceless in case of attack."

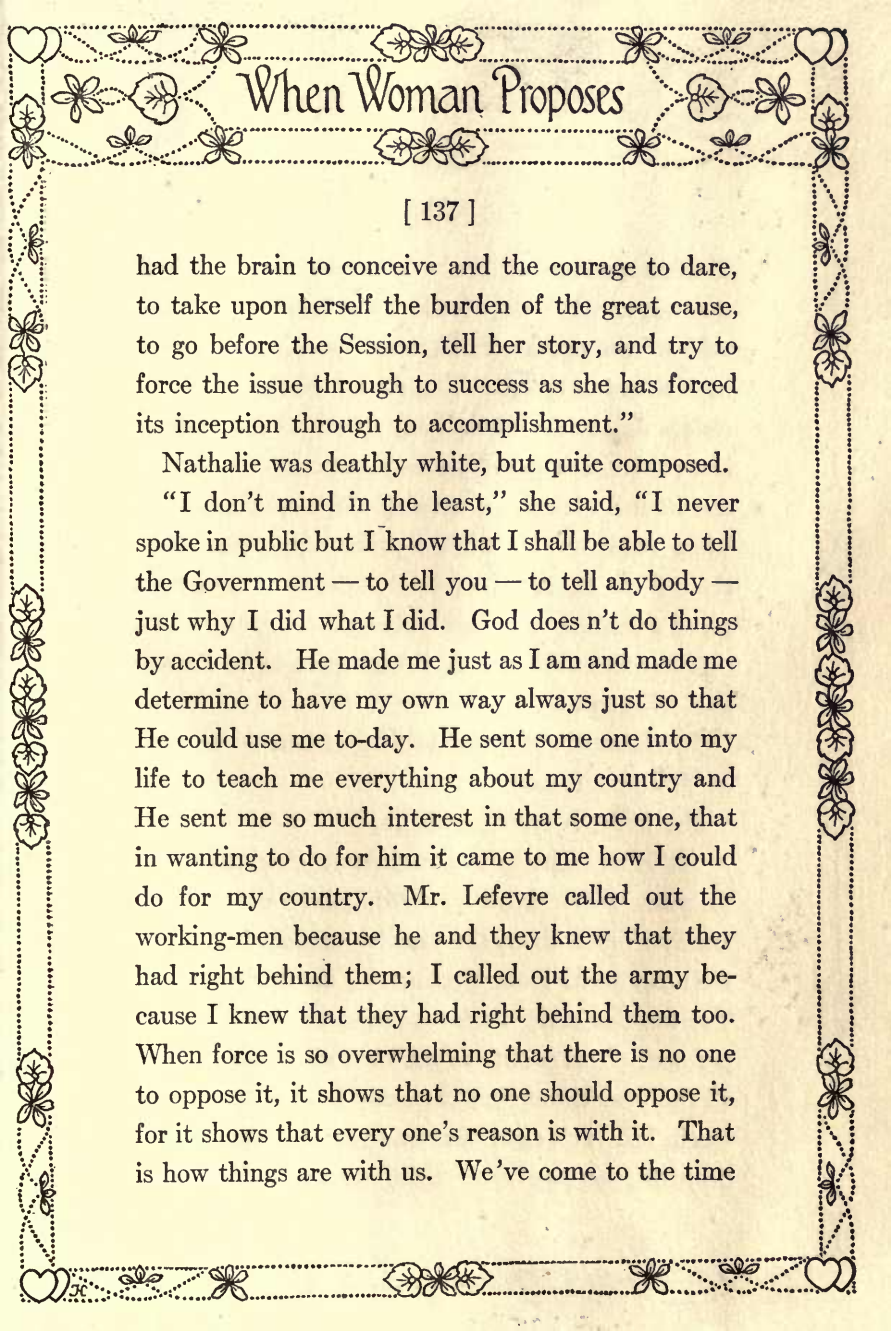
"Oh, pardon me," said Lefevre, "but I must protest against a representation of the force opposing the army — if you choose to consider it opposing — as in any sense an enemy. That force is no enemy and contemplates no attack. The only danger in the existing circumstances is the danger incurred by the recognition that if there were danger there is no one to oppose it."



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“Granted,” said the Executive, “but however the facts of the case are presented the main point is that we approach the hour in which their riddle must be satisfactorily solved, and unless it is so solved no one can say what will occur to-morrow. The Special Session is called for ten o’clock; the whole country depends in the widest and broadest sense of the word upon the results. You and I” — he looked at Lefevre as he spoke — “have measured ourselves against the law-makers before; the army was also represented in a struggle with them once this winter. We all know the results. At the present moment no man can measure what their action will be — no man can measure what effect even the gigantic deadlock about us may have upon them. The fact that the country lies helpless, paralyzed, stricken, may very likely not weigh for a moment against some personal spite — some petty business animosity. Appeals to the public good, to popular rights, to national demands, have been tried and have failed again and again. To deal with them is altogether a lottery of chance. I propose then to throw for the highest stakes; we men know that our strength avails us not; let us call upon the woman who has



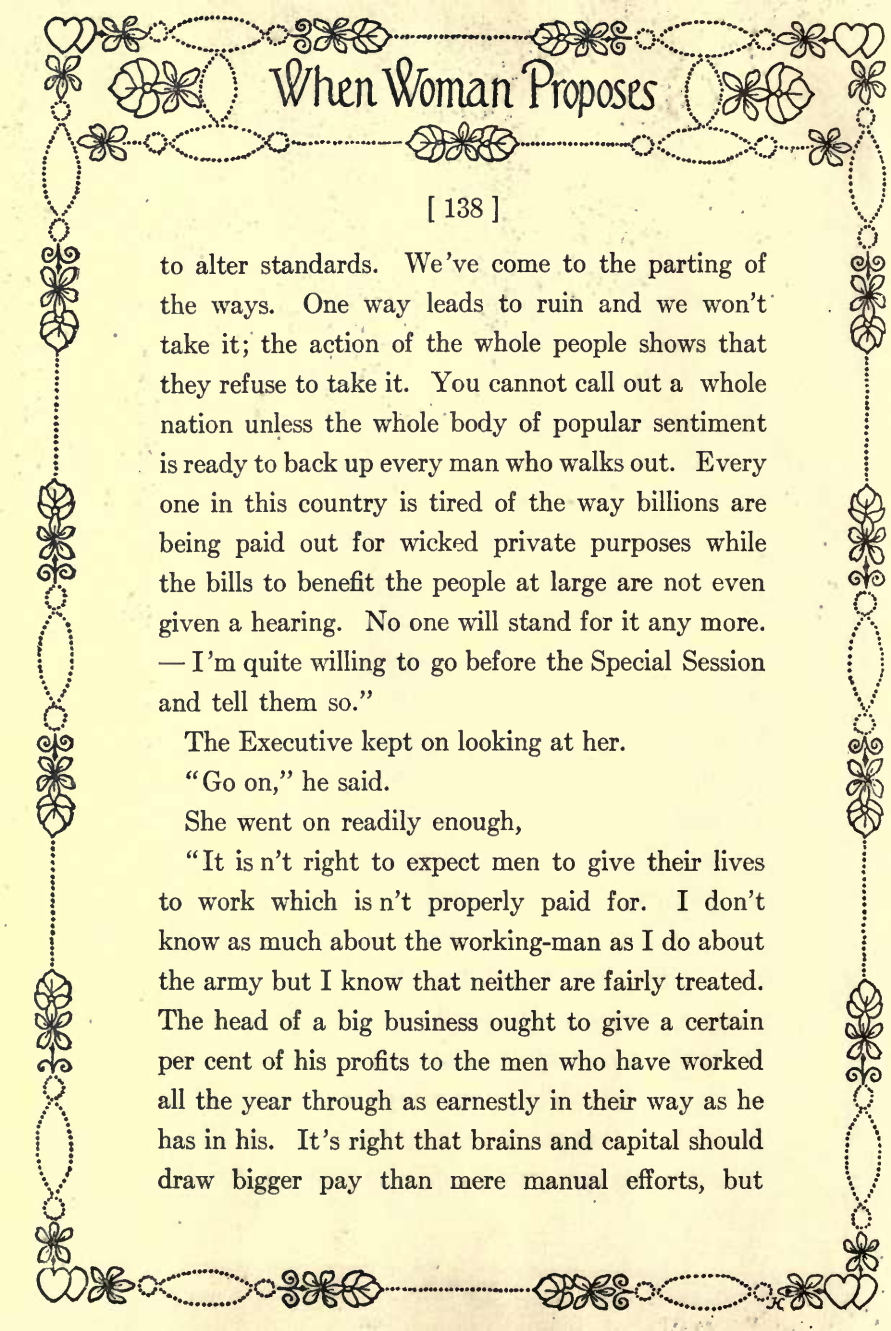
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had the brain to conceive and the courage to dare, to take upon herself the burden of the great cause, to go before the Session, tell her story, and try to force the issue through to success as she has forced its inception through to accomplishment."

Nathalie was deathly white, but quite composed.

"I don't mind in the least," she said, "I never spoke in public but I know that I shall be able to tell the Government — to tell you — to tell anybody — just why I did what I did. God does n't do things by accident. He made me just as I am and made me determine to have my own way always just so that He could use me to-day. He sent some one into my life to teach me everything about my country and He sent me so much interest in that some one, that in wanting to do for him it came to me how I could do for my country. Mr. Lefevre called out the working-men because he and they knew that they had right behind them; I called out the army because I knew that they had right behind them too. When force is so overwhelming that there is no one to oppose it, it shows that no one should oppose it, for it shows that every one's reason is with it. That is how things are with us. We've come to the time



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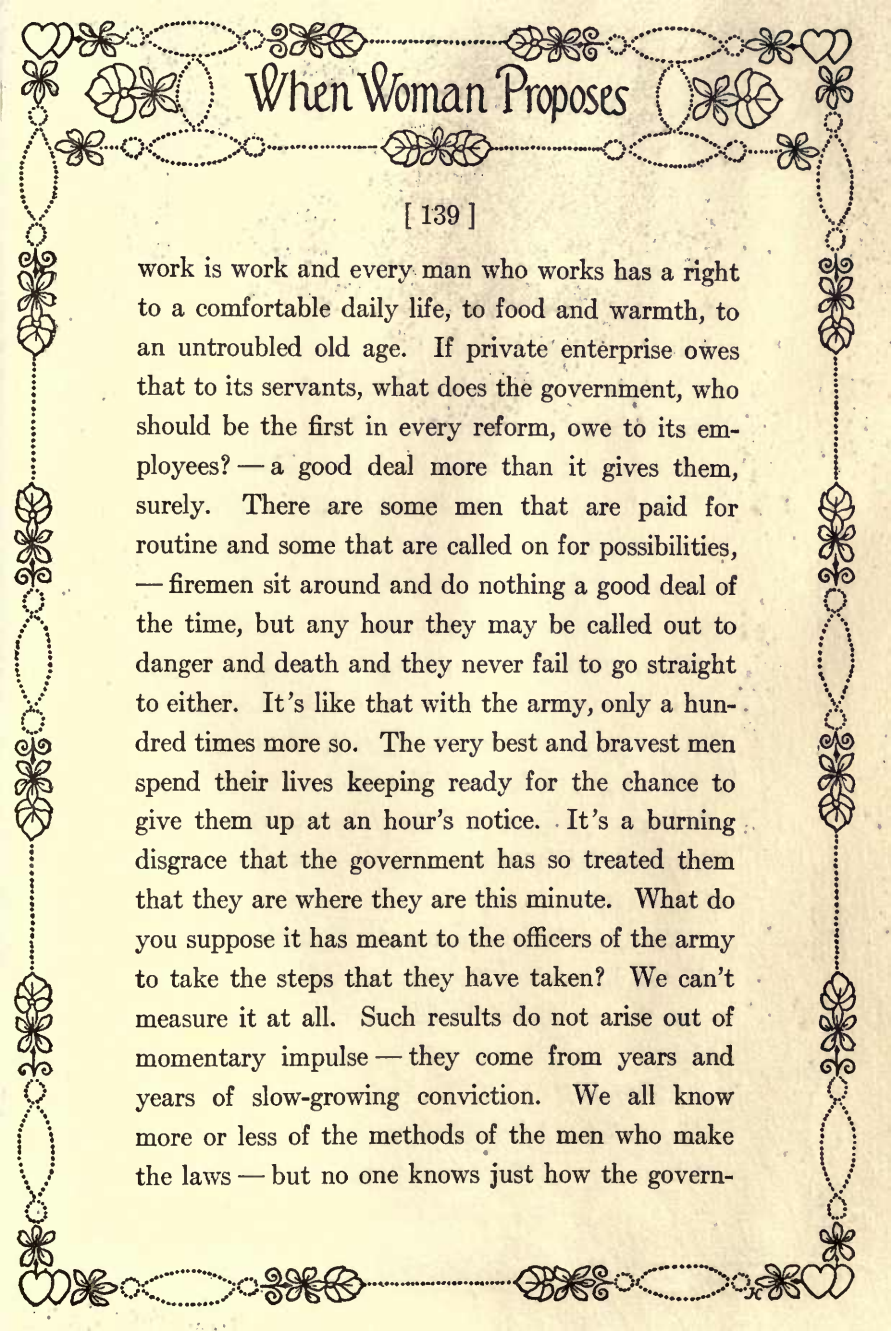
to alter standards. We've come to the parting of the ways. One way leads to ruin and we won't take it; the action of the whole people shows that they refuse to take it. You cannot call out a whole nation unless the whole body of popular sentiment is ready to back up every man who walks out. Every one in this country is tired of the way billions are being paid out for wicked private purposes while the bills to benefit the people at large are not even given a hearing. No one will stand for it any more. — I'm quite willing to go before the Special Session and tell them so."

The Executive kept on looking at her.

"Go on," he said.

She went on readily enough,

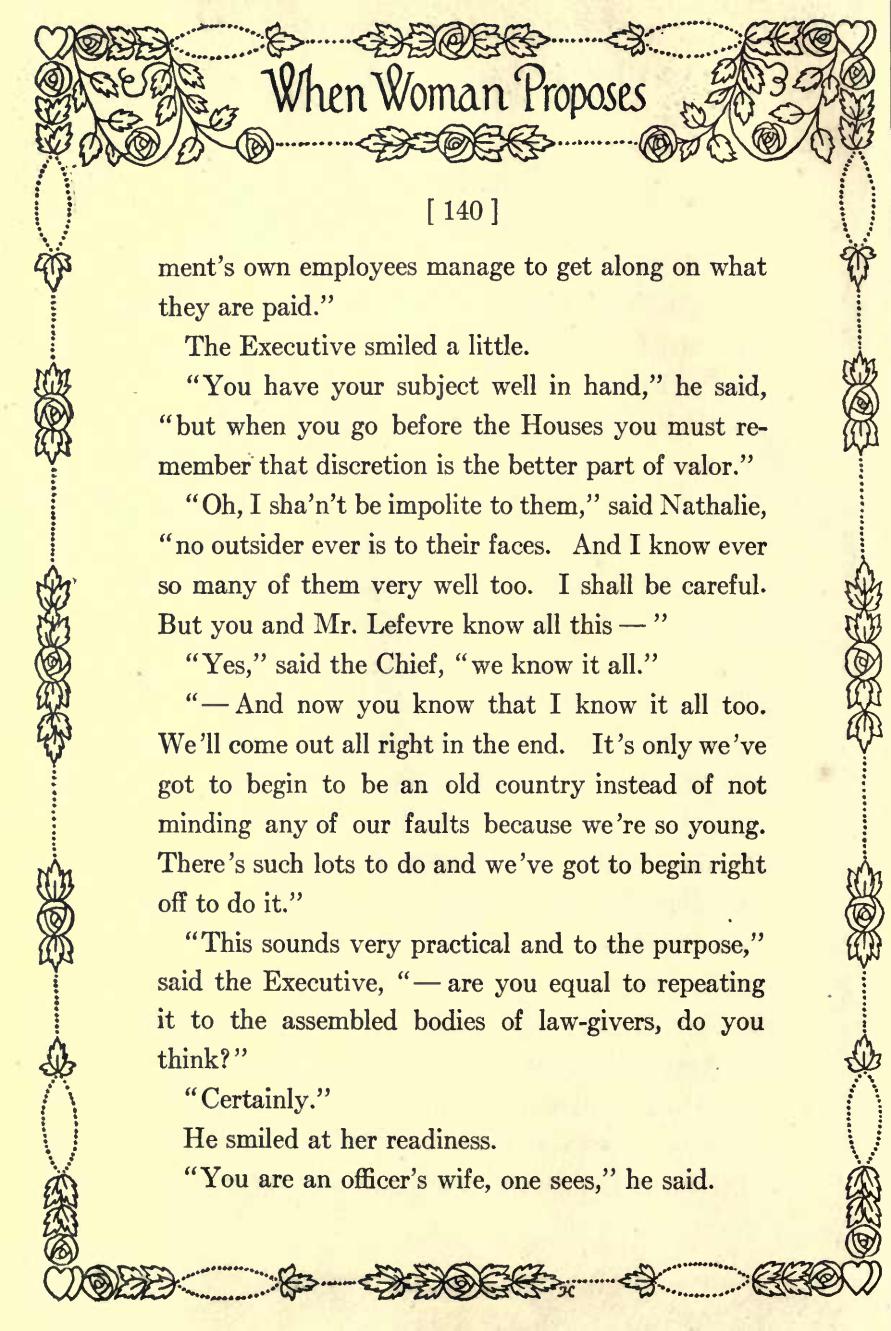
"It is n't right to expect men to give their lives to work which is n't properly paid for. I don't know as much about the working-man as I do about the army but I know that neither are fairly treated. The head of a big business ought to give a certain per cent of his profits to the men who have worked all the year through as earnestly in their way as he has in his. It's right that brains and capital should draw bigger pay than mere manual efforts, but



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work is work and every man who works has a right to a comfortable daily life, to food and warmth, to an untroubled old age. If private enterprise owes that to its servants, what does the government, who should be the first in every reform, owe to its employees? — a good deal more than it gives them, surely. There are some men that are paid for routine and some that are called on for possibilities, — firemen sit around and do nothing a good deal of the time, but any hour they may be called out to danger and death and they never fail to go straight to either. It's like that with the army, only a hundred times more so. The very best and bravest men spend their lives keeping ready for the chance to give them up at an hour's notice. It's a burning disgrace that the government has so treated them that they are where they are this minute. What do you suppose it has meant to the officers of the army to take the steps that they have taken? We can't measure it at all. Such results do not arise out of momentary impulse — they come from years and years of slow-growing conviction. We all know more or less of the methods of the men who make the laws — but no one knows just how the govern-



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ment's own employees manage to get along on what they are paid."

The Executive smiled a little.

"You have your subject well in hand," he said, "but when you go before the Houses you must remember that discretion is the better part of valor."

"Oh, I sha'n't be impolite to them," said Nathalie, "no outsider ever is to their faces. And I know ever so many of them very well too. I shall be careful. But you and Mr. Lefevre know all this —"

"Yes," said the Chief, "we know it all."

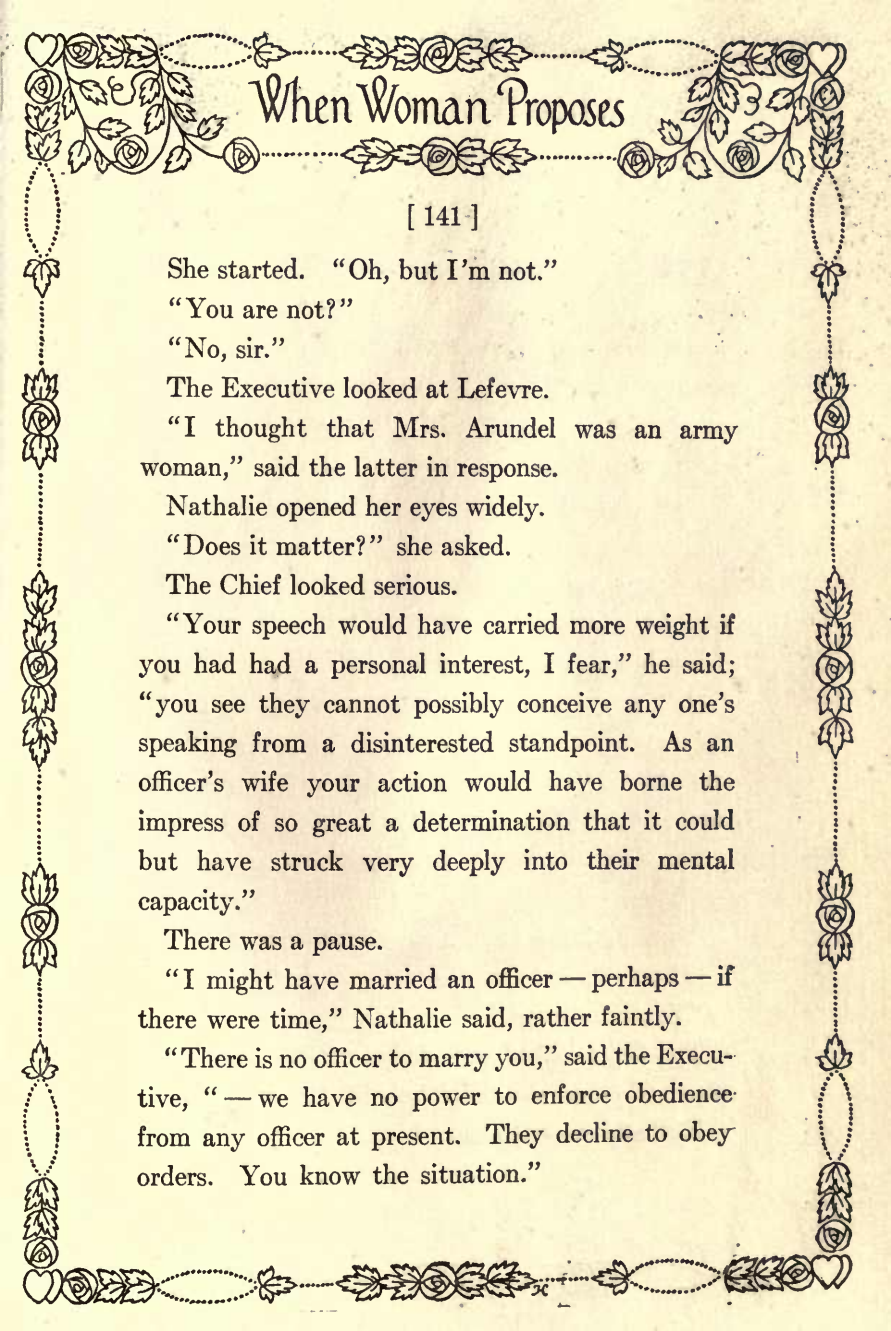
"— And now you know that I know it all too. We'll come out all right in the end. It's only we've got to begin to be an old country instead of not minding any of our faults because we're so young. There's such lots to do and we've got to begin right off to do it."

"This sounds very practical and to the purpose," said the Executive, "— are you equal to repeating it to the assembled bodies of law-givers, do you think?"

"Certainly."

He smiled at her readiness.

"You are an officer's wife, one sees," he said.



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She started. "Oh, but I'm not."

"You are not?"

"No, sir."

The Executive looked at Lefevre.

"I thought that Mrs. Arundel was an army woman," said the latter in response.

Nathalie opened her eyes widely.

"Does it matter?" she asked.

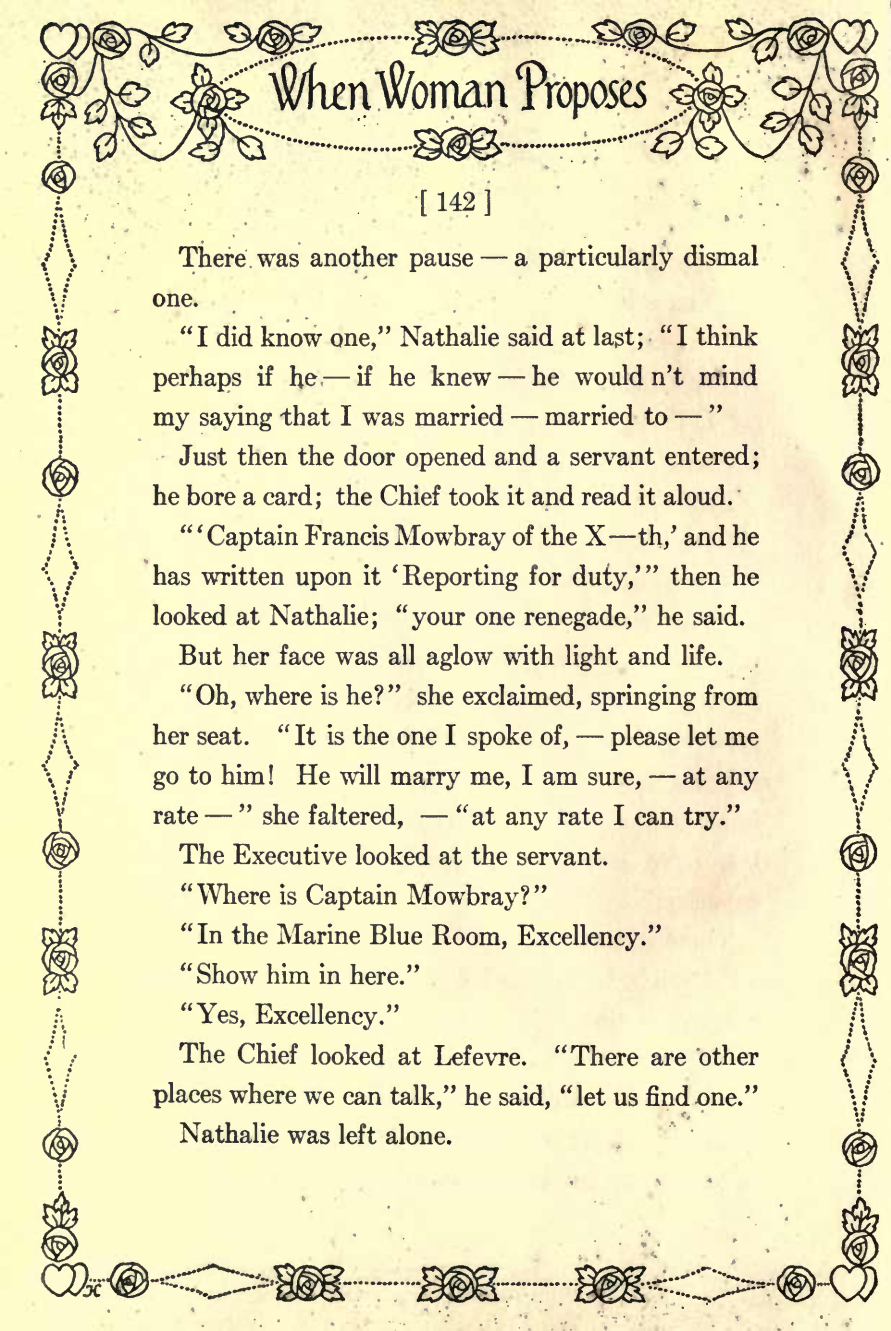
The Chief looked serious.

"Your speech would have carried more weight if you had had a personal interest, I fear," he said; "you see they cannot possibly conceive any one's speaking from a disinterested standpoint. As an officer's wife your action would have borne the impress of so great a determination that it could but have struck very deeply into their mental capacity."

There was a pause.

"I might have married an officer — perhaps — if there were time," Nathalie said, rather faintly.

"There is no officer to marry you," said the Executive, "— we have no power to enforce obedience from any officer at present. They decline to obey orders. You know the situation."



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There was another pause — a particularly dismal one.

“I did know one,” Nathalie said at last; “I think perhaps if he — if he knew — he would n’t mind my saying that I was married — married to —”

Just then the door opened and a servant entered; he bore a card; the Chief took it and read it aloud.

“‘Captain Francis Mowbray of the X—th,’ and he has written upon it ‘Reporting for duty,’” then he looked at Nathalie; “your one renegade,” he said.

But her face was all aglow with light and life.

“Oh, where is he?” she exclaimed, springing from her seat. “It is the one I spoke of, — please let me go to him! He will marry me, I am sure, — at any rate —” she faltered, — “at any rate I can try.”

The Executive looked at the servant.

“Where is Captain Mowbray?”

“In the Marine Blue Room, Excellency.”

“Show him in here.”

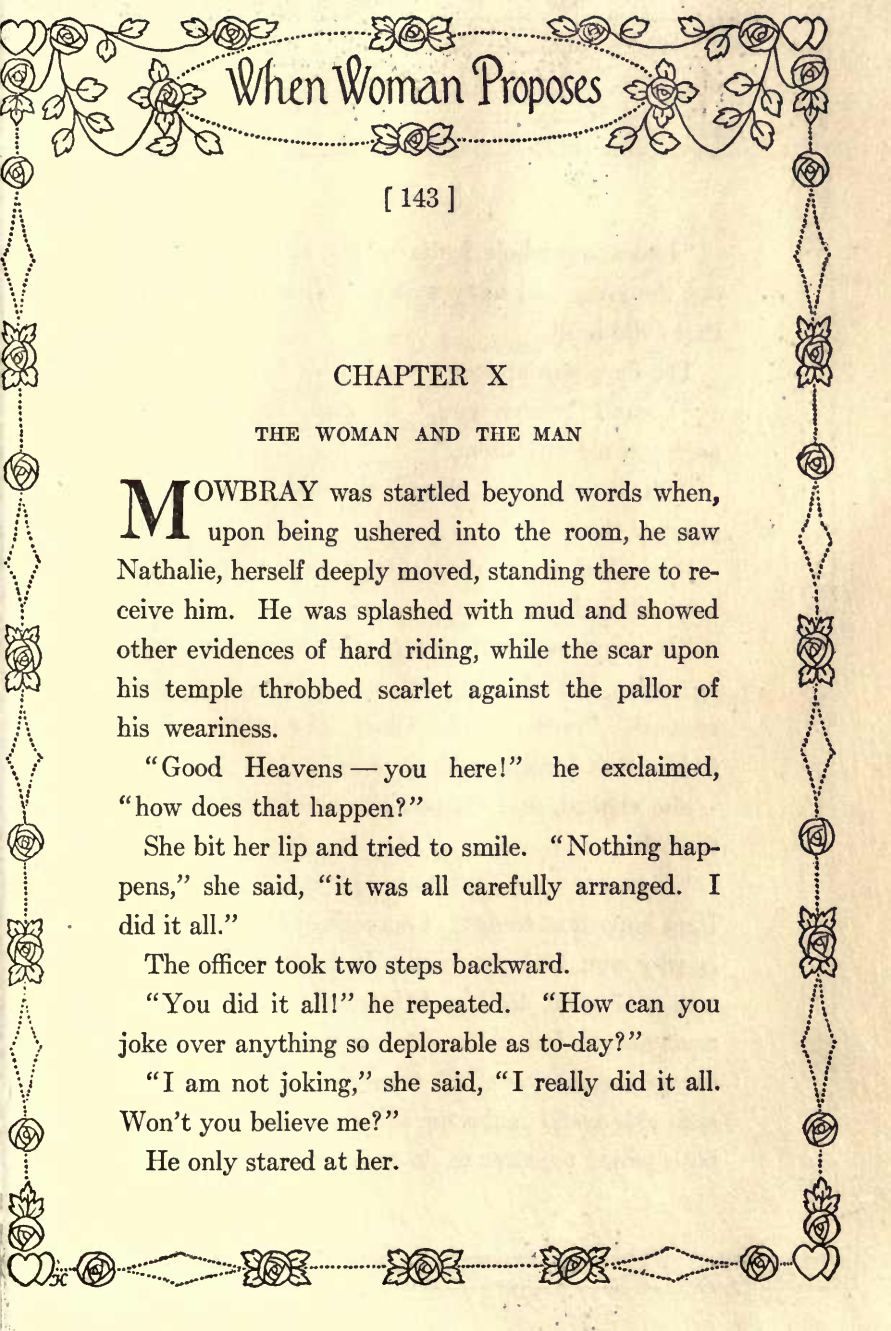
“Yes, Excellency.”

The Chief looked at Lefevre. “There are other places where we can talk,” he said, “let us find one.”

Nathalie was left alone.



*"Oh, where is he?" she
exclaimed, springing from
her seat.*



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CHAPTER X

THE WOMAN AND THE MAN

MOWBRAY was startled beyond words when, upon being ushered into the room, he saw Nathalie, herself deeply moved, standing there to receive him. He was splashed with mud and showed other evidences of hard riding, while the scar upon his temple throbbed scarlet against the pallor of his weariness.

“Good Heavens — you here!” he exclaimed, “how does that happen?”

She bit her lip and tried to smile. “Nothing happens,” she said, “it was all carefully arranged. I did it all.”

The officer took two steps backward.

“You did it all!” he repeated. “How can you joke over anything so deplorable as to-day?”

“I am not joking,” she said, “I really did it all. Won’t you believe me?”

He only stared at her.

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"I took my whole fortune," she said, "and called out the army and navy with it. That is why I say that I did it all."

The deep scarlet anger flooded his face.

"I can't believe you," he said, hoarsely; "no money could buy them."

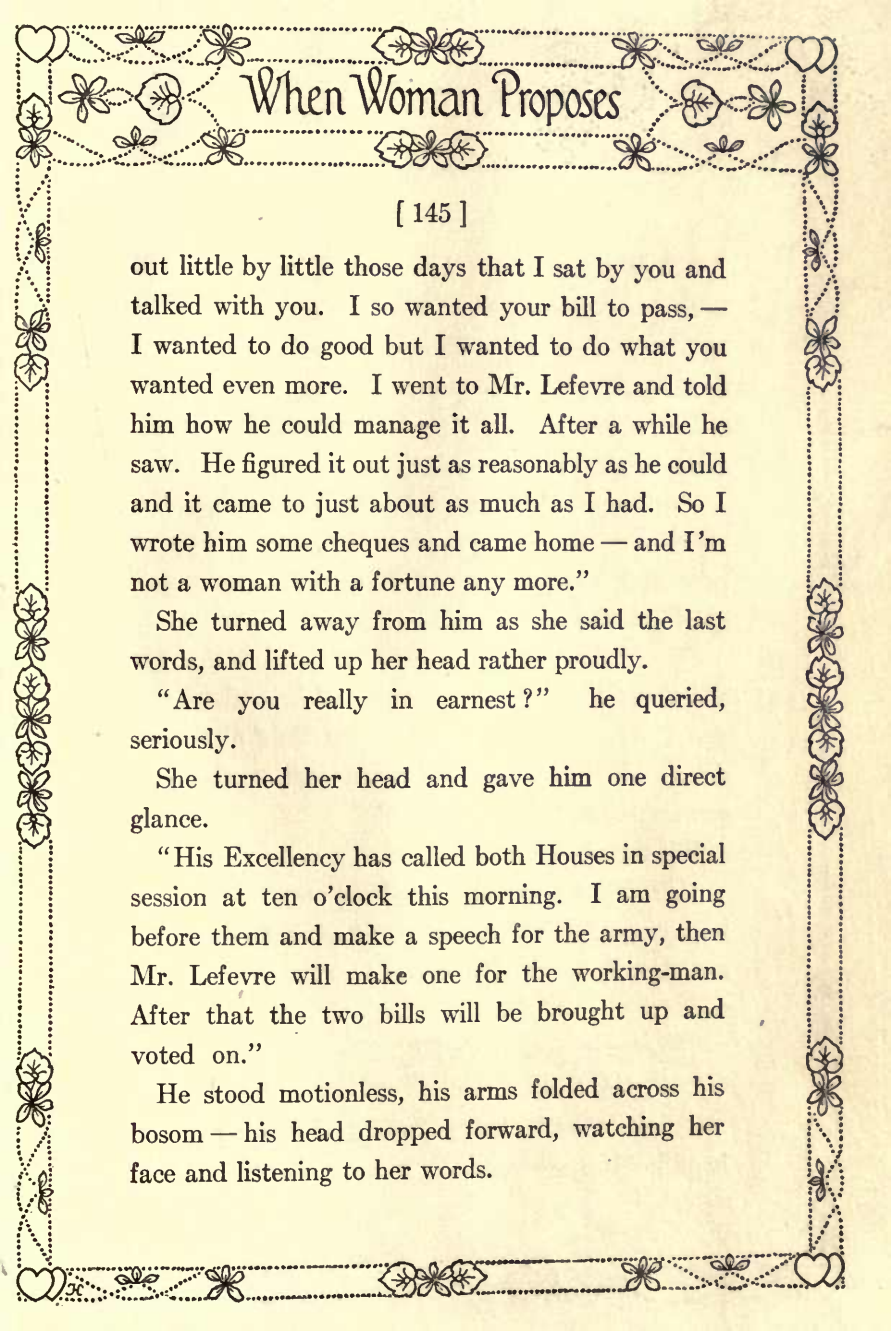
"Oh, I did n't buy them," she said, "I only telegraphed them."

He looked at her a minute, and then burst into ironical laughter.

"If you were a man or any other woman I should be angry, I think," he said, — "as it is, I am only amused. Where is the Chief Executive, — it is to him that I must speak at once."

She choked, and clasped her hands hard, one in the other.

"Listen to me first," she said, "it is important — I am important to-day. I am so important that that is why you find me here. It is n't joking — it's true, — I went to Mr. Lefevre the day that you went away. It had come to me that it was a grand chance to get your bill through. I thought that each side could make the other's victory certain, if both joined together to do so. I had thought it all



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out little by little those days that I sat by you and talked with you. I so wanted your bill to pass, — I wanted to do good but I wanted to do what you wanted even more. I went to Mr. Lefevre and told him how he could manage it all. After a while he saw. He figured it out just as reasonably as he could and it came to just about as much as I had. So I wrote him some cheques and came home — and I'm not a woman with a fortune any more."

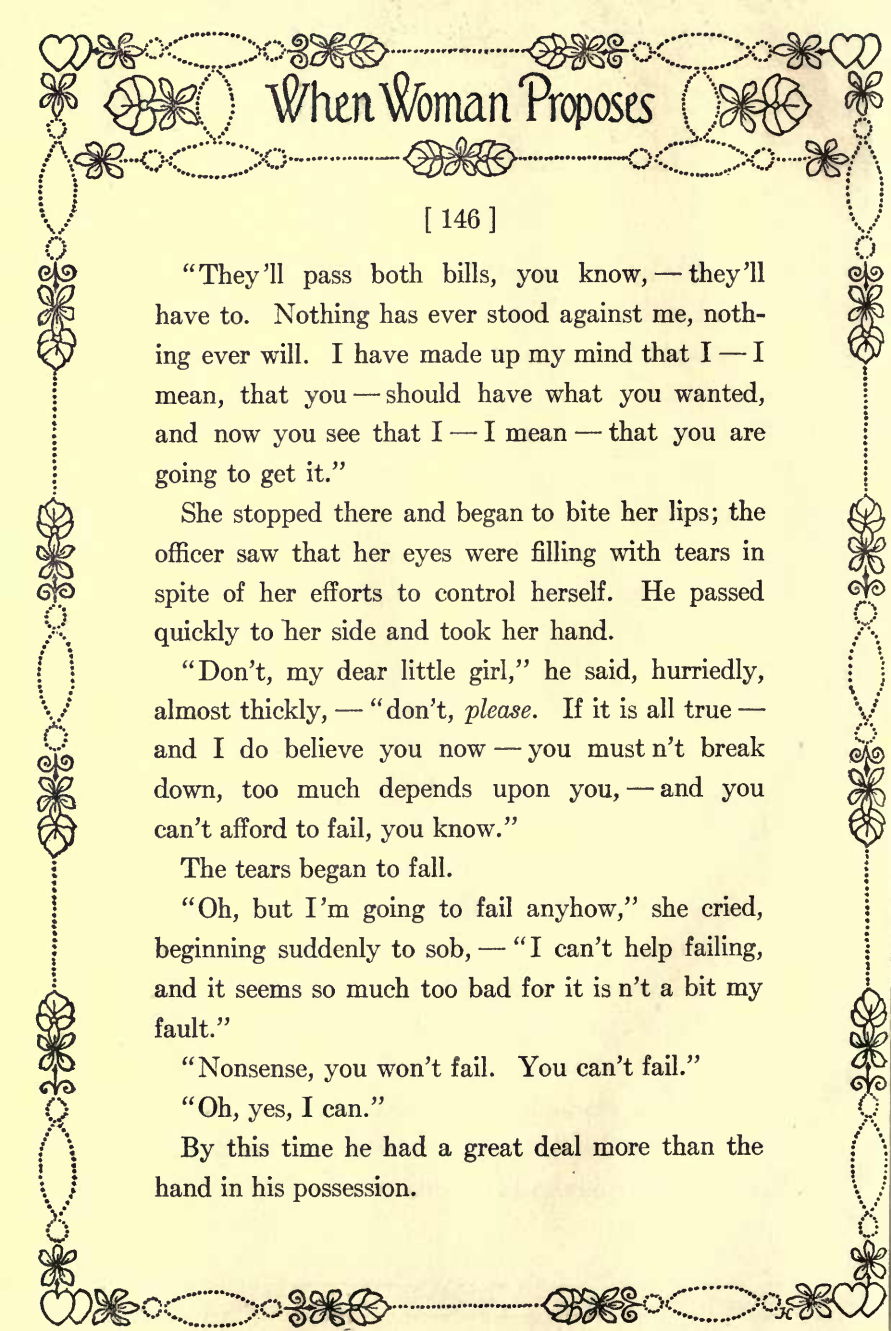
She turned away from him as she said the last words, and lifted up her head rather proudly.

"Are you really in earnest?" he queried, seriously.

She turned her head and gave him one direct glance.

"His Excellency has called both Houses in special session at ten o'clock this morning. I am going before them and make a speech for the army, then Mr. Lefevre will make one for the working-man. After that the two bills will be brought up and voted on."

He stood motionless, his arms folded across his bosom — his head dropped forward, watching her face and listening to her words.



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“They’ll pass both bills, you know, — they’ll have to. Nothing has ever stood against me, nothing ever will. I have made up my mind that I — I mean, that you — should have what you wanted, and now you see that I — I mean — that you are going to get it.”

She stopped there and began to bite her lips; the officer saw that her eyes were filling with tears in spite of her efforts to control herself. He passed quickly to her side and took her hand.

“Don’t, my dear little girl,” he said, hurriedly, almost thickly, — “don’t, *please*. If it is all true — and I do believe you now — you must n’t break down, too much depends upon you, — and you can’t afford to fail, you know.”

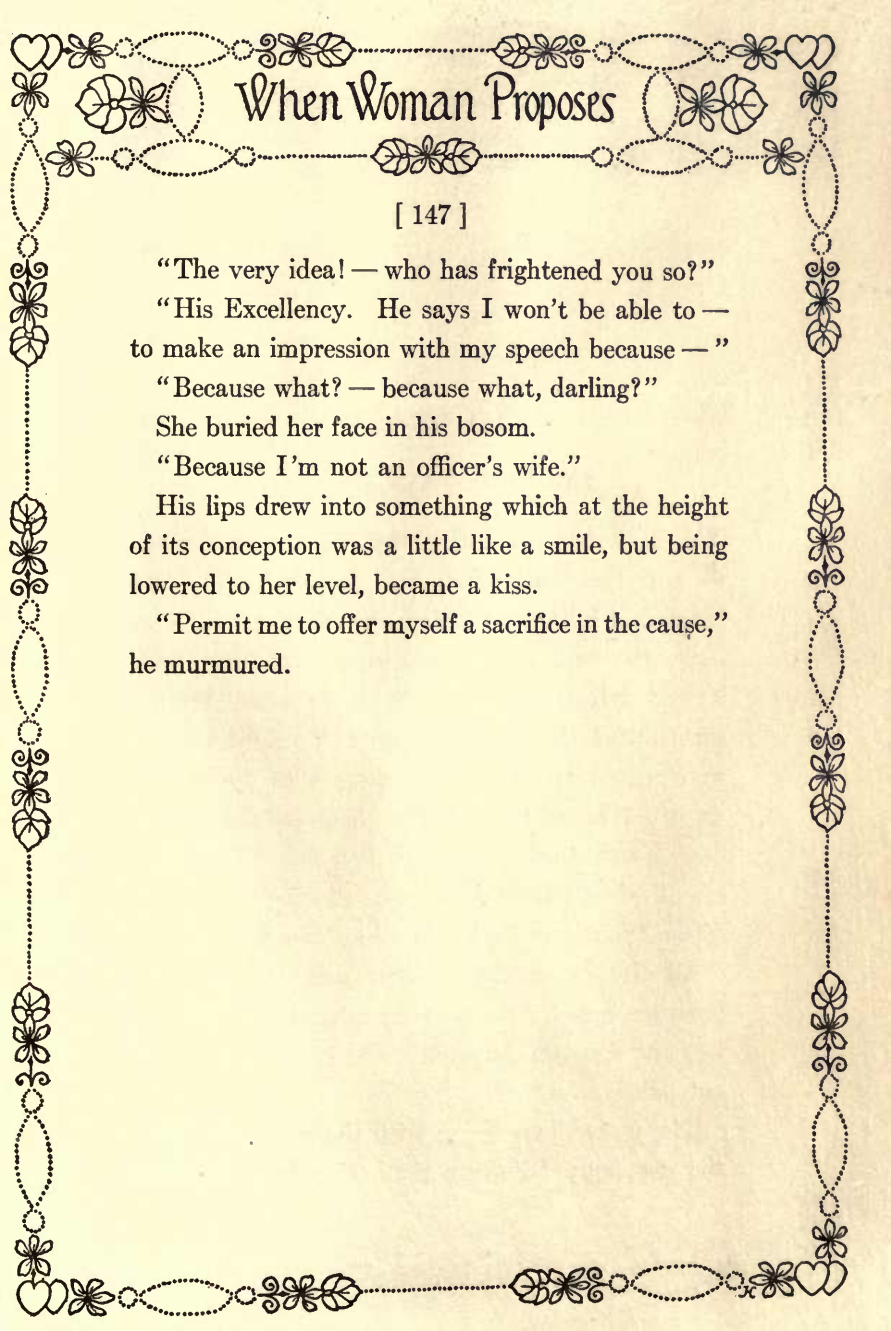
The tears began to fall.

“Oh, but I’m going to fail anyhow,” she cried, beginning suddenly to sob, — “I can’t help failing, and it seems so much too bad for it is n’t a bit my fault.”

“Nonsense, you won’t fail. You can’t fail.”

“Oh, yes, I can.”

By this time he had a great deal more than the hand in his possession.



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“The very idea! — who has frightened you so?”

“His Excellency. He says I won't be able to — to make an impression with my speech because — ”

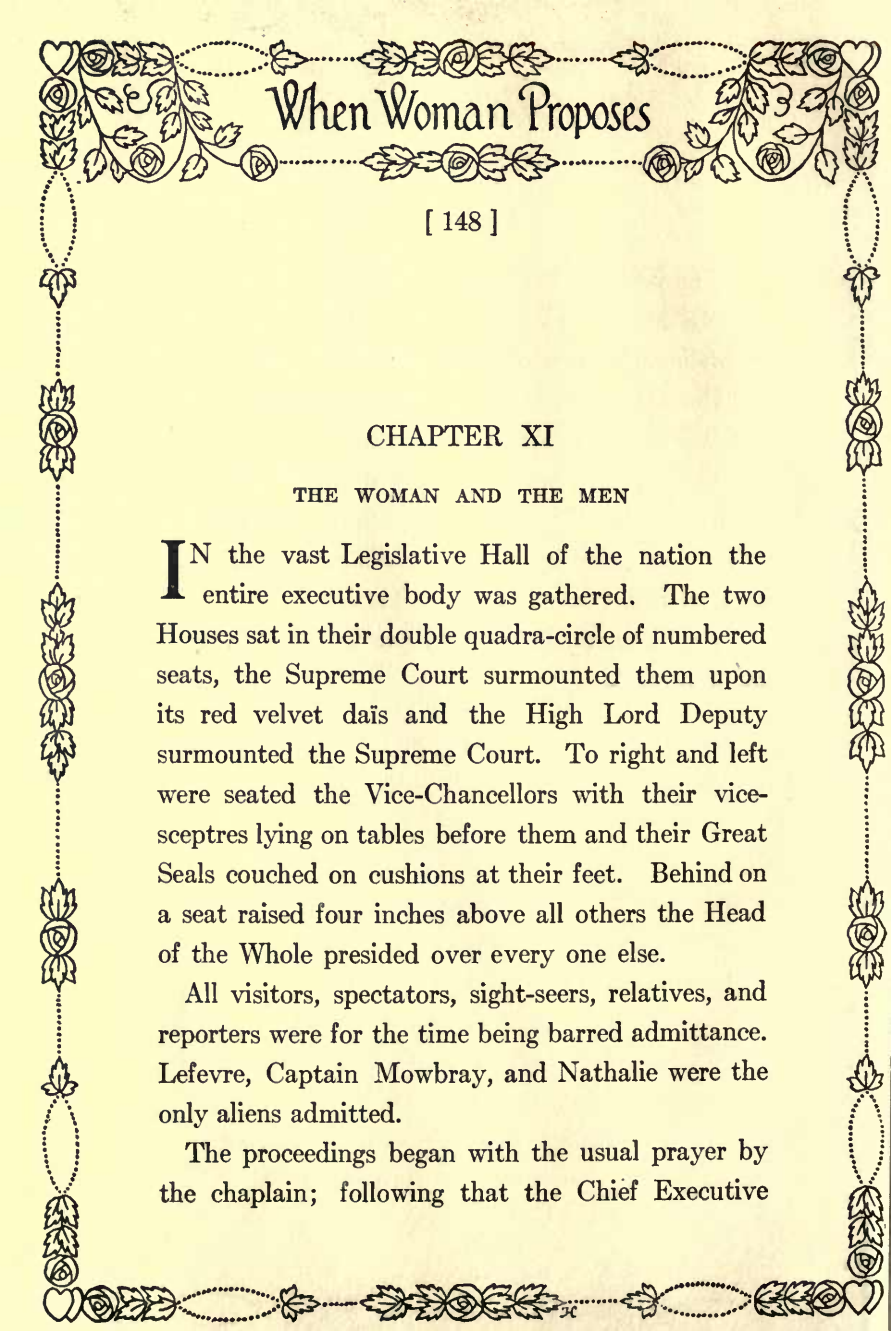
“Because what? — because what, darling?”

She buried her face in his bosom.

“Because I'm not an officer's wife.”

His lips drew into something which at the height of its conception was a little like a smile, but being lowered to her level, became a kiss.

“Permit me to offer myself a sacrifice in the cause,” he murmured.



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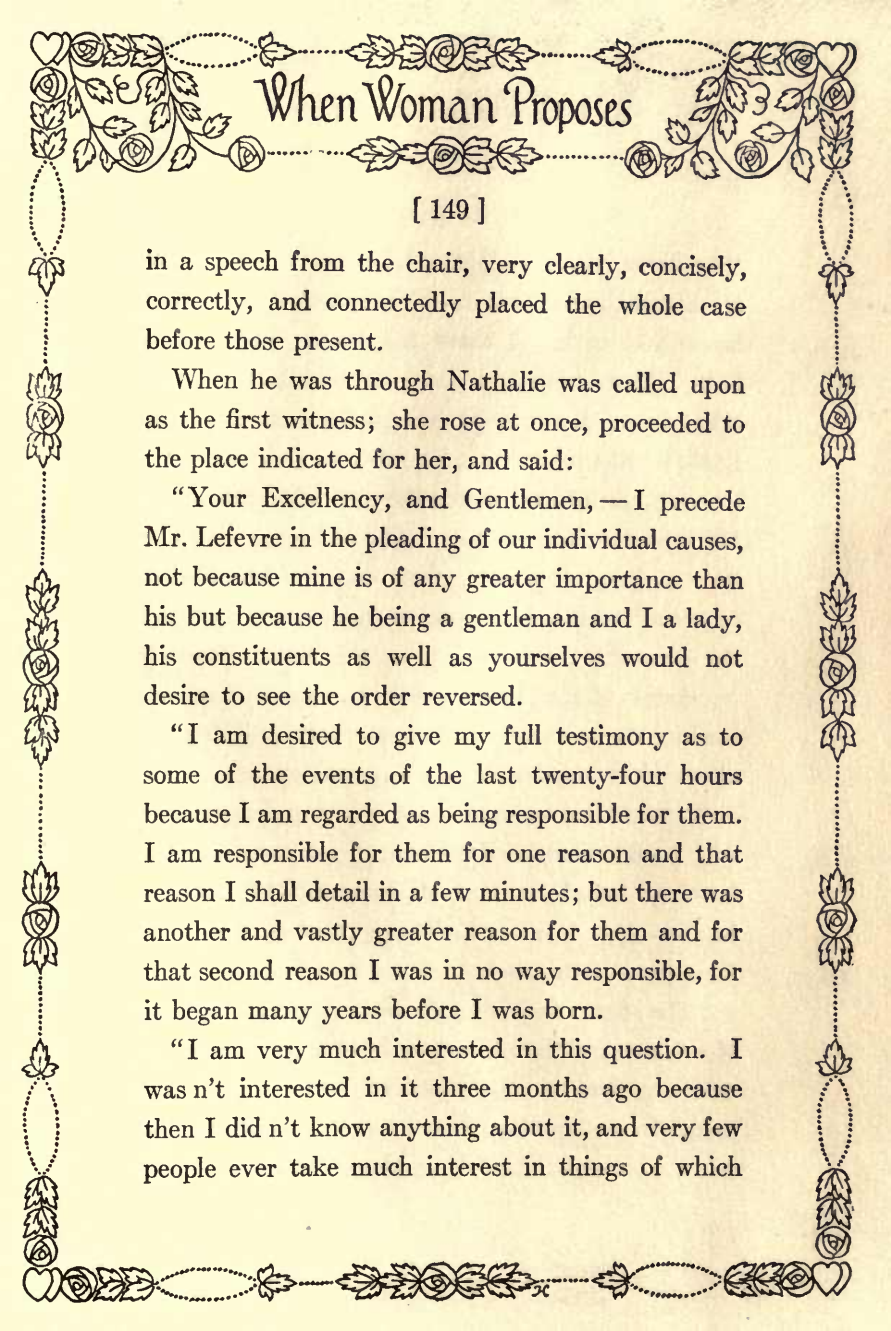
CHAPTER XI

THE WOMAN AND THE MEN

IN the vast Legislative Hall of the nation the entire executive body was gathered. The two Houses sat in their double quadra-circle of numbered seats, the Supreme Court surmounted them upon its red velvet daïs and the High Lord Deputy surmounted the Supreme Court. To right and left were seated the Vice-Chancellors with their vice-sceptres lying on tables before them and their Great Seals couched on cushions at their feet. Behind on a seat raised four inches above all others the Head of the Whole presided over every one else.

All visitors, spectators, sight-seers, relatives, and reporters were for the time being barred admittance. Lefevre, Captain Mowbray, and Nathalie were the only aliens admitted.

The proceedings began with the usual prayer by the chaplain; following that the Chief Executive



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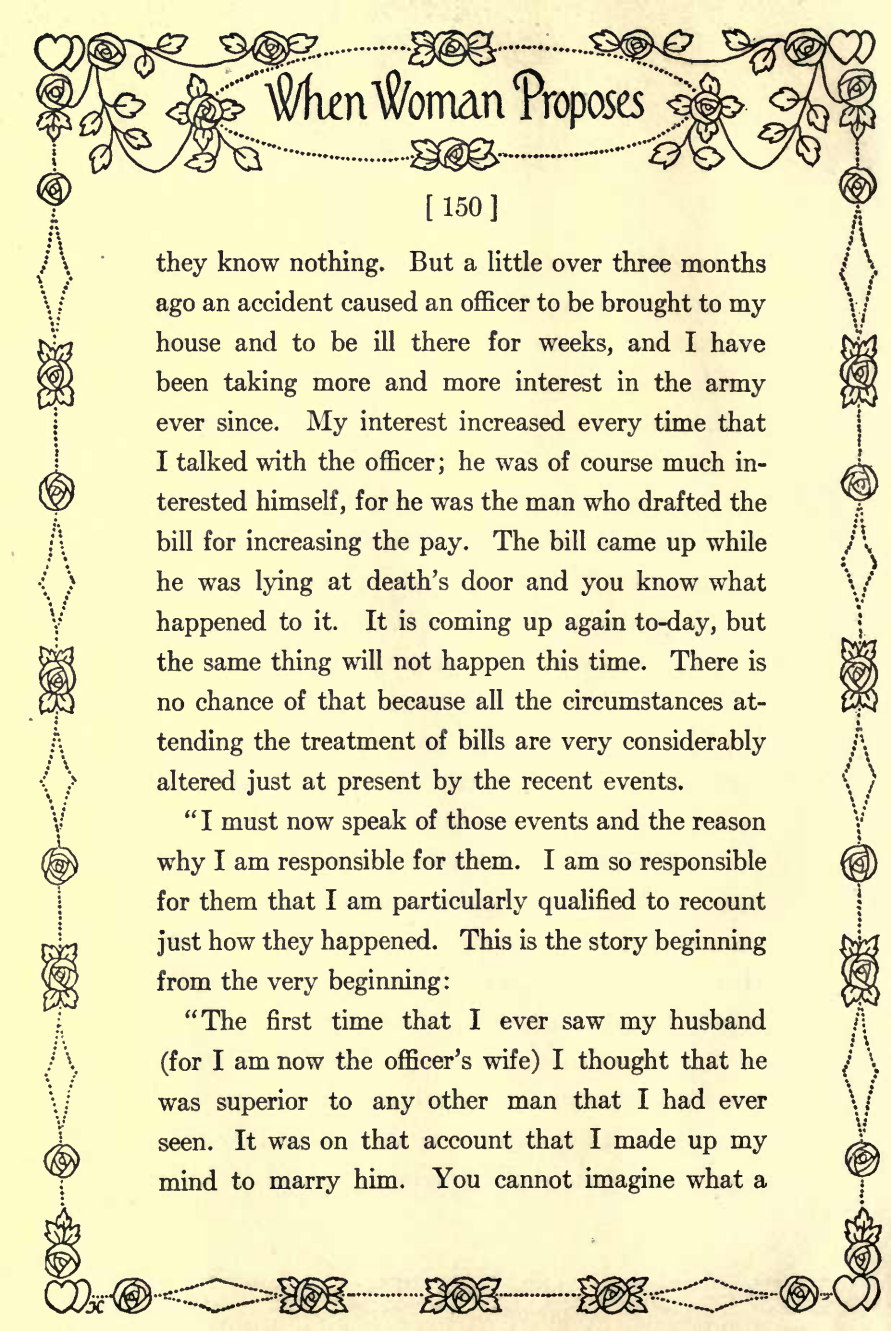
in a speech from the chair, very clearly, concisely, correctly, and connectedly placed the whole case before those present.

When he was through Nathalie was called upon as the first witness; she rose at once, proceeded to the place indicated for her, and said:

“Your Excellency, and Gentlemen, — I precede Mr. Lefevre in the pleading of our individual causes, not because mine is of any greater importance than his but because he being a gentleman and I a lady, his constituents as well as yourselves would not desire to see the order reversed.

“I am desired to give my full testimony as to some of the events of the last twenty-four hours because I am regarded as being responsible for them. I am responsible for them for one reason and that reason I shall detail in a few minutes; but there was another and vastly greater reason for them and for that second reason I was in no way responsible, for it began many years before I was born.

“I am very much interested in this question. I was n't interested in it three months ago because then I did n't know anything about it, and very few people ever take much interest in things of which

The page is framed by a decorative border of roses and hearts. At the top, a horizontal line of roses and leaves arches over the title. The sides are decorated with vertical lines of roses and hearts, connected by dotted lines. The bottom features a row of roses and hearts, with a small 'x' mark on the left side.

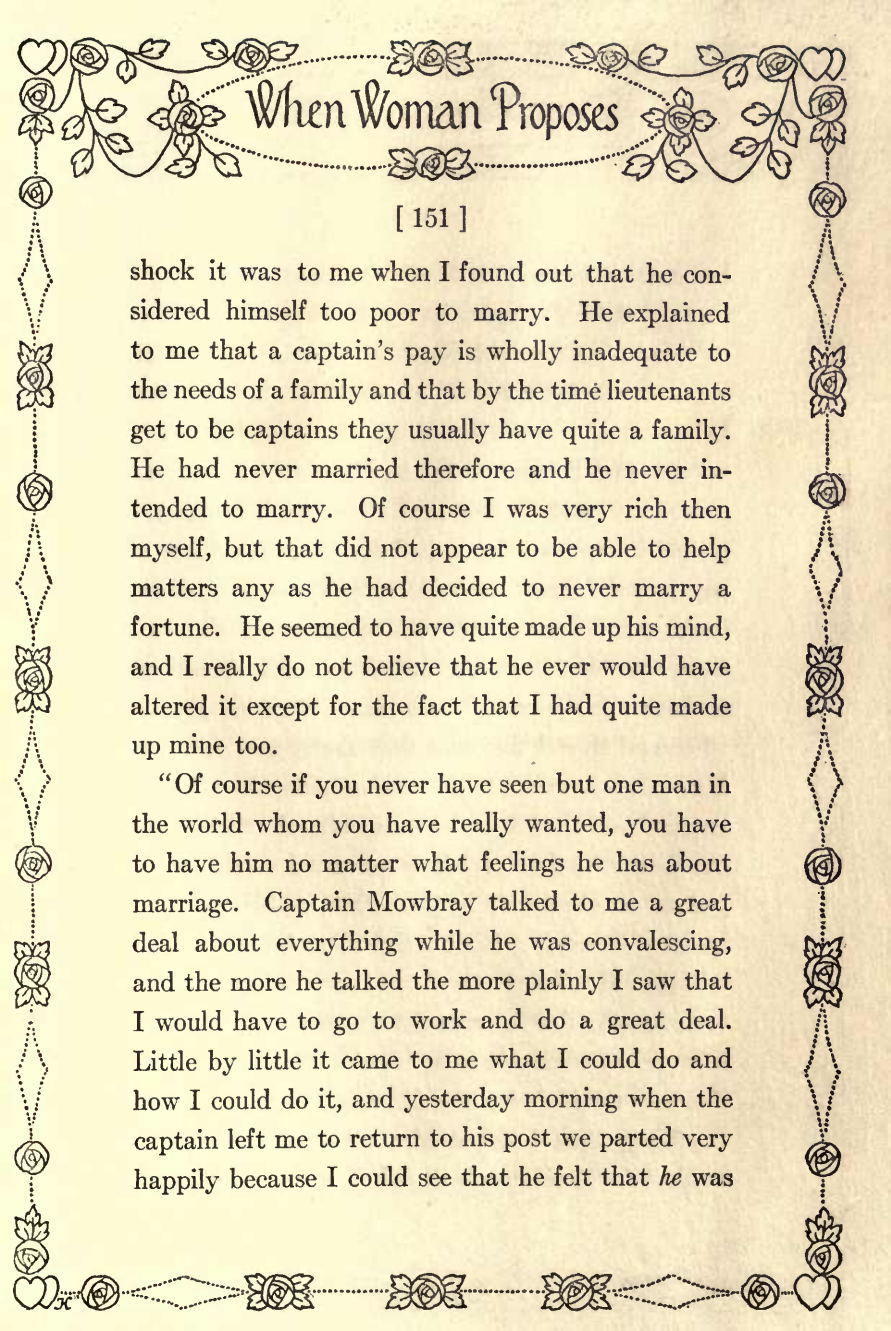
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they know nothing. But a little over three months ago an accident caused an officer to be brought to my house and to be ill there for weeks, and I have been taking more and more interest in the army ever since. My interest increased every time that I talked with the officer; he was of course much interested himself, for he was the man who drafted the bill for increasing the pay. The bill came up while he was lying at death's door and you know what happened to it. It is coming up again to-day, but the same thing will not happen this time. There is no chance of that because all the circumstances attending the treatment of bills are very considerably altered just at present by the recent events.

“I must now speak of those events and the reason why I am responsible for them. I am so responsible for them that I am particularly qualified to recount just how they happened. This is the story beginning from the very beginning:

“The first time that I ever saw my husband (for I am now the officer's wife) I thought that he was superior to any other man that I had ever seen. It was on that account that I made up my mind to marry him. You cannot imagine what a

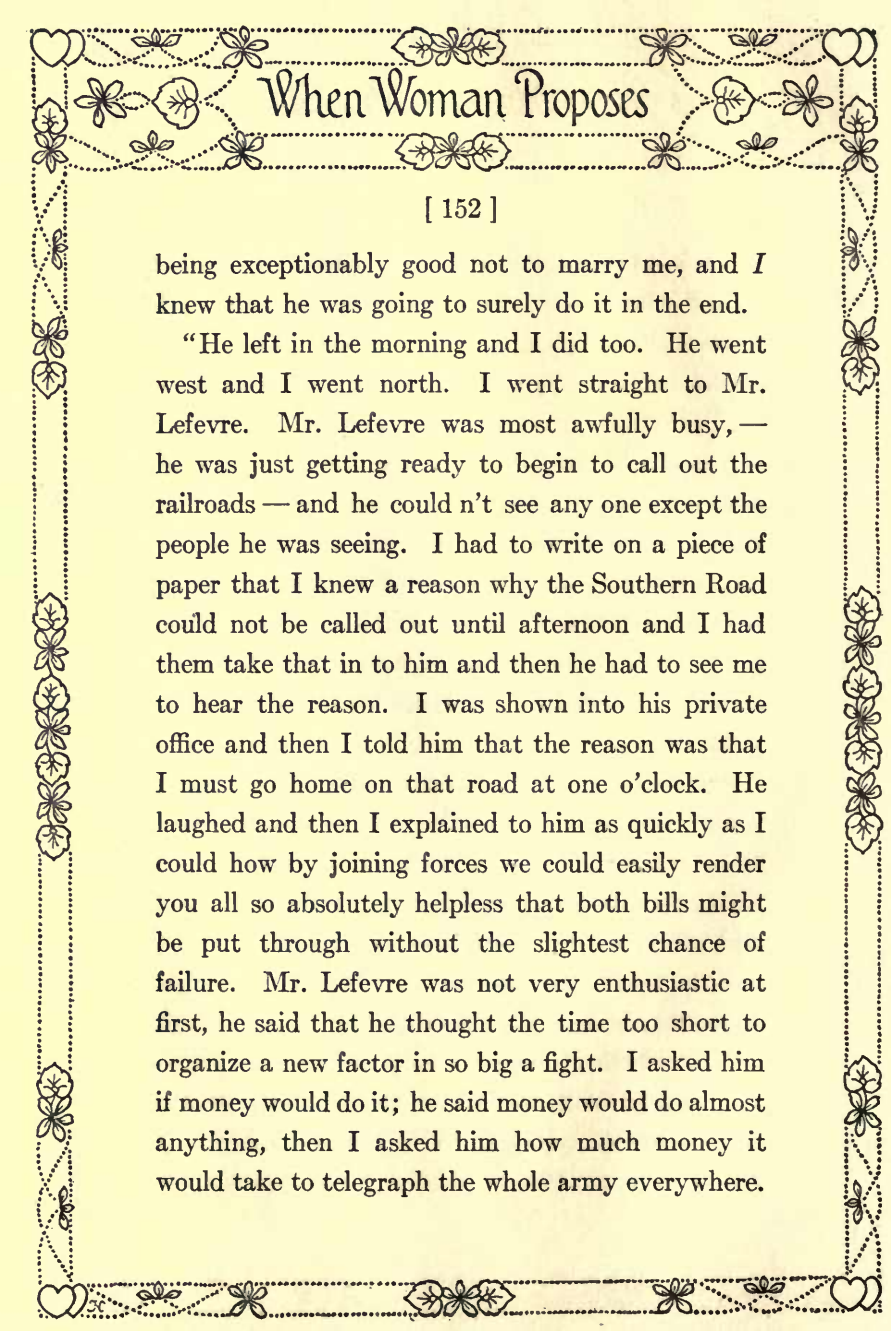


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shock it was to me when I found out that he considered himself too poor to marry. He explained to me that a captain's pay is wholly inadequate to the needs of a family and that by the time lieutenants get to be captains they usually have quite a family. He had never married therefore and he never intended to marry. Of course I was very rich then myself, but that did not appear to be able to help matters any as he had decided to never marry a fortune. He seemed to have quite made up his mind, and I really do not believe that he ever would have altered it except for the fact that I had quite made up mine too.

“Of course if you never have seen but one man in the world whom you have really wanted, you have to have him no matter what feelings he has about marriage. Captain Mowbray talked to me a great deal about everything while he was convalescing, and the more he talked the more plainly I saw that I would have to go to work and do a great deal. Little by little it came to me what I could do and how I could do it, and yesterday morning when the captain left me to return to his post we parted very happily because I could see that he felt that *he* was

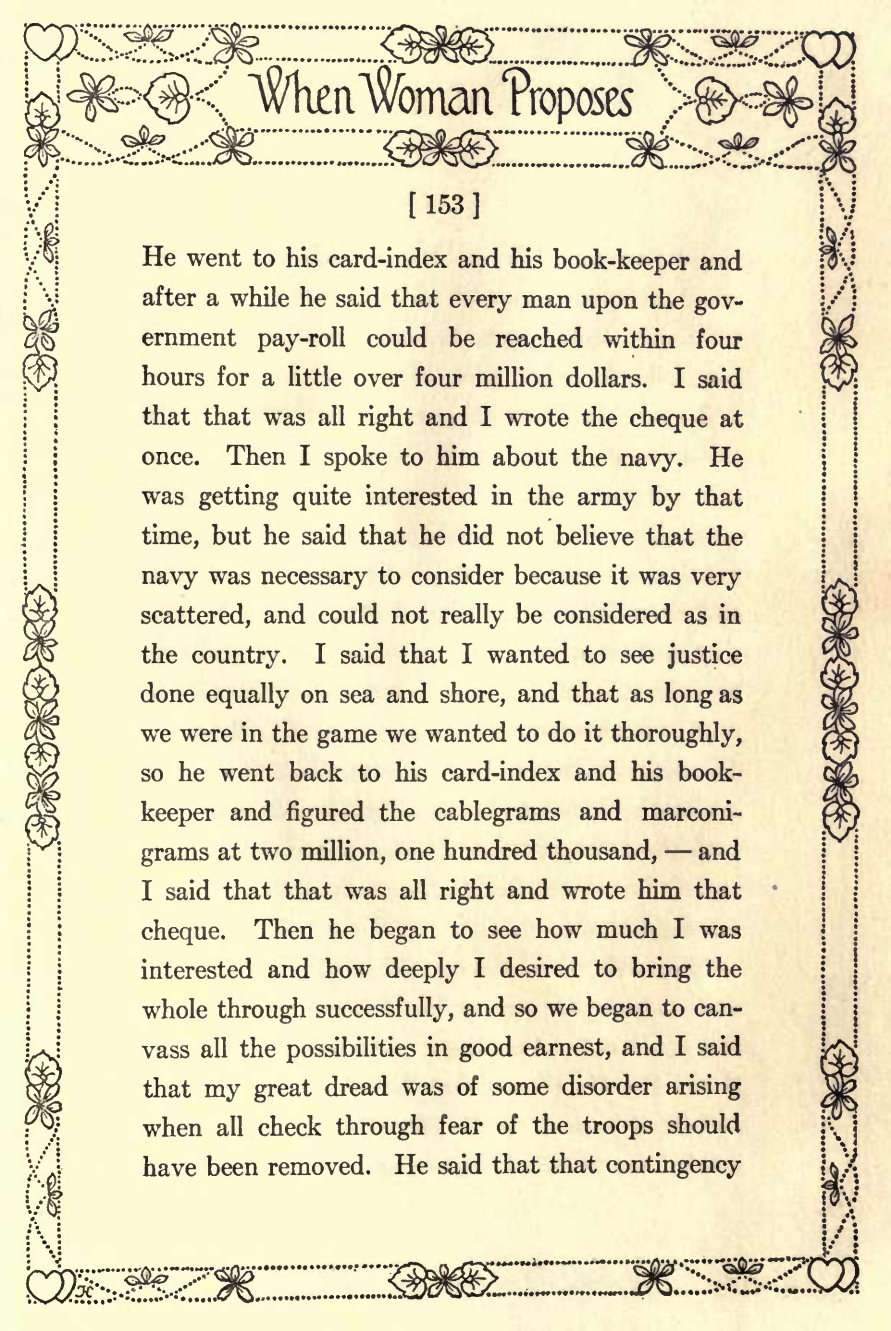


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being exceptionally good not to marry me, and I knew that he was going to surely do it in the end.

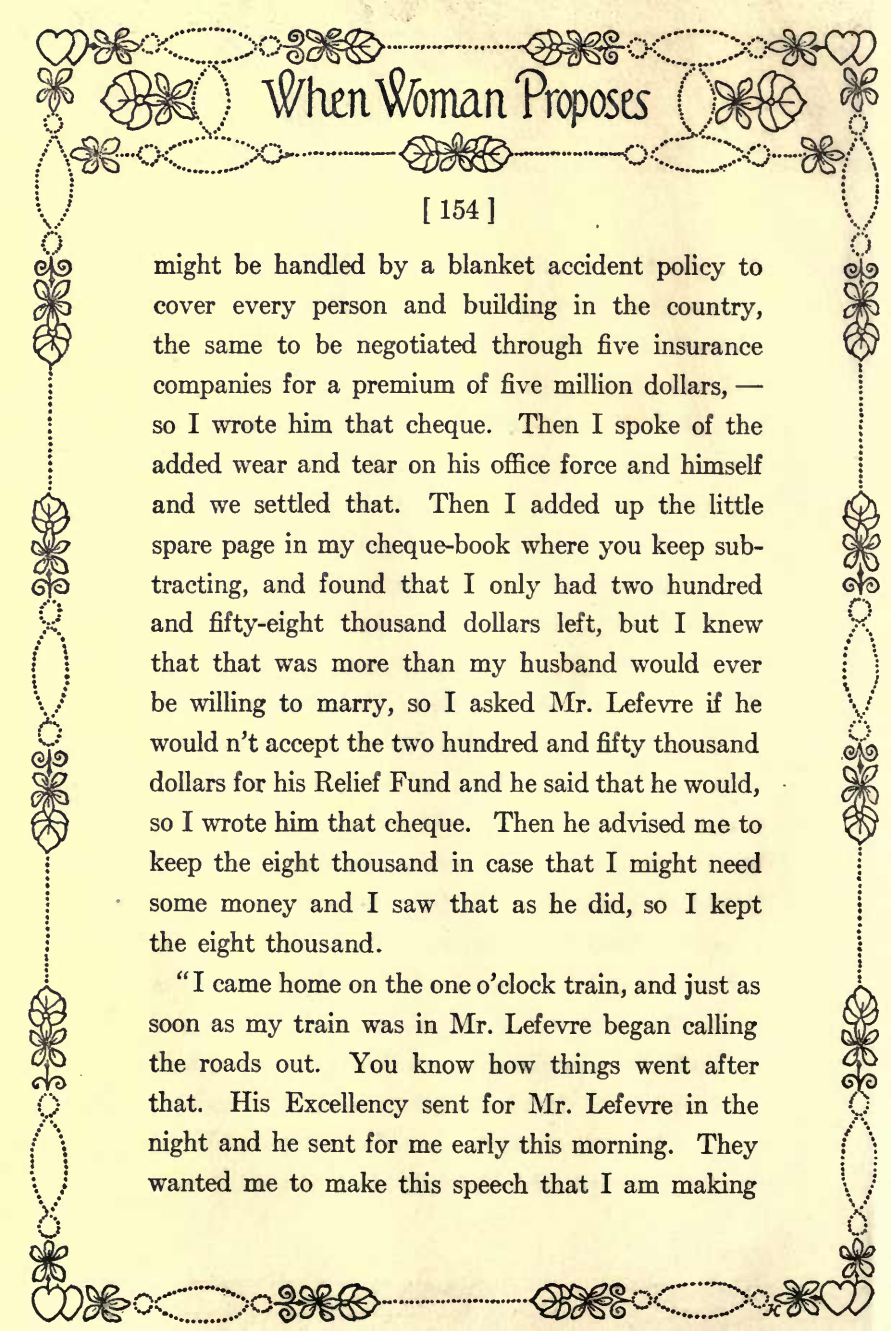
“He left in the morning and I did too. He went west and I went north. I went straight to Mr. Lefevre. Mr. Lefevre was most awfully busy,— he was just getting ready to begin to call out the railroads — and he could n’t see any one except the people he was seeing. I had to write on a piece of paper that I knew a reason why the Southern Road could not be called out until afternoon and I had them take that in to him and then he had to see me to hear the reason. I was shown into his private office and then I told him that the reason was that I must go home on that road at one o’clock. He laughed and then I explained to him as quickly as I could how by joining forces we could easily render you all so absolutely helpless that both bills might be put through without the slightest chance of failure. Mr. Lefevre was not very enthusiastic at first, he said that he thought the time too short to organize a new factor in so big a fight. I asked him if money would do it; he said money would do almost anything, then I asked him how much money it would take to telegraph the whole army everywhere.



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He went to his card-index and his book-keeper and after a while he said that every man upon the government pay-roll could be reached within four hours for a little over four million dollars. I said that that was all right and I wrote the cheque at once. Then I spoke to him about the navy. He was getting quite interested in the army by that time, but he said that he did not believe that the navy was necessary to consider because it was very scattered, and could not really be considered as in the country. I said that I wanted to see justice done equally on sea and shore, and that as long as we were in the game we wanted to do it thoroughly, so he went back to his card-index and his book-keeper and figured the cablegrams and marconigrams at two million, one hundred thousand, — and I said that that was all right and wrote him that cheque. Then he began to see how much I was interested and how deeply I desired to bring the whole through successfully, and so we began to canvass all the possibilities in good earnest, and I said that my great dread was of some disorder arising when all check through fear of the troops should have been removed. He said that that contingency

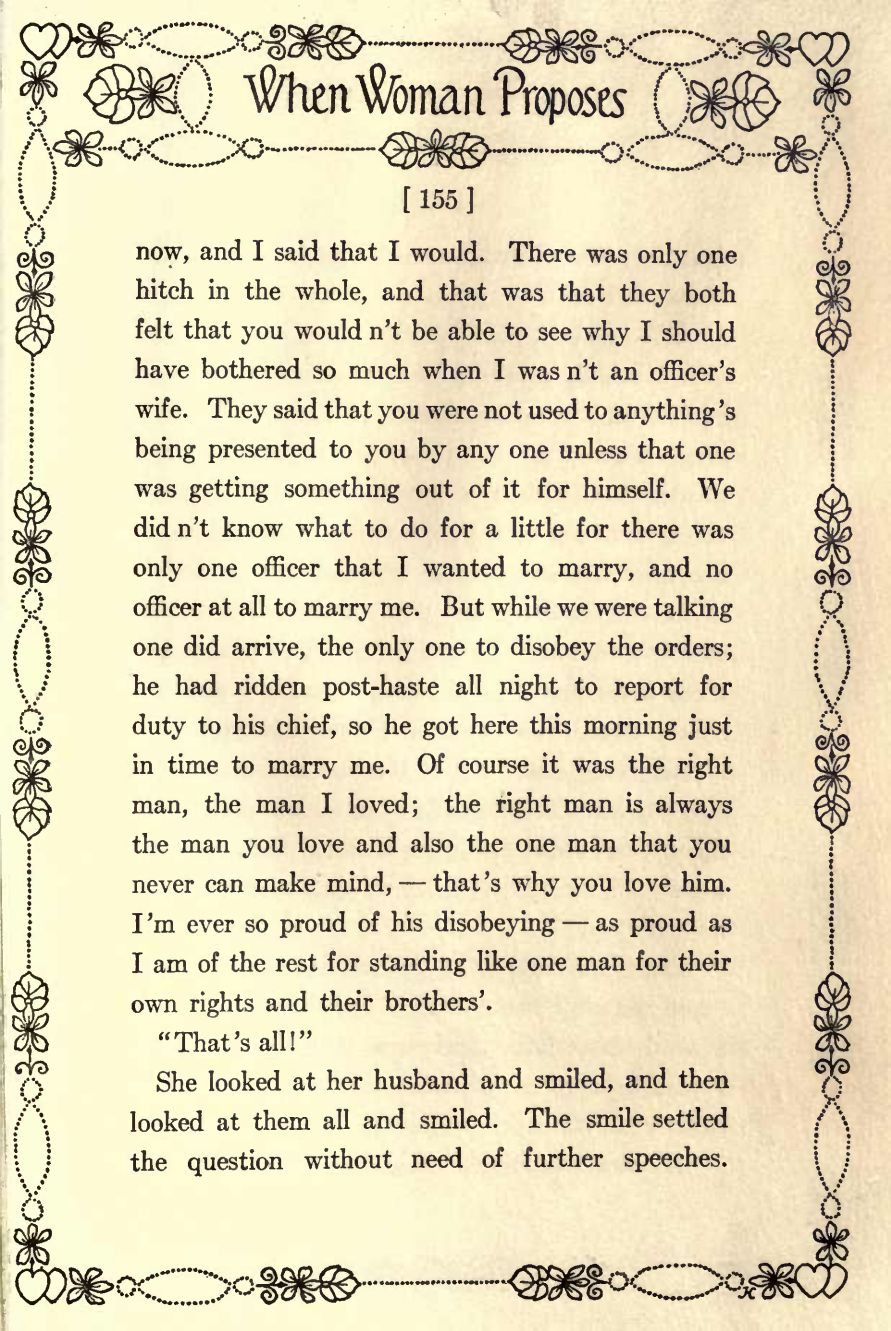


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might be handled by a blanket accident policy to cover every person and building in the country, the same to be negotiated through five insurance companies for a premium of five million dollars, — so I wrote him that cheque. Then I spoke of the added wear and tear on his office force and himself and we settled that. Then I added up the little spare page in my cheque-book where you keep subtracting, and found that I only had two hundred and fifty-eight thousand dollars left, but I knew that that was more than my husband would ever be willing to marry, so I asked Mr. Lefevre if he would n't accept the two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for his Relief Fund and he said that he would, so I wrote him that cheque. Then he advised me to keep the eight thousand in case that I might need some money and I saw that as he did, so I kept the eight thousand.

“I came home on the one o'clock train, and just as soon as my train was in Mr. Lefevre began calling the roads out. You know how things went after that. His Excellency sent for Mr. Lefevre in the night and he sent for me early this morning. They wanted me to make this speech that I am making



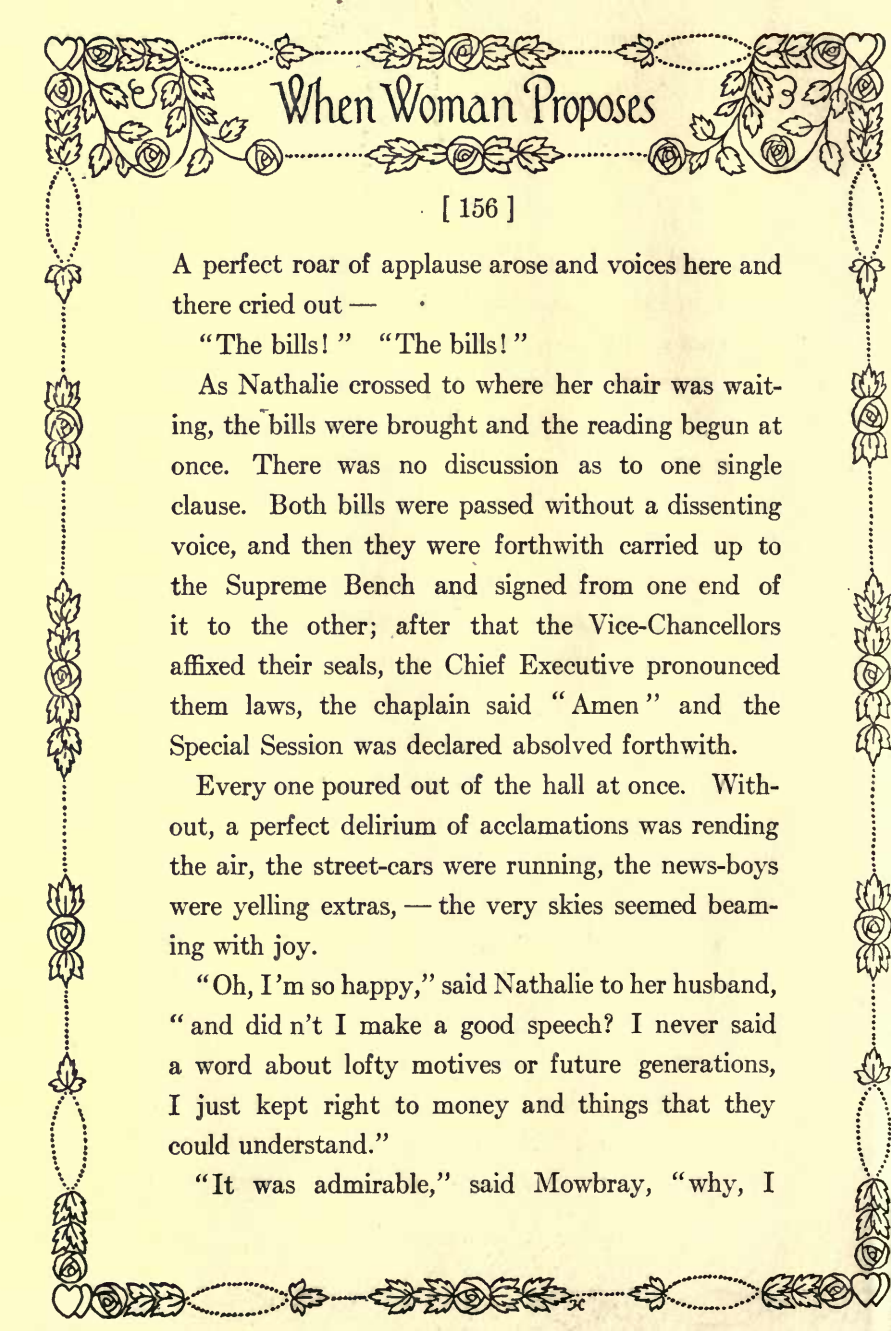
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now, and I said that I would. There was only one hitch in the whole, and that was that they both felt that you would n't be able to see why I should have bothered so much when I was n't an officer's wife. They said that you were not used to anything's being presented to you by any one unless that one was getting something out of it for himself. We did n't know what to do for a little for there was only one officer that I wanted to marry, and no officer at all to marry me. But while we were talking one did arrive, the only one to disobey the orders; he had ridden post-haste all night to report for duty to his chief, so he got here this morning just in time to marry me. Of course it was the right man, the man I loved; the right man is always the man you love and also the one man that you never can make mind, — that's why you love him. I'm ever so proud of his disobeying — as proud as I am of the rest for standing like one man for their own rights and their brothers'.

“That's all!”

She looked at her husband and smiled, and then looked at them all and smiled. The smile settled the question without need of further speeches.



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A perfect roar of applause arose and voices here and there cried out —

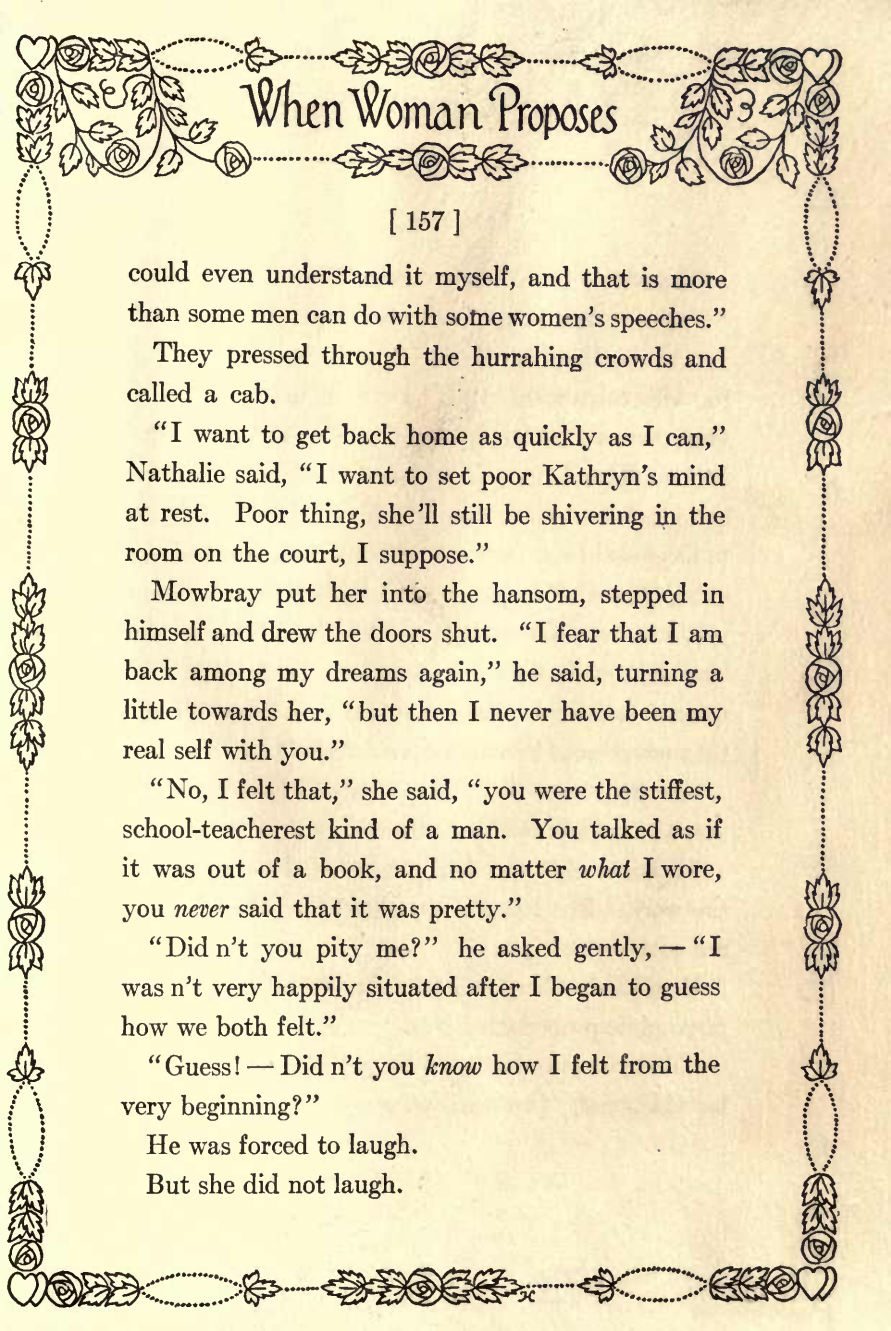
“The bills!” “The bills!”

As Nathalie crossed to where her chair was waiting, the bills were brought and the reading begun at once. There was no discussion as to one single clause. Both bills were passed without a dissenting voice, and then they were forthwith carried up to the Supreme Bench and signed from one end of it to the other; after that the Vice-Chancellors affixed their seals, the Chief Executive pronounced them laws, the chaplain said “Amen” and the Special Session was declared absolved forthwith.

Every one poured out of the hall at once. Without, a perfect delirium of acclamations was rending the air, the street-cars were running, the news-boys were yelling extras, — the very skies seemed beaming with joy.

“Oh, I’m so happy,” said Nathalie to her husband, “and did n’t I make a good speech? I never said a word about lofty motives or future generations, I just kept right to money and things that they could understand.”

“It was admirable,” said Mowbray, “why, I



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could even understand it myself, and that is more than some men can do with some women's speeches."

They pressed through the hurraing crowds and called a cab.

"I want to get back home as quickly as I can," Nathalie said, "I want to set poor Kathryn's mind at rest. Poor thing, she'll still be shivering in the room on the court, I suppose."

Mowbray put her into the hansom, stepped in himself and drew the doors shut. "I fear that I am back among my dreams again," he said, turning a little towards her, "but then I never have been my real self with you."

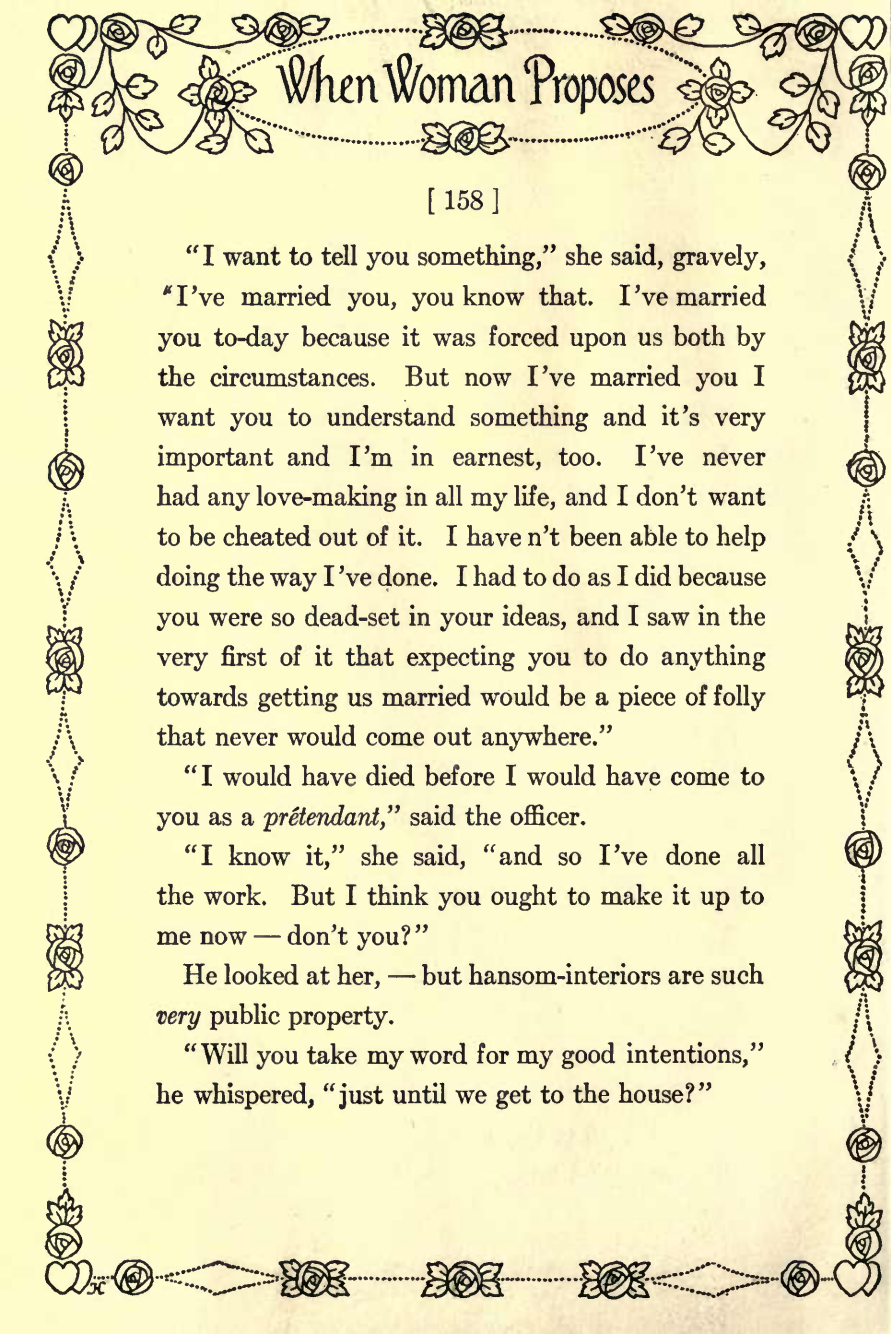
"No, I felt that," she said, "you were the stiffest, school-teacherest kind of a man. You talked as if it was out of a book, and no matter *what* I wore, you *never* said that it was pretty."

"Did n't you pity me?" he asked gently, — "I was n't very happily situated after I began to guess how we both felt."

"Guess! — Did n't you *know* how I felt from the very beginning?"

He was forced to laugh.

But she did not laugh.



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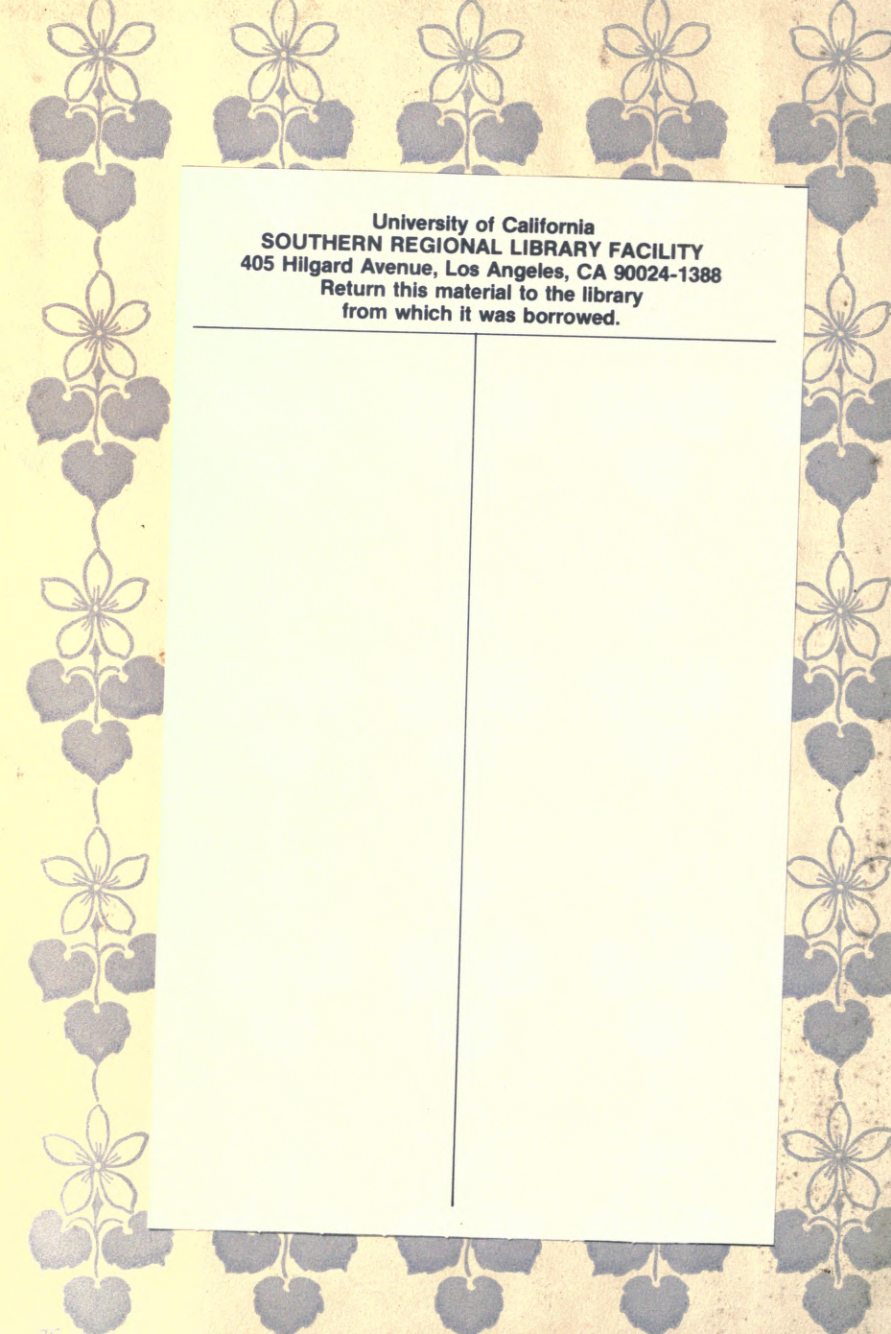
“I want to tell you something,” she said, gravely, “I’ve married you, you know that. I’ve married you to-day because it was forced upon us both by the circumstances. But now I’ve married you I want you to understand something and it’s very important and I’m in earnest, too. I’ve never had any love-making in all my life, and I don’t want to be cheated out of it. I have n’t been able to help doing the way I’ve done. I had to do as I did because you were so dead-set in your ideas, and I saw in the very first of it that expecting you to do anything towards getting us married would be a piece of folly that never would come out anywhere.”

“I would have died before I would have come to you as a *prétendant*,” said the officer.

“I know it,” she said, “and so I’ve done all the work. But I think you ought to make it up to me now — don’t you?”

He looked at her, — but hansom-interiors are such *very* public property.

“Will you take my word for my good intentions,” he whispered, “just until we get to the house?”

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