REBECCA HARDING DAVIS

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I

In another minute the Kaiser Wilhelm would push off from her pier in Hoboken. The last bell had rung, the last uniformed officer and white-jacketed steward had scurried up the gangway. The pier was massed with people who had come to bid their friends good-by. They were all Germans, and there had been unlimited embracing and kissing and sobs of "Ach! mein lieber Sckatz!" and "Gott bewahre Dick!"

Now they stood looking up to the crowded decks, shouting out last fond words. A band playing "The Merry Maiden and the Tar" marched on board.

The passengers pressed against the rails, looking down. Almost every one held flowers which had been brought to them: not costly bouquets, but homely bunches of marigolds or pinks. They carried, too, little German or American flags, which they waved frantically.

The gangways fell, and the huge ship parted from the dock. It was but an inch, but the whole ocean yawned in it between those who went and those who stayed. There was a sudden silence; a thousand handkerchiefs fluttered white on the pier and the flags

and flowers were waved on the ship, but there was not a cry nor a sound.

James Perry, one of the dozen Americans on board, was leaning over the rail watching it all with an amused smile. "Hello, Watts!" he called, as another young man joined him. "Going over? Quite dramatic, isn't it? It might be a German ship going out of a German port. The other liners set off in as commonplace a way as a Jersey City ferryboat, but these North German Lloyd ships always sail with a certain ceremony and solemnity. I like it."

"I always cross on them," said Dr. Watts. "I have but a month's vacation—two weeks on board ship, two on land. Now you, I suppose, don't have to count your days? You cross every year. I can't see, for my part, what business the assistant editor of a magazine has abroad."

"Oh, we make a specialty of articles from notorieties over there; statesmen, scientific fellows, or people with titles. I expect to capture a paper from Lorne and some sketches by the Princess Beatrice this time."

"Lorne? It throws you into contact with that sort of folk, eh?" said the doctor, looking at him enviously. "How do they strike you, Jem?"

"Well," said Perry importantly, "well-bred people are the same the world over. I only see them in a business way, of course, but one can judge. Their voices are better than ours, but as to looks—no! It's queer, but American women—the wives and daughters of saddlers or farmers, perhaps—have more often the

patrician look than English duchesses. Now there, for example," warming to the subject, "that woman to whom you bowed just now, the middle-aged one in blue cloth. Some Mrs. Smith or Pratt, probably. A homely woman, but there is a distinction in her face, a certain surety of good breeding, which is lacking in the heavy-jawed English royalties."

"Yes; that is a friend of mine," said Watts.

"She is a Mrs. Waldeaux from Wier, in Delaware. You could hardly call her a typical American woman. Old French emigre family. Probably better blood than the Coburgs a few generations back. That priggish young fellow is her son. Going to be an Episcopalian minister."

Mr. Perry surveyed his friend's friends good-humoredly. "Brand new rugs and cushions," he said. "First voyage. Heavens! I wish it were my first voyage, and that I had their appetite for Europe."

"You might as well ask for your relish of the bread and butter of your youth," said Watts.

The two men leaned lazily against the bulwark watching the other passengers who were squabbling about trunks.

Mr. Perry suddenly stood upright as a group of women passed.

"Do you know who that girl is?" he said eagerly. "The one who looked back at us over her shoulder."

"No. They are only a lot of school-girls, personally conducted. That is the teacher in front." "Of course, I see that. But the short, dark one—surely I know that woman."

The doctor looked after her. "She looks like a dog turning into a human being," he said leisurely. "One often sees such cases of arrested evolution. D'ye see? Thick lips, coarse curls, flat nostrils–"

Perry laughed. "The eyes, anyhow, are quite human," he said. "They challenge the whole world of men. I can't place her!" staring after her, perplexed. "I really don't believe I ever saw her before. Yet her face brings up some old story of a tragedy or crime to me."

"Nonsense! The girl is not twenty. Very fetching with all her vulgarity, though. Steward, send some coffee to my stateroom. Let's go down, Jem. The fog is too chilly."

Frances Waldeaux did not find the fog chilly. She had been thinking for thirty years of the day when she should start to Europe—ever since she could think at all.

This was the day. It was like no other, now that it had come. The fog, the crowd, the greasy smells of the pier, all familiar enough yesterday, took on a certain remoteness and mystery. It seemed to her that she was doing something which nobody had ever done before. She was going to discover the Old World.

The New was not more tremendous or unreal before the eyes of Columbus when he, too, stood on the poop of his ship.

Her son was arguing with the deck steward about chairs.

"Now, mother," he said at last, "it's all right. They are under cover so that the glare will not strain your eyes, and we can keep dry while we watch the storms."

"How did you know about it all? One would think you had crossed a dozen times, George."

"Oh, I've studied the whole thing up thoroughly," George said, with a satisfied little nod. "I've had time enough! Why, when I was in petticoats you used to tell me you would buy a ship and we would sail away together. You used to spoil all my school maps with red lines, drawing our routes."

"Yes. And now we're going!" said Frances to herself.

He sat down beside her and they watched the unending procession of passengers marching around the deck. George called her attention by a wink to any picturesque or queer figure that passed. He liked to watch her quiet brown eyes gleam with fun. Nobody had such a keen sense of the ridiculous as his mother. Sometimes, at the mere remembrance of some absurd idea, she would go off into soft silent paroxysms of laughter until the tears would stream down her cheeks.

George was fond and proud of his childish little mother. He had never known any body, he thought, so young or so transparent. It was easily understood. She had married at sixteen, and had been left a widow little more than a year afterward. "And I," he used to think, "was born with an old head on my shoulders; so we have grown up together. I suppose the dear soul never had a thought in her life which she has not told me."

As they sat together a steward brought Mrs. Waldeaux a note, which she read, blushing and smiling.

"The captain invites us to sit at his table," she said, when the

man was gone.

"Very proper in the captain," said George complacently. "You see, Madam Waldeaux, even the men who go down in ships have heard of you and your family!"

"I don't believe the captain ever heard of me," she said, after a grave consideration, "nor of the Waldeaux. It is much more likely that he has read your article in the Quarterly, George."

"Nonsense!" But he stiffened himself up consciously.

He had sent a paper on some abstruse point of sociology to the Quarterly last spring, and it had aroused quite a little buzz of criticism. His mother had regarded it very much as the Duchess of Kent did the crown when it was set upon her little girl's head. She always had known that her child was born to reign, but it was satisfactory to see this visible sign of it.

She whispered now, eagerly leaning over to him. "There was something about that paper which I never told you. I think I'll tell you now that the great day has come."

"Well?"

"Why, you know—I never think of you as my son, or a man, or anything outside of me—not at all. You are just ME, doing the things I should have done if I had not been a woman. Well,"—she drew her breath quickly,—"when I was a girl it seemed as if there was something in me that I must say, so I tried to write poems. No, I never told you before. It had counted for so much to me I could not talk of it. I always sent them to the paper anonymously, signed 'Sidney.' Oh, it was long—long ago! I've been dumb, as

you might say, for years. But when I read your article, George —do you know if I had written it I should have used just the phrases you did? And you signed it 'Sidney'!" She watched him breathlessly. "That was more than a coincidence, don't you think? I AM dumb, but you speak for me now. It is because we are just one. Don't you think so, George?" She held his arm tightly.

Young Waldeaux burst into a loud laugh. Then he took her hand in his, stroking it. "You dear little woman! What do you know of sociology?" he said, and then walked away to hide his amusement, muttering "Poems? Great Heavens!"

Frances looked after him steadily. "Oh, well!" she said to herself presently.

She forced her mind back to the Quarterly article. It was a beginning of just the kind of triumph that she always had expected for him. He would soon be recognized by scientific men all over the world as their confrere, especially after his year's study at Oxford.

When George was in his cradle she had planned that he should be a clergyman, just as she had planned that he should be a well-bred man, and she had fitted him for both roles in life, and urged him into them by the same unceasing soft pats and pushes. She would be delighted when she saw him in white robes serving at the altar.

Not that Frances had ever taken her religion quite seriously. It was like her gowns, or her education, a matter of course; a trustworthy, agreeable part of her. She had never once in her life

shuddered at a glimpse of any vice in herself, or cried to God in agony, even to grant her a wish.

But she knew that Robert Waldeaux's son would be safer in the pulpit. He could take rank with scholars there, too.

She inspected him now anxiously, trying to see him with the eyes of these Oxford magnates. Nobody would guess that he was only twenty-two. The bald spot on his crown and the spectacles gave him a scholastic air, and the finely cut features and a cold aloofness in his manner spoke plainly, she thought, of his good descent and high pursuits.

Frances herself had a drop of vagabond blood which found comrades for her among every class and color. But there was not an atom of the tramp in her son's well-built and fashionably clothed body. He never had had a single intimate friend even when he was a boy. "He will probably find his companions among the great English scholars," she thought complacently. Of course she would always be his only comrade, his chum. She continually met and parted with thousands of people—they came and went. "But George and I will be together for all time," she told herself.

He came up presently and sat down beside her, with an anxious, apologetic air. It hurt him to think that he had laughed at her. "That dark haze is the Jersey shore," he said. "How dim it grows! Well, we are really out now in the big world! It is so good to be alone there with you," he added, touching her arm affectionately. "Those cynical old-men-boys at Harvard bored

me."

"I don't bore you, then, George?"

"You!" He was very anxious to make her forget his roughness. "Apart from my affection for you, mother," he said judicially, "I LIKE you. I approve of you as I never probably shall approve of another woman. Your peculiarities—the way your brown hair ripples back into that knot "—surveying her critically. "And the way you always look as if you had just come out of a bath, even on a grimy train; and your gowns, so simple—and rich. I confess," he said gravely, "I can't always follow your unsteady little ideas when you talk. They frisk about so. It is the difference probably between the man's mind and the woman's. Besides, we have been separated for so many years! But I soon will understand you. I know that while you keep yourself apart from all the world you open your heart to me."

"Wrap the rug about my feet, George," she said hastily, and then sent him away upon an errand, looking after him uneasily.

It was very pleasant to hear her boy thus formally sum up his opinion of her. But when he found that it was based upon a lie?

For Frances, candid enough to the world, had deceived her son ever since he was born.

George had always believed that she had inherited a fortune from his father. It gave solidity and comfort to his life to think of her in the stately old mansion on the shores of Delaware Bay, with nothing to do except to be beautiful and gracious, as befitted a well-born woman. It pleased him, in a lofty, generous way, that

his father (whom she had taught him to reverence as the most chivalric of gentlemen) had left him wholly dependent upon her. It was a legal fiction, of course. He was the heir—the crown prince. He had always been liberally supplied with money at school and at Harvard. Her income was large. No doubt the dear soul mismanaged the estates fearfully, but now he would have leisure to take care of them.

Now, the fact was that Colonel Waldeaux had been a drunken spendthrift who had left nothing. The house and farm always had belonged to his wife. She had supported George by her own work all of his life. She could not save money, but she had the rarer faculty of making it. She had raised fine fruit and flowers for the Philadelphia market; she had traded in high breeds of poultry and cattle, and had invested her earnings shrewdly. With these successes she had been able to provide George with money to spend freely at college. She lived scantily at home, never expecting any luxury or great pleasure to come into her own life.

But two years ago a queer thing had happened to her. In an idle hour she wrote a comical squib and sent it to a New York paper. As everybody knows, fun, even vulgar fun, sells high in the market. Her fun was not vulgar, but coarse and biting enough to tickle the ears of the common reader. The editor offered her a salary equal to her whole income for a weekly column of such fooling.

She had hoarded every penny of this money. With it she meant to pay her expenses in Europe and to support George in his year

at Oxford. The work and the salary were to go on while she was gone.

It was easy enough to hide all of these things from her son while he was in Cambridge and she in Delaware. But now? What if he should find out that his mother was the "Quigg" of the New York –, a paper which he declared to be unfit for a gentleman to read?

She was looking out to sea and thinking of this when her cousin, Miss Vance, came up to her. Miss Vance was a fashionable teacher in New York, who was going to spend a year abroad with two wealthy pupils. She was a thin woman, quietly dressed; white hair and black brows, with gold eye-glasses bridging an aquiline nose, gave her a commanding, inquisitorial air.

"Well, Frances!" she began briskly, "I have not had time before to attend to you. Are your bags hung in your stateroom?"

"I haven't been down yet," said Mrs. Waldeaux meekly. "We were watching the fog in the sun."

"Fog! Mercy on me! You know you may be ill any minute, and your room not ready! Of course, you did not take the bromides that I sent you a week ago?

"No, Clara."

Miss Vance glanced at her. "Well, just as you please. I've done what I could. Let me look at your itinerary. You will be too ill for me to advise you about it later."

"Oh, we made none!" said George gayly, coming up to his

mother's aid. "We are going to be vagabonds, and have no plans. Mother's soul draws us to York Cathedral, and mine to the National Gallery. That is all we know."

"I thought you had given up that whim of being an artist?" said Miss Vance, sharply facing on him.

Young Waldeaux reddened. "Yes, I have given it up. I know as well as you do that I have no talent. I am going to study my profession at Oxford, and earn my bread by it."

"Quite right. You never would earn it by art," she said decisively. "How long do you stay in York, Frances?"

"Oh, a day, or a month—or—years, as we please," said Frances, lazily turning her head away. She wanted to set Clara Vance down in her proper place. Mrs. Waldeaux abhorred cousinly intimates—people who run into your back door to pry into the state of your larder or your income. But Miss Vance, as Frances knew, unfortunately held a key to her back door. She knew of George's wretched daubs, and his insane desire, when he was a boy, to study art. He gave it up years ago. Why should she nag him now about it? By virtue of her relationship she knew, too, all of Mrs. Waldeaux's secrets. It was most unfortunate that she should have chosen to sail on this vessel.

"Well, mother," George said, uneasy to get away, "no doubt Miss Vance is right. We should set things in order. I am going now to give my letter of credit to the purser to lock up; shall I take yours?"

Mrs. Waldeaux did not reply at once. "No," she said at last. "I

like to carry my own purse."

He smiled indulgently as on a child. "Of course, dear. It IS your own. My father was wise in that. But, on this journey, I can act as your paymaster, can't I? I have studied foreign money–"

"We shall see. I can keep it as safe as any purser now," she said, obstinately shaking her head.

He laughed and walked away.

"You have not told him, then?" demanded Clara.

"No. And I never will. I will not hurt the boy by letting him know that his mother has supported him, and remember, Clara, that he can only hear it through you. Nobody knows that I am 'Quigg' but you."

Miss Vance lifted her eyebrows. "Nothing can need a lie," she quoted calmly. Presently she said earnestly, "Frances, you are making a mistake. Somebody ought to tell you the truth. There is no reason why your whole being should be buried in that man. He should stand on his own feet, now. You can be all that he needs as a mother, and yet live out your own life. It is broader than his will ever be. At your age, and with your capabilities, you should marry again. Think of the many long years that are before you."

"I have thought of them," said Mrs. Waldeaux slowly. "I have had lovers who came close to me as friends, but I never for a moment was tempted to marry one of them. No, Clara. When the devil drove my father to hand me over—innocent child as I was—to a man like Robert Waldeaux, he killed in me the capacity for that kind of love. It is not in me." She turned her strenuous

face to the sea and was silent. "It is not in me," she repeated after a while. "I have but one feeling, and that is for my boy. It is growing on me absurdly, too." She laughed nervously. "I used to be conscious of other people in the world, but now, if I see a boy or man, I see only what George was or will be at his age; if I read a book, it only suggests what George will say of it. I am like one of those plants that have lost their own sap and color, and suck in their life from another. It scares me sometimes."

Miss Vance smiled with polite contempt. No doubt Frances had a shrewd business faculty, but in other matters she was not ten years old.

"And George will marry some time," she said curtly.

"Oh, I hope so! And soon. Then I shall have a daughter. I know just the kind of a wife George will choose," she chattered on eagerly. "I understand him so thoroughly that I can understand her. But where could he find her? He is so absurdly fastidious!"

Miss Vance was silent and thoughtful a moment. Then she came closer. "I will tell you where to find her," she said, in a low voice. "I have thought of it for a long time. It seems to me that Providence actually made Lucy Dunbar for George."

"Really?" Mrs. Waldeaux drew her self up stiffly.

"Wait, Frances. Lucy has been with me for three years. I know her. She is a sincere, modest, happy little thing. Not too clever. She is an heiress, too. And her family is good; and all underground, which is another advantage. You can mould her as you choose. She loves you already."

"Or is it that she–?"

"You have no right to ask that!" said Miss Vance quickly.

"No, I am ashamed of myself." Mrs. Waldeaux reddened.

A group of girls came up the deck. Both women scanned the foremost one critically. "I like that wholesome, candid look of her," said Miss Vance.

"Oh, she is well enough," said Frances. "But I am sure George does not like yellow hair. Nothing but an absolutely beautiful woman will attract him."

"An artist," said Miss Vance hastily, "would tell you her features were perfect. And her flesh tints–"

"For Heaven's sake, Clara, don't dissect the child. Who is that girl with the red cravat? Your maid?"

"It is not a cravat, it's an Indian scarf. If it only were clean–" Miss Vance looked uneasy and perplexed. "She is not my maid. She is Fraulein Arpent. The Ewalts brought her as governess from Paris, don't you remember? They sent the girls to Bryn Mawr last week and turned her adrift, almost penniless. She wished to go back to France. I engaged her as assistant chaperone for the season."

Mrs. Waldeaux's eyebrows went up significantly. She never commented in words on the affairs of others, but her face always was indiscreet. George, who had come up in time to hear the last words, was not so scrupulous. He surveyed the young woman through his spectacles as she passed again, with cold disapproval.

"French or German?" he asked.

"I really don't know. She has a singular facility in tongues," said Miss Vance.

"Well, that is not the companion *I* should have chosen for those innocent little girls," he said authoritatively, glad to be disagreeable to his cousin. "She looks like a hawk among doves."

"The woman is harmless enough," said Miss Vance tartly. "She speaks exquisite French."

"But what does she say in it?" persisted George. "She is vulgar from her red pompon to her boots. She has the swagger of a soubrette and she has left a trail of perfume behind her—pah! I confess I am surprised at you, Miss Vance. You do not often slip in your judgment."

"Don't make yourself unpleasant, George," said his mother gently. Miss Vance smiled icily, and as the girls came near again, stopped them and stood talking to Mlle. Arpent with an aggressive show of familiarity.

"Why do you worry Clara?" said Mrs. Waldeaux. "She knows she has made a mistake. What do you think of that little blonde girl?" she asked presently, watching him anxiously. "She has remarkable beauty, certainly; but there is something finical—precise–"

"Take care. She will hear you," said George. "Beauty, eh? Oh, I don't know," indifferently. "She is passably pretty. I have never seen a woman yet whose beauty satisfied ME."

Mrs. Waldeaux leaned back with a comfortable little laugh. "But you must not be so hard to please, my son. You must bring

me my daughter soon," she said.

"Not very soon. I have some thing else to think of than marriage for the next ten years."

Just then Dr. Watts came up and asked leave to present his friend Perry. The doctor, like all young men who knew Mrs. Waldeaux, had succumbed to her peculiar charm, which was only that of a woman past her youth who had strong personal magnetism and not a spark of coquetry. George's friends all were sure that they would fall in love with a woman just like her—but not a man of them ever thought of falling in love with her.

Young Perry, in twenty minutes, decided that she was the most brilliant and agreeable of companions. He had talked, and she had spoken only with her listening, sympathetic eyes. He was always apt to be voluble. On this occasion he was too voluble. "You are from Weir, I think, in Delaware, Mrs. Waldeaux?" he asked. "I must have seen the name of the town with yours on the list of passengers, for the story of a woman who once lived there has been haunting me all day. I have not seen nor thought of her for years, and I could not account for my sudden remembrance of her."

"Who was she?" asked George, trying to save his mother from Perry, who threatened to be a bore.

"Her name was Pauline Felix. You have heard her story, Mrs. Waldeaux?"

"Yes" said Frances coldly. "I have heard her story. Can you find my shawl, George?"

But Perry was conscious of no rebuff, and turned cheerfully to George. "It was one of those dramas of real life, too unlikely to put into a novel. She was the daughter of a poor clergyman in Weir, a devout, good man, I believe. She had marvellous beauty and a devilish disposition. She ran away, lived a wild life in Paris, and became the mistress of a Russian Grand Duke. Her death–"

He could not have told why he stopped. Mrs. Waldeaux still watched him, attentive, but the sympathetic smile had frozen into icy civility. She had the old-fashioned modesty of her generation. What right had this young man to speak of "mistresses" to her? Clara's girls within hearing too! She rose when he paused, bowed, and hurried to them, like a hen fluttering to protect her chicks.

"He was talking to me of a woman," she said excitedly to Clara, "who is never mentioned by decent people."

"Yes, I heard him," said Miss Vance. "Poor Pauline! Her career was always a mystery to me. I was at school with her, and she was the most generous, lovable girl! Yet she came to a wretched end," turning to her flock, her tone growing didactic. "One is never safe, you see. One must always be on guard."

"Oh, my dear!" cried Frances impatiently. "You surely don't mean to class these girls and me with Pauline Felix! Come, come!"

"None of us is safe," repeated Clara stiffly. "Somebody says there is a possible vice in the purest soul, and it may lie perdu there until old age. But it will break out some day."

Mrs. Waldeaux looked, laughing, at the eager, blushing faces around her. "It is not likely to break out in us, girls, eh! Really, Clara," she said, in a lower tone, "that seems to me like wasted morality. Women of our class are in no more danger of temptation to commit great crimes than they are of finding tigers in their drawing-rooms. Pauline Felix was born vicious. No woman could fall as she did, who was not rotten to the core."

A sudden shrill laugh burst from the French woman, who had been looking at Mrs. Waldeaux with insolent, bold eyes. But as she laughed, her head fell forward and she swung from side to side.

"It is nothing," she cried, "I am only a little faint. I must go below."

The ship was now crossing short, choppy waves. The passengers scattered rapidly. George took his mother to her stateroom, and there she stayed until land was sighted on the Irish coast. Clara and her companions also were forced to keep to their berths.

During the speechless misery of the first days Mrs. Waldeaux was conscious that George was hanging over her, tender as a mother with a baby. She commanded him to stay on deck, for each day she saw that he, too, grew more haggard. "Let me fight it out alone," she would beg of him. "My worst trouble is that I cannot take care of you."

He obeyed her at last, and would come down but once during the day, and then for only a few hurried minutes. His mother

was alarmed at the ghastliness of his face and the expression of anxious wretchedness new to it. "His eye avoids mine craftily, like that of an insane man," she told herself, and when the doctor came, she asked him whether sea-sickness affected the brain.

On the last day of the voyage the breeze was from land, and with the first breath of it Frances found her vigor suddenly return. She rose and dressed herself. George had not been near her that day. "He must be very ill," she thought, and hurried out. "Is Mr. Waldeaux in his stateroom?" she asked the steward.

"No, madam. He is on deck. All the passengers are on deck," the man added, smiling. "Land is in sight."

Land! And George had not come to tell her! He must be desperately ill!

She groped up the steps, holding by the brass rail. "I will give him a fine surprise!" she said to herself. "I can take care of him, now. To-night we shall be on shore and this misery all over. And then the great joy will begin!"

She came out on deck. The sunshine and cold pure wind met her. She looked along the crowded deck for her invalid. Every-body was in holiday clothes, every-body was smiling and talking at once. Ah! there he was!

He was leaning over Frances' steamer chair, on which a woman lay indolently. He was in rude health, laughing, his face flushed, his eyes sparkling.

Looking up, he saw his mother and came hastily to meet her. The laugh was gone. "So you came up?" he said impatiently. "I

would have called you in time. I– Mother!" He caught her by the arm. "Wait, I must see you alone for a minute." Urged by the amazed fright in her face, he went on desperately, "I have something to tell you. I intended to break it to you. I don't want to hurt you, God knows. But I have not been idle in these days. I have found your daughter. She is here."

He led her up to the chair. The girl's head was wrapped in a veil and turned from her.

Mrs. Waldeaux held out her hands. "Lucy! Lucy Dunbar!" she heard herself say.

"Mais non! Cest moi!" said a shrill voice, and Mlle. Arpent, turning her head lazily, looked at her, smiling.

CHAPTER II

Clara Vance had her faults, but nobody could deny that, in this crisis, she acted with feeling and tact. She ignored mademoiselle and her lover, whose bliss was in evidence on deck all day, and took possession of Mrs. Waldeaux, caring for her as tenderly as if she had been some poor wretch sentenced to death. "She has no intellect left except her ideas about George," she told herself, "and if he turns his back on her for life in this way– She never was too sane!" shaking her head ominously.

She thought it best to talk frankly of the matter to little Lucy Dunbar, and was relieved to find her ready to joke and laugh at it. "No bruise in that tender heart!" thought Clara, who was anxious as a mother for her girls.

"We all worshipped Mr. George," said Lucy saucily. "I, most of all. He is so cold, so exalted and ah—h, so good-looking! Like a Greek god. But he never gave a look to poor little me! The fraulein came on deck as soon as we all went down with sea-sickness, and bewitched him with her eyes. It must have been her eyes; they are yellow—witch's eyes. Or maybe that cheap smell about her is a love-philter! Or was it just soul calling to soul? I should have said the fraulein had the soul of a milliner. She put great ideas into the hat that she altered for me," Lucy added, with an unsteady laugh.

"I care nothing for them or their souls," said Miss Vance

crossly. "It is his mother that I think of."

"But really," said Lucy, "mademoiselle is quite raw material. No ideas—no manners whatever. Mrs. Waldeaux may mould her into something good and fine."

"She will not try. She will never accept that creature as a daughter."

"She seems to me to be indifferent," said Lucy. "She does not see how terrible it is. She was leaning over the bulwark just now, laughing at the queer gossoons selling their shillalahs."

"Oh, she will laugh at Death himself when he comes to fetch her, and see something 'queer'in him," said Clara.

But her little confidence with Lucy had relieved her. The child cared nothing for George, that was plain.

Mademoiselle, watching Mrs. Waldeaux closely all day, was not deceived by her laugh. "The old lady, your mother," she said to George, "is what you men call 'game.' She has blood and breeding. More than you, monsieur. That keeps her up. I did not count on that," said the young woman thoughtfully.

George took off his glasses and rubbed them nervously as he talked. "I don't understand my mother at all! She has always been very considerate and kind. I never thought that she would receive my wife, when I brought her to her, with calm civility. Not a kiss nor a blessing!"

"A kiss? A blessing for me?" Lisa laughed and nodded meaningly to the sea and world at large. "She could hardly have blessed a woman lolling full length in her chair," she thought. "It

IS her chair. And I have unseated her for life curling herself up in the rugs."

Yet she had a twinge of pity for the old lady. Even the wild boar has its affections and moments of gentleness. A week ago Lisa could have trampled the life out of this woman who had slandered her dead mother, with the fury of any wild beast. For she was Pauline Felix's daughter. It was her mother's name that Mrs. Waldeaux had said could not be spoken by any decent woman. Lisa had been but a child, but she had held her mother's head close to her stout little heart as she lay dying—that awful mysterious death of which the young man had tried to make a telling story. The girl crossed herself now and closed her tired eyes as she thought of it. She had been a wicked child and a wicked woman, but she knew certainly that the Virgin and her Son had come near to her that day, and had helped her.

George, who was poring fondly on her face, exclaimed: "Your eyes are wet. You are in trouble!"

"I was thinking of my mother," she said gently, holding out her hand to him.

He took it and said presently, "Will you not talk to me about her, Lisa? You have not told me any thing of your people, my darling. Nor of yourself. Why, I don't even know whether you are French or German."

"Oh, you shall hear the whole story when we are married," she replied softly, a wicked glitter in her eyes. "Some of the noblest blood in Europe is in my veins. I will give you my genealogical

tree to hang up in that old homestead of yours. It will interest the people of Weir—and please your mother."

"It is good in you to think of her," he said, tenderly looking down at her.

He was not blind. He saw the muddy skin, the thick lips, the soiled, ragged lace. They would have disgusted him in another woman.

But this was—Lisa. There was no more to be said.

These outside trifles would fall off when she came into his life. Even with them she was the breath and soul of it.

She saw the difference between them more sharply than he did. She had been cast for a low part in the play, and knew it. Sometimes she had earned the food which kept her alive in ways of which this untempted young priest had never even heard. There was something in this clean past of his, in his cold patrician face and luxurious habits new to her, and she had a greedy relish for it all.

She had been loved before, caressed as men caress a dog, kicking it off when it becomes troublesome. George's boyish shyness, his reverent awe of her, startled her.

"He thinks Lisa Arpent a jeune fille—like these others. A little white rose!" she thought, and laughed. She would not tell him why she laughed, and muttered an oath when he stupidly insisted on knowing.

He was the first lover who had ever believed in her.

She had begun this affair simply to punish the "old woman";

the man in it had counted for nothing. But now, as they crossed the gangway, she looked up at him with eyes that for the moment were honest and true as a child's, and her firm hand suddenly trembled in his.

Three weeks later Mrs. Waldeaux came into Miss Vance's little parlor on Half Moon Street. Her face was red from the wind, her eyes sparkled, and she hummed some gay air which an organ ground outside. Clara laid down her pen.

"Where have you been, Frances? It is a week since I saw you."

"Oh, everywhere! George has been showing me London!" She sat down before the fire with a gurgle of comfort and dropped her bonnet and gloves on the floor beside her. "Yesterday we spent at the Museum. George explained the Elgin marbles to me. I don't suppose any body in London has studied their history so thoroughly. I did wish you could have heard him. And the day before I was at the House—in the ladies' gallery. I can't imagine how he got admission for me. He IS so clever!"

"We are going down to Canterbury for a couple of days," said Clara. "We start at noon. Will you go with us?"

"No, I think not. George does not seem to care for cathedrals. And he has plans for me, no doubt."

Miss Vance brushed the bonnet and carefully rolled up the strings. "Are you satisfied? Is London the London you have been thinking of these twenty years?" she asked.

"Oh, a thousand times more! And George has been with me every day—every day!"

Miss Vance picked up the gloves, looking impatiently at the poor lady's happy face. "Now she has gone off into one of her silly transports of delight, and for no earthly reason!"

"I noticed that George has seen very little of Lisa lately," she said tentatively. "If he really means to marry her–"

"Marry her! Clara! You surely never feared THAT?"

"He certainly told us plainly enough that he would do it," said Miss Vance testily.

"Oh, you don't understand him! You have had so little to do with young men. They are all liable to attacks like that—as to measles and scarlet fever. But they pass off. Now, George is not as susceptible as most of them. But," lowering her voice, "he was madly in love with the butcher's Kate when he was ten, and five years afterward offered to marry the widow Potts. I thought he had outgrown the disease. There has been nothing of the kind since, until this fancy. It is passing off. Of course it is mortifying enough to think that such a poor creature as that could attract him for an hour."

"I was to blame," Miss Vance said, with an effort. "I brought her in his way. But how was I to know that she was such a cat, and he such– If he should marry her–"

Mrs. Waldeaux laughed angrily. "You are too absurd, Clara. A flirtation with such a woman was degrading enough, but George is not quite mad. He has not even spoken of her for days. Oh, here he comes! That is his step on the stairs." She ran to the door. "He found that I was out and has followed me. He is the

most ridiculous mother's boy! Well, George, here I am! Have you thought of some thing new for me to see?" She glanced at Miss Vance, well pleased that she should see the lad's foolish fondness for her.

George forced a smile. He looked worn and jaded. Miss Vance noticed that his usually neat cravat was awry and his hands were gloveless. "Yes," he said. "It is a little church. The oldest in London. I want to show it to you."

Miss Vance tied on Mrs. Waldeaux's bonnet, smoothing her hair affectionately. "There are too many gray hairs here for your age, Frances," she said. "George, you should keep your mother from worry and work. Don't let her hair grow gray so soon."

George bowed. "I hope I shall do my duty," he said, with dignity. "Come, mother."

As they drove down Piccadilly Mrs. Waldeaux chattered eagerly to her son. She could not pour out her teeming fancies about this new world to any body else, but she could not talk fast enough to him. Had they not both been waiting for a lifetime to see this London?

"The thing," she said earnestly, as she settled herself beside him, "the thing that has impressed me most, I think, were those great Ninevite gods yesterday. I sat for hours before them while you were gone. There they sit, their hands on their knees, and stare out of their awful silence at the London fog, just as they stared at the desert before Christ was born. I felt so miserably young and sham!"

George adjusted his cravat impatiently. "I'm afraid I don't quite follow you, mother. These little flights of yours– They belong to your generation, I suppose. It was a more sentimental one than mine. You are not very young. And you certainly are not a sham. The statues are interesting, but I fail to see why they should have had such an effect upon you."

"Oh!" said Frances. "But you did not stay alone with them as long as I did, or you would have felt it too. Now I am sure that the debates in Parliament impressed you just as they did me?"

George said nothing, but she went on eagerly. It never occurred to her that he could be bored by her impressions in these greatest days of her life. "To see a half-dozen well-groomed young men settle the affairs of India and Australia in a short, indifferent colloquy! How shy and awkward they were, too! They actually stuttered out their sentences in their fear of posing or seeming pretentious. So English! Don't you think it was very English, George?"

"I really did not think about it at all. I have had very different things to occupy me," said George, coldly superior to all mothers and Parliaments. "This is the church."

The cab stopped before an iron door between two shops in the most thronged part of Bishopsgate Street. He pushed it open, and they passed suddenly out of the hurrying crowd into the solemn silence of an ancient dingy building. A dim light fell through a noble window of the thirteenth century upon cheap wooden pews. The church was empty, and had that curious significance

and half-spoken message of its own which belongs to a vacant house.

"I remember," whispered Frances, awestruck. "This was built by the first Christian convert, St. Ethelburga."

"You believe every thing, mother!" said George irritably. She wandered about, looking at the sombre walls and inscriptions, and then back uneasily, to his moody face.

Suddenly she came up to him as he stood leaning against a pillar. "Something has happened!" she said. "You did not bring me here to look at the church. You have something to tell me."

The young man looked at her and turned away. "Yes, I have. It isn't a death," he said, with a nervous laugh. "You need not look in that way. It is—something very different. I—I was married in this church yesterday to Lisa Arpent."

Frances did not at first comprehend the great disaster that bulked black across her whole life, but, woman-like, grasped at a fragment of it.

"You were married and I was not there! Yesterday! My boy was married and he forgot me!"

"Mother! Don't look like that! Here, sit down," grabbing her helplessly by the arms. "I didn't want to hurt you. I brought you here to tell you quietly. Cry! Why don't you cry if you're worried! Oh! I believe she's dying!" he shouted, staring around the empty church.

She spoke at last.

"You were married and I couldn't say God bless you! You

forgot me! I never forgot you, George, for one minute since you were born."

"Mother, what fool talk is that? I only didn't want a scene. I kept away from Lisa for weeks so as not to vex you. Forget you! I think I have been very considerate of you under the circumstances. You have a dislike to Lisa, a most groundless dislike–"

"Oh, what is Lisa?" said Frances haughtily. "It is that you have turned away from me. She has nothing to do with the relation between you and me. How can any woman come between me and my son?" She held up her hands. "Why, you are my boy, Georgy. You are all I have!"

He looked at the face, curiously pinched and drawn as if by death, that was turned up to his, and shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "Now this is exactly what I tried to escape yesterday. Am I never to be a man, nor have the rights of a man? You must accept the situation, mother. Lisa is my wife, and dearer to me than all the world beside."

He saw her lips move. "Dearer? Dearer than me!" She sat quite still after that, and did not seem to hear when he spoke. Something in her silence frightened him. She certainly had been a fond, indulgent mother, and he perhaps had been abrupt in cutting the tie between them. It must be cut. He had promised Lisa the whole matter should be settled to-day. But his mother certainly was a weak woman, and he must be patient with her. Secretly he approved the manliness of his patience.

"The cab is waiting, dear," he said. She rose and walked to the street, standing helpless there while the crowd jostled her. Was she blind and deaf? He put her into the cab and sat down opposite to her. "Half Moon Street," he called to the driver.

"Mother," touching her on the knee.

"Yes, George."

"I told him to drive to Half Moon Street. I will take you to Clara Vance. We may as well arrange things now, finally. You do not like my wife. That is clear. For the present, therefore, it is better that we should separate. I have consulted with Lisa, and she has suggested that you shall join Clara Vance's party while we go our own way."

She stared at him. "Do you mean that you and I are not to see London together? Not to travel through Europe together?"

He pitied her a little, and, leaning forward, kissed her clammy lips. "The thing will seem clearer to you to-morrow, no doubt. I must leave you now. Go to Clara and her girls. They all like to pet and make much of you. I will bring Lisa in the morning, to talk business a little. She has an uncommonly clear head for business. Good-by, dear!" He stopped the cab, jumped out, and walked briskly to the corner where his wife was waiting for him.

"You have told her?" she asked breathlessly.

"Yes. It's over."

"That we must separate?"

"Yes, yes. I told her you thought it best."

"And she was not willing?"

"Well, she did not approve very cordially," said George, evading her eye.

"But she shall approve!" hanging upon his arm, her burning eyes close to his face. "You are mine, George! I love you. I will share you with nobody!" She whistled shrilly, and a hansom stopped.

"What are you going to do, darling?"

"Follow her. I will tell her something that will make her willing to separate. Get in, get in!"

CHAPTER III

Frances, when in trouble, went out of doors among the trees as naturally as other women take to their beds. Lisa's sharp eyes saw her sitting in the Green Park as they passed. The mist, which was heavy as rain, hung in drops on the stretches of sward and filled the far aisles of trees with a soft gray vapor. The park was deserted but for an old man who asked Mrs. Waldeaux for the penny's hire for her chair. As he hobbled away, he looked back at her curiously.

"She gave him a shilling!" exclaimed Lisa, as he passed them. "I told you she was not fit to take care of money."

"But why not wait until to-morrow to talk of business? She is hurt and unnerved just now, and she—she does not like you, Lisa."

"I am not afraid. She will be civil. She is like Chesterfield. 'Even death cannot kill the courtesy in her.' You don't seem to know the woman, George. Come."

But George hung back and loitered among the trees. He was an honest fellow, though slow of wit; he loved his mother and was penetrated to the quick just now by a passionate fondness for his wife. Two such good, clever women! Why couldn't they hit it off together?

"George?" said Frances, hearing his steps.

Lisa came up to her. She rose, and smiled to her son's wife,

and after a moment held out her hand.

But the courtesy which Lisa had expected suddenly enraged her. "No! There need be no pretence between us," she said. "You are not glad to see me. There is no pretence in me. I am honest. I did not come here to make compliments, but to talk business."

"George said to-morrow. Can it not wait until to-morrow?"

"No. What is to do—do it! That is my motto. George, come here! Tell your mother what we have decided. Oh, very well, if you prefer that I should speak. We go to Paris at once, Mrs. Waldeaux, and will take apartments there. You will remain with Miss Vance."

"Yes, I know. I am to remain–" Frances passed her hand once or twice over her mouth irresolutely. "But Oxford, George?" she said. "You forget your examinations?"

George took off his spectacles and wiped them.

"Speak! Have you no mind of your own?" his wife whispered. "I will tell you, then, madam. He has done with that silly whim! A priest, indeed! I am Catholic, and priests do not marry. He goes to Paris to study art. I see a great future for him, in art."

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