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CALGARY

ing. Not, of course, that she really cared too, the divine beauty of them, and the for Sid, any more than he cared for her. It was merely too flirts making a trial of strength, the old eternal duel between man and woman; but, for once, the man had most to lose-and that Sid kept reiterating to himself; for this momentary diversion he might lose Rosamund, lose his whole life, and the meaning of it-

The siren, who had not known him for three days without knowing all about him, estimated accurately with what she had to contend. For the woman flirt there is no incentive like-Another Woman! It was not this quite attractive man whose scalp she was after. It was the woman to whom he was so ridiculously constant that she burned to humiliate.

Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way. I said that the line is fine, and often, to sincere observers, the adherence to it has a somewhat technical value. Was it casuistry or simplicity in Sid that made him feel that his faith was still intact so long as he had not acutally-kissed the siren? We live in a legal, concrete world, a world that judges us by our definite completed actions rather than by our feelings, or our cunningly restricted evasions of the penalty. A kiss-whatever the motiveis a concrete decisive act. A kiss is evidence. The desire to kiss, howeven powerful, is not. Now Sid had not yet kissed the siren. According to any external tribunal, Sid was still faithful to his Rosamund.

This unkissed kiss, so to say, was the key of the castle; at all events from the siren's point of view. Sid's heart, to tell the truth, ached with a sincerer standard; but, at all events, be its value what it might, this unkissed kiss was the redoubt on which he had hoist-ed his colors, to fly or fall. And it was to be no easy fight, he realized, as the siren nestled herself into a comfortable position in that sheltered nook of the windlass and sailing tackle, and phosphorescence and gold-dust stars, and the importunate surge of the sea.

He braced himself with the thought of Rosamund as with a prayer. crossed himself with the remembrance of his last look as they had parted. It' may sound laughable that anyone should arm himself so cap-a-pie against a kiss, vet the stakes in any contest are represented by some apparently trivial symbol. A kiss was the symbol here; and the siren, at all events, did not underrate its symbolic value. She fought for it as though it had been the cross of the Legion of Honor, fought with all the delicate skill of an artist, and she laughed softly now and again as she came near winning-winning the kiss that belonged to another woman.

She was terribly beautiful was the siren, terribly everything that a seductive woman can be. The atmosphere about her was a dreamy whirlpool, of which the vortex was her lips, and Sid felt himself being drawn closer and closer to that vortex. How he longed to throw up his arms and drown—but, instead, suddenly, brusquely, rudely, he

sprang up.
"I won't," he cried abruptly, and left

It was not gracefully done, but it was the only way he could do it. Victories are seldom graceful. In the thick of battle it is occasionally necessary to be impolite. Suddenly Sid had seen, as it were, luridly embodied the moment he had told himself might some day come-the moment of temptation. Here was he face to face with it at last, one of those terrible moments of trial which divide the past from the future, and challenge us to decide then and there, once and for all, what we really mean about ourselves; one of those moments that cannot be postponed, but must be met and fought just how and when they come; and as Sid realized all the moment meant, those perfumed alluring lips so dangerously near to his filled him with a veritable terror, and his heart almost stopped beating with dread of succumbing. Poor Sid, he had been so accustomed to take such kisses as they came with a light heart, but now suddenly, as in a lightning flash, he seemed to see the meaning of those mysterious standards by which the faith of men and women has been immemorially judged, a meaning he had never suspected before, and he saw,

vivid revelations thus made to him, not a moment too soon, had given him that strength to cry out "I won't," and tear himself away.
As with a burning heart, he arraigned

himself before himself in the solitude of his stateroom, it seemed at first that his victory had been but a poor one, a victory only in name. He had desired to kiss the siren, it was impossible to deny that, and surely the very wish to do so was unfaithfulness; and the only reason that had restrained him-was it not the fear of losing Rosamund? No, it was more than that, and with the realization that it was really more than that—a real inspiration, however feeble, toward the better way of loving, a repugnance for the old way, and a genuire preference, very young and tender indeed as yet, for a finer ideal-he grew a little comforted. Yes, it had been a victory, a greater one than it had seemed. He had not really wanted to kiss the siren, after all, in spite of compromising appearances—not really deep down. It was only an old habit of the surface that had momentarily got the better of him! And though it may sound like casuistry, it was not so. Poor boy, it might not have seemed a brilliant victory to the looker-on. But flirtation is a habit that dies hard, and till he had known Rosamund the mere idea of faithfulness to a woman had never remotely entered into his mind. This passage with the siren, however, had proved him so far on the road to regeneration as to have developed an actual preference for being faithful! He was himself surprised at the feeling, and it filled him with a certain awe, made him almost a little frightened, though curiously happy. Did he really love one woman at last like that? Just ore woman, out of all the women in the world? Yes, just one woman. It

was a wonderful feeling. The temptation of the siren had been the gross one of the senses. The finer and subtler trial had yet to come. Rosamund had so far compromised with her original decree as to consent to limit Sid's ordeal to one out of his nire muses. She would be content, she said, with his seeing Meriel, she, whom you may remember, he was to love till Judgment Day; for Rosamund was right in thinking that, of all Sid's previous feelings, his love for Meriel had been most serious. Indeed, it had been a feeling apart from all others and it had always shone wistfully in Sid's memory as a lost sacred thing that had come into his life too early, before his heart had been ready for it. A magic gift of loving it had been, but he had taken it carelessly with the rest, and realized all it had been only when it was far away. He recalled looks out of Meriel's eyes which told him long after that she had known he was not ready for the love she could give him, unconsciously the occasiona thought of this old shortcoming of his had prepared him for-Rosamund, of whom Meriel came to seem in his mind a beautiful prophecy. Thus old love dies that new may live, or rather lives on in giving its life to the new. Certainly, Sid would never have loved Rosamund more had he not loved

Meriel so much. Yet, what if it should prove that Rosamund in her turn had only been developing him toward repossession of his old dream! Love moves in a mysterious way. How strange if this interval of experience had been meant to bring him back, at last worthy of them, to Meriel's arms at last. He could not deny that his love for Rosamund had been haunted sometimes by moonlit memories of Meriel's face, though he could with equal truth say that the new love was greater than the old one, because of its inclusion of stable human elements which his fairy dream of Meriel had lacked. Meriel had been a dream-woman, but hardly a human woman; but Rosamund was both. Yet, almost without his knowing it, there had been lurking in the background of his consciousness a vague curiosity-it was hardly more-as to what it would seem like to see Meriel again; what her face would seem like. how her voice would sound. He did not for a moment fear the result, yet he sometimes felt that he would like to try the experiment; but all these feelings had iest, hardly consciousne pared with month's ex All that into Sid's 1

August,

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