

Arthur quietly took the seat indicated—the words, spoken in that quiet, imperious tone it were impossible for him to resist, as he had heretofore learned to his cost. Looking steadily at the girl he answered:

“Until I heard your voice I was utterly unaware of the identity of the person that I risked my life to save.”

“Then,” she murmured, “such being the case, I will not thank you for saving my life till I have told you my story—the story of my life since I jilted you, over two years ago.”

She paused for a few moments, then resumed, in gentle, beseeching tones:

“Arthur,”—lingering longingly over the name—“Arthur, you know not the pain and agony that I suffered before I could bring myself to reject your offer to become your wife—no, not to reject your offer, for I had already accepted it, but to play with your affections, and then jilt you. But this is not to the point. You know my old guardian, John Brocklibank, and how anxious he was that I should make a brilliant marriage. He never knew of my engagement to you, as I would never allow you to mention it to him. I feared his violent temper, and dreaded lest he should banish you from his house were he to know the relations that existed between us. He importuned me day after day to marry Sir Ralph Bryerly, and was for ever harping upon the splendid position I would hold as the wife of the wealthy Baronet. His praises were dinned forever into my ears, until the glamour of the splendour that could be mine for a word seemed to overpower my senses, and I at last consented, though reluctantly, to accept the addresses of Sir Ralph. But, oh! Arthur, I loved you all the time!” with a wail of anguish.

“And yet you could receive the caresses of that conceited puppy, accept his presents, and at the same time profess love for me,” he returned, somewhat hotly.

“I was mad, I think, Arthur,” she continued in a low tone. “When I told my guardian that I would marry Sir Ralph he expressed such joy that I, for a time at least, seemed to be imbued with his gladness. I was kept in a whirl of gaiety, going to operas, concerts, balls, and all the routs of the season, and was not allowed time to think. Then, when you came to me and asked me to redeem my promise, I thought of all that I should have to give up were I to become your wife—the wife of a struggling barrister, with but three hundred pounds a year, when I might have thirty thousand a year by marrying the Baronet.”

Arthur winced audibly at this, but made no remark, and she continued:

“I rejected you—even perjured myself by denying that I had ever promised to marry you. But, oh, the look that appeared on your face at my cruel words! It has haunted me, sleeping and waking, from that day to this. And when, after your first just outburst, which I checked before it was half uttered, you turned your back on me and left me without a word or a look, I thought that I should suffocate—that my heart was breaking. I tried, but in vain, to recall you; the words would not come—my throat seemed parched and dry—there was a buzzing sound in my head, and I remembered no more. When I recovered consciousness I determined to write to you, asking you to come back and take me. But I put it off till next morning; then I sent off my letter, but only to have it returned, with the intimation that you had left town, leaving no address behind you. Then my weary waiting began. Day by day I expected to hear from you or to see you, but you never came, nor could I, by all my enquiries, discover a trace of your whereabouts. During all this time I kept my room, refusing to see either my guardian or Sir Ralph, and as time sped on, and nothing could be heard from you, I grew gradually ill, my thoughts continually brooding on the one subject. I thought that, in your first paroxysm of grief and disappointment, you might have taken your life, and I cursed myself as your murderer. Then I had brain fever, and, as I was afterwards told, the doctors had great difficulty in saving my life. I wanted to die, as I thought by so doing I should the sooner join you. As

soon as I had sufficiently recovered to be conveyed downstairs, I summoned Sir Ralph, and requested him to release me from my promise. At first he refused, but on my representing to him that I had never loved him, but that I loved another, he reluctantly released me, and left me in peace. When I told my guardian what I had done he was furious, threatening me with all sorts of things; but I cared not what he said. I still thought that you had committed suicide, and I wanted to follow you. But my constitution is naturally robust, and, after a while, there grew within my breast a longing to live, and with this longing there sprung up the conviction that you were still alive. And the stronger this conviction grew, the stronger grew my desire to find you. But how was I to do it? My guardian, I knew, would never consent to my becoming your wife, even if you would have me after my cruel treatment of you. There was but one thing for me to do. I must escape from his house, and go on my quest alone. I had over a thousand pounds in my own name at the bank. Half of this I managed to draw out without exciting my guardian's suspicion, and obtained a letter of credit for the balance. Only taking what clothing I could pack in a travelling bag, I left my guardian's house, one cold, dreary night, about sixteen months ago, and started on my weary and lonely search for you. It was only after I had left the roof that had sheltered me so long that the thought struck me that I knew not at what point to begin my search. But that I must get out of London I knew. I therefore went to Scotland, and have travelled half over the world since, having been all through the continent of Europe before I crossed the Atlantic. On this side I have been all through the United States, Canada and the South American Republics, but no trace of you could I find, although I examined the registers at nearly all the hotels in the cities through which I have passed. Last night I spent in Montreal, and the conviction that I had banished for so long a time again returned—I again thought you were dead. I lay awake in my room at the St. Lawrence Hall till near morning, when I dozed, and while in a half-sleeping, half-waking condition I thought I saw your body floating on the St. Lawrence. Your face was very sad, but very peaceful, and your lips seemed to murmur, “I am at rest.” I aroused myself from my lethargic condition and tried to shake off the effects of my vision. But it appeared to me again and again all through the day. I could not shake it off. Wherever I went I seemed to see your face floating so peacefully on the surface of the waters, and to hear your voice calling upon me to come and join you. I took passage for Quebec—why I know not—but no sooner had I stepped upon the vessel than the vision again returned—you floated past the steamer, with the same peaceful look upon your face—your lips seemed to be calling to me. With a bound I threw myself into the river, and never expected to see again the light of another day upon this earth. But you have rescued me, Arthur—saved me from being obliged to pass my Maker with the sin of suicide upon my soul. Say, then, that you will forgive me?”

The last words were sobbed rather than uttered, and strong man that he was, Arthur, too, had to choke down the lump that rose in his throat.

III.

Long before she had finished her pitiful story he had been eager to clasp her to his breast and breathe the forgiveness that she prayed so earnestly for in his ear; but he sustained himself by a mighty effort till she had concluded, then, rising, he clasped his hands around her neck, drew her head upon his shoulder, and whispered, brokenly:

“Forgive you, my darling? Yes, I forgive you with all my heart and soul; and my life shall be devoted to blotting out all the suffering of the past two years.”

“And I, too, Arthur, will endeavour, by all my future actions, to repay you for your generosity in pardoning me.”

After some conversation, Arthur mentioned that he had travelled under the name of Arthur

Browne, and Nellie under the name of Eleanor Harvey, instead of Eleanor Holbrooke. Thus it was that these two had frequently been in the same town and knew not that they were in such close proximity. Arthur further explained that after he had left London he had wandered aimlessly from place to place, always striving to drive away the face of the girl who had jilted him, but, finding it impossible, he had determined to return to England, dispose of his property there, and then return to Montreal to settle.

While these explanations were being exchanged, a knock was heard at the door, and the Doctor was admitted. A glance at his patient satisfied him that all was correct, and with a muttered apology, “You have better medicine than I can give you,” he was about to withdraw, when Arthur requested him to stay, while he sought the Captain. That gentleman having arrived, such parts of their story as were necessary were detailed to the two by Arthur, and both gentlemen left the cabin, after heartily shaking the rescuer and rescued by the hands, with more moisture around their eyes than they would care for any of the crew or passengers to see.

On arriving at Quebec Arthur and Nellie put up at the St. Louis Hotel. The captain of the Quebec, with much forethought, had told such a story to the passengers as satisfied their curiosity, and the two were thus saved the fire of running questions that would otherwise have been poured upon them.

Arthur did not take passage on the Parisian, but just about the time the boat sailed there was a quiet little wedding, by special license, at St. Matthew's Church, the only persons present being the Captain and the Doctor of the Quebec, and one of the stewardesses of the steamer, who had been very kind to the blushing bride while on the vessel. But the two were happy—Nellie that she had been rescued by the hand of fate—or was it Providence?—from a watery grave, and Arthur that he had been the instrument employed in her rescue.

Shall we leave them in their happiness, or give a brief outline of their future life? It must be very brief, then. Just this: Neither Arthur nor Nellie had any great desire to live in England. They made the journey across the Atlantic, settled up all their affairs in the old country, and then returned to Montreal, where, before very long, Arthur obtained a most lucrative practice, and became one of the leading lights of the Montreal Bar. Nellie's grace, beauty and gentle disposition soon procured for her the *entree* into the best circles in the Canadian metropolis, but she never became a butterfly of fashion. Whenever any work of a philanthropic nature was to be found, her hand and her purse were ever open to relieve the distress and the suffering of her fellow-creatures, and her cheerful voice was ever ready and willing—ably seconded by her husband—in advancing the cause of humanity. Let us leave them to their unclouded happiness.

AN OPPORTUNITY.

There is nothing in life that slips by more stealthily than an opportunity. The artist knows this when he hastens to record with his pencil the impression which is his for the moment, lest intervening matters shall cause it to be dimmed or effaced. The scientist bears it in mind as he concentrates his powers for a glance into the telescope, or for a movement of the crucible. And in all other spheres the fact is recognized by him who avails himself promptly of the time which is “for every purpose,” and of the fine filaments of circumstances which are ready to make his act efficient. If we recognize that such seasons of advantages have come to us and gone again unheeded, we are saddened, whether our loss be a temporal benefit to ourselves or a never-returning occasion for doing good to others. Yet this pain will be a blessing if it shall teach us that in order to have our deeds wrought harmoniously into the swiftly-moving web of life, we must be on the alert to use God's proffered opportunities while they are opportunities.—S. S. Times.