

# WANTED—A COMPANION.

(Continued.)

## CHAPTER V. A LOVER.

A glorious July day in Brussels. Out under the trees of the Parc white-capped *bonnes* were sitting or sauntering with exquisitely dressed white babies; bigger babies with the daintiest of high-heeled *chaussures* played at ball or chased butterflies. Belgian soldiers off duty lounged and ogled the *bonnes*; foreign people, mostly English, looked about them, sat awhile, and would walk off briskly, having, as they must say, "seen the Parc," and so must "see" something else. Carriages were heard rolling along outside the Parc railings, the royal palace rose grand and majestic, and the sentinels by their little boxes paced on guard.

Miss Scott and her companion were some of the English, but they were not restless like most of them. They sat on and talked, and the girl Ellen Travers made merry over some flirtation on the bench close by the one on which she and Miss Scott sat.

They had been in Brussels a week, and they would stay one week more.

Whether the lesser gaiety of the city caused it, or whether she pined for home, Ellen Travers had been dull and sad. In her own room she had had fits of crying, passionately controlled and yet as passionately indulged in when the next hour of solitude let her relax her self-control.

Miss Scott, kindly old body, asked a question or two, but the girl gave no explanation, and indeed became so odd that Miss Scott held aloof.

Ellen showed herself so coolly dignified that she was unlike a girl, and then a moment after throw herself into the most appreciating manner possible. Two such opposite styles of behaving could not be natural. At least, if natural, Miss Scott judged that a little severity would be a tonic.

So Miss Scott held aloof.

However, these vagaries had worn off and the girl was her charming self again.

"I hope there will be letters for me when we get back to the hotel," Miss Scott said musingly.

"Yes; you love your letters." Ellen was making figures in the gravel with the tip of her sunshade; she gave one the idea of being a girl wholly at ease and free.

"I should think I did. I should fly home at once if my people neglected me as yours do."

"And I am so phlegmatic, I care not at all. But how lucky! I could not fly home if I wished to do so."

"I am not a slave-holder."

"Indeed no! But I am your servant in honor, dear. How stilted that sounds! When in reality I wish I were your servant forever, and could keep away from those people forever and aye."

This was given with a burst.

"My dear child!" Miss Scott had her lips open to ask all sorts of questions as to the seemingly disjointed condition of the Travers family affection. She stopped herself and closed her lips tightly.

"My, don't tell me, child; I don't want to know anything."

Ellen was rosy-red.

"There is nothing I can tell you," she said with decision. "I tried once before to cut myself adrift, I can't do it. Aunt holds me. Talk of tyranny! I hate the very sight of the postman; only that is foolish now, because when I wrote to aunt I forgot—forgot," she accented, "to give any address. And I wrote you know from Paris."

"How wrong of you!"

"How right of me!" Ellen was gay.

"Not at all. But I am glad to say that your fault is repaired," said Miss Scott reprovingly, "for you distressed me so when we first came here that I wrote a few lines to your aunt asking if you were subject to fits of depression."

"You did not!" Suddenly Ellen's rosy face paled and her eyes were full of terror. "Fits of depression—ha, ha!" She got up from the iron garden seat and walked swiftly and irritably across the sward and back. "I am to have no chance!" she said as she came up to Miss Scott.

"What did you say? I did not—"

"Nothing; I did not know what I said. I do not suppose it was anything worth repeating. Let us forget," she went on more quietly. "We cannot mend matters—alter matters, I mean. It would have been kinder to have let aunt lose me."

"It is very strange. Your aunt seems to arrange for you, she seemed a most capable woman," Miss Scott began.

"Most capable woman!" Ellen repeated under her breath. "She is." By this time all impulse and fire had gone from the girl, and she seated herself by Miss Scott, inert. The lady wondered.

As she wondered, and the silence continued between them, each one entirely absorbed with her own thoughts, a gentleman passing on the opposite side of the centre fountain caught sight of them.

He smiled. Then his tanned face—he had been holiday making in the open air for a fortnight—colored red, and his grey eyes lightened.

He was evidently sure that his momentary recognition was a just one. He walked away, turned down a side path, and presently reappeared within sight of the two ladies.

They did not see him. They were rising and evidently making for the gate of exit.

The gentleman followed them at a moderate distance, and saw them enter the new Hotel de la Regence. It was his hotel also. He was satisfied, he would see them an hour hence at dinner. He had only arrived in Brussels that day.

He was the young Englishman who had been assisted by Ellen Travers at the Poste Restante in Paris.

Without any beating about the bush, or any descriptive scenes of love-making till our readers came to the conclusion that this same John Everett Newsom, son of the Newsom, who was second partner in the well-known firm of Baillie, Newsom and Grant, engineers, shall inevitably be the hero of the play, we set him before them now distinctly in that character.

Lover he certainly was. He knew he had fallen in love at first sight that morning at the Paris Poste Restante. He had seen no reason to combat his passion, and sought for Ellen, but when he found her at the hotel it was on the day when Miss Scott and she were starting for Brussels.

He made no sign then, but as he had occupied a week in sight-seeing he filled a second week in the same way, going about the Belgian towns and country places in a happy unordered way of his own.

This was not the action of an impulsive lover. No. But John Newsom, aged twenty-eight, was not impulsive. He was none the less sure, however, of his love—surer than ever when he found himself in Brussels.

At dinner he would speak to her.

She was not there.

In the middle of dinner Miss Scott appeared. To the waiter, who seemed to expect a second lady, she said:

"Mademoiselle does not dine; she is ill."

Henceforth the dinner was an inane weariness to Newsom—he, too, a healthy man who appreciated dinner.

A look of excitement flashed in Miss Scott's eyes, as after a visit to her invalid she returned to the *salon*.

"I hope mademoiselle is not seriously ill," Newsom asked—asked reservedly.

"She is not ill—she is hysterical," with resentment. "I know of nothing to upset her; do you?"

"I?"

"Well—no," with a change to deprecation. "I see you are not an acquaintance, as I fancied. I am sorry."

"She's a dear girl, but something strange has come over her." Miss Scott began to knit with vigor. She could not bear to offend anyone.

"I am sorry," came without thought from Newsom. "Your friend did me so kind a service in Paris, I would like to thank her. I was nearly losing an important letter."

"You do not speak French?"

"Only very bad French."

So talk began, and it continued sufficiently to establish a friendship.

Meanwhile Ellen Travers had locked her door—it faced Miss Scott's door on the opposite side of a long corridor—locked it so deftly that not a sound could be heard. One may do this with even a rusty lock if one is careful, but Ellen had a habit of always oiling the lock of her room door. Odd! Well, she did it, perhaps because she had lived with people who did it; nervous people dislike the creak of door-handles and locks.

Ellen closed her door; her face was white. She had in her hand a letter; there had been one for her and three for Miss Scott in the letter-rack as they entered the hotel.

Ellen's letter was on foreign paper—from England. Before she read a word she caught the address given at the top of the paper, and with a little gasp took up the torn envelope. It had been posted in Brussels. And she had been sure in her belief that she alone of all her home belongings—she alone was across the silver streak, and free of English ties.

The little gasp steadied her nerves. Even a patch of color mastered the whiteness of her cheeks, and she was self-controlled when she read her letter.

She read it a second time, a third time. Then, with an expression of self-will and a flash of light in her eyes, she said half aloud:

"No I will not do it. I obey no more."

But even in saying this she obeyed, for she held her letter to a lighted candle and watched the paper burn away. It was obedience to the writer of the letter.

## CHAPTER VI. LES TROIS SIRENES.

Les Trois Sirenes was a place of evening entertainment in Brussels affected by men. Music, smoke, coffee—other liquids too. The female element was present, but the ladies who composed it were scarcely ladies "in society."

John Newsom was taken to Les Trois Sirenes by two men he had made friends with in his hotel.

They smoked and they sipped their coffee at a little table, and they listened to music—first-rate music. But smoke was the feature of the place—smoke that blurred the over-brilliant gas and everything.

Later on a party of two ladies and two men took the table next to Newsom's. They were English, or at least spoke the English tongue. One might be a foreigner, not a Frenchman or a Belgian. But the one attractive personage was a lady, a lady of perfect grace and bearing, who wore much rich black lace about her head and shoulders. A momentary glance at this lady's face thrilled Newsom. Was there not a likeness! But no, the idea was absurd.

The lady returned Newsom's glance, returned it uncompromisingly.

Then Newsom called himself a fool—disloyal to fancy such a brazen face like the face of the woman he could love!

The fair-haired teutonic-looking man spoke.

"I like not Brussels," he said.

"And I do," the lady in black lace said, your huge London and Paris does not suit my health."

"The taste of Madam Gavill is just." The second man shrugged his shoulders ironically.

Beneath the shrouding lace the lady's white hair made her noticeable as well as the striking voice.