

"I might make a poor attempt," he laughed, "but it will be a delight to watch you. This work of yours on the walls is really fine. I should almost be afraid to have you look at mine."

"You shall bring yours to show me. They will not be as delicate, but they will be far above mine in one thing."

"And what is that?" Carl inquired.

"Strength!"

"How can you tell that?"

"I cannot tell, but I know."

"You will be disappointed, I am afraid."

"No," she declared, decisively. "I shall not." Then she laughed in bell-like tones at her emphasis.

"Come," she commanded, with a thrill of animation, "we shall paint that bluff. See! just where the sun lines the green with the gorge."

"Agreed!" Carl said. "Let us hurry or the rays will have left the crags. Your shadows would then be too heavy."

"Ah!" the girl exclaimed, with a searching smile, "I see you understand art."

"A little," he admitted.

"As well as mining?" she interrogated.

"Very little better."

"Do you know what I heard a person say yesterday?"

"How could I?"

"He said Glover knew more about mining than half the engineers in Cobalt."

Carl started. He thought she must be joking, but a sharp look assured him the girl was in earnest.

"Who?" he asked.

"That wouldn't be fair."

"Is he a miner?"

"Well—yes."

"Ridgeley," Carl guessed.

She laughed in assent. "You are very, very keen," she said.

"It must be your influence that has sharpened my wits to-day, then, for I have been stupidly dull all week."

"Why do they call you 'The Prince'?" she inquired, rather irrelevantly.

"College nickname."

"Any reason?"

"As much as they have for the most of them. I've forgotten when they first gave it to me. Ha, here is your bluff. Beautiful light! Be quick, now. Set your board here. This stone will do for a seat. The moss is not so hard. One minute, wait till the rays clear that fringe. Now they bathe the gray. Quick!"

She looked up with a laugh of satisfaction at his imperative mood. Then she fell to work with a will, silently mingling her colours. Unlike some, she never talked except in monosyllables when she painted.

Glover lay back in a nook of the big rocks and watched her. "George!" he caught himself saying, "but she is perfect." The lithe figure, sitting like a sculptor's masterpiece on the rocky throne, was formed as finely as some Greek ideal. All the flesh wealth of perfect feature was harmonized with a thoughtful, earnest expression as she bent her head slightly over the board. He was not in love, he told himself, but something drew him, some indefinable, subtle thing. He had felt it that night in The Clan perhaps stronger than now, yet, try as he might, he could not define it.

The last long sunset light left the crags that Rita Theodore was painting. She sat back with a little sigh.

"There, Mr. Critic," she said, mirthfully. "What is your judgment?"

Glover looked at it. "Good," he commented, "shadow just a shade deep. Where'd you get that yellow in the crags here?"

"I forgot. It was among the rest. I hardly could tell where or how long I have had it."

"It lacks life. A lighter yellow would have made a big difference."

"You are very harsh," she softly appealed, but somehow her tone was not of disappointment. It seemed to be pleased.

"No," he objected, "only just! Now, the gorge and river are splendid. You may have been right about your lack of strength. The cliff seems weak. Lend me your brush!"

To the girl's surprise, he calmly painted out her cliff, and with a few deft strokes ran in a bold, strong pile of crag, true to nature as the original, even to the shreds of falling moss.

Miss Theodore's dark eyes were filled with a glow of admiration as she looked full into his. Confused by their brilliancy, Carl tried to glance aside, but some magnetic spell held him. The power of her look was indescribable, unaccountable. He could see in that instant her thought was not on the sketch.

Struck by sudden shame at his childishness, he dashed a hand before his eyes. Then he put the paper in her grasp.

"You have the gift, the great gift," she said, quietly. A strange but tremulous indecision seemed to have come over her. The gleam in her eyes was far, far away, when she rose to go. "Come!" was all she said.

Carl gathered the things and they turned homeward

while the night shadows crept down from the north, settling first in the gorge.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE weeks that followed were strangely and fatefully woven for Carl. The mystic something which drew him to this girl of the north grew stronger and stronger. He found himself more and more in her company, more days in the great free wood, rock, and waterway; more evenings in the dreamy studio or the reading-room of hers just beyond. That reading-room, with its mental luxury of furnishing, struck one as strange, even ridiculous, in a wild mining town up in the lone Temiskaming stretch. But whether ridiculous or not, it was a little heaven to Carl. There was the sense of sunny southern surroundings about it. It made the wind dwell upon soft Mediterranean nights, with Venice in the starry glow of sky and water, shadowy gondolas stealing under sombre arches; perhaps a low, sweet, passionate serenade to thrill to flame a heart already glowing with the soul-thrilling beauty of the sun realm. Its perfume awakened a picture of long purple hills pouring arbors of wine grapes down each low set plain. It sent the thoughts to the Grecian isles, a million isles cast in a historic east.

What could be more ludicrous. Nevertheless he could not shake the feeling, and the woman before him might have been some eastern goddess. Her face was southern, rich, and warm; her hair was the tint of night clouds, even as deep as the purple grapes on the uplands of Arretium. She charmed Carl's thoughts.

There was nothing to hold him at work, and he was glad. He was not in love, he told himself; only it pleased him, thrilled him, conquered him, to be with her. Her father Colonel Theodore, was busy looking after mining investments, of which Carl heard he had many, so that the two young people were left alone constantly.

One thing which surprised him was her impulse. Sometimes she would suddenly plan a walk, a painting expedition, a canoe jaunt through the lakes, upon the instant the thought occurred to her. This amused him, too, and he sometimes remonstrated and took command of her, making her fall in with his arrangements. That especially seemed to please her.

"Do you know," she said one day when Carl had come to take her canoeing, and she had wished on a sudden impulse to explore the bluffs on the ridge away to the east, where grew great cushioned mosses and clinging rock ferns, with which she loved to decorate her windows, "that you are the first man I have met who dared to order me about."

"Perhaps it is because of my strength."

"No, it is something else. And the odd part of it is that I submit so gracefully. I must be losing courage."

"Were the others too timid?"

"They seemed to think the proper place was at my feet."

"You were accustomed to being queen, then?"

"Absolutely!"

"And here?"

"You make me feel like a schoolgirl."

"Impossible!" Carl ejaculated in feigned consternation.

"Am I such a tyrant, then—a sort of master spirit?"

"You are the ruling power—The Prince, you know."

"I have had no intention of being arbitrary."

"But you have"—the dark eyes mocked. They were in the canoe now skirting the shore of the lake where the air was laden with the scent of pine and fir.

"Shall I evacuate the throne?" There was a deep meaning in his tone.

She looked up sharply, with eyes just a trifle serious.

"Your uncle is well, then?" she said.

"Yes. He is on crutches yet, though. He comes tomorrow."

There was no reply. The girl appeared to be waiting for him to continue.

"The tyrant may then be deposed," Carl went on.

"You mean you are going?"

"Yes, unless my uncle insists on my staying."

"You know you have done well along the mining line. Why do you not follow it up?"

"My failing for art, I suppose."

"Do you intend to cultivate it?"

"I may in the future."

"You should. You have the strength, the great gift of art—then," with a smile, "you are so tyrannical."

"Cruel!" he tossed at her.

"Does it wound very, very much?"

"I shall always remember it."

"In pain?"

"No, with pleasure. Pain is often a pleasure."

"And pleasure a pain."

"We are getting phrases confused," Carl said, letting the canoe drift idly. It was the middle of summer and Temiskaming flaunted forth all its gipsy beauty.

"Then our thoughts must be," the girl asserted.

"They may be."

"One thing, however, is clear."

"And that?"

"Is that you have been the Prince here. I have been—the page."

(To be continued.)

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