

season. The larger balls she held out against, by the smaller gayeties, such as receptions, dinners and theatre parties, claimed her almost against her will. She had some gowns made at Isabel's dress-maker's, and declared laughingly that she had never before realised how important clothes were in bringing out one's good points. She was such an instantaneous success that Mrs. Carmen had to struggle hard with herself not to begrudge to her a greater popularity than that of her own daughter.

"I wonder what it is about her that makes her so attractive," said that lady to her husband after the first month of her niece's stay. "She has not one regular feature, and yet, when you talk to her she is pretty. Even men lose their heads about her. There is Dick Street, whom I thought in love with Isabel, positively foolish over her. And some way, though I can't help feeling a little resentment that she should outshine Isabel, I can't help loving her myself. As for Isabel, I think she is more fond of Marion than she is of me," and Mrs. Carmen sighed.

With all the love of her open-hearted nature, Isabel adored her cousin, who, in a less demonstrative way, returned her affection. The two girls became close friends.

"The trouble is," said Isabel once, "I am a closer friend than you are. I tell you all I think and feel and do and I always feel that there are lots of things way down in those gray eyes of yours that I shall never have a peep at."

"Are you sure you don't keep one or two secrets from me?" Marion had answered. And the ever ready blush suffused Isabel's fair skin.

There had come, as the weeks passed, a subject which was never mentioned between them and which was constantly in the minds of both girls. When Marion had first come she had noticed the attachment which existed between her cousin and Dick Street, who came to the house more than any of the other men. Isabel's reluctance to talk of him so freely as she did of the others made Marion suspect that on her side at least, there was something more than friendship. Then Dick Street had transferred all his attention to Marion. In vain she discouraged his advances, seeing, with her keen intuition, how it was hurting Isabel and what an effort she was making to seem indifferent.

The man's name was never mentioned between the two girls now, and as the winter slipped away, Isabel began to feel a certain anticipation in the time when Marion should return to her friends in Iowa. She was not to blame, for she struggled to be the same toward her cousin, but into her love had come a restraint, between them a gulf had widened. Marion felt what was passing in Isabel's heart, and her own ached with sympathy, but she was powerless to do anything until one night when she received two stormy confessions, which cleared the atmosphere.

Isabel and her mother had gone to the last of the subscription dances of the season and Marion was at home alone. She sat before the library fire going over in her mind all the events of the last weeks, and thinking of the change which had come over her life, when the maid

announced a visitor, Mr. Street.

"How do you do?" she said, without rising. "I thought you were going to the dance to-night."

"I did intend to go, but I knew you would be here alone, and I had to come. I have something to tell you—something I must tell you," he paused, breathless through nervous excitement, then hurried on, before she could interrupt him: "Oh, Marion, I love you! I love you! I have tried not to, but I can't help it! I never knew what it was to love until I met you. Don't you care a little for me?"

"Let me ask you a question in return," she replied. "Why did you try not to love me?"

"Why?" he repeated, as though not fully understanding her.

"I will tell you why," Marion went on, her voice a little deeper from emotion. "It was because you knew that by loving me you were untrue to another, and you fought against it. You knew that another woman loved you, that you let her see that you loved her, so teaching her to love you more and more, until, without words spoken between you, she was yours, wholly and completely. You know that I am speaking of my cousin."

All the fire had gone out of the man. He sat down and rested his head in his hands.

"Did she tell you this?" he asked.

"No, but I can see it. Her heart is breaking little by little, and she goes on smiling bravely because she is such a splendid girl. You loved her before I came, and when I go you will love her again. What you feel for me is the infatuation of an hour—at most, a passion which will burn itself out. You do not know what you are giving up in Isabel. She is the truest, finest and sweetest woman in the world."

"I did not know she cared," he answered without looking up.

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