



## *The Alternative*

valuable. Last week I opened the box and took you out. I was amazed to find that you had always been there. I had put you there as a little girl, and when I came to take you out, you were a beautiful lady. I'd been treasuring you up through all these years without really knowing it. I never knew I was so rich."

A sudden panic assailed her. She realized, without warning, that she was being made love to, and that underneath his fanciful declarations there was something real, and strong, and earnest. She might have laughed at him and chided him for his gallantry had it not been for one distressing obstacle: he, Bosworth Van Pycke, had been lying just as snugly all these years in the deepest recesses of her heart. Unlike him, however, she had never quite forgotten the flaxen-haired lad of the steamship.

"It's so very nice of you to say —" she began.

"I mean it all, too — every word of it," he said gently.

"It's all come back to me —"

"Don't you think we'd better go in where the children are?" she asked nervously, backing toward the door, the light in her eyes very bright. "This — this, Mr. Van Pycke, is the pantry."

He flushed. "I — I dare say it does seem rather like backstairs gallantry," he said, in genuine humility.

"I didn't mean it in that way," she cried instantly. "It was the most beautiful thought I've ever heard expressed." She stopped suddenly. "Are you coming?"

"Not until I've said the rest of it," he said, looking over his shoulder. Then, with fierce eagerness, drawing