

perturbation, I began running over a memorandum of things to be done. He interrupted me sharply.

"Look here, Jack, I want you to go out with me at three o'clock this afternoon to—," mentioning a small town some twenty miles distant. "We will get there at four, leave again at half-past five, and reach home in time for dinner."

"My time is precious, I object."

"Do it Jack. The matter is of vital importance to me."

An appeal from Fitzgerald was irresistible. I agreed at once. At three o'clock I met him at the railway station.

We had been ten minutes on our way when he said, abruptly, "Jack, I am going to be married."

"Thunder!"

My emphatic expletive echoed through the car, and then he added, "I should not feel quite right about it if you were not there, and that is how I persuaded Emily. Besides," he continued, after a short pause, "I want you to see her. It will be much to me during two years of separation to have some one near me who has seen her."

Then, the gates of his confidence being opened, he plunged into lovers' hyperbole. I listened silently, my hat slouched over my eyes, and my hands thrust deep into my pockets. I could listen, and at the same time mentally review the years of our friendship.

It had been my habit to scoff—an envious scoff, of course—at his love-affairs. I knew now that the time of scoffing was past, and I realized (with more than a woman's jealousy, I confess it) that his love for his Emily would endure, and henceforth be the guiding impulse of his life, whether for good or ill.

On arriving at our station, Fitzgerald went at once to the ladies' waiting-room. He returned with a young girl on his arm, whom he introduced to me as Miss Emily Gordon.

I shook hands with her vigorously, and stretched on tip-toe to get a nearer view of her face, for she was very tall. As I stared at her I chilled with disappointment—not a vague sentiment, but a decided opinion that the face was not worth what Fitzgerald would sacrifice for it. The face was fair and finely featured, flushed just now with excitement. The eyes were dark, and though their wavering regard was childish and pretty, and, under the circumstances to be expected, that it was which made my heart sink. The restless glance struck me not as a trick of the moment demanded by the situation, but as expressing undesirable characteristics in the woman. There was not a gleam of the steady, spiritual light such as it would have pleased me to see in the eyes of the woman who was to be Fitzgerald's wife.

They were married in the Methodist parsonage by a very old man, and the marriage was witnessed by the clergyman's wife and myself. Mrs. Fitzgerald insisted on her husband's taking her marriage certificate, affirming childishly that she would surely lose it. She had left her home that morning with the avowed intention of visiting friends.

She was now to proceed on her journey, and her train would leave twenty minutes before ours for the city. I shook hands with her at the parsonage gate, saying, with elaborate tact, that I had always longed to pry about this peculiarly interesting town. She was crying, and clinging closely to Fitzgerald. She held my hand a moment.

"He is going so far from me, and two years are so long! You will take care of him. Promise me—oh, promise me!"

"I do, with my whole heart," I answered, and turned away from them.

I liked her better. The tears and the sob in her voice

had touched me, almost won me. My dull senses were awakened to the attraction which such a creature might have for a man of strong passion and imagination. If it had not been for that first wretched impression, I should have been in love on the spot with Fitzgerald's wife.

We were on our way home when he asked me what I thought of her. I praised her in the best words I could find, and thought I was acquitting myself well. Fitzgerald's hand fell on my shoulder.

"What are you saying Jack? You are as cold as ice."

"You forget. You are at fever heat."

"Then what are you feeling?" he burst out, irritably.

"What are you thinking that detracts from her?"

I had been coldly thinking the worst of her. I was startled into an unequivocal answer.

"I am thinking that she has not the strength to appreciate you, or to be true to you. I am fearing that nothing but ill will come to you of what you have done to-day."

I expected that he would turn upon me furiously, but he did not. His face lost its color, and he said, as if reasoning to himself, not in answer to me:

"It was her own wish. I would have trusted her without any pledge. It will be strange if she does not regret this day, yet I stake my soul that she never will."

I said to myself, "He has given her his best; surely that cannot have been unworthily bestowed." I dug a grave for my doubts and suspicions, and tried to cover them deep.

We were in winter quarters in a canyon of the Fraser River. We had had no mail for several weeks, and toward the end of the year we concluded that there were a noble army of martyrs and an accumulation of mail-bags beneath the snow-drifts which stretched almost unbroken for a hundred miles, the distance to the nearest post-station. One day, after a week of almost uninterruptedly fine weather, the welcome messenger arrived—arrived on his low sledge drawn by eight sure-footed dogs—arrived in hot haste, with bells jingling, and frost-powdered beard, and bright eyes gleaming out from a frame of furs, for all the world like a belated Santa Clause.

Fitzgerald, as usual, opened the bag, and I knew by his puzzled look that the letters eagerly expected by him, from his wife, were missing. He kept apart from us all day, but in the evening joined the group round the fire, with a pipe and newspaper.

There was a youngster in our party who I knew was fully informed of the love of Fitzgerald and Emily Gordon—as far, that is, as the affair had been gossiped over by his mamma and her women friends. When this youth, buried in a home paper, whistled shrilly, and shouted, "Say, Fitzgerald, here's a nut for you!" I felt certain that he had bad news of Fitzgerald's wife.

"What is it?" Fitzgerald asked, indifferently, not looking from his paper.

"About that stunning Miss Gordon—the girl you were such spoons on. Do you remember?"

Fitzgerald took his pipe from his mouth. "I remember. What about her?"

"It is reported from Rome that Miss Emily Gordon, one of our fairest daughters, is to marry the young and distinguished Count Mondella. Both parties being of the Roman Catholic faith, the wedding is soon to be celebrated in the Holy City with great eclat."