

BAT WING BOWLES

speaking with a formal restraint. "Much as I value your happiness, I—I cannot observe this—custom of the country!"

He spat the words out bitterly, and closed his lips—as if there was more he might say. But Dixie did not lose her smile.

"Maybe I'd accept you," she suggested with a roguish twinkle, and once more he gazed into her eyes to read there if she was his friend. But a woman's eyes are deceptive, and hers spoke of many things—she smiled, the old dazzling smile, but there was mischief in the depths. He sighed and drew away.

"Ah, no," he said, "you cannot understand." Then, as she waited, his heart turned to bitterness and he spoke on as the thoughts came. "Really, Miss Lee, it pains me—I cannot believe it. What is one man, more or less, that you should hurt me like this? Dixie"—he raised his downcast eyes and regarded her reproachfully—"I have dreamed about you. I have worshiped you from afar—I have fought my way to be near you. You don't know how it would pain me—after all I have hoped—to have you——"

"Aw, Bowles," chided Dixie, reaching out her hand, "can't you see that I want you?"

And then Bowles' dream came true.