



THE GREAT DITCH AT ISLE-AUX-NOIX, P.Q.
OUR MILITARY RUINS.

melancholy? Verily the girl was presented to him as a confused study. He must speak to her and judge for himself. He got up then and hastened back to the house. In order to prolong Frank's agony of expectation he made for a side entrance, and so avoided the people on the front verandah. He would slip in amongst them quietly if possible. As he passed along the hall, he heard voices. They came apparently through the open casements of the drawing-room; evidently the ladies were on that part of the verandah, and he determined to join them as unobtrusively as he could by way of the window.

He entered the room and was about to act up to the design, when he was arrested by a figure standing right in his path. It was Miss Caldwell; she was quite alone. The red light from the western sky, where the sun, but a moment before, had vanished, outlined her form and shed a radiance over her soft brown hair. A fit pose for the eyes of our enraptured lover! One arm was uplifted grasping the flimsy lace curtain, by which she was partly shrouded. The posture, though unstudied, brought out the graceful proportions of the girl's figure. Sidney's was an eye that instinctively appreciated beauty. And here was the embodiment of grace and beauty, with the ruddy glow of a new-born twilight shed over her with subdued lustre. What wonder if he gazed over her with subdued lustre. He was young, and the blood that coursed through his veins was hot. And there was in him a strain (inherited maybe from some old song singing ancestor) that made him quick to respond to the sense of the beautiful—that fired his soul, even as the sweetest music does, and uplifted him far above the clogging restraints of ordinary life. For the man who has imagination is not bound down to the hard material facts and figures of this world. And my hero was blessed, or, as the case may be, cursed with imagination. All the poetry in his nature was stirred at the sight of this unconscious girl. And it seemed as if his heart went out to her somehow, nearer, and marked the rapt look with which she gazed forth, admiring the after-glow, and the light world was a better one now that he knew it held such a divinity. What a love of nature the girl had! Her position altered not; nor did her eyes move from the survey of the sky. "What were the thoughts that conjured up that look of

dreamy melancholy to her face?" Sidney wondered.

"Could it be that she too yearned for the unattainable—that her's was a nature apart from other natures, even as his own was? Did she also strive to pierce the mists that veiled life from life, wiping off the eternity that was before our birth from the memory? Ah!" As this idea came to him, Sidney was conscious of a thrill of pleasure unspeakable. Yes, he had found at last a kindred soul,—nay, rather say he had again become united to his other self.

For had he not known her in that dim past which his poor earthly memory failed utterly to recall, but of whose existence he was so certain? Had not their two souls been linked together in that shadow land? Of course they had; he knew it. And, as his thoughts were thus engaged, as his spirit seemed as if it would leave its fleshy cell and confer with her spirit, he saw that the girl was vaguely disquieted. Perhaps she, too, was conscious that her other self was at hand! She turned slowly, and her eyes stared into his in a startled way. But, withal, there was a half smile in her face, and that half smile brought to the entranced Sidney the fullness of joy. His brain reeled and a darkness seemed to descend and cloud the whole world from him and her. It was as if they two were alone utterly.

He was conscious of the fact that in the midst of the darkness there was a light; and, in the centre of the light, was this girl's face. Round about in the gloom was a sound as of rushing wind. There the tempest roared and the rain beat; here, before him, was the light, and here was the angel's face!

God knows what might have been! My fantastic young hero was so worked up, and his mind so unsettled, that time was not, and place was forgotten. Possibly his next vision would have found the girl in his arms—maybe there would have been no next vision. For, with minds constituted like unto his, the dividing line betwixt fact and fancy may not be crossed with impunity. There is that in the world and rave horribly. You have, perhaps, seen them behind the bars of a madhouse. These men originally were not given to more extravagant vagaries than Sidney March. But they crossed from the matter of fact, and remained too long in the realm beyond. And now they cannot return; they are not as other men.

But fortunately there came an interruption. Sidney heard the sound of unwonted bustle in the darkness that was round about him; he heard the tramp of feet, and vaguely he marvelled. Then—ah!—a voice was speaking. What was its message? He listened with strained ears, but there was still that rushing, crashing sound, and the words came not distinctly. Instinctively he strove to collect himself, and lo!—

"You here, too, Mr. March! I have been looking everywhere for this little truant. I fear it will be lonely for her here, poor dear."

And little Mrs. Cowan smiled upon the girl whose figure overtopped her own diminutive one by half a head. Then, with a nod to my hero, she passed from his sight, and brought the lady of his love along with her. Sidney, all dazed and shaken, followed after them through the open window, and approached the little group on the gallery.

He was greeted by a cry from the hostess,—

"Here he is!—come along Sidney! I have promised them you shall tell us an amusing story."

The others glanced at him with an expectant smile, but Sidney responded not. In truth, though his face did not reveal it, his mind was still dazed and confused. He muttered unintelligibly, and sank wearily into a chair that was some distance removed from them.

Those of the others who were well used to his whims thought but little of this. It was but another black mood, another of his interesting fits of brooding. He would brighten up presently; and so they left him in peace, returning again to desultory conversation. Frank was there, stretched contentedly at Miss Smiling's feet; he had a lighted cigarette in his hand, which he had obtained from young Caldwell. The last was on the outskirts of the group, and he was also smoking. But, as Mrs. Cowan appeared, escorting her young charge, he rose quickly, threw away his cigarette, and arranged a seat for both near by. Moreover, he was infinitely more careful about the comfort of Mrs. Cowan's charge than for that of the lady herself. Such conduct in a brother was strange, not to say unprecedented. Had Sidney's wits not been clouded by the late transport that he had experienced, he would have noted this. And perhaps—for he had a marvellously quick brain—his speculation thereat might have resulted in changing this history. As it was, however, he did not observe the significant action.

(To be continued.)