

THE GIRL WITH THE BEAUTIFUL FACE.

BY ALMA F. MCCOLLUM

ALIGHT vine from one of the hanging baskets swayed gently in the breeze, and a fresh puff blew it streaming out across her face.

"Look!" she said, and caught the long tendril. "What is it, do you know?"

She was looking into my face, and I was looking into her's.

"No," I whispered, "but I think it is Canadian mistletoe."

I drew nearer, but she almost screamed an astonished "Don't!" and the next instant I was alone.

When I recovered my senses, I rushed after her to try, if possible, to explain my conduct, and obtain her pardon, but she had left the dancing room, and after waiting in vain for her, I wrote a short note begging her to return and give me five minutes to vindicate myself. I entrusted it to Jennie—one of the maids—and told her to wait for an answer.

In a few moments she gave it back to me, and my heart sank, for I thought she had been unable to find Marian; but she said the answer was within, and in opening it I found the following lines hastily pencilled under my signature:

"I think I understand, and forgive you freely on condition that you never again refer to the subject. MARIAN KINGSLEY."

In the morning she greeted me with her usual pleasant smile, and the days passed as other days, except that she carefully avoided being left alone with me; but Muskoka had lost its charm and I determined, if possible, to leave on the following morning.

The evening mail brought me several letters, and one of these I made a pretext for my sudden departure.

Marian had disappeared after supper, and was not present when I told Mrs. Ellis of my change of plans. I sat on the verandah talking to her till twilight, hoping that Marian would return, and making arrangements to meet her and Mrs. Ellis in New York when they sailed for Europe.

The twilight deepened and still she did not come, and Mrs. Ellis suggested that I would look for her and bring her cloak, for the night air had become chilly.

Inwardly I was very reluctant to go, for I knew the meeting would be awkward for both of us, but Mrs. Ellis insisted, and I could not let her see me hesitate. I asked her to come with me, but she declined, as she had thought Marian had gone to Sunset Rock (a favourite spot of hers at this hour), and the distance was too far for her this evening. Of course she was only scheming to give me a few moments alone with Marian, but after last night's episode, I felt that they were useless to me, and it was with slow, unwilling steps that I wended my way towards Sunset Rock, a steep, high bluff overlooking the lake at the west of the hotel.

In ten minutes I was in sight of the rustic summer house, perched on its summit, and could dimly distinguish Marian sitting with her face hidden in her arms, which were leaning on the back of the bench within. She did not hear me approach till I spoke, and she started nervously, and her voice trembled as if she had been crying, when she thanked me for the cloak. I put it around her, but her fingers could not manage the clasp at the neck, so I fastened it. As I did so a sob rose in her throat, but she stifled it.

"What is the matter?" I asked, taking both her hands in mine. "Sit down again and tell me."

"Oh! I am so foolish and childish," she

began, but I assured her I did not think so, and thought that she must have some serious trouble to unnerve her so.

She attributed the cause of her tears to her intended departure from Canada. She had never met many English people and disliked leaving her friends here. I tried to console her by saying she would surely make friends wherever she went and would soon be very happy in England.

"No!" she declared, jerking her hand from mine, "I will never be happy, and I wish the old Paris would sink on the way over, and end it all."

"I saw that she was in an unreasonable mood and on the verge of hysterics, and as I was certain she was keeping the real cause of her emotion from me, I could offer no suggestion or comfort to help her, so I told her of my sudden departure in the morning. She said she was very sorry, and I believed she was, but not in the way I wished her to be. I asked her to pardon me if I referred to last night, for I could not help thanking her for her forgiveness, and also for sparing me the humiliation of telling her what she could not agreeably listen to from me. Then I waxed eloquent and unconsciously acted after the manner of a noble rejected in a dramatic novel. After all, books of that class are sometimes true to life, although one almost needs a personal experience to find it out.

I held both her hands in mine and told her that in me she would always find a friend whose every thought was for her welfare, and I made her promise to send for me, be she in England or Canada, if, at any time I could do her the slightest service. After that we walked silently back to the hotel, and I think that I, knowing that she was lost to me, suffered as much as she did in thinking of her former fiancée.

In the morning, when I departed, the hour was made hideous with sounds of tooting horns in various stages of huskiness, and clanging cow bells and tin horns surreptitiously borrowed for the occasion, for it was the custom of these merry people in this manner to speed the departing guests, and the louder the clang the deeper the sorrow and the greater the appreciation of your presence as a guest at the hotel.

On this occasion—and I tell it to my credit—every available noisable article on the premises was pressed into service. Someone even plied the handle of the squeaky force pump to add to the din, and to crown all, just as we were disappearing around the last point, a loud salute was fired, and the flag was lowered to half mast.

Marian and Mrs. Ellis came with me as far as Port Carling, and we talked constantly of meeting again in September and of the possibility of my being in England at Christmas time, for I had determined to keep informed of their whereabouts, and if my double was not again in the field to continue my suit.

In a mechanical sort of way I returned to Toronto. I believe my only reason for doing so was that I had purchased a return ticket there.

I left home with the intention of visiting all the beauties of Canada, but suddenly wearied, and longed for the seclusion of my mother's cottage in the Adirondacks.

Two men sitting behind me were discussing their return trip to New York, and decided to sail down the St. Lawrence as far as Montreal, and I adopted their plan and bought my ticket by the same route. We sailed on the same morning by the R. & O. line, and a fresh breeze was blowing, rippling the lake into a myriad dazzling points of light. My fellow passengers failed to interest me, and I stared vacantly at the bright water or roamed aimlessly about the deck. No one sought my society, as all the

men on board seemed attached to some party—all save one, and he was quite alone like myself.

He had drawn a deck chair far forward in the small corner in the bow, and was sitting with his back to everyone. I could not help noticing him, for I coveted his chair in the position he had placed it, and also there was something very familiar looking about his face, and I sat watching him, trying to trace a resemblance to some one I knew. He was a young looking fellow, with a very gloomy countenance. The mouth drooped at the corners and the brow was creased into a frown, which was not habitual because no permanent lines were there.

A stiff breeze fluttered the leaves of a book he was reading, and he smoothed them back impatiently several times, then suddenly after an especially vicious gust, threw the book fiercely into the water. Then he lay back in his chair, pulled his cap over his eyes, as if he contemplated following it to its watery grave, and wished to shut out the sight. I could cheerfully have kicked him, for the book he threw away was "The Lilac Sunbonnet," and how he could wilfully cast it from him without finishing its contents was more than I could understand. It was evident that the world and he were not on the best of terms.

He did not look as if he had dyspepsia and I was wondering what had gone amiss with him, when suddenly he sat upright, re-adjusted his cap and took several letters from his pocket.

He selected one, and had only removed the envelope when the wind blew it out of his hand, far over the deck almost into my face. He sprang after it, and I caught it quickly and gave it back to him, but in the moment it was in my hand I recognized the same square envelope and violet crest that Marian had sent from Muskoka not two weeks ago. I looked at him closely again and it suddenly dawned on me whom he resembled. He certainly had the advantage over me, for he was several inches taller, and his hair had a becoming soft curl, which mine lacked, but the eyes and mouth were the same, and he might easily have passed for my younger brother.

So this is my double I mused, and I watched him. His attitude was one of such utter dejection I felt extremely sorry for him.

If I had waited till selfish motives arose and had not acted on the impulse of the moment. I might now end my story differently, but I immediately determined to try the role of peacemaker, so went smiling forward and tried to make him talk to me.

It was very hard at first, but I adroitly directed the conversation to Muskoka, and when I mentioned Heartease he began to show a little interest. Then I talked of the people there, Mrs. Ellis and Miss Kingsley among others.

"Oh!" he said very solemnly, "they are from Toronto. I am acquainted with them. Miss Kingsley and I were in the same year at 'Varsity.'"

(Concluded on page 26.)

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