

"Dorane has not that much sentiment in him, Heathcote," was the dry response, "as to mind his family's leaving him, except, perhaps he is missing the money his governor used to allow him. Certainly his bank business will not yield enough to cater to his gambling and spendthrift proclivities. But probably, as you say, Miss Raymond's coldness is affecting him."

"Has Dorane proposed to Mrs. Staunton's companion, and been spurned by her?"

The lawyer's brow flashed at the thought but merely shrugging his shoulder, he made no reply to the young man, but went into the inner office. It was then, only then, that he knew in what regard he was holding this fair girl, for whom his old enemy was a rival, as it were.

He loved her! He had loved her the day they had first met on crowded Broadway. He had loved her, when a second time, he was at the mercy of his runaway steed, he had seen the lovely eyes fill with sympathy for him, and he had loved her when he first saw her in Staunton House, and he had not known it until now. Then, as if in painful protestation there arose before him the beautiful glowing face of the woman to whom his love was pledged, and whom in a few short months he was to call by the sacred name of wife. His hands knotted, and he cursed his own violation of the noble trust he held.

"You are a wretch, Bruce Everett," he muttered, "worse, ten times worse, than Cyrus Dorane. Are you such an ingrate as to fling aside the love of the noblest woman that has ever been your lot to know, and to think for even one minute of any other?"

Death itself would be preferable, and he must fight against this temptation. Now was the time to begin to nip future entanglement in the bud. But, ah! Would he be capable of it?

To-night he was to go to Staunton House for dinner, so sending to a fashionable nursery, he ordered a bouquet of jasmine and immortelles, and they preceded him to Staunton House as a valentine to her, who wore his ring.

In due time he arrived out himself, and all smiling, she met him at the

drawing room entrance, the flowers in her hands.

"St. Valentine was forgotten by me, until his present came to remind me that this was his day. You see they look so nice that I dislike to set them away, but I shall put them where they will be sure to coax the admiration they merit," and stepping lightly to the centre table of inlaid cedar wood, she placed them in a slender onyx vase.

Her voice and manner were warm enough, but the words smote her lover's ears, as being distantly cold and not uttered with the same enthusiasm that one time marked a reception of any gift, especially flowers, from him. The valley was widened between them, and neither could exactly account for it. It had been growing so for the last four or five months.

"Next year I am to have my valentine," he said, as she returned to his side, "and that will be you, my own. I am to claim you in June, and I have a ravishing programme drawn up. First the Rivera and Paris with all its passing delights, then Rome. Oh, yes! We will tour the world, as never a wedded two yet have," but even as he spoke a slight shadow fell athwart the window pane, and the figure of her, who was alluring him from his allegiance to the enchantress at his side, entered the hall and passed up the broad stairs.

"Miss Raymond has been for a walk," Beatrice said softly, "and she and mamma are going out now and dine with Hilton Carton's mother. So Bruce, as we have no other guests coming, you and I and papa will entertain each other."

"You have not said what you think of our going to the Rivera and Paris," he remarked, trying to show her that it was in her he was only interested, and not in that other.

"It will be delightful, Bruce."

"And you will like to visit Rome too, heart's dearest?"

"Yes, Bruce, and anywhere else you wish to go."

When dinner was over Beatrice left her father and lover to their wine and cigars.

"Where do you intend that your honeymoon is to be spent, Bruce?" the judge asked.