

UNFORTUNATELY marriage did not present itself to Neville's imagination as the simple, easily arranged affair which Letitia's experience had taught her to regard it; and in the events that followed the momentary betrayal of his feelings she was scarcely able to judge Neville's position fairly, and to do him justice. Neville belonged to a wealthy English family. How could Letitia know that, personally, he was far less independent than the son of an artisan? He had no means of his own, and he had been brought up in the belief that to marry upon his lieutenant's pay was an impossibility. Hitherto, in fact, marriage had not entered into his calculations. He had been quite willing to contemplate it only at that probably distant period when he would either receive an adequate allowance from his father or inherit a portion of his father's wealth. But the question of marriage necessarily forced itself upon him after that scene on the bluff. As a gentleman he had his code of honor, which he could not infringe without a painful forfeiture of self-respect. Much depended upon whether Letitia had taken him seriously. Did she not, possibly, realize, as he did, the different bearings of the situation, and understand that they must give each other up, that the avowal of love was the signal for farewell? Yet Letitia was a charming girl. Had he only himself to please, how easily and pleasantly the matter could be settled! But what would his mother say to the match? Lady Caroline Neville and Mrs. Roy! What would happen if he wrote home and announced his engagement to the daughter of an Alberta tradesman (for so they would class Mr. Roy, regardless of mitigating circumstances)? Threats and entreaties might pour in alternately by every mail; or there might be a cool shrug of the shoulder and an intimation that he could, of course, do as he pleased, but that he need expect neither help nor countenance from his people. It occurred to him to throw up his profession, and to trust to Mr. Roy to put him in the way of earning an income. But that idea was quickly dismissed. It would be intolerable. For a moment, however, he envied Edgar Roy, who could marry when and whom he pleased.

These thoughts tossed through Neville's mind for twenty-four hours; but the habits and traditions of his family could not longer be set aside. At the end of twenty-four hours they began to reassert themselves, and he had at last to own their dominant influence. An offhand invitation to join a shooting-party that was given at this crisis was accepted with alacrity, since, at least, it deferred decision. A few brace of grouse, sent with a note to Mrs. Roy, would

explain his movements, and Letitia, if she were a sensible girl, would draw her own inferences. Letitia, unfortunately, had not that experience of Old World civilization which would have given her the clue to the comprehension of Neville's fettered condition. For her his kiss was the definite avowal of love. Words would follow as a matter of course. Her dreamy ecstasy betrayed her to the quick eyes of her mother, and Mrs. Roy, partly because she would not allow herself to question her daughter, was in a greater flutter of agitation than Letitia.

The future had revealed itself; and how fair it was! thought Letitia, as she looked from her bedroom window upon the pure-white range of the Olympians. She recalled Neville's words the first time she met him:

The island-valley of Avilion,
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly.

In such a sheltered valley would their lives be spent.

In shy happiness Letitia kept close to her mother's side the whole of that first day. Neville might appear at any moment, and she was timid at the thought of meeting him alone after their mutual confession on the bluffs. The second day, however, she was sure he would come, and the delay had given her courage to put on her prettiest gown. She even stepped more than once to the veranda, which commanded a long stretch of the road. The third day she began to grow impatient and just slightly anxious. Neville's truth was beyond question, but had she, perhaps, repelled him? She had certainly withdrawn from his embrace. She had been glad of the presence of the boys. In the boat she had been separated from him. Did he, could he, think that she was indifferent? How easily she could dispel such an idea if she could only see him; but until then—

"Your manners are just a trifle too reserved, Letitia," Mrs. Roy took occasion to say during the course of the morning, when she and Letitia were looking over the household linen together. She felt that some such hint at this crisis might do good, for to her, too, had occurred the thought that Letitia might unconsciously have snubbed Neville. Letitia was now convinced that she had been in fault, and she sighed for an opportunity to repair her error. In the evening Edgar remarked casually that he had met Neville.

"He was in a great hurry. He was off to Quamichau with Gowan and Tydesly, and he just stopped me to say that he hoped to send you a bag of game."

In a few days the game arrived, a quarter of venison and three brace of grouse—"with Mr. Charles Neville's compliments."

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