

WANTED—A COMPANION.

(Continued.)

"Angry, child? I am charmed—you have never been half in love."

"Oh, hush!" Pain came for an instant on the bright face. "You were telling me something, or was it somebody you were speaking of? There—I know; what is this poor Isabelle like?"

"An insipid German girl; but she is not German. Madame de la Maure is anything but insipid; she is striking. She is Alsatian, as she says—a dark woman with dark eyes and eyebrows, and a profusion of white hair."

"Like those American ladies."

"Yes; something."

"Do you know I have taken a dislike to that fashion."

"You will be converted when you see Madame."

"Yes?" the word was given questioningly.

Ellen's spirit of animation was gone, and whether to be lively cost her too great an effort, or whether she really was growing dreamy, she again fell back.

"Shall I send for Newsom?"

Suddenly there was utter loss of self-control on the girl's part. Her face burnt crimson, then as suddenly paled. The gray eyes had the terrified look in them.

"No," she cried; "no, you will never do that! It is so hard," she gasped as if to herself. "No, you must never send for him—I am going to send to say that he must never come to me. I shall never see him again. Let me leave you, Miss Scott—send me back to England; that is better than—than—I can never see him here."

"Are you mad?" Miss Scott, being a woman of energy, took the girl's arm firmly, looked into her face as firmly.

"Ah no!" A quiet sigh and a lapse into utter calm followed the words.

"I cannot understand these vagaries; I shall write to your aunt—to your father."

"I have no aunt, no father," was the quick, almost stern answer. "I deny them all! I am alone—myself—alone! Why was I born? Why cannot I die? But I can——" Really at this point Ellen Travers had forgotten Miss Scott—had, in fact, forgotten all but one thing, and this was her love, her great love for John Newsom. And seeing this love in its mighty strength she was setting against it the whole of the life she had lived, and she saw that that life and her love could never be made one.

If no help was to be given to her she would die. Not could die, but would die. There was the bit of old wall, the sheer cliff, the silent blue sea.

"Stuff and nonsense!" Miss Scott exclaimed in her unenlightened common-sense. "I've heard girls talk this rubbish before; it all means nothing."

The words stung the deep tragedy of the girl's soul.

"Ah, I am foolish!"

"I should think you were. Now walk quickly, briskly! The air is cooling; we'll go round. There's the roof of the hotel; there's sure to be a road round here."

CHAPTER X. MYSTERY.

Miss Scott and Ellen went back to their hotel. A long passage led from Miss Scott's room to Ellen's, and besides this separation they too were on opposite sides of this passage. Some two or three people came between our two.

A white-haired lady confronted Ellen as she reached her door; it was Madame de la Maure. The lady bowed. Ellen did not.

When she reached her room she gasped. She sat on her box and gasped.

The next act on was as strange. She took the key from the lock of her room, greased it in the hot tallow of her candle, and worked it well in the lock. The thing was noiseless.

Here was a long-forgotten habit taken up again. Why?

She dressed. She saw despair and stern resolve in her own face in the glass. She feared not at all; nay, she acted as calmly and as usual.

Then she went to Miss Scott's room, and knocked.

The answer "come in" came directly, but Ellen had not waited for it. By the time it was spoken she was in the room and had closed the door.

"This is the most wonderful of all hotels for doors," she said; "there are four to my room. How many have you?" and without answer the girl was examining as she had examined her own room. "See!" she cried. "This one is not fastened!"

"This is such a countrified place, dear, there can be no fear. Here, just arrange my cap for me."

Ellen's deft fingers were at work in a moment.

"Besides," Miss Scott went on, "Madame de la Maure is in that room, and she is a protection."

"No one is a protection," Ellen said decidedly. "I must barricade you as I have barricaded myself." She set to work to do it.

"There is nothing for anyone to steal," Miss Scott laughed. "I'm not worth taking myself, and my valuables are nothing at all."

Ellen did not answer. She was toying with Miss Scott's rings, then took up a little brooch, and with the natural kindly way one's own daughter would have she fastened it in the lace of her friend's dress.

"Sleep in your rings, dear," the "dear" accented, but the whole was the smallest of whispers. "Don't answer," here her hand lightly touched

Miss Scott's lips, and the next moment she laid a finger on her own lips for a sign of silence.

With all, she so impressed Miss Scott with her spirit of command that that lady never uttered a remark. She was a woman who liked to talk too.

The two went downstairs, and when the full light of the lamps met Ellen, she was something terrible to look at.

She was white, but mere lack of color was less than nothing when set by the expression of the girl's face. The light was gone from her eyes; hope had gone. There was simply despair.

"Ellen!" Miss Scott seized her arm. "What has happened to you?"

"Nothing, dear Miss Scott, dear!" For a second the girl's hands pressed those of her friend. Then she drew herself back. "We cannot cut ourselves adrift from our fate. I thought I could. I cannot."

"Stuff and nonsense!" Miss Scott declared. "I do not know any of your secrets, of course, but I'll have no nonsense about 'your fate.' I am your fate! There!"

CHAPTER XI. A LOST RING.

"I have unpacked my treasure!" Madame de la Maure cried, tapping a finger on her left hand with her right to signify the old ring. "Yes; I will show it to you after dinner."

"No," said Miss Scott, seeing some half-dozen loud-talking Germans at the far end of the long table. "No," she repeated, "pack it away again unless you wear it as I do. That's the only safe way, such things do no harm now-a-days. Have you had a paper to-day?"

"No, Madame, no. I read not at all. Isabelle troubles me to day."

"She does not dine!"

"No; she walks—walks in the garden, she says. I much fear," and Madame significantly tipped her forehead.

Miss Scott nodded with sympathetic comprehension.

"It is another of those great hotel robberies," she said, returning to her own subject. "At Macou now—they are coming south, you see."

"Ah, I have not read; I hear what the world says. I wonder much those rascals," she really said the words in an easy English fashion, "are not caught. The law is so powerful," and she sighed restfully, as if the power of the law were a comfort to her.

The dinner that night was a good one, it always was at Les Trois Pele-rins, at Sainte Marce. But it might have been of all the most indigestible food in creation, considering what a wretched night Miss Scott had. The good lady had no weight on her mind troubling her; she was indeed rather elated than otherwise over things in general, for she had by some course of reasoning best known to herself brought herself to believe in the almost immediate appearance on the scene of John Newsom, the lover. Like most good women she loved a bit of match-making, and though her two lovers had not been helped by her in the beginning, she yet looked upon herself as their good genius. Yet, with all this self-gratulation she tossed on her bed under the most hideous nightmare.

In the morning she looked quite pale.

"I might have been drugged," she cried. "Such hideous dreams! such a weight! I fought to wake myself. I am sure I cried out."

"That is true," Madame de la Maure assented; "I heard you; those walls are so thin. But it did not repeat, or I would have taken the liberty to come in to you."

"You could not have got in."

"No?" with a careless lift of the eyebrows. "You lock your door; I do not do that."

"I barricade myself; I have no notion of being robbed. Who knows that the thieves are not here?"

"Hein! that is terrible!" The French lady looked frightened. "Then, Madame, I will show you my treasure, my one jewel, and then I will at once lock it away."

"Wear it. I do. That's the only safe plan. I have slept in mine before now."

"That's a good suggestion, but Madame is rich, while I am only poor and a servant; would it be proper for me to show diamonds on my fingers? But look, Madame—"

She came to Miss Scott's side, and seating herself by her put an old ring into her hand.

It was the counterpart of Miss Scott's own.

"That's funny!" that lady cried. "It has a bend like mine."

"From the continual wearing," Madame added. "My mother was like you; she always wore the ring, so did it conform itself to the bend of her hand."

"How old is it?"

A shrug as if incapacity to probe the depths of antiquity answered.

"I trace mine two hundred years," Miss Scott said.

"Probablement," Madame put out her hand for her ring. "And you see this that you open so?"

She touched some hidden spring, and disclosed a little box with hair.

"That's curious; mine has not that."

"No?" The dark eyes shone with very natural delight. "Then is my ring of the more valuable! But it is possible that Madame's ring has the large centre diamond set—what do you call it?—open, not dark in this old fashion."

"No, it is not open. Fetch it, Ellen dear. I was so upset this morning that I left my rings on the dressing-table."

"Ha, ha!" softly did the French lady laugh. "And Madame's precautions of the night might be destroyed by the day."

She was almost too familiarly jocular, Miss Scott thought.

Ellen was a long time gone on her errand. She came back white.

"Miss Scott, it is not there. There are the others."