

A STRANGE CONFESSION.

BY KOMUS.

"Yes, Tom, I am gloomy to-night and not without cause."

I had noticed that some painful subject was occupying my friend's thoughts and hoped to learn what could make such a lively companion dull. I was not disappointed, for Jack continued:

"Come nearer the fire, Tom, and I will relate a chapter in my life, hitherto known only to myself and my God. You are my best friend and I can trust you. I must repeat the story if only to relieve my mind. For about five years I have kept this secret, and now it shall be revealed to you alone."

Then a painful expression overspread his handsome dark features as he related this story.

"About five years ago I was the manager of a branch bank in the State of California where my position gave me an excellent opportunity to meet the best people of the city. At that time I spent most of my evenings fully enjoying the amenities of social life."

"The city was not very large in those days; but, even then, was the resort of many tourists during the winter months. I had met all the ladies of the city and its vicinity without being particularly impressed by any. Not that they were not pretty and attractive, for many of them were both; but, rather, that I was hard to please. I have since been glad to hear that most of them now are brightening the lives and cheering the homes of proud husbands and fathers."

"I had satisfactorily filled my position for nearly three years, and my friends concluded that I never intended to marry, when, in a day, the whole tenor of my life was changed."

"One afternoon, while returning to my hotel, a strange lady asked to be

directed to a certain street, explaining that she had stupidly lost her way. As the distance was considerable I offered to be her guide. After a moment's hesitation, she accepted my services and a few minutes later we parted as much strangers as when we first met. I then returned to my rooms at the hotel and, for an hour, wondered who that strange lady could be."

"That evening I attended a 'Ball' and was introduced to Miss B—, a lady from the east, who had come to spend the winter in our City with her uncle, Mr. B—."

"I immediately discovered that the strange lady of the afternoon was Miss B— of the evening."

"Perhaps it was our former meeting, perhaps it was fate; I don't know, nor does it matter which; but I found Miss B— different from any other lady among my many acquaintances. Her face was beautiful and classical, her form was perfect, while all her movements were light and graceful. Her voice was sweet and expressive. Even her lovely blue eyes seemed to speak."

"From what I have stated, you can judge I was hopelessly in love with Miss B—, and that, in less than five hours. Early in the morning I left the ball-room for my hotel, intending to get a little sleep before day, only to find that I could not rest. One beautiful face was always before me and my eyes would not remain closed. From a calm, almost indifferent man, I was quickly transformed into an impulsive and restless fool."

"The days wore on, and I lost no opportunity to enjoy the society of the only woman who ever won my heart. She always welcomed me with a bewitching smile; but, in vain, I watched for any action, word or look