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SALOON... and Cigars

When They Did Not Know

As it was, of what use was life to her? She was married to a man who, she said, to herself, evidently, was no whit about her. There had been no marriage settlements, of course, for when Harry Carlisle's father dropped a million in Wall street and presently died, he left his son with an income which, with his habit of life and thought, was little more than a subsistence. But of anything like that she had never thought; all she thought was that marriage meant love, adoration, companionship—and for a short period she had found it so. And in that time who carried in face and manner such radiant bliss as Harry Carlisle's beautiful young wife?

"Beautiful?" said Doras Fraeme. "But passably. Unique, perhaps captivating, I grant you."

He was not beautiful himself, certainly, enjoying the distinction of being as ugly a man as society could tolerate; but he was clever, somewhat distinguished in the matter of athletics and the hunting of big game and he was immensely rich.

He had not been an especial friend of Harry Carlisle's, indeed, Harry had been heard to say, before his marriage, that the less he saw of him the better he liked him. But it was not long after the wedding that Harry wondered how he could have been so mistaken in Fraeme, a whole-souled fellow, and pathetically unfortunate in that he could never hope to win the love of a woman.

"I'm sure I don't see why," Agnes said, a little petulantly, being displeased that her husband had chosen to loiter with Fraeme rather than come back to her. "A man is not married for his beauty. Sometimes the uglier a man is, the more a woman loves him."

"Oh, if you mean pity,"

"I don't. I mean fascination. One looks and looks again till one finds character, and—and—something else. I don't know what."

"One would find wit and a charm of manner and a sort of princely generosity in Fraeme. Why, if you'll believe me, when I happened to say that yachting in the Mediterranean was beyond my means, although not beyond my desires, he put the Lamboad at my disposal. Indeed, he rather urged it. And, by George, I've half a mind to accept it."

"Oh, Harry, and leave me!" she cried, pausing with the brush in hand that swept her long, resplendent hair.

"Leave you, my precious? Of course not! You are to go along."

"At his expense?"

"At whose else?"

"Oh, never!"

"But why not? I couldn't afford anything like that, you know, worse luck. We would simply be his guests as we might be on land. Others will be of the party."

"Oh, no, no! It would be too much obligation. I—I shouldn't like it. I couldn't do it." And she brushed her hair more rapidly, and if her husband had looked at her reflection in the glass he would have seen her great violet eyes flashing, and directly afterward the soft full lip trembling.

"Too late," he said lightly. "I have promised."

"Without consulting me?"

"Oh, come now, Agnes, what woman ever had to be consulted and weigh pros and cons when a yachting trip to the Mediterranean was concerned?"

"This woman," cried Agnes. "And I absolutely refuse to go."

"What excuses are you going to give?"

"Excuses? None."

"And I?"

"You seem to have been thinking only of yourself, and you must make your own excuses."

"I shall do nothing of the sort. I shall go."

"Very well." And she caught up her dressing-gown, and, wrapped in its rosy folds, sailed out of the room like an angry young goddess. It was their first quarrel; perhaps, she thought—if in her towering passion she thought at all—that by making it violent it would be their last.

"Well, I don't know what this means," murmured Mr. Carlisle. "But if I take backwater now I shall have to do so the rest of my life." So he went to bed; and, being very tired and the hour late, in spite of himself he went to sleep. When he awoke it was far into the day, and Mrs. Carlisle, Aileen said, had taken a little bag and gone into the country.

For a moment, Mr. Carlisle was struck aback, as he phrased it, even his language sympathetically feeling the yachting fever. "I'm all at sea," he said. But, as he flattered himself,

before the maid, and hurried through some apology for a morning toilet.

"There will not be much to do while Mr. Carlisle is away, Aileen," she said. "And after you have set the apartment in order, you can have the day."

It seemed as though she would stifle herself unless she had the place to herself that she might get used to her misery.

Nevertheless, at nightfall, after the long and bitter day, spent in going from room to room like a wild creature, it suddenly crossed her mind that Harry might have been practicing a ruse, or might possibly have been punishing her contumacy, and would be back for dinner. It was masterful; but she could afford to laugh at it. The color sprang to her white cheeks at the fancy, the light to her eyes; she hurried to dress her lovely hair the way he liked it best, to put on her gown of lavender liberty that he had said made her look like the spirit of a rose coming out of the twilight. They would have to go out to dinner—for there was no dinner in the house; but that would be all in the way of festivity. And when at last the bell did ring, her heart gave a great leap, a surge of love and joyousness swept her from head to foot, and she ran to throw open the door, and stood there, magnificently lovely, before the gaze of Doras Fraeme.

"I—I—why—how—I supposed you were out at sea."

"At sea? I?" he said, stepping inside and closing the door, and without invitation throwing off the coat that hung loosely on his shoulders. "Far from it, as you perceive, I lent the yacht to my friend. But I had no idea that Carlisle would go without you. What under—Ah, well, pardon me, but if I were in his place—and he looked about him slowly and made ready to take a seat unasked as soon as she were seated—" a yachting party would call to me in vain."

"One is sometimes very thirsty for the sea," she said, with a slow dignity. But her voice trembled, and she sat down, because she could not stand.

"Men differ," said Mr. Fraeme, disposing himself comfortably. "What I long for is not the sea, but a home. A home with the charm of this," he said, turning to gaze about him leisurely; "with some one waiting for me, watching for me. One thing is sure; I should never leave it for any foreign cruising. But—" he paused, locking down abstractedly at the pattern of the rug, and then shrugging his shoulders as one shakes off unpleasant thoughts—"but that, you see, is not for me. I go through life alone. What wonder if I amuse myself? Yet a good woman might have made a good man of me!"

"I hope," said Agnes, timidly, a gentle sympathy in her tones, "that at some time—some one—"

But his bitter laugh interrupted her. He stood up and looked in the long mirror. "It is likely!" he exclaimed, with a gesture half of horror, half despair, and he threw himself back in the chair he had left, covering his face with his hands.

Her heart was full of agitation, full of pity for some one more wretched than herself. She put out her hand and perhaps would have touched him, gently as the petal of a flower might have done. But he grasped the hand quickly, bent over it an instant, touched it with his lips, left the room, and snatching his coat and hat was gone.

The next morning some huge boxes of roses came to her, the multitude and fragrance of which for many days made her rooms a garden. During these days she did not again see Mr. Fraeme; but one morning, too restless to stay indoors, she went out, and in one of the sheltered-by-ways of the park she came across him sitting on a stone bench with his arms stretched along its back and his head fallen between them in an attitude of utter dejection. He moved as her step drew near, and looked up with a startled, half-bewildered air, and then sprang to his feet, hat in hand, quite as if nothing were the matter and ignoring the last moment. He walked along beside her, still with his hat in his hand, for it was a blasp morning, the snow having been gone for some weeks, and in that wild part of the park the buds were rustling and the buds were swelling. Presently he began telling her a droll story, and as they walked to the cars no one would have dreamt he had a care in the world, and no one could have helped wondering about him afterwards; and Mr. Fraeme occupied a share of Agnes' thoughts that day to the exclusion of some part of her own sorrows.

Mr. Fraeme came to the apartment that night. He came the next day, presently he was coming every day and sending his flowers before him. He told her wild stories of his ad-

ventures in wild countries, and sad stories of his neglected childhood and cruel youth. He read to her; he sat in silence. "I am keeping guard," he said lightly, once, "since you have been left alone and unprotected." And his manner conveyed more than his words might have dared. Every time he left her, Mrs. Carlisle was more impressed than she had been before with the fact of her husband's indifference.

Day by day, too, Mr. Fraeme's flattery became less subtle and more free. "I have always, till now, had an impediment in my admiration," he said, laughing, and gazing at her boldly. "If a woman had beauty there was some counterbalance that made it void. But you!" And his eyes said the rest.

"Well," he said one evening, "it is time I went to my eyrie. It is pleasant walking there these cool spring nights, with the smell of the coming leaves in the air. What would it be if some one were waiting there for me? What is it to me that the place is a palace; that it is hung with tapestries for which Mazarin sold his soul; that I have there a Rubens whose possession imperial princes quarreled. That Titian of mine is a poor thing to look at instead of the face of a wife. Good heavens! How I could love her," he cried. "With what sweet observances I would compass her. I would make her love me. Even the thing I am I would make her love. She should be so happy she could not help loving me. And I ask for so little love. With what luxury, what splendor, what pleasure I would surround her, what worship I would give her. Good heavens! How Carlisle could throw away such happiness."

He snatched up a book and began reading anywhere, anything at haphazard and, after a few sentences, abruptly said "Good night."

He never approached the matter of Harry Carlisle's treatment of his wife any more directly than that. But every time, it may be, he congratulated himself on the fancy that the fibres of her affections were thinner.

She had gone out one morning for some necessary purchase, glad that the long Lenten season was almost over, yet wondering why anything made her glad. She paused before a florist's window, where the likeness of a great white-winged angel "was made with the long-stemmed white lilies, when Mr. Fraeme came up behind and joined her.

"Why not come in here?" he said at a shop door. "There is a feast for the eyes somewhere inside." And he led the way. "The blue diamonds," he said to some one in authority, after they had passed down one or two glittering aisles. And presently, in long pincers held over night-black velvet, two stones like the concentrated light and splendor and color of blue heavens were before them. "They are like new-born stars," he murmured, his lips, as he bent looking at them with her, not far from her ear. "What luster, what freshness, what immortal bits of azure noonday! And yet no bluer nor more lustrous than your eyes. They are worth a king's ransom. Once they were the treasure of a queen. They are yours if you will have them."

Indeed they were magnificent. They were, as he had said, a delight to the eyes. She looked again, to make sure they were really there, perhaps before she turned away. "I am afraid my little apartment is not large enough to hold them," she said.

"I do not ask you to wear them there," he said, still low voiced, and following her, as she stepped out into the clear, lofty day, with its light and loveliness in the promise of the coming spring.

She was not angry with him. On the contrary, she was angry with Harry Carlisle. She remembered her old intention regarding this man, and she had had for some time more than a faint intimation of the feeling of Doras Fraeme. "Diamonds," she said, "would have no attraction for me beside love."

"And it is love I would give you. Such love as you long to be loved with," he replied, half under his breath, but with a certain savage intensity in his voice, even in the bending of his head. "Such love as no man ever gave woman! Divorce is so easy," he urged then. "And life is so short. It is not as if he had not gone and left you free. And if in time you, you also, come to love—" She made a slight deprecatory movement. "I will leave you now," she said.

"But to think of it!" he exclaimed. "Promise me—to think of it!" taking a hasty step after her. But she only waved her hand, with a slight motion of farewell, as she left him, and went down a side street.

In her rooms she could think more at her ease. There was only the dim consciousness to hinder her that

roll made her shiver.

For a moment she was a trifle dizzy. Who was she—what was she about to become—to enter here where all was sacred as the garden of the Lord? A little child standing near-dazzled, it may be, by her face, with the look of pain and wonder making the beauty singular—held toward her a lily she had found. She took it absently and as a matter of course, and then sank on her knees in sudden abasement, her whole soul reaching out for something to hear her, to help her, and she prayed with unspoken words and unspeakable desire while the music flowed over her like a tide.

She went home, still grasping the lily. Presently she put the flower in water and felt it was like a promise of peace in the place. She told Aileen to take the day again, and when Doras Fraeme rang that night, he rang in vain. Her husband, she was saying, might have forsaken her, but she was still his wife. And perhaps—not perhaps, but, oh, certainly!—it was in an instant of pique he had gone, and he had been sorry ever since—as sorry as she had been. He had not called, because no cable could say what he wanted to say. There would be a letter soon, perhaps by the morrow's post. How could she so long have been blinded by her selfishness and temper. But if heaven could forgive her, Harry would. And if only Harry—she did not complete her thought—possibly, just then, her husband stood first in her thought. When he came he should find her waiting, watching, loving, always his wife. What vile prompting had ever given her doubt of Harry Carlisle! As in old times the sound of the Easter bells had cast out dark legions, so today had it cast evil out of her heart.

She was sitting there in front of her lily, wrapped in a sort of ecstasy of hope and assurance, the rosy burning on her cheeks, the eyes shining like stars in depths of violet evening, the smile about her lips of faith triumphant over temptation, when there came a rattle of a key in the lock, and before she could spring to her feet she was in her husband's arms. "I never meant to go!" he cried. "I meant to come back with the pilot, but the sea ran so high he couldn't take his boat and went across with us. And I have been on the rack every instant of every day. What you have suffered, my darling! Oh, what I have suffered! Thank heaven, I find you here, and that you had faith in my love and my return! Can you ever, ever forgive me?"

"Let us forget it! Let us forget it all!" she cried. "It is Easter, and you have risen from the grave, you have come back to me from the dead!"

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