

have to remember there was one day Rob, when you did not love me."

He thought she was going to laugh. He looked up curiously, and saw only a very grave and beautiful profile contemplating spaces and infinitudes that had no connection with his poor story.

"Well, I don't know," he murmured despairingly; "probably I did that day too, although I did not know it."

She did laugh, softly, but to his astonishment there were tears in the eyes that turned to meet his.

"Then, since you include that day too, and there is no omission, I think I have something to tell you, too, Rob." The bright wave of crimson that swept over her face changed to a divine pallor, as she made thus her great amends to him. "Though it is all hopeless, as you say, yet I should always want to remember that I told you this. If it is any comfort to you, to hear it from me, why, then, I want you to know, Rob, that you are more of a man in my eyes than any other I have ever met on earth; and that I love you, Robert lad, I love you with all my heart. Now, go. We must bear our lives, and God help us to bear them."

"Mary!—Mary!" gasped Rob, his beatific face confirming her recent statement that he could "see as far as heaven," "do you mean—that you care for me—as a man you could have married?"

"A man whom I did not consider worthy of that honor"—the flute-voice renewed its smooth and even music—"would not be the one I have just described to your humble sense as the strongest, noblest, and bravest that it has ever been my lot to meet. Now, mad though you are for flattery, Robert, I have said those words for the last time. We must meet the future bravely. In a sense, this must be our farewell: it is 'hail and farewell,' for us, Robert lad."

"No—never, never!" said Rob breathlessly, as though he actually plunged through the pearly gates of bliss; "there'll be a way! There must be a way! I'll make a way! I was not worthy—but I've won you! Say I've won you, since you care for me. Oh, God! I thought the way was hard, and all the time I was climbing up a hill that led to glory and the joy of life." He rose and strode once back and forth across the room, his humming-bird lightness of head carrying him altogether into the realms of bliss.

"I'll make a way, my beautiful, my dearest—"

"Virginia is stirring," said the flute-voice, low. "You are behaving insanely. She will come in here presently."

"She will only think you have refused me," bending the ecstasy of his smile on Mary. "I am going out to tell her. Come with me, or shall I think I am dreaming. Come with me, dearest. You owe me this much. Remember the unkind 'exaggerated' speech you made about me."

"I remember," said Mary sadly; "but we must remember other things as well. We are not free, neither you nor I."

"What binds you?" said Rob, in a flash, gritting his teeth in her very face like a lion about to start out on the devouring path. Mary smiled.

"Not a lover," she made haste to say, "but I shall not leave Bate; no one else would make a home for him, or have two days' patience with him. No one. Even if you were free," she reminded him, very gently, for his joy was sweet to her.

Rob's "intuitive" eyes, scorning all barriers, took infinite largess of the future. He shrugged his broad shoulders as though the world of sordid entanglement, privation, and doubt fell from them lightly.

"Besides," she said, "remember it was your faithfulness to what you believed to be your duty that won me to you, made me trust you. It would be a poor reward if your love for me made you give up the fight, Rob."

(To be continued).

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