

ened color on the rosy face.

For Rita the evening was a continued triumph, but for one thing—Ralph never came near her.

Several times she encountered his glance; and something in his earnest look moved her strangely.

There was a mad wild hope in her heart that he would ask her to dance.

Foolish Rita! She had been cold and indifferent, vouchsafing him neither word nor glance if she could avoid it; and now that he in his turn held aloof, she was miserable.

The lights and music jarred on her excited nerves, and she longed to be alone.

After several unsuccessful attempts, she finally escaped to the conservatory, unnoticed and unattended.

She had not been there many minutes when she was aroused by the sound of voices near her.

"What a foolish man!" Rita heard a strange voice say. "You have everything to make you happy, and yet you declare you are wretched."

"I have not the thing I most desire," answered a voice that made Rita shrink further behind the large plants that screened her.

Not for the world would she have Ralph Chesney find her there.

"And what is that?"

"The love of the woman I adore," said Ralph unsteadily.

"Old man, I am sorry for you—I did not know. Is it"—hesitatingly—"is it Rita Campbell?"

"Yes," admitted Ralph slowly; and they moved on.

Rita was too stunned to move, even when their voices had died away.

A tremor shook her frame; the slow tears gathered beneath her lashes and began to fall one by one.

"Does he love me?" she cried, trying to believe in her happiness.

And so absorbed was she that she did not hear the sound of approaching footsteps.

A startled exclamation roused her, and looking up, she found Ralph standing beside her.

They were both terribly agitated, but after a moment's silence, Ralph said very gently:

"Miss Campbell, you have learned in the last few minutes what I intended you should never know. I have always laughed at the idea of love at first sight, but the first time I saw you my heart went from me. How my love

grew as the days went by it would be impossible to tell you, but the hope of my life was to call you my wife."

He paused for a moment, perhaps to steady his voice.

"But the more I showed my love, the colder you grew, and you will never know the agony I endured when I found your heart shut against me; but I determined not to pain you with an avowal of my love, and I should have held to my resolve if accident had not revealed my secret to you."

Not one word crossed the beautiful lips when he finished.

Fearing he had annoyed her beyond all forgiveness, Ralph started away; but, as though she divined his thoughts, Rita rose to her feet.

As she raised her eyes to his face, something in their lovely depths gave Ralph a touch of rapture he had never known before.

"Rita," he cried in a low impassioned tone, "can it be true that you love me—at last?"

She made no verbal answer, but turned to him a face full of happiness and content. In another moment she was in his arms.

"Rita," bending his face to hers, "say—I love you."

"I love you!" she whispered back.

"My own, my wife!" he answered, with his lips to hers.

A moment later he knew, with a thrill of rapture, his kiss had been returned.

THERE are about 1,000 Colored Masons in Illinois, and about 20,000 in the United States. The States of Ohio and Missouri have the strongest Colored Grand Lodges in the Union.

A LODGE has been chartered by the Supreme Council of Italy to work in Naples in accordance with English laws and customs. It will work in the English language, and was started by British residents. It is expected that Italian Masonry will be improved by it.

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