

"Yes, indeed," he went on to say, "It is the most daring scheme I have ever heard of—and it is a practicable one."

Allan bowed, and replied that he was very glad to have enlisted Lloyd's interest in it. It was a critical moment in his life, and yet—to his own astonishment—he was perfectly calm. On entering the box he had felt excited and nervous, but now he was able to answer Lloyd's concise practical questions clearly and definitely. He could not well have accounted for the fact, but somehow he felt entirely at his ease with this extraordinary man, whose appearance, in combination with his wealth and his fame, would have disconcerted most others in his position.

"Have you got so far with your preparations that you could set forth your whole scheme in detail to-morrow?" Lloyd now inquired.

"I shall require three more months."

"Well, don't lose a moment," said Lloyd in emphatic tones. "And you can count on me in every way." Turning now towards his daughter, he introduced Allan to her.

"How do you do, Mr. Allan?" Ethel Lloyd greeted cordially, looking him frankly in the face as she held out her hand. She had been watching him intently throughout the conversation.

Allan bowed, somewhat confused, for he was not much accustomed to talking with young ladies.

It seemed to him that Ethel had used too much powder on her face. She put him in mind of a pastel, so soft and smooth was her colouring—the blonde hue of her hair, the blue of her eyes, and the delicate redness of her young lips. She had greeted him quite in the style of a *grande dame*, and yet in her voice there was something almost childlike which suggested that she was not really nineteen (as Hobby had told him) but much younger.

Allan made some polite remark, smiling in a slightly embarrassed fashion.

Ethel continued to look at him observantly, the inquisitive girl in her blending with the woman of influence, conscious of conferring a favour by showing her interest.

Ethel Lloyd was a typical American beauty, her figure