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•0•0•0•0•0•0•0•0•0•0•0•0• A Bermuda Fisherman's Daughter

By Kate Upson Clark yright, 1904, by Kate Upson Clark 04040404040404040404040

mon with many of his fellow IN common with many of his fellow islanders, Thomas Gilbert found himself before he was fifty years old stiffening with rheumatism. He had been brought up to gardening and still assisted in the care of the rector's simple grounds, but most of the time he fished. Among the boats which drew up at the Hamilton wharf each night filled with rockfish, red and gray snappers, mulet, bream, sennet, hamict, hogfish, cubb, amber fish or divinely colored angelfish none had used for ly colored angelfish none had used to be finer than Thomas Gilbert's. Now his boat was not so well filled, and the long sail back to his home in Somerset tired him. His son Digby, a lad of sixteen, had preferred a place in a store to fishing with his father, though the store was as yet far less profitable to him. The finances of the Glibert family felt the old man's disabilities but Brenda looked upon Martin Mears with no more favor on this account.

Mrs. Gilbert had been taken from some charitable institution in London some charitable institution in London and brought to Bermuda in her child-hood by the rector's wife. At that time Thomas Gilbert took care of the rector's horse and his gardens. The young people fell in love early, but they had been so happy in the rectory service that they had not married until they were past thirty.

There was an air of gentility about the small cottage of the Gilberts. It savored of the fineness of the rectory. Brenda Gilbert felt it. She had been named by the rector's wife and edu-

named by the rector's wife and edu-cated largely with her children. She was therefore better bred than most of was therefore better bred than most of those with whom she associated. More than that, there was not so beautiful a girl in all Bermuda as she. Brenda was a blond. That means as much in Bermuda as in Africa. Among the monotonously dark eyes and olive skins and let block lock to the second to the and jet black locks of her mates her flaxen tresses and brilliant blue eyes

and dazzling complexion made her seem like a verifable seraph.

Martin Mears was a pilot, a good enough fellow, and, for a young Ber-mudian, he was rich. Brenda knew that he was perishing for love of her and was ready to marry her tomorrow, but he lacked the refinement to which she was accustomed. Then he was short and thickset and red faced, and, in her soul, in spite of the many considerations which her father and mother urged upon her in his favor, Brenda

It is computed that there are only about twenty square miles of territory in all Bermuda. It is not strange therefore, that there are some men who know the faces of all the white inhab itants. The others, though nearly twice as many, count little to a Bermudian as many, count little to a Bermudian. Thomas Gilbert's beautiful daughter was naturally somewhat famous throughout the islands. Her mother would not allow her to go with the soldiers, and caste, which is powerful there and takes on a pettiness of detail commensurate with its geographical scope, forheads the young rearner, the lead forbade the young men of the local gentry to associate on terms of equality with a fisherman's daughter. Yet there was one of them who fell in love with her, and he cared nothing for wagging

ongues nor for the comments of his roud mother and sisters.

To do John Masters justice he loved To do John Masters justice he loved the girl's fine lack of coquetry and her goodness and gentleness as much as her beauty. Mrs. Thert knew that he had taken Brenda to some of the plenies and that he had walked home with her from church, but she knew, too, that he was poor. To be sure, he was the second son in a good family. His mother was an English officer's widow and an English contiemer's WALKER & REEVE — Barristers,
Solicitors, etc., Chatham, Ont. Oflices over Chatham Loan & Sayings Co. Money to lend on mortwas an English officer's
daughter and lived in a pleasant mansion in Warwick. But their income
was small for the expenses which they man could not hope to marry for years to come, while here was Martin Mears, ready to wed the girl at once and put her and the rest of them beyond the reach of want. It was true that John Masters was handsome and polished and had all those high bred ways which count for so much with girls like Bren-da, who had a nice little hauteur of her own, but Mrs. Gilbert revolted against the distaste which she knew the Masters family would feel for the match, and why wouldn't Brenda take Martin

One day the mother came upon her daughter crying among the lemon trees in the garden. "What is it?" she asked, sitting down beside the girl and taking her head in her motherly lap. "He—he—he's going away!" sobbed the heartbroken beauty.

"Who. Meeting"

"Who—Martin?"

"No. John Masters."

"Oh, that's nothing. He is of no account to you. I suppose he is going of to seek his fortune. He had better. They say he hasn't got a cent. Her money all goes to take care of themfour boys and four girls make a big family. He's good looking and all that, but you mustn't care about him, Brenda, and I've said so before. They wouldn't like it, and I could see that the rector's lady thought it wann't suitable. Remember that you are in the station in which Providence has been pleased to place you. Why can't you oblige your father and mother and take Martin?"

"Mother," said Brenda resolutely, "you might as well know that I never shall marry anybody but John Masters. We are engaged, and just as soon as he gets settled in New York we shall be married, I know you don't want me to go out to service, but Dig-

by is doing pretty well, and father's rheumatism is better, and maybe I can help a little up at the hall, and so we can manage even if I am not married for two or three years. Oh, I love him so, mother! You can't imagine how I love him! And he is going away!"

The mother could stand it no longer. She tossed Brenda's fair head away from her as if it had been a worthless sweet potato and marched into the house, mimicking her lovesick daughter's tone as she did so.

The day cam. when John Masters

ter's tone as she did so.

The day cam, when John Masters was to sail. The engagement was to be kept perfectly quiet for the present. In order to that end Martin Mears was to be allowed to come to the Gilbert cottage occasionally, but Brenda had declared that she should never say one word to any young man to environ any word to any young man to amuse or entertain him. Her lover should never have the slightest cause for jealousy. As he walked off down the ceder avenue, tall, straight, dignified, she thought he was the handsomest and truest man in the world, and she was sure that none bad ever loved anybody as he loved her. He had promised to write at once upon reaching America and to tell her then how to address him. Brenda waited eagerly for the

The next steamer did not get in un til a fortnight later. It arrived on a Sunday, and the mails were opened on Monday. Brenda could not get away in the morning. She thought it was not likely that she could receive the mail if she did, for such matters move slowly in the islands. In the afternoshowly in the islands. In the afternoon she went; there was nothing for her. But that was not very strange, she reflected. She really ought not to expect anything before another steamer.

But that brought nothing and neither did the next. Brenda began to look pale and wretched. Six months passed.

Still she had received no letter.
All of this time Martin Mears was faithful, but not obtrusively so. When the West India boats came in, pomegranates and persimmons found their way humbly to Brenda from him. He brought his new horse up to show her Horses are rare and expensive in Bermuda—but Martin was flourishing and gave her to understand that he did not mind a little thing like that.

When the year had rolled around again and still there had been no word for her from John Masters Bronds was siting under a great Pride of Indla tree near her home one evening when Martin came strolling up. She was in a soft and tender mood, and his deference and devotion seemed grate-ful to her humiliated spirit. He handed her a little book which he said he had found at the Tower of Hamilton as he was passing by. It was about the islands. Maybe she would like to

She took it and began to glance over the pages in the dim light. He talked on quietly. Then he grew more earnest. on quietly. Then he grew more earnest.

"Oh, Brenda!" he pleaded, his face
working with the passion which he
had kept in leash so many months.

"I've waited so long and loved you so
all the time! I know about that young Masters-but, Brenda, he never meant anything. He's all right, over there in America—you can go up and ask his folks on the hill there if he isn't—but he isn't troubling himself about you. And I am waiting for you. You will never hear from him again. Probably he is courting another girl this very

"You lie, Martin Mears! You know that you lie!" she cried huskily. "You make me creep and crawl! Go away!



Go away!" And, thrusting her hands toward him with a gesture of utter loathing, she rushed into the house.

toward him with a gesture of utter loathing, she rushed into the house.

She had been in a sort of stupor for the last few weeks. Now she was wide awake and her soul was on fire. How could she find out whether what Martin said was true? She had wandered past John Masters' mother's home in Warwick. She had seen his sigters driving in their pony carriage. She had come near throwing herself in front of them and crying, "For heaven's sake tell me is John living—and where is he?" But nobody was supposed to know that she was anything to John Masters—and her pride had kept her silent. Now she would know. She would go to his home and inquire. There was no one to go with her, but that made no difference. She would go as soon as she could get ready in the morning.

Dressing herself the next day with uncommon care, she set forth. Yes, Mrs. Masters was at home. Brenda had written her name on a plain card which she handed to the maid. She heard Mrs. Masters coming down the stairs. She pose, but her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth. Then it occurred to her that of course Jehn was living. If he had died everybedy

d have known it. What a foo she had been to come here! Yes, Mar-tin was right. He had a certain hard sense which she had a certain hard sense which she had always admired in him. Or perhaps she could get out without seeing anybody, after all! Her agony almost escaped from her in shrieks.

"Did you wish to see me?"
A cold, stately personage stood before her. Brenda remained standing. She saw that the woman recognized her. How much had John told her? Oh, what should she say?
The haughty woman watted, staring

what should she say?

The haughty woman waited, staring at her. A pitiful smile fleeted over the girl's face underneath her dotted veil. She put her hands out as though to catch hold of something. Then she tottered and fell. The satin sofa caught her with each of the catch. her, and the cold woman was warmed up to the extent of lifting the fainting girl's veil and pulling off her gloves while she rang the bell for assistance. Before anybody could answer it Bren-da had come to herself and had sat up on the sofa, looking the proud mother

before her full in the eyes.

"Tell me," she said breathlessly—
"tell me before anybody comes—is John
well? Tell me! Tell me!"

"Yes," said John's mother, a scorn

creeping over her handsome face, which was the counterpart of her son's. "I cannot imagine why you want to know But John is finely established in New York. We have many friends and relatives there, and he is very happy."
"Oh, no, no!" breathed the girl, tears streaming slowly down her face.

"So he writes," pursued the mother mercilessiy.

"Tell him," Brenda said presently, with all her courage—"tell him that I am—glad—that he is happy." Then her crushed pride gave a great recoil, and without intending the words or fairly knowing that she was pittering them she added, "Tell him that I—I am going to be married." going to be married." Somehow she emerged from the house and made her way home. She felt that

everything was gone, and it did not make any difference now what became of her. She might as well please her father and mother and do what she could to make their lives easier. She broke into the quiet living room at home as though she were crazy.

"Mother," she said, "you may tell Martin Mears that I will marry him."

"When?" gasped the startled mother "Tomorrow." And it was done. Five years passed, and Brenda was the mother of two children. They were girls, with all of her blond beau-

ty. Martin had been a devoted hus band. He had put Brenda's brother Digby in the way of earning well, and all the comfort which the family had anticipated from the marriage had been realized.

One day Brenda was in her store room, when in moving a small box of her husband's, which he always kept locked, it fell to the floor. The lock broke, and a package of unopened let-ters dropped out. Brenda's blood froze in her veins as she looked at them. They were addressed to her in the handwriting of John Masters. She tore them open feverishly and read them—letters full of love at first, of agonized doubt and fear later, then of despair. One letter had been written after her marriage. "Oh, how could you leave me, my darling? Could you not wait for me? Have I not done all that I could for you? You have stripped life forever of all brightness for me. Oh, if I could only know what has come between us!"

She wept in great gusts of passion as she read on. And her husband had kept these letters from her. She hated

When he came to his dinner the letters lay beside his plate. He recogters lay beside his plate. He recog-nized them instantly. One of the chil-dren was taking its noonday nap. He sent the other to be fed by the negro woman in the kitchen. Brenda was sit-ting in her place colorless and her eyes fixed on him and burning with re-proach. He gazed at her a moment. Then he dropped upon the floor and groveled at her feet, and she spoke for "How could you, Martin; how could

"Oh, I know it wasn't right, Brenda!" he said hoarsely, "but I loved you so! You don't know how I loved you! Nobody ever loved anybody so. I had to have you, and so I got Digby to get the let-ters, and I paid him not to let you have them. Oh, it wasn't right! But it was the only way that I saw to get you. And haven't I been good to you, Brenda? Haven't I done everything for

She rose and left him. His touch

She rose and left him. His touch seemed to poison her.

A week followed of borrible, silent suffering for them both. Then came a scene which she had pictured to herself for many years. Even since her marriage she could not help sometimes imagining it, though she had tried to be a good and faithful wife to the one who, as she now knew, had robbed her of the only man whom she had ever loved.

John Masters came back to Bermuda. She knew nothing of it until he appeared before her, though her husband had plloted in the steamer which had brought the exile into harbor on the previous day and had seen him among the passengers. He came to Brenda's home in the sweet twilight of a May evening. She was playing with her children under the blooming oleanders. He entered the gate almost like an old man, though he was scarcely thirty. His face was strongly marked and his hair was streaked with gray. She had grown more beautiful than ever with motherhood. He turned pale as she came forward and took his hand. There were no formalities between them. She spoke as though they had been parted enly a short time.

"I never got your letters until last week. John," she said simply. "I am married, as you know. These are my children, but I married in a fit of wounded pride and despair because I

did not liear from you. I know now that I have always loved you just the same, though I am prepared to live on with my husband and to try to be a good wife to him and a faithful mother to my children. Come and tell me about yourself."

She led him to the vine wreathed purch and they set down together.

porch, and they sat down together on the bench. The evening wore on The negro nurse put the children to bed. Still the long separated man and wom-an talked on. Then Martin Mears came home. Brenda did not look to-ward him, and the stern expression upon the face of John Masters forbade any speech between him and the man who had so wronged him. Humbly Martin Mears crept past them and

The window of his room opened upon the porch. He threw himself down in his clothes upon the bed. The hours flew, and still John Masters and Bren-



"I cannot imagine why you want to know."

da talked on, unmindful of life or death or the lapse of time, while the miserable husband listened.

He heard a description of what the true lover of his wife had suffered. He heard her tell John Masters how she had watched and waited for a letter, then how she had married, but how an awful mystery had hung over her through it all and had made her different from her old self and like a person in a dream. Martin Mears groaned to himself. It was all true. She had been kind to him, but it was the kindness of one who knows not what she

Suddenly a light began to shoot up from the east.
"Is there a fire, Brenda?" asked John

Masters.
She looked steadily for a moment toward the new light. "The sun is rising, John," she said. "We have talked all night, though it

has seemed but an hour. It is the last day for us. You must go, and you must never come back. We must never see each other again."

She broke into a pitcous sob. Martin Mears heard the man sob, too, as he

tried to still her.
"Don't, Brenda!" he pleaded. "It is harder for me than for you. Remember that. I would love to gather you in my arms and comfort you. I could do that in the old days, but not now. You are another man's wife. It is true that he is a villain, but you are still bound to him. Our only solace must be that we have always been true, and I shall be yours until I die."

The man's self control and high principle astounded the listening husband.
"He knows that I hear all that he says," he muttered to himself, "but he knows, too, that whatever he might do I could not say anything." He writhed upon his bed in an agony of remorse. He rose presently and passed them,

pale and wretched, at the gate in the dawn.

During that day he fell over the side of his pilot boat—that was what the seamen said, and, indeed, the ocean was very rough—and was drowned. John Masters went back to America the following week, but a year later he returned and claimed his bride.

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