

I was armed for it. That morning we had a canoe party to the Bald Porcupine—Jack Blackwright and Mamie Sterling in one, Mrs. Van Tassel and Prof. Gibbons in another, and last, but most important on that day, Mr. Dallas and I.

We were distraught, crossing. A commonplace or two at the landing and then silence, broken only by the dip of his paddle. I trailed my hand in the cool, green flood. His eyes feasted hungrily upon my face. Once he stopped and seemed about to speak. I calmly raised my eyes—the fiords—he seemed troubled and with a sturdier stroke sent us swiftly forward. At last the bark grated upon the beach. Mamie and Jack had already clambered to the heights. The Professor was learnedly explaining to our chaperone the nature of star-fishes and we took the path by the sea, over the point, and found a nook looking south toward the meeting of water and sky, whence lazy swells swept slowly, to break in sullen murmurs at our feet, swaying in the depths the brown kelp, which somehow always seems to me like the tangles of a drowned woman's hair.

He spread the wrap as a rug for me and I sat down upon it with my back against the rock, while he cast himself in a graceful sprawl at my feet, seeing nothing of hill or sky or cloud or wave but what was mirrored in my eyes. I quickly denied him even that, for I cast them down. We were silent for five minutes, and then slowly, deliberately, confidently, in well-trained music of his voice, he began.

He loved me. (This without prelude.) He had never fancied he would love woman, but the moment he saw me he knew that he had met his fate. I was the one being he had met in the world who seemed lifted above all that was human; I inspired reverence, worship, adoration, but I gave, too, the right, the imperious right, to love me and to be beloved by me. Was it not true?

I was silent. The boats in the harbor rocked idly; a passing cloud cast a swift shadow; a shrill gull veered in his flight and called to his distant mate. About us the drone of busy insects in the grass; beneath the writhing of waters about the rocks, and their dull moan in the cavern.

No woman but I had ever stirred his

pulses, my hand the first to strike from his heart-strings a music which should echo there forever. He loved me. All his past had been strangely untruthful—but he understood it now. His soul had been waiting, waiting and watching for me, and now he had found me and he loved me. Could I picture the future—fair as the skies above us with the light I had brought him; fervent as that burning sun of July; true as the wind which owns no master, but hurries to its purpose; infinite and deep as the sea. He loved me.

Still I spoke not, but with downward eyes watched the play of the salt tide with the weeds it clutched in its crystal fingers.

Why did I not answer him? Ah, his own true, passionate heart dared guess the secret. No love strong as his could kneel a suppliant and beg for favors. He knew the secret I would withhold; the hour had come; our love was mutual; it had been ordained for me as it had been ordained for him (here he took my hand); no woman dare say no to the man whose wild love mastered her, and—

About this time I came to the conclusion that I had heard quite enough.

The fiords were lifted and gazed quite calmly into Mr. Dallas's somewhat lurid orbs, and the hand was quietly but resolutely withdrawn to my private keeping.

"Do you think that your declaration has been entirely justified?" I inquired.

His dark face crimsoned and a scowl I shall never forget came to his brow.

"What do you mean?"

"Is an explanation necessary?"

He sprang to his feet and stood gazing down upon me with such an expression as I have since fancied a murderer might have worn. One, two, three minutes passed; his eyes glittered—burned: his breath came sharply; his hands were clenched. I know by rights I should have been frightened. I was not. I feared him no more than I feared the spray of golden rod at my breast.

He glanced swiftly upward, then behind him, and, as assured that no one was within easy call, stooped and roughly grasped my shoulder.

"I can kill you—see!" Here he pointed to the sharp rocks and the ice-cold depths below us. "Love me—love me, I say, or"—

I wonder how it was that in that