

may be the work of Sir Vane himself, or of his emissaries. Oh, Jemima! I am afraid—afraid!

'Now, Miss Snowball, there ain't no reason. That sounds like an honest letter, and I believe it. At three this afternoon, I'll be on the watch down at the front door, and if it ain't Mr. Valentine—well, then, the party that comes will have some trouble in getting in to this room. Don't you be afraid. Just put on your prettiest dress and perk up a bit, for you do look that pale and thin, Miss Snowball, that it's quite heart-breakin' to see you; and trust to me to keep him out if it's the wrong man. If it's the right one, as I feel sure it is, all our troubles is at an end. A man's such a comfort at times when a body's in a muddle, and don't know what to do. I wonder,' says Jemima Ann, stitching away diligently, and keeping her eyes on her work, 'if Mr. Rayney is with him?'

There is a sound as of a sudden catching of the breath at mention of that name, but no reply. Indeed Dolores hardly speaks again for hours. She sits silently at her post by the window, in a fever of alternate hope and dread, watching the passers-by. She tries to read, tries to play, walks up and down, and has worked herself into a feverish and flushed headache long before three o'clock.

It strikes at last. She resumes her place by the window, and clenches her hands together in her lap, as if to hold herself still by force. At the moment the bell rings.

'There!' cries Jemima Ann.

Both start to their feet. Jemima Ann hurries down stairs, locking the door behind her, and Dolores stands pale, breathless, her hands still unconsciously clenched, her heart beating to suffocation. It seems to her the supremest hour of her life. Is it salvation and 'M. Paul!' Is it ruin and Vane Valentine? She hears a joyful cry from Jemima, the rapid sounds of footsteps flying up the stairs—the door is unlocked, and the maid rushes joyously in.

'Oh, Miss Snowball! dear Miss Snowball! it's all right—it's him, it's him!'

And then before her, tall, strong, handsome, bearded, resolute, good to see, comes George Valentine.

The quick revulsion of feeling, the sudden joy, takes away her last remnant of strength. She holds out both hands to him, and would fall, so dizzy does she grow, but that she is in his arms, held against his loyal, loving heart.

'My little Snowball! my dear little girl!' he says, and stoops and kisses the pale, changed face, more touched by that change than he cares to show.

'I—how foolish I am,' she says, and laughs, with eyes that brim over, forgive me, M. Paul. I have been wretched and nervous lately, and the shock of seeing you—'

She breaks off, and sinks back in her chair, and covers her face suddenly with her hands, and, for a little, utterly breaks down.

'Oh, I beg your pardon,' she says, shocked at her own weakness; 'do not mind me, pray. I will be all right in a moment. Only it so brings back the old times, and dear old Isle Perdrix, and—oh! how good, how good it is to see a friendly face again.'

'That is a pleasant hearing,' he says, cheerily, 'so you were afraid my letter was all a ruse? My dear child, I have known for over a week you were here. If you had been discovered by the other, I was always ready to come to the rescue. My poor little Snowball! how pallid and thin you have grown. Life has gone hardly with you, I fear, since I saw you last.'

Tears, hard to hold back, spring to her eyes once more, they fill, they overflow. The sympathetic tone, the loving look, go to her heart. She covers her face, and it is a moment before she can speak.

'I am very weak; I never used to be a crying animal,' she says at last, trying to laugh through the falling drops. 'Yes, life has gone hard, but I did not mind so greatly until I found him here after me. We were getting along so nicely, I was almost quite reconciled before that. But M. Paul—I may call you by the old name, may I not?—I would rather die than go back. You will not let him try to force me, will you?' she says, holding up her pleading clasped hands like a little child.

'My dear girl, you shall not go back—no,' he answers, more moved by the gesture, by the pitiful change in the bright beauty he remembers so well, than he cares to let her see; 'no one shall force you against your inclinations. You have nothing to fear, I think. He certainly has been in search of you; he certainly, also, has not as yet found you. He is not in New York to-day. The yacht started on her trial trip this morning, to be absent a week; so your enforced imprisonment may end for the present. I mean to take you for a drive this afternoon—oh, you must! I will have no refusal. I am quite alone in New York, our good friend, Rene, is in Rome, back at his work. He wanted to come; he was perfectly insane, I think, just at first, when he heard of your flight; but I managed to make him hear reason. For obvious reasons, it was better he should not accompany me. I dis-