

Maud knew Mae through and through. He would not insist further. He would not say another word on the subject, nor would he take it ill if she decided not to accompany him.

She could see that he was already endeavouring to reconcile himself to the thought that this might happen.

He looked out straight in front moodily. It never occurred to him that she could be acting a part. He himself had never acted a part in his life, and his entire nature was simple and straightforward to a degree that was a constant source of astonishment to Maud.

An impulse of tenderness moved her, and she seized his hand. "Of course I'm coming with you, Mac!" she exclaimed, with a loving expression on her face.

"Ah, that's good," he replied, squeezing her hand gratefully.

Now that her ill-humour was banished, Maud felt happy and light-hearted, and began to talk in her liveliest manner.

"Was Ethel Lloyd very charming to you, Mac?" she asked.

"Well, really, she was extremely civil," he replied.

"How does she strike you?"

"She seemed to me very simple and natural and unaffected—almost like a child."

"Oh!" Maud laughed, and she could not explain to herself why Mac's answer made her vexed with him again. "Oh, Mae, how well you know women! Good Heavens! Ethel Lloyd simple and natural! Oh, la, la!"

Allan was obliged to laugh too, but he insisted: "Well, she seemed simple and natural to me."

"I never heard anything so absurd in all my life!" went on Maud. "How like a man! Why, there isn't a more sophisticated being in the whole world than Ethel Lloyd. Her naturalness is all art. She is the most accomplished coquette, and everything about her is carefully planned out. She enjoys fascinating your sex. Take this from me, Mac. I know her. Didn't you even notice her sphinx-like eyes?"

"No," Mac replied, with perfect truth.

"You didn't! Well, she herself said to Mabel Gordon, 'I have sphinx-like eyes—everybody says so.' And you think her simple and natural. Why, she is the vainest creature imaginable. Her photograph appears in the newspapers at