

ALL FOR LOVE.

CHAPTER IX.

PAUL LAMBERT PROPOSES.

One morning, a couple of days before the party, his nurse being indisposed, Beth took little Philip for a walk upon the beach. She had always been very fond of the child, and often took him out or to her room for a romp, a treat young Philip appreciated greatly. She found a sheltered nook, where, in the shadow of some rocks, the child could dig in the sand without being burned by the sun, and she could read and watch him at the same time. Here, half an hour later, Paul Lambert, bearing an armful of ferns and wild roses, found her.

"Aha! so this sequestered spot is where you hide yourself, Miss Russell when you disappear so mysteriously from our midst," he observed with well-assumed surprise, but with a sly smile lurking in his fine eyes. "May I sit down and rest after my long tramp?"

"Certainly, Mr. Lambert. Make yourself comfortable, if you can. Perhaps that harder yonder will not be very much bolder than another," graciously responded Beth, indicating a rock some three yards distant.

The gentleman gave vent to a quiet laugh of amusement, as he tossed his floral treasures down beside her. "Thank you; but since you have invited me to make myself comfortable, if I can, I'd prefer, if you don't mind, this corner of your rug," he replied audaciously, as he dropped almost at her feet upon the steamer rug she had spread down to protect her gown from the sand, and nodded smiling defiance at her, as he added: "I should feel as if I were making a formal drawing-room call perched upon that tall bowlder, and I am in a very social mood just at present."

Beth began to feel quite uncomfortable. For many months Mr. Lambert had persistently followed in her train, showing plainly enough what was the paramount object of his life, and she had often been hard pressed to prevent his making her a definite proposal of marriage. From a worldly point of view, an alliance with the Lambert family would have been regarded by society in general as most desirable for Beth, or any other aspiring young woman; and it certainly was a very flattering tribute to her personal attractions and moral worth that the gentleman was so persevering in his suit, regardless of the financial disaster that had recently overtaken her. But Beth did not want to marry Mr. Paul Lambert.

"Really, Miss Russell, this is very nice," he resumed, in a contented tone, as he allowed his glance to roam over the scene before him, "and you certainly possess the artistic temperament in a strong degree. The view from this little cove is absolutely idyllic. That graceful sweep of beach, with these towering rocks for a background; the blue sea, with its dainty white caps; and, across the bay, that beautiful pastoral scene, with its verdant fields, thrifty farms, and grazing cattle, to say nothing of this very attractive group right here in the foreground, all combine to

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make a picture which I would very much like to have reproduced by the brush of a skillful artist. Lady Beth you love beauty, don't you?"

She flushed rosily, more because of his tone than the fact that it was the first time he had ever ventured to address her as Lady Beth, although she was popularly so called among her close friends.

"Who doesn't?" she returned brightly, "though of course some are more keenly alive to the artistic than others. You, yourself, have just word-painted the scene very prettily, showing a most appreciative sense of nature's loveliness."

"Well, possibly," he said lightly, "and I think I might paint in a few more details that would appreciably add to it, and which constitutes its chief charm for me. You have no idea what a lure for the eye you yourself are in that white gown, sitting upon this crimson rug, with that great bunch of ferns and wild roses beside you. Lady Beth, do you know—"

"Philip! oh, Philip, dear—excuse me, Mr. Lambert, but I am afraid that child—" Beth interposed, and suddenly anxious lest her charge should wander from her sight, made a move as if to rise.

Again the gentleman laughed, as he put forth a shapely hand to detain her.

"Pray don't rise, Miss Russell," he said. "Philip is doing very well, as you can see for yourself by merely glancing over your shoulder. Just at this moment he is interested in laboriously excavating an unfortunate clam from his sandy abode. He will capture his prize very shortly. I wish I was as sure of success in some

of my cherished plans as he is," this with an expressive glance which caused Beth to suddenly avert her eyes. "By the way, how fond you are of that child, Miss Russell," the young man interpolated as he turned a thoughtful look upon the sturdy little fellow so busy with his shovel.

"What makes you think so?" inquired Beth, with a soft breath of relief at this apparent transference of his attention from her to the boy.

"Well, for one thing, you have a peculiar way of speaking to him which proves beyond a doubt that you love him very much. There is an indescribable thrill in your tone that makes the name of Philip sound very attractive as you speak it."

Beth's cheeks again flamed scarlet as she shot a startled look at her companion. Was it possible, she wondered, that she was unconsciously betraying to him and others what she had always believed to be a well-guarded secret in the innermost recesses of her heart—that the name of Philip was the dearest in all the world to her?

"Yes, I do love the child very dearly," she tried to say in a matter-of-fact tone. "You know his mother and I have been friends from childhood."

"Yes, I know; and the boy was named for an old chum of Mr. Armstrong's, was he not?" inquired Mr. Lambert, while he gravely studied the lovely averted face beside him.

Beth stirred uneasily; then she said with a bright little laugh: "Ask him to tell you, Phil—oh, ho, ho, come and tell the gentleman or whom you were named," she called out to the child.

He threw down his shovel and came running up to her, his face all aglow.

"Philip Walton—To-ko—Jam-pan—best-fellow-ever-lived," he said all in one breath, repeating in his baby way what his father had taught him.

"Good boy," said the young man, laughing heartily, yet secretly chagrined in view of Beth's quick-witted manoeuvre, for she had drawn the little one into the curve of her arm and cuddled him close beside her.

"You love this 'best fellow that ever lived,' don't you?" Philip nodded earnest assent; then added: "Everybody does. Don't they, Auntie Beth?"

Auntie Beth bent low to tie a loose shoe lacing on the small foot beside her.

"Tell Mr. Lambert what he brought you from 'To-ko Jam-pan,'" she evaded.

"Tom—tom," said Philip, illustrating upon an imaginary instrument, "and—"

"Just what such a boy as you would like," interposed the gentleman appreciatively. "And now," glancing at the neglected shovel and pail, "I wonder how that poor clam is getting along out there all alone."

Philip, thus reminded of his interrupted occupation, scrambled to his feet and toddled off to resume his excavations, somewhat to the dismay of Beth, who shrank from being again left tete-a-tete with this determined looking admirer.

tion pointing to his wealth in contrast to the reverses that had seemed to threaten her future. He had offered himself, upon his own merits and the merits of his great love for her.

Why should she not accept him? She liked him well, Teddy excepted, she had no other gentleman friend whom she prized more highly. He was a man to be respected for his moral and intellectual qualities as well as for his fortune and the social position occupied by his family. She had broken with Philip, and believed, from his ready acceptance of the situation, that he was glad to be released from his obligations. This had almost broken her heart, and, as she believed, ruined her life in so far as any domestic prospects with him were concerned.

If she married Paul Lambert, a future of luxury awaited her, and she need never know a care nor hardship that the tenderest love and devotion should shield her from. For the moment she was almost tempted to give him the answer he craved, and settle everything irrevocably; he was more congenial than most of her acquaintances, cultured, amiable, and wholehearted, worthy of her highest respect. "Why not?" she asked herself the second time. Then her soul revolted. She did not love him; she could make him no adequate return

for what he was offering her. She did love some one else with all her heart, and she would be doing him a wrong, once the fatal step taken, that she could never repair.

Beth possessed a brave and loyal heart. She was the soul of honor, and, even though she had apparently been a gay little butterfly ever since her debut in society, there was an underlying nobility in her nature which always prompted her to be just and considerate of the rights and happiness of others; and this doubtless, was one secret of her exceeding popularity.

"Mr. Lambert—" "Oh, if I could hear you say Paul, as you say Philip, when you speak to that child, I would be happy," he interposed, leaning eagerly toward her, with a note of intense appeal in his tones.

Her face crimsoned at the name of Philip, but she bravely faced him, and frankly met his eyes, as she went on: "Mr. Lambert, I am sorry you have forced this upon me. I have evaded you and hoped you would understand. Won't you try to forget, and—let us continue to be the same good friends that we have been in the past?"

"You mean that you cannot—" he began, with palling lips.

"No, I cannot," she interposed, but her own lips quivered, as she looked in his eyes smote her. "I do not love you as you would have the right to expect if I said yes, and, it would be the greatest wrong I could do you, I—"

(To be Continued.)

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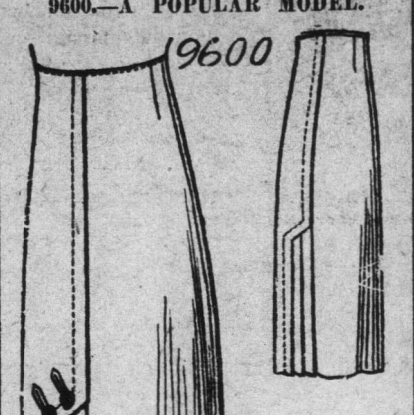
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