

Macdonald looked a little uncomfortable at this turn. There was in his mind a little brown head in an humble parlour of one of his college chums that he might have loved if—but no! Mabel could best keep his pace in the world.

"If I loved and were loved in return," Lewis continued, "I would marry regardless of money, its absence, or its presence; and"—his eyes turned to those behind the tea-urn—"I would not forego my manhood's prerogative to seek its mate to woo as all men do, though I had to kneel at a throne with my proffer." The eyes behind the urn dropped and their owner thought, "If he loves me, he will tell me so"; and Lewis, as his fingers played on with his ring, felt that he had asserted his manhood and could now leave that circle forever and carry his self-respect with him. Thus do we mortals who think to read each other through the eyes mistake the very alphabet of one another's hearts.

III.

Eight o'clock had come at Paignton House, and thence had gone again with astonishing celerity. The audience had gathered from all the isles of "Venetia," and had moored their varied flotilla of boats at the little wharf and along the bathing beach. The programme written in straggling characters and nailed to one of the pillars of the verandah had been read, and its summer-time jokes duly laughed at. But still the curtain did not rise; or rather was not pushed jerkily to one side by anything but spirit hands. The audience were not wholly in the dark, however, at to the cause of delay, for certain sounds issuing from the direction of the "stage"—ten tables in a row—told of riot and anarchy in the dressing rooms. What they did not know was that the disturbance was largely due to the efforts of "the Company" to dissuade little Miss Jones from appearing as "Evangeline in search of her lover" in a gay little bonnet and an opera cloak, and Miss Jones' determination to wear those gems of her wardrobe, even if she had to take Tommy Bennett's suggestion and change her robe to that of "Camille." But just then the attention of the gusty, chatting, laughing assemblage was invited to centre itself on the familiar figure of Mr. McPhail, a jovial, good-hearted Irish school-master of sixty, on a holiday. Mr. McPhail was the acknowledged head of the house. Did any of the guests find themselves at cross purposes with their neighbours, the post office, or any other of their surroundings, why what could they do but go to Mr. McPhail? He seemed born for pouring oil on troubled waters, and his oil can was seldom idle in Muskoka. Hence it was fitting that the welcoming speech should come from Mr. McPhail. Then came the first charade. When the curtain was got back and its perspiring managers had withdrawn the obstruction of their persons, a scene not unlike that with which "Patience" used to open, presented itself. About upon the stage reclined, in most uncomfortable attitudes of studied ease, a half dozen young ladies, some knitting, some reading and all visibly struggling with a mighty desire to laugh. In the rear of the group stiffly lounged a young man made up as a Mexican cow-boy, and not unlike a corner-grocery loafer, who was trying to act as if chatting with the hysterical young lady beside him. Just when it was plain that the stage party could dam back the torrent of laughter no longer, an old lady appeared with a young face and dainty high-heeled boots, and in a marvellously shrill and querulous voice, scolded the group for wasting their time. Then the amateur stage hands marched across the front of the platform with their curtain, and the audience burst into laughter and talk. For the second scene the curtain was not removed. The acting appealed only to the ear. There was a rushing about upon the stage as if a man were trying to catch a mosquito in a furniture-cumbered room without a light. After a pause, Mr. McPhail appeared and announced that they had decided not to play the "word" as a whole. They had now given it in two parts and would let their guests guess. For once the conventional charade was too much for the sharpest guesser present. None had ever seen the like of it. The good Mr. McPhail dropped hints that would have misled a Scotland Yard detective; and, when they gave it up in despair, pronounced in triumph the name of a neighbouring camp, from which many of them came—"Idlewild." Music, another charade and some readings followed; and at last after an unusual delay, the curtain was drawn back to reveal Mrs. Castana reclining in a dim light on a low couch, a dream of beauty. The stage was hung with richly coloured drapings and carpeted with heavy rugs. The couch was a yielding mass of crimson softness. Mrs. Castana was dressed as nearly like an Eastern *houri* as the united wardrobe and moral excellence of Paignton House would allow. Her dark, rounded arms flashed with tinsel jewels, and on her bosom lay massy chains of gold. Her form seemed swathed in clinging folds of scarlet and soft cream, and about her superb shoulders fell her dark hair in wavy profusion. She may not have been the "Zelica" of Tom Moore's dream, but she was a picture of entralling beauty. Then came through the drapery at the rear of the stage, a figure that was recognized at once as "The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan." He proved to be the possessor of a well-toned voice, and spoke the lines that everyone remembers in Lalla Rookh with good effect. "Zelica" listens submissively to her fate, and swoons in touching abandon when Mokanna unveils his horrid (charcoal and rouge)

face. Now the story is trifled with a little, and there comes through the drapery, after the Prophet has gone, a

—Warrior youth . . .
With silver bow, with belt of brodered crape
And fur bound bonnet of Bucharian shape.

It is Arthur Lewis as "Azim," and a stalwart, handsome "Azim" he makes. He rejoices over his found "Zelica" in the musical lines of Moore, which an affection for the poem prompted him to learn some years before, and now he does not have to read them as did Mokanna. He plays the lover well—too well, thinks Mabel in her seat—and leans passionately over the beautiful woman on the embracing couch, as he pleads with her to fly with him.

"With thee! Oh bliss!" breathes Mrs. Castana. "Tis worth whole years of torment to hear this," and with the remaining lines of her impassioned reply these new editors of Moore close the scene.

"It's horrid to have them separated at the last," Maudie Mayburn has said, and so the story is cut short with Mrs. Castana flung upon Lewis' breast, her beautiful arms clinging about his neck and her face looking up into his. The curtain worked clumsily that time, but the audience hardly breathed as they watched the exquisite tableau, so full of the passionate abandonment of love.

Mabel Murney had not a word to say as all about her every one was gushing into rapturous praise. A cruel hand seemed to have been laid upon her heart. Was it that she was jealous of Lewis? She had never been sure yet that she loved him, though her heart had modestly whispered its secret many a time. No, she was not jealous—that was an ignoble passion; but what right had that married woman to cling to him and look at him in that way?

"Who was the lady?" some one was asking behind her.

"An American lady," was the response. "She is married, but her husband never comes here."

"She looks well with Lewis, does she not?" put in another.

"I should think," laughed the first speaker, "that that scene had required a great deal of rehearsing."

But now Mr. McPhail was announcing that the programme was over and they were clearing the room for a dance. She let Macdonald claim her for the first which proved to be a waltz; but watched the room abstractedly for something she seemed to expect. Presently it appeared, and it brought her all the shock of a surprise; there came whirling down the floor Lewis and Mrs. Castana still in their Persian costumes. She said petulantly to Macdonald: "I think keeping on that absurd costume is stupid."

"They're posing for effect," sneered her partner. She did not like the coupling of them as "they," and hence Macdonald's effort availed him little. The dancing did not last long, but Lewis appeared twice with the beautiful American and with no one else. Presently Macdonald came to where she was talking to a late partner and said that their party were going home.

"Very well," she said, and wondered whether Mrs. Castana and Lewis were now out on the verandah, and if she would see them there.

"I would like to row you home, if you would let me," said a familiar voice at her ear. She turned and saw Lewis now reduced to the every day dress of a Muskoka camper.

"I am going to the city to-morrow and may not see you again," he continued.

"Very well," she repeated, hardly knowing whether she was pleased or not. He had just put her in his boat and pushed off, when Mrs. Castana's voice called out to another party:—

"Good-bye, folks; I'm going home to-morrow, you know."

The swift, strong beat of his oars drew them out of the shadows of the shore into the clear moonlight that flooded the lake everywhere.

"I know now why you are hurrying home to-morrow," she said presently. She was so careful of her voice that her enunciation was jarringly precise.

"Yes," he assented, thinking only of the scene at her tea table. "I have nothing to keep me here now."

She paled a little at this in the moonlight, and then said in a tone that was quite sisterly:—

"Do you think it wise to—to think so much of a married woman?"

"What!" ejaculated the astounded Lewis.

"That may be too strong—yet," assented the somewhat frightened girl, "and I have no right to lecture you anyway." This last with an attempt at airiness that was rendered an abject failure by a pathetic break in her voice.

Lewis began to see the drift of the stream. "You have been talking of Mrs. Castana," he said.

"Certainly"—quite coldly now.

"You think, then, that I am not only mercenary, but am plotting to rob another man of his wife." He was talking editorial in his turn.

"No, no," she said, not catching the first part of his sentence; and then it came to her. "Who said you were mercenary?" she asked, with a dim feeling that in some way she was to blame.

"You implied it this afternoon—when you supported Macdonald's innuendo." The editorial tap was still on.

"Oh, no! no! Oh, Arthur! how could you think it!" She moved toward him in the moonlight, her wonderful eyes moist with pleading tears. Arthur's heart gave a great throb. He knew now that she loved him, had called

him "Arthur," and that she was more beautiful in the caressing moonlight than he had ever seen her before. The past and the consistencies thereof were as nothing. He had her in his arms in a moment, in the swaying boat. The kindly spur of an island sheltered them from the eyes of their little world, and they had so little to say in this first rapture that the air did not think it worth carrying.

"But," said a soft voice somewhat later, from where you would expect only the ticking of his watch, "you said only to-day, most emphatically, that you would not forego your manhood's prerogative to woo for all the world; and I think I very nearly proposed myself in this case. Therefore it isn't regular—its—" but he stopped this first controversy of theirs with a—well, as lovers may and husbands might, and added in a tone that the pink ear might have lost if it were not luckily so near:—

"I will exercise my prerogative all my life."

The head sank nearer his heart and was satisfied.

A. R. CARMAN.

PARIS LETTER.

THE mission of the unfortunate M. Paul Crampel is stated to have had two aims, to connect the French Congo with Lake Tschad. Having "conquered," according to M. Alis, this lake region, Paul Crampel was to work westwards over the Sahara and join Cardinal Lavignerie's armed monks. But it was no secret that he was at liberty to penetrate eastwards from Lake Tschad, make his way into unknown Soudan—that no man's hinterland—and execute arm-blood signed treaties with tribal chiefs. In the meantime the Russian Lieutenant, Mashkoff, would exploit a passage from Abyssinia towards the same hinterlands, laying in stocks of chieftain treaties as he advanced. Thus Egypt would be attacked by the big back door, and Persia and Afghanistan relieved from British activity by the diversion of Russia in Equatorial Africa. This explains why Italy and Germany intend to at once take in hand the hinterland region of unclaimed Central Africa. England is already locking the back door.

There is room enough in Africa for all the powers; it is in the development rather than in the annexation of land-grabs that civilization feels interested. Paul Crampel was private secretary to M. de Brazza; he was twenty-seven years of age, and left France in March, 1890, three months after his marriage, upon his fatal expedition. Part of the route—the Oubangui—he had been over before, and to agree with the natives, he took for infant school fiancée, "Pahouine," daughter of a tribal chief, and married her *à la mode* Oubangui. Stanley never fell back on matrimony as an exploring agent. Napoleon when in Egypt declared he was a Mahomedan, but that did not avoid the necessity of his invoking the Forty Centuries to look down from the Pyramid upon him he whacked the Mamelukes. Abercrombie, later, had his turn at the Forty Centuries. The French found their historical rights to Egypt on Napoleon's invasion, and the English theirs on the expulsion of the French. What's the ruling of Gro-tius and Puffendorff in such a case? Back to our sheep. Little Pahouine, after receiving lessons on the piano, and it is hoped the use of the globes, as interpreter with Crampel, to her native heath. In September last the explorer had to chastise—as if a Stanley—natives at Bangui who opposed his march. At a place called Chari his expedition was annihilated; it does not appear to have been properly equipped; besides, the French think they can make their way into unknown Africa by Quaker doctrines and cotton pocket handkerchiefs. Colonel Archinard showed he had no confidence in such ways and means. Since Crampel's death the world counts a hero less; happily the stock of exploring heroes is everywhere large.

Now that the lights are fled and garlands dead of the Cronstadt deserted banquet hall, public opinion commences to take a business inventory of the event. Not much importance is attached as to whether or not a treaty has been signed, sealed and delivered; the fact is neither authoritatively affirmed nor denied, but left in glorious uncertainty like—the law. Besides, treaties, no matter even if drawn up in the name of the Holy Trinity, are only respected till they can be conveniently smashed; they are about on a par with "Interviews." An unexpected event, defeat at the opening of a campaign or the accession to a side of a new power, would knock the bottom out of the holiest of treaties. France gains by nestling in the bosom of Russia, strength in diplomacy, and perhaps reliable support in war. But, above all, she will be forced to shake off her wild politicians, to maintain stability in her government, and to indulge in no day-dreams about recasting the map of Europe. The profit is not so clear for Russia. If she enters on a campaign of diplomatic thwarting, such pin-cushion war can be carried into her own camp. She has not much to reap by a commercial treaty with France, for her best client is, and must be, England; Russia being an exporting country.

The antagonists of autocracy ought to rejoice that France has introduced that "Psalm of Life" the *Marche de la vie*, into Muscovy, and that the Czar saluted the hymn of the Revolution. Carlyle says the French are a "Messianic people"; now there is no divine right, no Louis XIV. absolutism, no Syllabuses, represented by the tri-colour. Where the French enter, the principles of 1789, be assured, will filtrate after them. When Lafayette and Rochambeau returned from the American War of Independence they brought with them a protest against the tottering absolutism of Louis XVI., and which swept it speedily away.