

Here Gibbs interposed. "He's mixing a lot of things up. You great owl," he said, glaring angrily at his friend, "what are you talking about? There's no fishing in Oonalaska, and no beetles—and no wolves, either," he added in desperation. Then the conversation drifted in another direction, and, as soon as he could, Mr. Prendergast made his escape.

"You played it rather rough on me, old man," said the soldier afterwards, "about that place."

"The old boy was getting angry," said Gibbs, "and besides, what I said was true. There *are* no beetles in Oonalaska; I have been looking up the authorities; it's too cold for them."

"Then you won't send your father-in-law there?" "I think not," said Gibbs. "We'll try to find a warmer place for him."

"Well, old chap," said Martingale, as he got into the dogcart the next morning, "if I can be of any help to you I will. You may rely on me; but if you have a crisis try and have it on a Saturday. I can always get away that day or Sunday; but I believe that the fish run better about this part of the month, and it might be difficult for me to leave them in the middle of the week, though, of course, if it was very important I would try to manage it." Then with a few last warnings the soldier climbed into his seat and drove off, having performed what he considered to be his mission.

The following day Samela was still invisible, and Gibbs spent his whole time on the river, fishing and communing with himself. The water was as usual in order, and there were plenty of fish up; a man had, as it were, only to put forth his hand and take them. But even a clean-run, inexperienced salmon will become uneasy when the fly and all the casting line fall in a lump on to his nose; and the best gut will go if the whole force of a powerful greenheart is used to rip it up from a rising fish. "He was thinking he was fishing for a shairk, maist of the day," said Archie grimly, on his return to the inn that night. Gibbs lost fish and broke gut, and finally, when trying furiously to lash out an impossible line, got his hook fast in an alder behind him and broke the middle joint of his rod. Then he gave up his paraphernalia to the disgusted Archie, and slowly sauntered home by himself. Out of chaos he had at last evolved order, and his mind was made up. He would *not* make any attempt to woo Samela, *not* watch her sketching, or ask her to tea; above all, *not* give her an opportunity of sitting and looking fascinating in his armchair. In coming to this conclusion he was influenced by the facts, that he knew nothing about her and her father, that he could not afford to marry, and, finally, that he was not at all sure that he was in love with her. A good deal of what Martingale had said he knew to be nonsense; but still, if a man will talk enough nonsense some of it will find a home for itself, especially if it is poured forth on a Sunday morning by a man, looking as wise as Solomon and Rhadamanthus combined, perched on a gate-post.

"Of course I will be perfectly pleasant and courteous to her," thought Gibbs; "but I'll take care it doesn't go beyond that; I am sure it is the right thing to do." And having so determined his course he became cool and almost comfortable again.

Samela joined her father at dinner. Her paleness might be attributed to her indisposition; but was it due also to her headache that she seemed disinclined to talk to Gibbs, disinclined to laugh as she used to laugh, to inquire about his sport, and to ask what funny speeches Archie might have made that day? Had she, too, been making up her mind?

Gibbs had been looking forward to quite another meeting than this. He had anticipated some difficulty in gradually withdrawing the light of his countenance from Miss Prendergast; he had thought it quite possible that his courage might be rather put to the test when he had to meet her pleasant smile with one just a little less pleasant, and show her, gently but firmly, that he only looked upon her as a casual acquaintance. It was only a strong confidence in his moral capabilities which enabled him to prepare for the contest he expected. But now it was *she* who was cool, *she* who seemed indifferent, *she* who appeared resolved to treat him

as she might treat a gentleman, whom she had met yesterday, and to-morrow was going to say good-bye to. Never a whit had Gibbs calculated on all this; and when he tried some small blandishments—for the strong, determined man was already beginning to find the ground weak below him, and his moral courage slowly oozing out—it was still the same, they had no effect at all.

Before dinner was half over Gibbs abandoned himself to gloomy forebodings. He forgot all about his good resolves—they became to him as if they had never been—thin phantoms which had never really occupied his mind. He cast about for some cause for this change. Had some bird of the air brought to her ears the somewhat free conversation which had been carried on about herself and her parent the day before? Had those sagacious-looking, black-faced sheep, or some roe crouching in the fern close at hand, delivered a message to her as the modern representative of their old mistress Diana? No; he thought it was more likely that Martingale was the cause. He was a fine looking man; he was rich; moreover, his brother was a peer, and Johnny bore the little prefix to his name which is sometimes supposed to carry weight with some girls. What a viper! thought Gibbs; and how indecent of the girl to show her feelings so soon!

The dinner crawled along, and at last Samela rose, and with a little bow to Gibbs left the room. And then another astonishing thing happened! The old man became—not genial, for that was not perhaps in his nature, but—as little disagreeable as he could manage to be. He pulled up his chair to the fire, asked Gibbs if he was not going to have a little more whiskey, and said it was a cold night in quite a friendly tone.

"Can it be possible," thought Gibbs, as he abstractedly poured out for himself a very strong glass of Clyneish, "that this ancient antiquarian knows his daughter's feelings, and is showing his compassion for me in this way?" And he looked with the greatest abhorrence at the professor, who forthwith began to give a disjointed account of his adventures on the hill that day. Night brought no comfort to Gibbs. He anticipated a sleepless one; but perhaps his hard day's fishing in the high wind, perhaps the agitation in his mind, perhaps even the glass of whiskey aforesaid stood his friends. After tossing about in a restless way for twenty minutes he dropped into a deep and dreamless sleep.

The following day things were as they had been, only worse. Samela avoided him, and the day after they were no better. The only ray of light thrown on Gibbs was from the corrugated countenance of the old professor, whose friendship seemed to increase every hour. Then Gibbs became unhappy, he lost half the fish he hooked, and he jumped upon Archie in a way that made that worthy's hair stand on end.

"She's heuked him," the latter whispered to Jane (he had acquired somehow an exaggerated idea of his master's wealth and importance), "and now she's playing him, and he's gey sick wi't, I can tell you; but whether he will stand the strain o't, I canna say." Archie was nothing if not cautious. "I'd like fine to see you trying that game on wi' me, Jean, ma lass!" and then the colloquy ended in the usual way.

Now, it happened one night, after dressing for dinner, that Gibbs was going down the passage, when, as he was passing Mr. Prendergast's room, he heard two words spoken in a low, passionate voice. They were only two words—"I cannot;" but there was an intensity in the way Samela uttered them which bit itself, as it were, into the brain of the hearer. Our fisherman had felt little scruple when chance put him in a position to listen for a moment to Archie's plainly expressed opinions, but he was no eavesdropper; he would have cut off his right hand sooner than have stood to try to hear what followed. He hurried down into the dining-room, marvelling what could cause the somewhat proud and independent girl to speak in such a fashion,—the horror and despair in her voice rang in his ears still. Mr. Prendergast soon followed, and announced that his daughter was again too unwell to come to dinner; then, as had been his habit lately, he inquired with some interest about

his companion's sport, and proceeded to give a long description of the difference which exists between a moth and a butterfly.

After the old man had disappeared Gibbs put on a cape and went out down the glen. It was a wild, wet night; the water was running here and there over the road, and he had to splash through it; the wind howled over the unsheltered moor and drove the rain smartly in his face; but the turmoil suited his humour, and he was glad it was not calm and fine. For he saw now—he seemed to see plainly, and he wondered how before he could have been so blind—that the piteous "I cannot" referred to himself. That old professor had no doubt been making inquiries as to his—Gibbs's—means, had found them satisfactory, and now discovered that the girl was the obstacle, and he was showing her that she would have to follow his judgment in the matter and not her own wishes.

Poor Gibbs! Never till that night had his pride received so great a shock. He was not a man who in any way plumed himself on his influence with women, he had never in the smallest degree considered himself to be a lady-killer; but so far his acquaintance and experience with the gentler sex had been pleasant and easy. He had made many friends among women, hardly, he thought, any enemies. And now, without his having anything to say in the matter, he was being thrust on an unwilling girl; *how* unwilling he was to some extent able to measure by the exceeding bitterness of the cry he had heard. If spoken words have any significance, then her feelings against him must be strong indeed.

The following morning Gibbs received a telegram, asking him to go that night to Inverness. The affairs of a minor for whom he was a trustee were in a somewhat complicated state; it was a question whether they ought not to be thrown into the court of chancery, and the matter had to be decided one way or the other at once. The London lawyer happened to be in Scotland at the time, and so offered to come as far as Inverness; indeed, was on his way there when the message was sent, and Gibbs felt there was no course open to him but to go there also.

There was a wedding in the strath that day and all horses were in great demand; so to suit the convenience of his landlord he sent his portmanteau down early in the day to the station, saying that he himself would walk. As he came down ready for the journey and passed the door of the sitting-room, Mr. Prendergast and his daughter came out, the latter in her hat and jacket.

"I am sure," said the old man, "that you will be kind enough to escort my daughter so far as the post-office. I have a foreign telegram to send of great importance which I cannot trust to a messenger, and some inquiries will have to be made about the place it is going to. I can't go myself owing to my sprain" (got on the hill the previous day), "and Mr. Macdonald tells me that a trap will be calling at the post-office in an hour's time which will bring her back."

Gibbs listened to this long harangue without believing in it. It seemed to him to be an obvious excuse for forcing on a *tête-à-tête* walk between Samela and himself. If a telegram really had to be sent, it could be sealed up, and the inquiry made by letter. He looked, while the father was speaking, at the girl, and he was greatly struck by the change in her face and manner. She was very pale, and seemed nervous and hesitating, as if she wished to say something and did not dare; a great contrast to the blithe lady of a week ago. Gibbs looked inquiringly at her, thinking she might make some excuse herself, but she kept her eyes fixed on her father; so he had no alternative but to say that he should be only too happy to be of any service; and then the two passed out of the lighted room into the twilight road.

His first feeling was one of hot anger towards Mr. Prendergast. "What a brute he must really be," he thought, "to force the girl to take this walk with me to-night when it is quite plain she doesn't want to come. How hateful it must be to her!" A week ago he would have been delighted to have had the opportunity of such a walk; he could have at any rate chatted away in a natural