

him away from her, that is to say from the girl he thought she was.

Comedy? Or tragedy? Which was it? She wanted to laugh, to weep, to give way to some emotion of an hysterical nature. But she did neither. She filled in the interval of waiting by pulling those three fat bundles of fat letters from their hiding-place in the desk and running through several at random. She already knew parts of them all by heart.

"How your friendship gladdens my heart! I could not live I think were it not for Saturday night—night of ineffable bliss—night that brings your letter."

And again: "So well do I feel that I know you that my spirit can at will bridge the leagues of land and water that lie between us and commune with your spirit. In the early dawn when it must still be the dead of night with you in Canada I lie and think of you and wonder—wonder if your dreams sometimes contain a little bit of me."

Absurd! Why that almost bordered on effrontery! And yet—she had dreamed of him more than once. Miss Manners flushed and tossed the letter aside, picking up another.

"It is good to know that you too have a portion of that divine discontent in your nature which is the motive power of all great enterprises. Men and women are not so fundamentally different after all. Women crave a permanent interest in the big things of life too. They too yearn beyond the skyline where the strange roads go down! I have a sister and I know."

How he understood! There was no denying it—his letters had been soul-satisfying.

Miss Manners sighed and returned the letters to their drawer, and hardly had she done so when the sharp tinkle of the elevator bell sent her heart into her throat. The next moment someone was knocking at her outer door. Drawing a long breath she summoned all her wonted poise and went forward and opened the door.

As she had expected, a man in khaki stood there.

"Miss Manners?" he queried, gravely.

Miss Manners nodded. Her quick artist's eye registered a number of pleasing impressions. He was an officer. He was tall, rather lean in build, with a thin brown face and deep-set dark eyes—eyes with a curious penetrating quality. And he was regarding her without the vestige of an ingratiating smile. She threw the door wide and he entered, cap in hand and then followed her without a word into the studio where she indicated an armchair.

What tack should she take? Or should she let him begin? Of course she would laugh the whole affair off as of no moment!

"Was—was your train very late?" she asked, politely.

"No—yes—that is I believe it was a trifle behind," he said, watching her take the chair opposite. "You—received Captain Gilroy's note?"

"Only a little while ago."

"Then of course you have been expecting—" and he broke off in a peculiar way and looked as embarrassed as a schoolboy caught in an act of disobedience.

"There—there are some matters to be cleared up," said Miss Manners, deciding to take the plunge at once when she noted his difficulty in going on. "I—that is you—of course you understand—"

She too broke off. It was his disconcerting steady gaze! He had hardly taken his eyes off her and but for the very palpable trembling of his big hands as they twirled his cap about she would not have guessed at his very real diffidence.

"Of course you understand," she began again, "just how it all is, Captain Gilroy. It was done in a spirit of fun rather than—"

"I am not Captain Gilroy," he said, finding his voice at last.

"Not Captain Gilroy! Then—then where is he?"

Her last shred of armor fell away. That suspicion of a twinkle in his eye was more than a suspicion now. She blushed.

The stranger cleared his throat.

"I am sorry to have to tell you that the Captain has been obliged to remain in Quebec on account of his eyes. He—"

"His eyes!"

"Yes, you see they have never quite given him satisfaction since he was almost blinded, at the battle of—"

"But—but he never said a word to me about his eyes!"

The stranger smiled.

"Naturally he—wouldn't want to worry you. As I say, he hasn't really recovered the full use of them yet and though he managed to get leave to cross to Canada it was upon landing that the doctors decided to try to do something more for him before he saw his home people."

"Oh, I—I see. How terrible though! I had no idea—"

Miss Manners was now experiencing an odd sort of relief. Gratitude to this officer for sparing her the ordeal she had so dreaded overcame all else. She would ask him to have supper with her!

"It was good of you to call and tell me all this," she said with the first smile she had yet vouchsafed him. "You—are?"

"A thousand pardons! My name is Brett—Lieutenant is my rank."

"Then I thank you kindly Lieutenant Brett, and, while I am so shocked about the Captain—"

"It is shocking, but they have hopes of saving the sight of one and perhaps

happy to think I was helping even if it were so slightly."

The stranger seemed restless and ill at ease but before he could speak she took up her tale again, her eyes on the rug.

"The letters the other girls got were full of—of blarney too and we thought it was all right to—to put a little warmth into ours—in other words to give as good as we got. So many poor chaps have neither mother nor sister to—pet them. But unfortunately Captain Gilroy after a time began to fancy himself in love with me. He—"

"To fancy? He—he'd die for you!" interjected the visitor hotly.

She looked up, startled at his tone.

"Wait," she said, shaking her head. "He does not even know what I look like. I sent him another girl's picture. Oh, I know he said it was my personality shining through my letters, that it was my humor, my little tricks of expression and so on, but I knew that it was the face of the girl he thought I was. Men don't fall in love with abstract qualities. They demand something tangible, corporeal."

"This photo—he kept referring to it? Kept talking of the features and so on?"

Miss Manners pondered.

"Well, no. Now that you mention it he only spoke of it once and that was to acknowledge its receipt."

The lieutenant bowed.

"You'll wonder why I'm boring you with all these details. But it's because I want you to carry my confession to

they should strike a big town he said. But I see now it was on account of his eyes poor chap. You will tell him how sorry I am?"

"Yes. But first let me explain—"

"Please! We have discussed the subject sufficiently don't you think?"

"But—"

"Have you dined?"

"Why no, I don't believe I have! I'd forgotten," he answered with a start. "And I'm keeping you—"

"Then do remain and have a little supper with me? I've been expecting a friend who has disappointed me, so the table is laid for two. If you have anything further to say about—this matter you can say it afterwards. This is a bit conventional I suppose, but you won't mind?"

"I should say not! I'll be delighted."

"You'll have to carve the fowl. I always make Phyllis do it."

"Fowl? Um-m-m. Lead me to it."

They both laughed and with the laugh all diffidence vanished.

Over the tea-table Lieutenant Brett lost the remainder of his gloom and became delightfully companionable and entertaining. He related a score of sprightly anecdotes pertaining to trench and billet life, told tales of his comrades' bravery, but seldom did he speak of himself and not once of Gilroy. Miss Manners over the steaming little urn and the dainty shell-like teacups was equally at ease. A dozen times in the course of the meal she thanked her stars that it was this pleasant young officer and not the other, love-stricken, one whom the gods had sent to be her guest for the evening.

"I would know you were an artist just by observing you," the Lieutenant remarked, involuntarily, when they had risen.

"I suppose I do radiate a horrid professional atmosphere."

"You don't! But it's the way you do little things. There is an air of distinction in the way you push back a chair or lift a cushion or arrange a pile of books. Different from other people's ways. Then this gem of a room. You love it. Your eyes soften when they



On the defensive.

both eyes. Rest is what he requires. No reading, no writing—"

"I feel very guilty, yet how was I to know? He—you knew that he has written me twice a week for ever so long? He only missed while he was crossing this time. He should not have been allowed—"

"Let us not worry about it," suggested the stranger with a smile and Miss Manners also smiled, but tremulously.

"Did you ever go to the dentist in dread over a tooth you knew would have to come out and have him tell you he couldn't take you to-day and would you please come back next week? Well, that's exactly how I feel at the present moment."

He looked puzzled, and was about to speak when she went on:

"To change the metaphor, you've lifted a millstone from my neck. I dreaded so having to face Captain Gilroy and tell him about my—oh, it's too silly! I don't know how I'm going to make you understand—"

"I believe I understand better than you think."

"You see, it was such fun at first to get those letters of his," she rushed on. "It had been ages since—well, since I had had time for love letters. I'm a busy woman. But some months ago I yielded to the entreaties of the girls and took on some alleged lonely soldier correspondents. Four of mine died, poor fellows, but the Captain remained. I can't knit so I wrote him twice a month for a while and then once a week. I felt

him, to be my proxy, if you will be so good. Really, I can't go through with the absurd thing a second time. Will you spare me the embarrassment and break the—news as gently as you can?"

"I don't know about that," said the Lieutenant, grimly.

"Please."

He appeared to consider.

"I realize I have been foolish, but was he any less so?" she pleaded. "If you could have read—"

"Oh, I know he's an idiot—always was," the Lieutenant remarked hastily.

"No, no! I won't have you to say a word against him," she said quickly. "It was mostly all my own fault."

He watched her with smoldering admiration in his gloomy eyes and seemed half envious of Gilroy.

"I may as well admit," she continued, with an access of color, "that I've been drawn into some sort of thrall, too. You mustn't tell him this though. The sense of utter impersonality that his letter had for me did not quite take away the thrill with which I received each one. I had to keep reminding myself that they had been written to Grace Deering, that it was her face, her personality that inspired them. I read them as one reads a beautiful story where someone else is always the heroine."

"But you place too much emphasis on that picture. I—have seen the picture. It was pretty but—not breath-taking. Did he send you his in return?"

"No. He was always going to, when

Thousands
of under-
nourished
people have
found that

Grape-Nuts

food —
a scientific
blend of nour-
ishing cereals
— helps
wonderfully
in building
health and
happiness.

Needs no
Sugar

Canada Food Board License W-2-026