

336 My Brave and Gallant Gentleman

"Mary,—Mary,—Mary!" I cried brokenly.
"Mary,—Mary!"

Gently and shyly, but smiling in her gladness, she freed herself from my enfolding arms.

"George,—sit down, dear. I have much to tell you before—before——"

A blush spread over her cheeks and she turned away in embarrassment.

"—Before what, Mary?" I craved.

"Before—I can listen to you.

"George!—I love you with all my heart. I have always loved you,—I could not help myself. That, I think, is why I quarrelled with you so,—at first. But I was afraid that my loving would avail me little and would probably cause you pain, for I was pledged to marry a man I did not love; and, because of that pledge, I was not free to give my love to any other man.

"George!—that man is dead now. He died a month ago in a street riot with some natives in Cairo.

"All his sins are covered up with him," she sighed.

"And, after all, maybe Harry Brammerton was not——"

"Harry Brammerton!—" I cried, springing up in a tremble of excitement. "My God! Oh, my God! I thought,—I,—I understood,—I—I—oh, God!"

I clutched at the table for support as the awful truth began to dawn on me.

Mary rose in alarm.

"Why! What is it? What have I said? George,—didn't you know? Didn't I tell you be-