ONLY A YEAR AGO. BY A. B. BOSWELL, time-only six weeks-how is it possible

that you can love me?" "How is it possible? Rather ask how is possible to avoid loving you? And besides, is It really so incomprehensible. Avis? You have known me just the same length of time, and yet-yet-I have ventured to hope that you that you love me, dear. Oh, Avis, is the sweet hope false? Have I deceived myself? Or will you indeed confirm it by promising to be, some happy day,

He would have caught and clasped the fair girl in his arms, but she, keeping him

them—"and so this is the result of your artist folly. You would paint my pretty companion's picture forsooth, and while so doing have stolen her heart and lost your own. I might have looked for this; I should have been more careful. But do you hope I shall tolerate such folly? I overheard you ask the girl just now to be your wife,"

"My adopted daughter," Mrs. Living stone replied, for Roy had turned aside in stilence, overcome by the sight of the beauty he had loved and lost. "Twelve years ago I took her—then 5 years old—from a poor old fisherman down on the beach, three or old fisherman down on the beach, thr

overheard you as a the gar june your wife."

"You did," the young man answered gently, but with a resolution that was unmistakeable. "I love her, and will marry

my hopes are bound up in you. Let us not quarrel about this foolish girl. She is dear to me also. Let us take time to think. Compare the girl with others. When our guests are gone, if you are in the same mind, we will see what is best for all. Will you promise?"

"To wait for your consent until our guests are gone? Yes, I can promise that."

"And meantime not to speak of this to Avis." "That's harder, mother. But if you will tell her that you may consent I will

obey you."
"I will tell her every word that has passed between us," said Mrs. Livingstone.
And she meant to keep her promise.
But Avis was not waiting for her, as she
had expected. The girl had gone to her
own room, sending to Mrs. Livingstone a
piteous little message of excuse. Her head
ached. Might she be allowed to keep in
her own showher?

The lady smiled. "I will set her heart at rest to morrow," she thought. "There is no time now." For her expected guests were arriving.

And when Roy looked at her inquiring.

ly, as he missed the girl.

"She wished to keep her room to-night,"
she whispered. "All will be well to-mor-

But when to-morrow came a sad surprise came with it. Avis had disappeared.
"That I may not cause you grief or pain

This was all; and she had gone—leaving no trace, making no further sign.

In vain Roy sought for her, even with the help of detectives, having left home and come to the city for that purpose; while his mother, no less anxious for the safety of the lost girl, made what excuse she could to her assembled guests for his absence. After a month of weary searching he returned, heartsick and discouraged.

"No news," he said, in answer to his

mother's anxious questions; "nor will there ever be. I have lost all hope of find-A year has passed since gentle Avis disappeared, and once more a gay party of merry guests made the Laurels bright and cheerful, foremost among them Rose Brandon, the beauty and heiress, and

A great favorite was she with stately

Mrs. Livingstone, and there were not wanted those who named her as, the future mistress of the splendid but gloomy house which her beauty and joyous laughter made

gently:

"May we see the picture, Roy?"

He arcse without a word and led the way to the library, the guests all following, led by Rose Brandon. Last of all came Mrs. Livingstone with her old friend, Mrs. Grey, a fair, sad woman with silver hair.

Mrs. Grey was a great invalid; and un-conquerable grief had preyed upon her heart for years and broken down her fra-gile body. She leaned heavily on Mrs. Livingstone's arm

word did," the young man answered gently, but with a resolution that was unmitakeable. "I look her—then 5 years old—from a poor old the beach, start of the put his arms around her."

"Without my consent? Without your mother, a blessing? Is this the affection—the duty of my own child?"

He put his arms around her.

"I shall here set you at defiance, mother, and least of all, for Avis' sake. She is too good, too ardenly attached to you to do aught that could wound you. But will you not have compassion for us, show to do aught that could wound you. But will you not have compassion for us, show here were find a child so trail your seek heavet and soul you know—whose mind is its of your own pure training? I love her with a love that will not change. Useless you give me Avis for a wife I shall not change.

"Absurd!" Mrs. Livingstone's eye flashed soornfully. "When our guests arrive bods, you will find many far superior to Avis. A founding! It is not her poverty—we are rich enough—but her bird." here word, and 'Avis' she is called."

"Absurd!" Mrs. Livingstone's eye flashed scornfully. "When our guests arrive bods, you will find many far superior to Avis. A founding! It is not her poverty—we are rich enough—but her bird." here word, and 'Avis' she is called."

"Avis' she creed." My onlid—it she word, and 'Avis' she is called."

"Avis know nothing of it, and I care nothing. It is herself love."

"Absurd!" Mrs. Livingstone's eye flashed scornfully. "When our guests arrive bods, you will find many far superior to Avis. A founding! It is not her povery—we are rich enough—but her bird." here word, and 'Avis' she is called."

"Avis more rich enough—but her bird." here word, and 'Avis' she is called." "Avis' she ciscalled." "Avis'

"That I may not cause you grief or pain
—you who have been to me a true mother
—I fly from a temptation that would prove
too strong if I remained. When I am
gone your son will soon forget me. I pray
God that he may—for his sake. But I
shall not forget, nor cease to love you.
Farewell, dearest friends. Forgive your
little

Avis."

This was all; and she had gone—leaving
no trace, making no further sign.

In vain Roy sought for her, even with
the help of detectives, having left home
and come to the city for that purpose;
while his mother, no less anxious for the
safety of the lost girl, made what excuse

governess for little Ida. Mother was sick
when first she called, and consequently I
received her. She was so beautiful and
inoccent, and yet so sad and friendless,
that my whole heart went out to her from
the first. She told me the simple story of
her adoption here and of Roy's love and
her adoption here and of Roy's love and
hers, but without mentioning a single
name, so that I never thought of you. She
had left, she said, in order that he might
forget her. She gave me as a reference
her own former music teacher, who, while
answering for Avis in every way, declined
to tell anything that the girl had left conealed. So she came to us, and has dwelt
with us ever since—quiet and sad, poor

with us ever since—quiet and sad, poor child, but safe and kindly cared for. I

child, but safe and kindly cared for. I left her at home with Ida and mother when I came away. She is there now."

Roy Livingstone caught her hands in his and pressed them to his lips.

"God bless you, Rose!" he cried, hoarse with emotion. "You have given me back happiness and love. Mrs. Grey, I will bring your daughter to you. I go by the train that leaves in half an hour; before nightfall you shall fold her in your arms. Adden, all!" and he was gone.

Adieu, all !" and he was gone. * The dusky gray of an autumn twilight filled the lonely schoolroom that afternoon, but occasionally flashes of light from a small but cheerful fire fell on the slender, girlish figure that sat before it in a low

armchair, her soft pale cheek supported by one little hand, her eyes fixed on the glowso bright.

Even Roy Livingstone's brow, on which the cloud of disappointment and regret had grown habitual, cleared somewhat as his what they gazed upon, but were looking

bring you fame. What has become of it?
Are you an artist no longer?"

"I painted the pioture, but never put it on exhibition. My mother has it in the library. I have never painted since," said Roy gravely.

A kind of chill fell on the company; instinctively they falt they were on dangerous ground. Even the heanty's happy voice took a softer tone as she questioned gently:

"May we see the picture, Roy?"

"He are see wittent a word and led the with a cry of love and joy unutterable,

with a cry ot love and joy unuterable,
"Roy! my beloved!" sprang to the arms,
sank on the breast of her true lover.
"You have found me!" she cried. "You

have found me!"
"Never to lose you again, Avis—never

again!"
"And your mother!"
Her great eyes searched his face timidly—anxiously.
"She will welcome you as I do. We

He would have caught and clasped the fair girl in his arms, but she, keeping him back by a gesture of her little hand, while her great dark eyes were fixed with be seeching earnestness upon his face, and swered:

"It is not what I wish, or even what you wish, that must be thought of, Mr. Roy, but your mother—your mother, who has been like a mother to me also—sgood, so generous. What would she say—'A voice, tremulous yet stern, interrupted her—a voice that made them turn and start in some confusion.

"She would say that you are right in remembering her, Avis, and that she is glad of this proof of your gratitude; for the rest, Roy Livingstone's mother looks farther than her own family circle, and higher than to a poor dependent, however good or fair, when she seeks a bride for her only son and a future mistress for the Laurels. Leave us, Avis. I do not blame you, child. Forget this folly; it was no fault of yours. I will speak to your further presently; wait is my room.

"And so," she went on turning to her only son and a future mistress for the roon, when Avis silently weeping had left them—"and so this is the result of yours artist folly. You would paint my pretty companion's picture forsooth, and whiles of doing have stolen her heart and lost your doing the presently was the my room.

"And so," she went on turning to he result of your artist folly. You would paint my pretty companion's picture forsooth, and whiles of doing have stolen her heart and lost your doing the fair them—"and so this is the result of your artist folly. You would paint my pretty companion's picture forsooth, and whiles of doing have stolen her heart and lost your down the companion of picture forsooth, and whiles of doing have stolen her heart and lost your down the companion of picture forsooth, and whiles of the manuel of the man

Native—"Well, how do you like our town?" Visitor—"Very nice place. Just consider; there are twenty-two trains or which one can leave daily."

where is she? And the clothes she wore? She sank back in Roy's supporting arms speechless, almost insensible.

Mrs. Livingstone hastened from the room, but returned immediately with the little garments.

Weeping with love and joy, the long-bereaved mother identified them allaway that I have used it with best results."

"Blessed be the merciful heaven that has kept her safely and restored her to me after all these years. And you, my friend," turning to Mrs. Livingstone, "how shall I thank you for your love and care. Oh, bring her to me! Let me clasp her once more in my arms. Why do you hesitate? I am strong enough; joy does not kill. What is it?" she continued wildly, gazing with growing fear upon the pale averted faces of mother and son. "Has harm befallen my child? Have I found her only to lose her? Avis, my daughter! Where is she?"

Rose Brandon rushed to her side, "Be calm," she cried. "Avis is safe and well. No harm has come to her. Listen to my Len tell you where to find her."

"Be calm," she cried. "Avis is safe and well. No harm has come to her. Listen to me; I can tell you where to find her."

"Are you badly injured? I see your face is cut." "No, I've only been to the barber's and had a hair-breadth scrape." to me; I can tell you where to find her."

"You!" it was Roy who spoke. "You know Avis?"

"I know her well, but I have never known until this moment of her connection with this family. Why have you kept your loss and grief a secret Roy? I could have helped you had I known your troubles long ago."

"It is nearly a year since she came to us in answer to an advertisement for a music governess for little Ida. Mother was sick when first she called, and consequently I wand a hair-breadth scrape."

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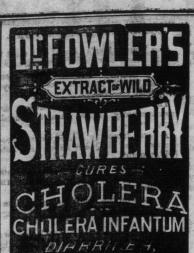
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the cloud of disappointment and regret had grown habitual, cleared somewhat as his artist-eyes took in her fresh proud lovelines; and as he listened to her animated talk, the smile that had grown so rare stole to his lips, and shone like a light in his eyes. His mother, watching him, smiled, too, well pleased.

"Is she not beautiful?" she whispered to him. "She would make a fair and gracious queen for The Laurels, Roy."
But the gleom came back to his face as he answered sadly:

"My queen went into exile, mother, a year ago. I have a constant heart, and cannot transfer my allegiance."

"Roy!' cried the clear, merry voice of Rose Brandon—"Roy, have you given up painting? You used to be sa ambitions. Only a year ago, I remember, you were ersthus and painting? The laurels her hands, as now—now, partly for shame at her own fond folly—and fancy, oh, such things! Fancy The Laurels her happy home once more, and Mrs Living the laurels and adopted mother! Fancy Roy's tender smile and leving leek; recall the clear. The same at her own fond folly—and fancy, oh, such things! Fancy The Laurels her happy home once mere, and Mrs Living stone her kind adopted mother! Fancy Roy's tender smile and leving leek; recall the clear. The same at her own fond folly—and fancy, oh, such things! Fancy The Laurels her happy home once mere, and Mrs Living strain with a force and incisiveness which commands admiration — New York Comma



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