

There were evident tourists making the round of the lakes wearing light overcoats, armed with opera glasses and very studious of fluttering maps. Then there was but a third class—the newly arrived and intending campers who had relapsed from city dress into partial Muskoka array—having got into camping shoes and shirt and here and there even donned a "blazer."

To this latter class belonged Arthur Lewis, as his array of baggage and his face all unspotted from the outer world testified. He was a journalist by profession and a thinker by choice, and, strange as it may seem, his dual occupations did not clash. He was strong fibred both in mind and body, and yet with a delicate appreciation of the refined and poetic. A lacrosse player and a canoeist, he liked to read aloud "The Lady of Shalott," and laughed most deeply at the delicate humour of Washington Irving. So strongly opinionated was he that his talent for argument was a standing joke among his friends, though it was rapidly becoming no joke to him. He could never trust himself alone with a hearer and a question. It was not at all uncommon for him to find himself at an evening party, where merriment and gaiety should reign, with a group around him listening to his arraignment in picturesque language of the tyranny of custom, of the enemies of "single tax" or of any other body or thing with which he had a quarrel. It is to be said, however, that the blame was hardly ever his. Men—and women, too—liked to hear his vivid, epigrammatic sentences, and purposely tempted him on the side of this, his besetting sin. He had always been frankly fond of feminine society from his earliest youth up and was fairly popular there, although the possessor of but few of the graces of a "ladies' man." Still, he could sing, and liked to talk sweet nonsense to a pretty face—and these things count.

Miss Murney had brought him an entirely new experience. He had met her some weeks ago at the house of her clerical friends, whom he had called to see on a newspaper errand. That was a bare introduction—nothing more; and nothing would have come of it, had she not taken the Niagara boat, alone, to visit a friend at the Queen's Royal on a morning that he took the same trip on inevitable business. Then the two accidents of formal acquaintance and loneliness brought them together as design would never have been inclined to do, for the barrier of Midas was between them, and their paths were not parallel. A steamer is a great familiarizer; whether it is that the motion tends to run people together mentally, or that they are freer in the unvalled air of the wilds of water, or whatever the reason may be, it certainly is true that one hour on a steamer is worth ten in a parlour for getting hold of the spiritual palms of people. Hence on the deck of the *Cibola* these two learned rapidly the character-geography of each other, and found that they were in that relation to one another—neither negative nor yet positive—that superinduces mutual attraction among mortals.

And there it had rested. Lewis had accepted invitations that he usually declined, because they gave him a chance to dance or chat with her; and these meetings had confirmed him in the unwilling belief that here was the one woman who would sympathize fully with his aspirations, keep step with his mental stride—even allow for and do for his mental dyspeptics—but they had not so much as lit by a single ray the vision of hope—hope of possession. Not that his gloom was reflected from any shadow upon her face, for there the brightest smile assured him of his welcome; but in spite of himself he admitted that the old feeling of the melodrama was strong upon him. His pride would not permit his asking that which would bestow so much more than was asked. He would have dared like a hero for the white hand could it come to him bare and helpless, but he would not ask its burden of her father's jewels. It is freely admitted that his was perhaps not a usual character in our time. We have now a lofty pride among us which ignores all such accidents as wealth and position; and, indeed, so sterling is the metal of it that it is more ready to climb them as obstacles than to descend their easy slopes. Arthur Lewis was of an older school. He had an obsolete notion that his wife should lean on him, and not he on his wife. He was ambitious of position, of wealth as a stepladder, of many things; he was not too haughty to accept aid from many sources, but something checked him when he thought of tossing his wedding ring—though fashioned loyally in love—over the storied stick of gold.

II.

Lake Rosseau lay asleep in the sunlight. For the most part, it shone as placidly as the face of a babe, but here and there a mischievous little breeze tickled it into dimpled smiling in its sleep. The delicious languor of an August day dominated the scene. The group upon the piazza of the Paignton House were disjointedly debating the relative coolness of their present position with that offered by the hammocks swaying under the trees.

"Oh! don't talk hammocks to me," Tommy Bennett was saying with the air of one to whom experience had taught much; "They may be all right for a gymnast—or a woman, but I never saw a Christian man who could ride one—that is, without damaging his morals."

"They are just as easy as can be," said little Miss Jones, the school teacher, with a peaceful smile suggestive of having convinced many a boy that it was "nice to do questions."

"I used to like a hammock before I was married," said Mrs. Castana, a gay young American lady, who had

a boy of ten with her and a husband somewhere in the great United States.

Bennett viewed her with interest. "And has Hymen a quarrel with hammocks?" he asked.

"Well," she replied reflectively, and just a touch of diablerie in her "merry, merry eye," "I've known Hymeneal quarrels about hammocks."

The party laughed and Bennett was so affected that he volunteered her a caramel.

"What is your opinion on this momentous question?" went on Mrs. Castana, turning her laughing eyes on Lewis.

"My mind is barren as to this matter," he confessed, "catching" her contagious smile, "but there is another upon which I have pronounced views. Here is a party of rational beings pledged to entertain, no one knows how many islanders to-night with private theatricals; and what have we done toward preparation?"

"Nothing," responds Maudie Mayburn, tragically, clasping her brown hands and shaking back her black hair.

"Oh! yes, we have," protests Mrs. Castana; "I've decided to wear my cream dress, and do my hair high."

"No, no," insists Miss Mayburn laying her dark head back into Mrs. Castana's lap; "wear that delicious satin of yours and be 'Beauty,' in 'Beauty and the Beast.'"

"Are we to have that?" Bennett asks darkly.

"Why shouldn't we?" demands Miss Mayburn in truculent tones.

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" hastily replies the abject Tommy; "Only I was fearful lest some of our guests might have seen it before. It—Oh!—it has been done, you know," he added doubtfully.

"Well, what if it has?" continues the warlike maiden.

"Did you expect that we had a new Gilbert and Sullivan for this?" "No, they don't collaborate now," calmly replies Bennett. Then the talk becomes more business-like, and soon blossoms into action and all are at work arranging tableaux, improvising charades or constructing a mimic stage. Lewis, who at once against and with his will, has accepted an invitation to take tea with the Murneys at their island and come over with the party afterward to the "High Jinks at Paignton House," goes down to the wharf about five and rows out into the lake. A half-hour later he draws in to the boat landing at "Murney Isle" and is invited from the verandah by bluff old Capt. Murney to "stable his water horse and come aboard." He does so and is soon floating with the idle tide of the summer day chat. The group is a small one for a Muskoka cottage. There are Capt. Murney and his two daughters, Mabel and Alice; a couple of old friends of the Captain's; a college chum of Miss Mabel's—a Miss Morrow; and Macdonald and Hill, two young scions of wealthy Toronto houses who are camping near.

Macdonald, as often as he can, disintegrates the general conversation so that he may talk direct to Miss Mabel, beside whom he has seated himself. As Lewis finds himself across the piazza from this couple and within the circle of the lively Miss Morrow's brilliancy, he is naturally opposed to this division of the talk and exerts himself to keep the big ball rolling. When in the calm and brave reason of solitude he tells himself that he would not for the world hinder so eminently proper a match as that which all the world believes is being made between Macdonald and Miss Murney. Some days when the spirit of romantic self-sacrifice is strong upon him, he pictures a rôle for himself in which the loved one shall know in the future years of his unspoken passion and pity him—oh! so much!—for it; and sometimes there is a hint of a sequel in which he consoles a bereaved widow—not too desolately bereaved, of course—and learns his sweetest reward in her trusting eyes. Yet when he sits within the sound of her voice, watches her soft warm hands crossed in her lap and sees her lifting her face to—Macdonald's gaze, the martyr within him dies in the grip of the lover.

Capt. Murney, who was the leader of the orchestral conversation, has now lost himself in some reverie of the past which he seems to be drawing from the bald summit of a granite island opposite. Miss Morrow is demanding all Lewis' attention to an endless account, studded with superfluous interrogations of a school girl dance in which Mabel seemed to be constantly whirling in the arms of a dark-eyed unknown; and Mabel herself is listening to Macdonald's chat about the doings of society people as if her whole soul were centred in their stupid comings and goings. But Mabel is not so absorbed as she looks. She has read the suicidal discontent in Lewis' eyes and decides to dispel it.

"Mr. Lewis," she said, looking across at him, "Did you not tell me that you were a connoisseur in mosses?"

"Hardly that," replied the delighted young man, briskly catching the conversational line thrown him, "but I am very much interested in mosses."

"So I thought," remarked Mabel, "and I have some that I want to show you on our island."

It was not likely that they would have gone alone had not the fates at this very moment brought Capt. Murney back from the past with the old, old story of a boyish prank with Macdonald's father on his lips. Macdonald, junior, had heard this innumerable times before, but the Captain always told it to him personally as a sort of family disclosure in which he must, of course, be vitally interested. This detained Macdonald; and who else had a motive to leave the cool verandah? So the couple disappear around the cottage and are soon following a soft carpeted path through the wood toward the other end of the island.

Nature has been left pretty much undisturbed on most Muskoka islands, and that fond old dame is passing kind to lovers. True, Lewis and Miss Murney were not labelled "lovers," but Dame Nature's spectacles are not good, and when a young man and maiden come out to her bower she gives them craggy slopes to help each other up and mossy trees to climb over together, and leaves the rest to the perspicacious sprite and his blindfold archery. The witchery of the Woodland was strong upon the poetic nature of these two and they learned more of romance than science from the soft mosses. White fingers are never whiter than in a bed of vivid green; and then specimens must be passed from hand to hand, eyes will meet eyes—well—what wonder that they were kinder far than ever with each other and all the world when they reluctantly turned back again.

Tea had come and in the dining room she took him next to where she sat behind the neat brass urn and the barricade of tea cups, while the unfortunate Macdonald was banished to the other end. The brightest pictures have other sides, unlovely with knotted cords and unplanned boards. All this sunshine playing around the happy Lewis had set Macdonald at the ignoble task of learning how rude he could be without breaking the canons of polite society. And at last he thought he had hit upon an arrow that could be tossed into the air as a toy, but still would find its way to the sensitive pride of Lewis.

"Do you remember Miss Polson, of Brantford?" he asked, addressing the presiding genius of the tea-urn, "she was at Rutherford's dance last winter."

"Oh, yes," said Mabel, after the explanatory sentence.

"Did you hear about her 'love-in-the-cottage' marriage?" he continued, with a smile suggestive of irony.

"No," returned Mabel, "I've heard nothing of her since that night when"—a touch of mischief shone in her eyes—"she wore the bright sash."

"Oh, yes," remarked Macdonald, "that was almost Oriental. Well,"—and now he had the attention of the whole table—"she married last week a young lawyer in Brantford with neither money nor prospects. He courted her with persistent fidelity, made love to her, they say, in language as eloquent as a mortgage covenant; and now talks of giving up his business and travelling for his wife's health." Macdonald let a little venom get into this last sentence.

"Poor girl," said Miss Morrow abstractedly.

"How much was she worth?" asks Hill.

"About \$60,000 in her own right and will get more on the death of her mother," returns Macdonald shortly.

"His marriage certificate made a fairly paying brief," commented Hill.

"Rather," drawled Macdonald, and then with indolent carelessness he let fly his arrow "a good many young fellows now-a-days blessed with a collegiate-varnish, are following Josh Billings' advice—'Mary fur luv, young man, but it is ez easy to luv a girl with muneey ez yer washer-woman's daughter.'"

The arrow went home and quivered. An easy laugh followed the sally and no one noticed how the blood left Lewis' lips and the lines of his mouth tightened to steel. So unconscious was Mabel Murney of the thrust; so free was she from any thought of Lewis as a mercenary lover, that she now turned to him who had been so long out of the conversation and sought with sweet innocence to bring him into it by asking:—

"What light, Mr. Lewis, does your social economy throw upon the problem of marriage for money?"

This question affected him like a copious douche of cold water. Macdonald's sneer had only pricked his temper but now that was gone and he felt the calm helplessness of one suddenly drenched in an unexpecting moment. What was there to be done—to be said! It was all over. The dream he had allowed to shadow itself all across his future, commencing meantime his moral courage, poor fool, because he did not paint it in more vivid colours, had been suddenly wiped out and there was no reason for doing anything. Mabel Murney thought of him as a mercenary adventurer. Had it been different she would have resented that attack of Macdonald's, the import of which must be plain to everyone; but she laughed at it and then turned to probe his wound. For the moment during which these thoughts were dominant in his mind, the world seemed to have stopped for him. There was nothing to do but sit there in dumb silence until the end came. She—they would all understand. Would they? The question opened an avenue of light right across his mental chaos. They might judge him guilty and hence shamefully silent. "Never show feeling to the world," he had been told, and at this crisis he would wear his best sheath. So, trifling with his napkin-ring and assuming the air of one who had taken a moment's thought before replying, he said:—

"Marriage for money is a contradiction of terms. Marriage is concrete love. The kind of thing that is denoted by the former phrase is a mere ledger transaction; to which, for decency's sake, the parties purchase the sanction of the church." He had trusted himself to say at first only these stereotyped things, but the sound of his own voice restored him to a proper feeling of confidence and he went on with a ring of scornful defiance in his tones.

"The most ignoble species of this branch of trade is where two people, neither of them touched with the divine fire of love, marry that they may unite their wealth. That they casually like each other in no way softens the brutal barter. Compared with this, the marriage of poverty with wealth, with love on one side, at least, is a fairly good thing."