

THE GIRL WITH THE BEAUTIFUL FACE.

By ALMA S. McCOLLUM

I SAW her first at Union Station, Toronto, and was standing next in line when she bought two tickets for Heartease, Muskoka. Strange to say I was destined for the same place, and that alone interested me even before I saw her face.

She was about as tall as I am, and as she turned around we accidentally looked straight into each other's eyes. She seemed confused, and coloured slightly, and as for me, I do not know what I did, but I shall remember those eyes and that face always.

I am an artist, and a successful one, too. You would recognise my name in many an American paper if I told you what it is, but this is a story about the girl with the beautiful face, and my name is not a necessary part of it.

If I was as skilful at pen pictures as I am with my brush, I could present to you an ideal that would live in your memory forever; but I can only, in a very inadequate way, tell you of a clear Canadian complexion; soft, large hazel eyes, which one might study for a lifetime and never fathom their depth; lashes, long, thick and brown, slightly darker than the hair, which was all aglow with golden lights; a perfect Grecian nose, and a mouth, just such a one as should have gone with those eyes.

The gods have certainly been good to her, was my uppermost thought in that first swift glance.

When we started on our journey she was sitting three seats ahead of me, and occupied most of her time in looking out of the window, at the same time unconsciously affording me an excellent opportunity of studying her profile.

Her companion was an English looking lady, whose thin lips were constantly parting over white, regular teeth, which reminded one of the keys of a piano. She commenced the tedious task of cutting the leaves of a new magazine, and religiously sawed through the last page before she glanced at the contents, a thing I have rarely seen a woman do.

When she turned and saw me she gave the same little start as the girl did, and looked the second time. Perhaps they think they know me. I sincerely wished they did, and consoled myself with the thought that my journey ended at the same port—Heartease, and in due course of time we could not help meeting; but it is always the unexpected that happens, and my desire was gratified sooner than I had dreamed of.

When we changed cars at Black Water Junction, the girl with the beautiful face met with an accident, and I was the hero of the hour. She was in the waiting room leaning on the window sill with her arm half out, and something must have been defective with the fastening of the sash, which was raised, for as the stiff rim of her sailor brushed against it it fell with a crash, I half caught it and saved her arm from being broken, for my hand came between it and the heavy sash. She did not scream, but all the pretty colour left her face.

"I am very thankful," she murmured.

"Are you hurt?" I asked, and the English lady insisted that she was, and was not satisfied till the sleeve was rolled back, disclosing a round, white arm only slightly bruised.

When we re-entered our train, new passengers had crowded in, and the only empty seats were two tucked over. I hesitated for a moment, and as neither looked repellent, sat down opposite them.

"Will you allow me to tell you my name?" I asked, and handed the English lady my card. She read it and the keyboard gleamed again.

"Ah," she said, holding up her finger in a pretty warning way, "I have heard of you, but you have not that advantage over me. I am Mrs. Ellington Ellis, of Clipperton, England, and this is my Canadian niece, Miss Kingsley."

I thanked her for her goodness in introducing me. I was, indeed, truly grateful.

Then she told me that of course she was familiar with my name as an artist, but she knew me in a social way also. My English cousins, the Ashunth's, were intimate friends of hers, and she had heard them talk of me and had seen my photograph.

Just at twilight the steamer touches Heartease in a little inlet on Lake Rosseau. When we arrived there a soft haze hung over everything, and musical cowbells were tinkling in the distance. It was an ideal spot for a poet or an artist, and Miss Kingsley's face was a study as we approached it. She seemed to have forgotten everything and everybody just for the moment, and her face was aglow with a radiantly happy expression, which I never again saw, although I am sure it often wears it now.



We were the only arrivals that evening, and as we knew each other, were considered as one party and placed at the same table.

There was the usual jolly crowd at the hotel; the same dances, bonfires and berry parties, and through everything Miss Kingsley and the aunt and I were constantly together; but it was the aunt and I that generally did the talking. Miss Kingsley puzzled me. She was very intelligent, had quaint ideas, and a pretty way of expressing them, but it was hard to interest her in conversation. I had never met a young lady so seemingly indifferent to my society, and perhaps that made the fascination all the greater. I knew that she liked me, but she treated me as she would another girl. Without a doubt she was the belle of the hotel, and would have held that position in a much larger community.

Although she appeared to join heartily in all the gaiety, she seemed utterly indifferent or unconscious of the sensation she created, and I do not think that anyone in the place, except myself, knew that she was unhappy. I also knew that I was falling in love with her, and perhaps the aunt knew too, and for that reason took me into her confidence.

It was the day after I had mailed a letter for Miss Kingsley, who had come down with it after the mail bag had been sent on board the steamer. I had offered to ask the captain to

take it, and only saw the back of the envelope, which was extra large and stamped with a peculiar violet crest, which I remembered afterwards.

Mrs. Ellis told me that the letter went to Toronto, and contained the final dismissal of one of Miss Kingsley's admirers.

"You know," she said, "the dear girl has a fortune besides her face. Both her parents died many years ago, and she lived with her grandmother in Toronto and attended the University there. She became infatuated with a young student and insists on marrying him, but he is a penniless young lawyer, of no family, and only wants her money. I see that plainly, and have determined to take her back to England with me, but have had great difficulty in making her realise the situation. At last I have succeeded, and we are going home in September. With her beauty and her money she can marry whom she pleases."

Ah! I do not believe she can, thought I. If she had not the latter she might.

So that is why the beautiful eyes had a sad look sometimes. I never heard what tactics the aunt adopted to accomplish her scheme, but I could picture the process.

Now, the strangest part of it all was that I bore a striking resemblance to the unfortunate young man, and had they had both noticed it that day on the train. I was some three years older then; he was just twenty-two, and Miss Kingsley was twenty. If he had lost there was no reason why I should not win. But I did not believe it was money he wanted.

There had been one of those unfortunate misunderstandings which take the light out of the future, and which a word or a look might set aright.

The days wore away, and she must have known that I loved her, for the eyes speak plainer than words can ever tell. I thought she knew, for she seemed to like me better and talked oftener to me.

It was rumoured through the hotel that we were engaged. People must have something to say at a summer resort, but if Marian—that is her name—Marian Kingsley, one of the sweetest sounding names in the world—if Marian heard the report, she never appeared conscious of it. The aunt seemed pleased. She liked me, and I was related to the Ashunth's, and that was sufficient. But things were brought to a sudden climax.

It was the night of the fancy ball, and dressed in a Grecian gown of soft, creamy white, Marian looked more beautiful than ever. To be sure, the costume was only of cheese cloth, bought at a district store, and I had helped with the draping, but the effect was wonderfully good.

One cannot be always love-lorn, and I think she almost forgot "my double" that evening. After a spirited two-step, danced to the music of one of Sousa's marches, we strolled together on the southern verandah.

The light in the light Japanese lantern there had burned away, and we were alone with the moon shining full in our faces. The music of "Manhattan Beach" floated softly out to us, and blended with the music of the faint tinkling bells, in the far distant wood. It was a ideal spot and an ideal night, and I was alone with Marian! May I not be pardoned if I lost my wits? Her hand was within my arm—just as we had come from the dance, and she was looking far out on the moon's shining track on the dark water.

(To be continued.)