

Won By Devotion

— BY —

Mary A. Fleming

The malicious eyes contracted a trifle more as they transfixed the audacious little flirt on the lounge. Captain Ffrench was out of his depth, but felt vaguely and alarmingly that this conversation was meant to be unpleasant.

"Because, should I leave me at the present moment—I am the worst person at figures in the world—Captain Ffrench, nineteen and twelve, how much is that?"

"One and twenty, I should say, in your case," responded, gravely, Captain Ffrench.

"My father died, my dear Mrs. Carlton," said Dora, with a rippling smile, "nine—teen years ago. I was at the time seven years old, only seven, I assure you the family Bible is still extant. Last birthday I was six and twenty. Six—and—twenty, fully two years older than Eleanor, I do believe. And then I lost my poor dear mamma so early. Things might have been so different if she had lived. It must be nice to have a mamma to look out for one, to point out whom to be attentive to and whom to avoid, in this deceitful world—to lay plans for one—"

"If one is not capable of laying plans for one's self—very true," said the other duellist, firing promptly. "A mother in many cases would be a superfluity. To be tossed about the world and learn one's own sharpness from hard experience—"

"I beg your pardon, Captain Ffrench did you address me?"

"Would you not like to come out and visit the fernery?" said Captain Ffrench hastily, in horrible alarm lest this bloodless battle should be renewed, "or—or is it too warm?"

"Not in the least too warm," smiled Dora; "warmth is my element. Vera, hand me my sun hat, please. Nelly, dear, what are your favorite flowers—I shall fetch you a bouquet."

She tied the broad tulle hat over the loose crinkling hair, the small, pretty face, and high blue eyes, gleaming with mirth and malice.

"It's a very fine thing to be mother-in-law."

To a very magnificent three-tailed Bashaw.

she sang under her breath as she went, but Mrs. Carlton heard her and flashed a wrathful glance after her enemy. She had been routed this bout, but hostilities had only commenced; she felt she was an old and able veteran, and they laugh best who laughs last. As she thought it Miss Lightwood's shrill peal came to her from out the blaze of sunshine into which she went with Captain Dick. Dora's laugh was not her strong point; it was elfish and metallic, and did not harmonize at all with the rose-hued mouth and baby prettiness of face.

"That horrid old woman!" she exclaimed, "did you ever hear anything so spiteful, Captain Ffrench? And all because you happened to be civil to me. Don't put on that innocent face, sir, and pretend you don't know."

Had Headache For Two Years

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"I asked him a great many questions," about Captain Ffrench, I know," said Vera, still hot and resentful, and seeing nothing to laugh at; "and he had not a good word to say of himself. I dare say he was informed. Still, with a sudden inconsequent change of tone, 'I think he is nice, don't you?'"

"Very nice."

"And handsome?"

"Well—rather."

"And awfully clever? Now don't say you don't know, because it is patent to the dullest observer. He talks like a book when he likes."

"Then he doesn't always like, for I have heard him, when he talked more like Captain Dick Ffrench than Emerson or Carlyle."

"Ah! I don't know them. All the same, he is clever. He is a musician."

"He plays the violin tolerably, as amateurs go."

"And he draws beautifully. And you needn't be so critical. He has your picture over the mantel at Shad-deck Light."

"Nonsense!" Eleanor's cheek flushed suddenly and Mamma Carlton, with one ear bent to her host, the other turned to her daughter, pricked up the near one to catch more.

"It is there—nonsense or not—a crayon, as like you as two peas, flattered if anything. It seems, Miss Lightwood, you and Captain Dick are very old friends."

"Oh, no, not I never spoke to him in my life until four days ago."

Vera's large, dark eyes lifted and looked at her. They were eyes of crystal clearness, the one beauty at present of her face, down through which one seemed to see into the absolute white truth of a child's soul.

"I am telling you the truth, Vera," she said, her cheeks still hot, "though you look as if you doubted it. Some years ago, I met Captain Ffrench at a house in New Orleans, where I gave music lessons. He came with an uncle of the children, and they adopted him as an uncle, also. The mother was a French lady. To the children I was simply Mademoiselle."

"What was Uncle Dick? But I never knew his name, never spoke to him till I met him here."

Vera dropped back on the marble. There was a shade of annoyance on Eleanor's face, as if half provoked at having this confession extorted. Her mother was listening, unctuous and well pleased.

"You evidently made a silent impression, then," said Vera. "I said this morning, 'That is Miss Carlton's picture'; and he said, 'Then Miss Carlton is a very pretty girl.' Here comes Dot, alone; I wonder what she has done with him? Dot! Where have you left Captain Ffrench?"

"Am I my brother's keeper?" replied Dora, sauntering in, a great nose gay in her hand. "Here is your bouquet, Nelly. Captain Ffrench cut the flowers, and I arranged them. I am a milliner, you know, by profession, and have artistic tastes."

"Ever so many thanks—your taste is exquisite."

"But where is Captain Ffrench?" persisted Vera, rising on her elbow. "You are responsible for him—he was last seen alive in your company. There is no old well out in the garden, is there? that you could drop him into, a la Lady Audley? And besides he isn't a husband in the way—"

"Vera, dear," said Dora sweetly, "your wild talk of husbands. My sister—she is only sixteen—talks dreadful nonsense sometimes. Indeed, it is a family failing—not that the Carlton side, of course."

"But Captain Dick—Captain Dick! What has become of Captain Dick?" reiterated Vera.

"He has gone to St. Ann's for letters," said Dora resuming her place on the lounge. "As it stands about one hundred and fifty out in the sun, you may imagine how fascinating he finds your society, when he prefers it to a blazing three-mile walk. Now don't talk to me, please, I am going to take a nap."

Which she did almost at once, her mite of a hand under her rose-leaf cheek, sleeping as a baby sleeps, with softly parted lips.

"How pretty your sister is," Eleanor said gently.

"Yes, is she not?" Vera answered proudly, "and so much admired wherever she goes. People turn in the streets to look after her, and Madame le Brun says she never had a forewoman half so popular before."

"You are not in the least like her." "Oh, no, not in the least. I am the ugly duckling, you know. There is generally one in every hatching."

"And, like the ugly duckling, will turn by and by into a stately swan," said Eleanor, smiling down on the dark, thin face, with its great Murillo eyes.

"No," Vera said shaking her head with a sigh, "such transformations are only in fairy tales and pantomimes. I am the ugly duckling, and I shall never be the swan. But I don't mind. I would rather have Dot pretty than be pretty myself."

Here Mrs. Carlton rose, excused herself, and departed. Mr. Carlton left to write letters in his study, Eleanor resumed her magazine, and

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Vera lapsed into a daydream, still coiled on the floor. The daydream changed gradually into a real dream, in which she was floating over sunlit seas with Captain Dick, past fairy isles all dotted with small, gray houses, until they finally, and rather unexpectedly came to anchor somewhere in the upper part of Fifth Avenue, before Mrs. Trafton's front door. Captain Dick moored his craft to the brownstone steps, and was going up to ring the bell, when—

"Three for the governor," said the pleasant voice of Captain Dick, in the flesh, "one for you, Miss Carlton, and half a dozen for myself. None for you, Miss Lightwood; none for you, Miss Vera, although I suppose it is rather soon for your five hundred to begin."

Vera rubbed her eyes, and sat up. He handed Eleanor her letter, and Dora, who was also awake, saw with one quick, keen glance that the writing was a man's.

"I did not expect—" Eleanor began in surprise. Then her voice faltered, failed, she looked at the envelope, and grew pale. She lifted her eyes, and cast an anxious glance at Captain Dick, but his countenance was impassive. Her letter was postmarked St. Ann's, the chirography unmistakably masculine, but there was no curiosity in his face.

"I must deliver the governor's," he said, and went. Miss Carlton rose slowly, and went upstairs. Dora's eyes followed her. The surprise, the falter, the pallor, the postmark—Dora had seen all. Dora had eyes that saw everything.

"Now I wonder what you are about?" mused Miss Lightwood, "and who our unwelcome correspondent is? Are you a fiery Southern lover come to guard your own, or are you a little bill?"

Little bills were the bane of Dora's life, but this was no dun. It was short and affectionate enough to establish the accuracy of Miss Lightwood's first guess. And it closed:

"I know you will resent my disobeying orders, but, resent or not, I must see you. Do not be too hard on a poor devil, Nelly—it is eight months since we met. See you I simply must. I will be on the other side of the boundary wall—where Mr. Carlton's peach trees flourish—about seven this evening. I will wait until nine, as I don't know the Carlton dinner hour. Do not fail. I expect a scolding, but a scolding from you, my darling, will be sweeter than words of honey from another."

E. D.

CHAPTER VII
In the Cool of the Evening
Day had passed, evening had begun.

It was six o'clock, and the white, quivering heat was spent, a breeze rose fresh from the Atlantic, fluttered every lace curtain, and blew through every open window and door of the fine old Carlton mansion.

Over in St. Ann's the noises of the day were done; down in the warm flushed west the sun—who had nobly done his duty all day long, and baked the earth to powder—was sinking out of sight. Revived by siesta and bath, the ladies of the household were robing for the great event of the day—of all our days—dinner.

"Dot," said Vera, tiptoeing around, and straining her neck to get a view of the small of her back, where she wished to plant a bow. "I am afraid it is of no use. I am afraid it is to be Eleanor."

"What is of no use?" asked Dora, for this remark had been made—like the generality of Vera's remarks—apropos of nothing. But she smiled too, as if she understood. Their rooms adjoined, the door of communication was open, and both were before their respective mirrors.

"About Captain Ffrench. Both this sash! I can't get it to come straight. I think he must be falling in love with her, Dot. He has her picture, as I told you, over there in that funny little light-house, and he has a way of looking at her—What are you laughing at?"

"At your perspicacity, dear; at your profound knowledge of the ways and manners of Richard Ffrench. This big solemn Dick who thinks we are all dying for him. So you think I have no chance?"

"Well," said Vera reluctantly, "you see, everything was in her favor. You did not have fair start Dot. Eleanor was here three days ahead, and a good deal can be done in three days."

"Vera broke off, for Dora was laughing immoderately. The simplicity, the earnestness of little Vera were too comical."

"Vera, child, you will be the death of me! Do you really think I have come down here to marry Dick Ffrench—if I can. What a humiliating idea! Not but that it would be worth while—"

She glanced wistfully out over lawn and garden, green glade, and dense shrubbery. "Yes it would be worth while, and what I can—I will do."

"Worth while?" repeated Vera. "I should think so. It is like the Garden of Eden. Old Mr. Carlton must

(Continued on page 7)

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Laundry Soaps - 3 for 25c	Bacon Sliced, lb. . . 50c
Panshine - - 3 for 25c	Head Cheese . . . 25c
Corn Starch - 2 for 25c	Sausage, lb. . . . 25c
Jelly Powders, package - 10c	Weiners, lb. . . . 25c
Laundry Starch - 2 lbs. 25c	Salmon, small tin . . 14c
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