

Sister Genevieve.

When her husband fell ill Kitty Vivian had been married nearly a year, and the doctors ordered him change of air and scenery. So in the very middle of the London season Kitty was obliged to pack up her pretty dresses, cancel her many engagements, and accompany him down to Malvern, where the beautiful air brought back a little of the old color to his pale, thin face. Herbert Vivian was not strong, and he had been working rather too hard of late, spending hours at his office, which for his health's sake should have been passed in the open air. He adored his pretty, bright-eyed little wife, and could not bear that she could not have everything she wanted in the way of luxury and comfort, and to attain this end he had to work much harder than he allowed her to have any idea of.

They spent six pleasant, healthy weeks at Malvern, and then went to pay some visits at various country houses, including Herbert's home, where his old father still lived. In September Herbert was obliged to return to London and to work, but Kitty declared that it was too soon to go back to their poky little flat, just when there were so many delightful shooting parties going on, and that she would go up to Yorkshire and stay with a cousin of hers whose house was always the scene of a perpetual round of gaiety.

Herbert consented rather against his will to this proposition. He did not like the cousin his wife had chosen to stay with, and he felt it hard that she should be willing, even anxious to part from him so soon after his recent illness, and let him go back alone to his work in London whilst she went about enjoying herself in country houses. However, he said very little, for he hated to throw cold water on any of his wife's amusements, and he betook himself to their little flat with a heavy heart, but with few outward signs of annoyance or disappointment.

Kitty wrote to him pretty regularly, her letters being full of her parties and of the society gossip which formed the chief topic of conversation at her cousin's house. Herbert spent his days at his office and his evenings at the club, and had to undergo a good deal of good-natured chaff from his friends about having become a "grass widower" so soon after his marriage. Though he bore their teasing good-humoredly, it hurt him, nevertheless, and often he would dine at home and spend his evenings reading, so as to avoid meeting his facetious young friends. At last, towards the end of October, Kitty returned, looking the picture of health and spirits, and full of all that she had been doing. They settled down then for the winter, and got along very nicely, for Herbert was so thoughtful and unselfish and so fond of his young wife that he seldom denied her anything if he could possibly help it. However, as Christmas drew near, and London became a prey to fogs and damp, Herbert Vivian developed a dreadful cough, of which at first he made light, declaring that he would soon get rid of it. The doctors to whom he went for advice thought differently, however, and after examining him thoroughly, told him firmly and decidedly, that if he ever meant to recover he must go abroad to some warm climate without one day's delay. Poor Herbert gave a sigh when he heard the doctor's verdict, but in his heart he knew it to be the right one, and he broke the news to his wife immediately on his return home.

"Oh, what fun! We'll go to Monte Carlo!" she cried, in great excitement; "we shall have a splendid time there. It will be really much more amusing, Bertie, than spending the winter in London."

"The doctor says I am to go to Madeira," said Herbert, "and I really think, dear, it will be better. You see, Kitty, Monte Carlo is a very expensive place, and as I shall be obliged to give up my work for the winter, I cannot afford to spend a great deal while we are away."

Kitty pouted. She was a spoilt child—the only girl among a large

family of brothers who had always given way before their pretty, imperious little sister. "I am sure Maderia is deadly dull," she exclaimed, irritably; "really, Bertie, you might have a little consideration for me. Fancy being cooped up in Madeira all the winter with no one but the ordinary inhabitants and a few English people who are dying of consumption. I can't imagine anything more miserable."

Herbert flushed. "Kitty," he said, sadly, "don't you think you are just a little selfish, dear? It will only be for two months, perhaps, and I am sure we shall find plenty of amusement once we get there."

"Oh, you will, I daresay," pouted Kitty, as she threw herself despondingly into an armchair. "You are always happy with your books and your sketching things, but you know how soon I get tired of reading, and I can't draw two straight lines."

"I will teach you, my darling, if you will let me," answered Herbert, gently. "Oh, Kitty, we might be so happy together," and he looked at her sorrowfully and sighed. In a moment the girl was overcome with a sudden fit of penitence and, throwing her arms round her husband's neck, she told him he was the dearest old "stick-in-the-mud" in the world, and that she would go with him wherever he wished. He stroked her brown head as it lay for a moment on his breast, and then, bending down he kissed her very tenderly.

A week later the Vivians embarked at Southampton in a Cape steamer, and at the end of eight days they found themselves landed at Madeira. The hotel at Funchal where they had ordered rooms was bright and sunny and very comfortable. To Herbert it was new life being out all day in the fresh, pure, balmy air after the horrible London fogs which they had left behind. At first Kitty was happy in her new surroundings, and declared that Madeira was the most delightful spot on earth. She and Herbert made several expeditions together, walking, riding and in bullock carts, and the latter did all he could to reconcile his wife to the dullness of the beautiful little island. There were very few English people at Funchal, and the hotel was as Kitty predicted, chiefly taken up by consumptive patients. There was one pretty, delicate-looking French girl of about seventeen, who had been sent out in charge of a Bon Secours nun, whose sweet, sad face and gentle ways had impressed Kitty very much the few times they had met. Her young patient adored her and could scarcely bear her out of her sight for a moment, declaring that no one could smooth her pillows or soothe her to sleep like Sister Genevieve.

Kitty soon got tired of exploring and began to look about for some new form of entertainment, but there was none to be had. After a while she began to mope and declared that she would certainly die of the blues if she had to remain any longer in Madeira. About this time she received a letter from her cousin in Yorkshire, telling her that she and her husband and a party of lively friends whose names she mentioned, were going yachting in the Mediterranean, and that if she liked they would call at Madeira and carry her off with them for a fortnight at Monte Carlo. Kitty was sitting out on the terrace with her husband watching the evening glow upon the waters when the letter was handed to her, and without a moment's hesitation she decided to accept the invitation. Herbert, as usual, said very little when the plan was laid before him, but a sharp pain cut him through the heart like a knife as he listened to his wife's words:

"It will only be for a fortnight, Bertie," she said in a tone of apology, "and you will easily be able to take care of yourself while I am away. I will ask Sister Genevieve to keep an eye on you and to let me know if anything goes wrong." And with this she stilled the voice of conscience which told her she should not leave her husband all alone, and went off to answer her cousin's letter. Ten days later she received a wire to say that she might expect the yacht early the following week, and she was full of

good humor and gaiety, during all she could to make up to Herbert for her impending desertion of him. The evening before the yacht was expected she went to seek Sister Genevieve to tell her what she was going to do, and to ask her to see after her husband during her absence, if he required any care. She found the nun walking up and down the terrace saying her rosary. Her face wore a look of almost heavenly saintliness, but was withal so sweet and sympathetic, that all who knew her felt drawn towards her in a wonderful manner. She stopped praying as soon as she saw Kitty approaching, and asked cheerfully if there was anything she could do for her. Kitty told her what she wanted, and somehow she could not help feeling a little bit ashamed when she saw the look of surprise and pain that came into Sister Genevieve's dark eyes as she listened.

"And are you going to leave your husband all alone?" she asked, when Kitty had finished speaking.

"Yes," replied the girl, reluctantly. "At least, there will always be you should he require anyone, which is not at all likely as he is so much better now."

For some moments Sister Genevieve did not speak. A far-away look had crept over her beautiful face, and her lips were trembling. Then very gently she said:

"Mrs. Vivian, I would like to tell you a story if you can stay a few minutes; it will not take long."

"Oh, I have lots of time," returned Kitty. "My packing is all done. I finished it this morning, so as to be ready whenever the yacht arrives."

"Let us sit down here then," said the Sister, leading the way to a rustic bench, beneath a trellis around which the roses were climbing, although it was January. Kitty followed, wondering vaguely what the story could be which Sister Genevieve was about to recount to her.

"Years ago," began the Sister, in a voice which trembled ever so slightly, "when you were little more than a baby, two young people fell in love with each other and were married. For two years all went well with them, and they were as happy as the day was long. Then one sad day the young husband fell ill and his doctor sent him to a little village in the south of England to recruit his health. His wife, of course, accompanied him, and at first she was charmed with the free, open-air life, the picturesque old village, and the friendly, weather-beaten fisherfolk who formed the chief society of the place. The invalid used to spend his days lying on the beach watching the fishermen mending their nets, and chatting with them about the sea and its treasures, which was a topic they never grew tired of. He was quite happy and contented, for he never cared very much for society, and as long as he had his wife near him it was all he asked. The soft, pure air did him a world of good, and his cough grew less frequent. After the first few weeks, however, his young wife who had always been accustomed to a life of gaiety, began to find the simple enjoyment of the little village extremely monotonous. She complained of the tiny rooms, the homely food and finally declared that she would certainly go mad if she had to remain there much longer. Poor Geoffrey was terribly upset when he heard her talking in this strain, and did all he could to make her more contented with her lot. He sent to London for books and pictures to brighten the rooms, he took her for long drives to all the places of interest in the neighborhood, but Madge was still dissatisfied. Nothing pleased her, she wearied of everything, and cried a great deal when she was alone, to Geoffrey's infinite distress. At last matters reached a climax. A sister of Madge's was spending the winter on the Riviera, and she sent long and glowing descriptions of the lovely scenery, the flowers, the sunshine, and, above all, of the charming people she had met. Madge pined to join her, and when Mrs. Seymour wrote and said that Monte Carlo would do her husband a great deal more good than the Devonshire village, Madge determined that she would make him go out there. She read the letter to him, and at last, after a long argu-

ment, Geoffrey resigned himself to the inevitable. A week later he found himself in a large hotel at Monte Carlo, which was filled with smart, healthy people, and he, in his weak state of health, felt himself very much out of everything that was going on around him. Mrs. Seymour, Madge's sister, was a robust, loud-voiced widow, always beautifully dressed, and with plenty of money at her disposal. She considered that Geoffrey wanted stirring up, and was always telling Madge to make him go and enjoy himself like other people, instead of moping in the hotel or sitting alone in the sunshine, watching the sea with that far-away look in his eyes. Unfortunately, Madge entertained a profound respect for Mrs. Seymour's opinion, and poor Geoffrey suffered in consequence. He always tried to appear bright and gay when his sister-in-law was anywhere near, but the sound of her voice and the aggressive rustle of her silk-lined garments approaching used to set his teeth on edge and make him shiver. They often took him for drives, which he would have enjoyed very much if he had been alone with Madge, but Mrs. Seymour almost invariably accompanied them, and the result was that he was longing all the time to get home as quickly as possible. He hated the gossip and scandal with which Madge's sister beguiled the hours, and could not bear to see the delight and interest his wife used to take in hearing of a recent divorce case or a suicide at Monte Carlo. Once he went for a drive with Madge, as Mrs. Seymour had some more amusing engagements on hand, and the memory of that afternoon lived for a long time in the minds of both. Madge was in a soft, coaxing humor, and she let him hold her hand and fondle the little finger which bore his wedding-ring. Geoffrey wished with all his heart that every drive might be like that one. He and his wife were so happy together, she seemed to him to be more like the Madge of the first few months of their married life, simple and affectionate, and quite content to talk to him about the beautiful scenery, the books he had been reading, and other things which interested him. But the other afternoons were not like that and Geoffrey regretted the Devonshire village with a bitterness which grew deeper every day. He saw so little of Madge. She was always going to parties with her sister or else wasting the sunny hours in the

hot, close atmosphere of the Casino. Once or twice she went to a dance in the evening, and Geoffrey was left alone to ponder sadly on the change that had come over his wife. And all this time Madge was in her element. Though at the bottom of her heart she loved her husband very deeply, yet she longed for excitement and admiration. She went everywhere, dressed beautifully and enjoyed herself most thoroughly. Poor Geoffrey was obliged to remonstrate with her once on the score of expense, for he was not very well off, and he feared that his foolish young wife might get herself perhaps deeply in debt. "I must dress like other people," Madge had answered irritably. "It's nonsense to suppose that I can go about if I do not get some new clothes," and Geoffrey sighed and said no more. He soon grew to hate the Casino. The bold-eyed, showy, painted women parading up and down, and the ceaseless chink of the money passing from hand to hand filled him with loathing and disgust. The first time he saw his wife take her place at the tables it gave him a feeling of pain which he could not repress. He went back to the hotel feeling more ill and weak than he had ever done since the doctor had cautioned him to avoid exertion and spoken disparagingly about his lungs. Something must be done, he said to himself, I cannot let her become like her sister and like all those other women who swarm about the Casino. The bedroom windows were open and a mist was slowly rising from the sea, but Geoffrey did not heed it, and he sat for a long time with his eyes fixed dreamily on the gathering darkness. He felt himself so weak and ill, so utterly unfit to take care of his vain pretty little wife, with her passionate love of life and gaiety. Soon he might require care and nursing, but he knew that he must not now expect them from Madge. Some demon of selfishness seemed to have taken possession of her, and her thoughts were all for herself and her own amusements. He was sitting in the same position when his wife returned home from the Casino. She had lost a good deal of money and was angry in consequence. At Geoffrey's first gentle remonstrance she broke into a torrent of passionate irritable words. He grew angry also for once in his life, and a quarrel ensued. For the first time since they had been married they exchanged no good-night kiss. The following morning the doctor was

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