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my power. Oh, you know it well!" he cried, and his voice suddenly trembled. But he controlled himself, as he went on. "That brings me to what I wanted to tell you, Peggy."

As suddenly as Max had forgotten about the stolen drawings of the new gun when he caught sight of Peggy, so she forgot about the mystery of Sylvia Chase as Max was speaking; when his voice trembled, a tremor that was wholly sweet passed over her.

"Yes, Max," she said, as he paused and looked at her; her tones were low, and her eyes were cast down.

"Last night," he said, "Mr. Beaumont, our chief, called me into his room, and bade me hold myself in readiness to go to Germany at a moment's notice."

"Oh, Max," she said, and looked at him strangely. "But why?"

MAX repeated what his editor had said of the increasing tension between Great Britain and Germany, and spoke about the theft of the drawings of the new gun.

"I read of it in your paper, Max," said Peggy, "and I remember that Captain Hollander spoke of it to us at home a few days ago. Father is dreadfully put out about it. Do you think that you really will have to go to Germany, Max?"

"Most probably—at any rate, I could see that Beaumont thinks so. And I am getting ready. I left instructions with my man to pack up. Still, I may not go, after all. And until I go, I shall continue the quest you gave me, Peggy."

They were now in Hyde Park, walking across it by one of the diagonal paths towards Lancaster Gate.

"What would you do in Germany, Max?" asked Peggy.

"It would depend on Beaumont's instructions—he would receive some definite news, and I should be despatched—that's how it would be."

"And would you be away long?" There was a queer quavering note in the way she spoke.

"There's no saying, Peggy; it would depend on circumstances."

Peggy sighed, and Max heard the sigh, and misinterpreted it.

"Perhaps before I go," he said, "Sylvia's secret—"

"I wasn't thinking just then of Sylvia," Peggy quickly interposed.

"Of me, then were you?" asked Max, and his voice trembled again. He looked at her, and their eyes met; in hers was a pretty confusion, in his the great question, the greatest a man can ask a woman.

"Do you care, Peggy, whether I go or stay, or how long I may be away?" he asked hoarsely. "Oh, my dearest, be frank with me!" he pleaded.

"Yes, Max," said Peggy, "I care."

CHAPTER XVI.

At Duty's Call.

IN the eyes of many people Hyde Park is the centre of London. This is a belief more easily held in the season when rank, wealth and fashion frequent it on foot, in motor-car and carriage, or in what is left of the summer after society has unanimously abandoned the capital, but when the trees and the grass and the flowers are at their best; yet in winter the great park is not without its own attractions—this vast space, open to all the winds of heaven, set in the midst of an apparently endless wilderness of houses and streets.

On the morning when the lovers were walking across it, the air was sweet and pure and keen, the long stretches of grass were powdered with a glistening rime for the day was frosty, the leafless trees, the branches of which were picked out here and there with gleaming white, gave an effect of colour to the scene and robbed it of its winter melancholy, and above it the sun shone in a clear pale-blue sky, bringing all its beauties into view. But neither Max Hamilton nor Peggy Willoughby was conscious of its charms.

For they had passed through the enchantment of love into that beatific state which, temporarily at least in the case of all lovers and in some thrice-happy instances perennially,

finds for itself new heavens and new earth. The magic, the wonder-working of love was upon them; for a space they forgot where they were—they forgot everything but themselves; they looked into each other's eyes, and saw in them the light that never was on land or sea, and their hearts were transported with unspeakable joy. That is love!

They walked slowly, lingeringly; they did not say much to each other at the time of their love—that is, in actual words, but messages, more subtle and yet far more satisfying than can be expressed by forms of speech, passed between them, heart of him beating with heart of her tuned to the key of the oldest "wireless" in the world.

After she had said in answer to his question, "Yes, Max, I care," he had taken her hand, pressed and held it. When after a time she had drawn it gently from him, he had taken her arm, nor did he relinquish it until they reached the street; both were intensely alive to their nearness to each other. The new heavens and the new earth of love's imagining are, after all, the old. He could not take her in his arms—there, in the park, with other men and women moving up and down its paths, though he longed to clasp her yielding body to him, to seal the dear confession she had made.

The opportunity came, or rather Peggy and Max made it between them—they would be poor lovers who could not make opportunities!

When they passed out of the park into the road, they halted as if by mutual consent, and gazed inquiringly at each other.

"I am coming with you, Peggy," signalled the eyes of Max.

"Of course, you are," hers replied.

They walked a few steps in silence. "Will you come and lunch with us?" asked Peggy, in a voice that shook ever so slightly.

"Yes, thanks; that's just what I hoped you would ask me to do," said Max joyously, in a voice that did not shake at all. "But it's much too far for you to walk, sweet; let's take a taxi."

THE words may not be altogether intelligible as they are written, but she understood them and him very well.

"Let's, Max dear," she said, in a tone that was as firm as his. They would be alone, more or less, in the taxi. Well, why not? At any rate, he might give her a kiss! Well, again, why not? She wanted that kiss, and she knew he wanted one, too!

But the taxi had hardly got into its speed, when it was not one kiss but many. Max seemed to have an unappeasable hunger for kisses, so that she cried out in some shame that the people in the streets would see him kissing her!

"Let them," he said, boyishly. "They'll never see a more improving sight. It will do them a heap of good!" And he laughed loudly out of sheer happiness.

"Don't be absurd," she chided him, and then laughed in sympathy with his mood. "We are just a pair of children," she added.

"Nice children, then," he said, still laughing. "Very nice children! But, oh, I am glad, Peggy darling, that you are a woman and I am a man, and that we haven't to grow up and wait for each other ever and ever so long."

Then the laughter passed from his lips, and his face suddenly became tenderly serious; the many words of love that seemed far away in the park flew to his lips, poured forth and caused Peggy to thrill deliciously.

"Oh, I am so happy, Max," she acknowledged, when he paused from very lack of breath.

"When will you marry me?" he asked, after a brief silence.

"By and by," she answered, with an attempt at mocking him which was not particularly successful.

"It cannot be too soon," he declared masterfully; then bethinking him that his words were too peremptory perhaps, he said in quite a different tone, "Oh, I hope you will not make me wait and wait, Peggy dearest. Why should we wait?"

Peggy had liked the masterfulness