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WHEN BABY DIED.

"The day the baby died the flowers
Drooped o'er the bed;
And birds within the shady bowers
Poured plaintively their grief.
And through the golden sun the sun
It seemed as if the day were done,
When Baby died.

As if over all the land a sudden blight
Had withered flower and leaf in one short breath
Into a mother's heart day turned to night,
As I lay to death.
While to her now come back with sudden tears
The winsome face the teasing curls aglow,
The little foot that pattered to and fro,
The angel wisdom of those happy years,
All ending with such suddenness of woe
When Baby died!

From out the drawer she takes with trembling care
The dainty shoes that Baby used to wear.
Ah! but the silence of the missing feet,
The tearful vision of the face so sweet—
Baby's dead!

Fair in its place away the curl of hair—
Nay, she will press it to her lips again.
And, dreaming of the years that might have been,
The mother finds her hands in speechless prayer—
Baby's dead!

Why, Baby was the playmate of the birds;
They missed him one the second day was gone
And 'twixt sound the perch with pleading words,
But [illegible] was his voice upon the lawn!
The hoop lay where he left it, by the wall,
The swing was motionless and overall
Such silence seemed to reign
That from the world beyond the sob of pain
Was echoed in sad hearts, although they knew
Their little friend the shining gates passed through
When Baby died!

His gipsy dog no more will bear the rein,
Nor draw about his toy cart again.
The horse stands crowed, the little soul is free,
Are Baby his teacher with the church and tree,
So most against his mother's face he'll press
A dainty cheek with more a coy caress;
No more he'll clasp his little hands and pray,
In words she taught his rosy lips to say;
Nor will he blither talk
Of things so wise beyond his baby years.
Put in their place the playthings that he left.
About the house each dear remembered walk
Bringing to mother's eyes the blinding tears,
Make her tend heart was of its joy bereft
When Baby died.

So leave the chamber to its silent gloom,
And put aside the little crib beside
And draw the curtains. Close the sacred room;
The lifted will mourn full memories of the dead.
For o'er the pictures hang on the wall
Some thoughts recall
That start the tears unbidden; and the vine
That clusters round the window will keep
Its flower nodding in the shade and shine,
To greet him when he awakens from his sleep.
Baby's dead!

And all in vain crushed hearts must reason why
Their loved ones in their bloom are so early die.
Life holds but love alone sufficient worth
To bind our weary feet into the earth.
And hearts are breaking for the love they lost
When some dear soul the shadowy river crossed.
—The Independent.

THE STORY OF A CONSPIRACY.

BY CHRISTIAN REID.

LETTER I.

[From Mrs. Temple to her Stepmother, Mrs. Harrington.]

NEW ORLEANS, June 20, 1874.

DEAR MAMMA—You will be sorry to hear that Archie has been very ill since I wrote to you last, and in consequence of this illness I fear I can not pay my visit to you as soon as I expected. The doctors tell me that I ought to take him to the mountains, so I shall start in a week or two for the Warm Springs in North Carolina. Can you not meet me there? Fanny might find it pleasant, and I could go home with you when the season ends. Write and let me know what you think of the plan. General Develin will not accompany me. He is obliged to take one of his daughters abroad for her health. He will probably return in October, and we shall be married soon afterward. He is exceedingly kind, and I really like him very much. If this sounds moderate, remember that I have outlived the time of romance. I played once, as you know, a part in the comedy—which often becomes a tragedy—of "All For Love, or The World Well Lost." It is a part which no one ever plays twice. Tell Fanny that Oscar Develin—my future stepson—will be at the Springs, and I should like her to meet him. He is young, good looking, wealthy, and already in love with her photograph. If she married the son while I married the father, it would complicate our relationship, would it not? Forgive my nonsense, and let me hear from you soon. Archie is better, but still very pale. He sends his love and a kiss to you and to Fanny. With love to the latter, I am

Affectionately yours,

MARION TEMPLE.

LETTER II.

[Mrs. Harrington to Mrs. Temple.]

THE HEIGHTS, June 25, 1874.

MY DEAR MARION—I have just received your letter, and answer it in some uncertainty. I should like exceedingly to meet you at the Warm Springs, and if I be guided my wishes alone I should certainly do so. But, unfortunately, there are several other things that I must consider—one thing specially of paramount importance; that is, Fanny's interest and happiness in life. You will wonder, perhaps, how visiting a watering-place could greatly affect this. I will tell you.

I believe I mentioned in my last letter that she has lately caused me a great deal of anxiety by the manner in which she has been encouraging a very undesirable admirer—a certain Mr. Savage, who is at present visiting the Bryans in the neighborhood. Charley Bryan picked him up somewhere, and introduced him—very inexcusably, I think—into society. He calls himself an artist, and I believe his business is to make illustrations for magazines and newspapers. I have steadily discouraged his attentions to Fanny, but you know that your father's will gave me no legal control over her, and if she married to-morrow in defiance of my wishes, I could not alienate from her a dollar of her fortune. This is a dangerous degree of liberty when a girl is headstrong and as beloved as Fanny is. Mr. Savage—when I believe to be a designing fortune hunter—knows that my opposition counts for nothing in a practical point of view. At present, I am sure that Fanny does not want to marry him, but he amuses her, and she may end by wishing it if she sees much more of him. Therefore, it is above all things imperative that she should not be thrown with him.

It chanced that he was here when I received your letter this morning. Fanny recognized the handwriting, and asked if you were coming. I said that on the contrary you were going to the Warm Springs, and wished us to meet you there, adding, "What do you say? Should you like to go?"

She hesitated, and while she hesitated Mr. Savage spoke: "Pray say yes, Miss Harrington. That French Broad country is magnificently picturesque and well worth seeing. Oddly enough, I am engaged to go there this summer on a professional tour. If you go, imagine how pleasant it will be!"

He absolutely had the audacity to say this before me! Of course I did not for a moment believe that he had any professional engagement to go to the French Broad, but I understood at once that if we go we shall meet him there.

To show you how Fanny encourages him, I will tell you what she answered: "Are you really going, Mr. Savage? That changes the aspect of affairs altogether. If I went though a picturesque country alone, I should not know what was worth admiring and what was not—for I am horribly uncultivated, as you have probably found out by this time—but with a knight of the pencil to direct my admiration into proper channels, it will be like an education. Mamma, my mind is made up; let us go to the Warm Springs."

"My mind is not made up, however," I replied coldly. "There are several things to be considered."

You see, now, my dear Marion, what these things are. I repeat again that I should like exceedingly to spend a month or two at the Warm Springs—which is really the pleasantest place of resort I know—and I may also add that I should like Fanny to meet young Develin, who would be in every respect a suitable match for her; but I fear the result of the association with the other which would certainly ensue. I have placed the matter clearly before you; let me hear what you think of it. If you can propose any plan by which the difficulties can be removed, I shall be glad to hear it.

With my best congratulations again on the brilliant prospect of your marriage with General Develin, I am yours affectionately,

ELLEN HARRINGTON.

LETTER III.

[Mrs. Temple to Mrs. Harrington.]

NEW ORLEANS, June 29, 1874.

Poor mamma, I am sorry for you! A headstrong daughter and an ineligible admirer form a terrible combination. But I am determined that an army of savages shall not prevent your visiting the Warm Springs. I have taken Oscar into my counsels, and we have formed a plan in which your passive co-operation is alone necessary: the active part of it will be with us. This is the order of our conspiracy: You must cease to show any active disapproval of Fanny's flirtation. Without absolutely encouraging Mr. Savage, treat him with that suave courtesy in which you excel, and make your preparations for the summer campaign as speedily as possible. If he waylays you on the French Broad—as of course he will—don't be disquieted. He can not marry Fanny in those wilds, and you will have faithful allies near at hand. When you reach the Springs, Oscar will at once take charge of the recalcitrant damoiselle, while I will devote myself to her knight of the pencil."

Are you surprised? It is true that I am a widow, it is true that I am engaged, and above all it is true that I am probably several years older than the gentleman in question. What of these things? I am still handsome—men's eyes would tell me that if my mirror did not—and I think I may say, with due regard to strict veracity, that I am not so thoroughly out of practice that I do not still remember how to make myself fascinating. Trust me to do my share of the work. Trust me that Mr. Savage will have little time and attention to devote to Fanny after I have known him twenty-four hours.

As for Oscar, I think he will do his share equally well. Besides his interest in Fanny—which is already very marked—he will be on his mettle. It will be a point of honor with him not to fail. Nor do I think he will. He has every attraction that could possibly win a girl's heart. Few men in his own rank of social of life can hold their own against him; it is scarcely likely, therefore, that Mr. Savage would be able to do so, even if I were not a lion in the path.

You see how excellently we have arranged every thing. Therefore, I beg you to dismiss all anxiety and pack your trunks. Tell Fanny to bring her prettiest toilettes; she will need them all. I shall start to-morrow for North Carolina, and shall engage your rooms as soon as I reach the Warm Springs. Write to that place and let me know when to expect you. Affectionately, M. T.

LETTER IV.

[Edward Savage to a Friend.]

ALEXANDER'S, ON THE FRENCH BROAD, July 19, 1874.

If you could see the place where I am staying, if you could see the nook in which I am at present writing, it is safe to say that you would be devoured with envy. With what an intensely condescending pity I think of you, sweltering between the pavements and between brick walls! Here a man need never know what heart is unless he chooses to set out and climb a mountain at mid day—an amusement which I should not recommend, although if any one had a fancy that way there are mountains enough to keep him employed for an indefinite number of days. The house—the quaintest, cleanest, quietest of old fashioned hostelries—is set immediately against one of these mountains, with the French Broad sweeping past it literally in front, not more than twenty yards distant. Probably you know nothing about the French Broad, or what a refrain it chants as it cuts its impetuous way through the mountains along the rocky channel which it has made in the course of countless ages. Just at this point the current is comparatively placid, but the restless music of its voice is ever in one's ear. I hear it as I sit now in a vine-shaded corner of the upper piazza, leafy depths of greenness around, the sunlight striking the great cliffs across the river and bringing out their splendid tints, a sense of inexpressible coolness, freshness and repose spread over everything.

But I can hear you asking why I am resting on my oars in this manner. For one thing, because the chief part of my work is done; for another thing, because I received a note a few days ago to the following effect:

"DEAR MR. SAVAGE—I believe I promised to let you know when we left home, so that you might, if possible, join us on our way to the Warm Springs, in order to tell me what I ought to admire. We start to-morrow, and shall probably reach Asheville on the eighteenth. We shall rest there a day or two before attempting the journey down the French Broad. I hope you are enjoying the country, and that you are prepared to play cicerone. *Au revoir.* Yours sincerely,

"FANNY HARRINGTON."

I fancy the long whistle with which you will say to yourself, "Now the murder's out!" Yes, a woman is in the case, and a very pretty one. I have seldom seen a more *seductante* beauty than Fanny Harrington. Complexion of a wild rose, eyes like violets, a prettily rounded figure, a neat foot and a gay laugh. These are the outlines; you can fill them in. She is the style of woman to be an arrant flirt, therefore I am by no means sure that coquetry is not at the bottom of the favor she has shown me. Indeed, I strongly suspect that it is, otherwise I might give you cause to say, "How dost thou, Benedict, the married man?"

Am I in love? No! a whit. My brain never acted more rationally, my pulse never beat more coolly. The "never called loving" is a youthful disease, and I am no longer very young. I am a man of thirty years old, and has survived several desperate fits of passion, the heart should certainly be in subjection to the reasoning faculties. Nevertheless, Fanny Harrington has pleased me exceedingly. She is pretty, thoroughbred, sparkling, and—best of all, my dear fellow—a heiress.

Now you elevate your eyebrows. You say, "Is this Savage who is writing—Savage, who formerly denounced *mariages de convenance* as the worst invention of the devil? Even so; and what is more, I claim the virtue of consistency. I still think that for a man to marry a woman whom he does not love, for the sake of her fortune, is disgraceful to himself and unjust to her. But I never held that a *mariage de raison* was a bad thing, or, in other words, that a man should not marry a woman who pleased and satisfied his taste because she chanced to possess the addition charm of a fortune. If you can not perceive the distinction, you are more obtuse than I give you credit for being.

In truth, I am daily more impressed by the profound truth contained in the remark of Dickens' stagecoach driver: "Poverty is no disgrace to a man, but it's devilish inconvenient." I am tired of grubbing for food and raiment and being tied hand and foot. If a charming woman—you should see her dimples when she laughs—is ready to put out her hand with a golden gift in it—a gift which means freedom, ease of mind and a thousand other things—should I hesitate to take it?

Yet my mind is not entirely made up. I shall join her mother and herself as they pass here on their way to the Warm Springs. When I reach the latter place I shall probably let you hear from me again. Until then take care of yourself, and if hens and dust grow fairly insupportable, buy the last number of the ——— *Magazine* and cool yourself by studying my sketches of this region. Yours, E. S.

LETTER V.

[Miss Harrington to a Friend.]

WARM SPRINGS, June 24, 1874.

MY DEAREST NELLIE—We reached this place a few days ago, and I write according to promise, to let you know how I like it. I am perfectly charmed! You will be astonished, perhaps, to hear this, but you would be still more astonished if you could see what a beautiful and what a fashionable place it is. The situation is simply superb. None of the Virginia Springs can compare with it. Mr. Develin says it is very like Kaaterskill. If so, Kaaterskill must be lovely. Fancy a valley—But I must begin at the beginning and tell you about myself and my hens.

We rested in Asheville a day or two—for mamma was very much fatigued by the journey over Swannanoa Gap—and I received a note from Mr. Savage, telling me that he was staying at Alexander's, on the French Broad, and would join us as we passed down. I told mamma, and she received the news more quietly than I had anticipated. Indeed, she changed very much in her manner to Mr. Savage before we left home. I believe I remarked this to you, and you suggested that perhaps she thought I was going to marry him, and meant to make the best of it. This made me draw back a little, and think that I might be committing myself too far. As you know, I had by no means decided to marry Mr. Savage. What is the good of being a woman who is not ugly if one may not enjoy one's self a little before one settles down for good?

Well, we met him at Alexander's. When the coach stopped, I was delighted to see his face at the door, for, after all, he is pleasant and really quite handsome. Besides, one needs an resort in traveling. Mamma greeted him cordially, and when he asked me if I would not come on the top of the coach, saying that it was a shame to travel down the French Broad shut up in the inside, she did not object, as I fully expected she would. So I was hoisted up on top, and oh, my dear, it was heavenly! The gorge is perfectly splendid, and Mr. Savage was charming! I wish you could see that magnificent river whirling and foaming over its rocks, and the great cliffs towering overhead hundreds of feet.

I never imagined anything so wild or so beautiful.

The journey to the Springs takes a whole day, and during this time Mr. Savage was very entertaining, so much so, in fact, that I am not at all sure what my answer would have been if he had asked the question. Luckily, he did not, probably because the driver was just in front of us and heard every word of our conversation, in which he seemed much interested. When we reached the Springs we were met by my sister, Mrs. Temple; you have heard me speak of her. She is my half sister, and a great deal older than I am—fully thirty-five, I should think. She was a great beauty in her day, and married for love a man with no fortune at all to speak of. He left her a widow with one child, and now she is engaged to General Develin, who is one of the richest men in Louisiana. I said that she was a great beauty in her day. My dear, I don't believe widows ever grow old. She is just as pretty now as she ever was, and just as fond of admiration. I saw that at once.

Of course I was jaded and tired when I arrived—who would not have been after sitting on top of a stagecoach all day?—so I did not look pretty, and I felt absolutely incapable of saying a decent word for myself. Fancy my feelings, then, on comparing myself with Marion very well, who looked perfectly lovely in gray silk, black lace and jewels. She went in to supper with us, though we were late, and I saw that Mr. Savage did little besides look at her. She was as pretty as a picture, certainly; and she knew it! She did not notice him much, but once or twice, when she turned to speak, it was in a way that I can't describe, but that men would probably consider fascinating.

After supper, when we were leaving the room, she put her hand in my arm and told me that Oscar—this is her future stepson—was desperately anxious to meet me. "But I know how one feels after traveling," she said, "so I told him he must restrain his impatience. Now, do you feel equal to a toilette to-night, or will you go to your room and rest until to-morrow?"

I decided to go to my room—in fact I had no alternative, for I had been jolted and banged about until I ached in every limb. Not even the music from the ballroom could inspire me with any desire to make a toilette. But, although I was tired, I was not especially sleepy since my room was on the ground floor, and the hotel was echoing with some one else's movements. My window overlooked the long piazza, up and down which people were passing. Hearing voices and laughter and rustling dresses so near I grew restless. I could not sleep, and presently (my light being out) I opened my shutters a little, and amused myself by observing the passing couples. After a while a lady and gentleman came around the angle of the building and advanced toward me. As they passed, the light streaming on them from several open doors and windows showed Mr. Savage and Marion. I was amused, and thought I would listen to their conversation, which I had ample opportunity to do, for they were walking very slowly. This is what I heard:

Marion (in that low voice of hers which seemed charged with sweetness and meaning)—"So you are an artist? What a pleasant surprise! I like artists so much—those whom I have known—and I dabble a little in art myself. That is, I try to sketch from nature."

Mr. Savage (in a tone expressive of the deepest interest)—"Indeed! The surprise and the pleasure are mine, then, for sketching is the most beautiful as well as the most interesting accomplishment a lady can possess." (N. B. I can not forbear inserting here that he told me one day, when I said I could but draw two sticks, that amateur sketching was "a simple abomination from an art point of view." So much for men's sincerity!) "I should like very much to see your sketches, if you will allow me."

Marion (laughing softly)—"I shall be very happy to allow you, and to receive your candid opinion of my capabilities. There is no use in spoiling paper if I can never hope to do more than caricature nature. My latest and, I think, my best sketch is of a scene up Spring Creek. I will show the sketch to you to-morrow, and then, if you like, we will go to the place represented, and you shall tell me how I have succeeded."

Mr. Savage (eagerly)—"I shall be delighted."

I did not hear any more than this, for they passed out of earshot, but I thought what I had heard enough. I closed my shutters, and said with Mr. Weller, "Beware of vidders!"

The next morning I looked my best; and you know what my best is! I wore that lovely blue organdie which is so becoming, and a chip hat trimmed with blue silk and pink roses. Notwithstanding this captivating attire, I saw a change in Mr. Savage at breakfast. He endeavored to look and talk as usual, but his eyes wandered, especially whenever any one entered the dininginoom. This occurred so often that finally I told him Marion was always the latest of risers and he need not look for her. He started, colored, declared it never occurred to him, but still I saw the preoccupied look in his eyes and heard the preoccupied tone in his voice.

After breakfast we went out on the piazza, and then he asked me if I would not walk down to the river. I declined. "It is too early for exercise," I said nonchalantly, "and I would advise you to reserve yourself for the walk up Spring Creek with Marion."

You should have seen how surprised he looked. But before he could say anything Marion herself appeared, attended by a young man who proved to be Mr. Oscar Develin.

"My dear, there is a vast deal of truth in the old statement that "birds of a feather flock together." I discovered very soon that Mr. Develin and myself are birds of a feather. Although it was too early for exercise, it was not too early to go out on the lawn and sit under a large tree, with the splendid river rushing a short way by, and compare our respective tastes and sympathies. We found that they were very much alike. Perhaps I was growing a little tired of Mr Savage. At all events, I consider Mr. Develin the most agreeable man I know *at present*, and he dances delightfully. There are numbers of other agreeable men here, however, and I choose my cavaliers among them, for I am—let us put it in capitals—THE BELLE OF THE SPRINGS! Congratulate me, and believe that I remain your loving FANNY.

LETTER VI.

[Savage to his Friend.]

WARM SPRINGS, August 6, 1874.

I should have forgotten altogether when I wrote to you last from what place or on what subject, if your letter, which reached me to-day, had not recalled it to my memory. Do not suppose that any impulse of friendship makes me answer it so promptly. There has simply come to me one of those abnormal times when a man feel that he must speak or die. You are the only person to whom I can speak. Therefore I seize your letter as an excuse to do so. Lunatics recover their senses after an outbreak, it is said; regard this as my outbreak, and believe then I shall try to recover my senses as soon as possible.

You ask if I have accomplished my arrangement *de raison* with Miss Harrington. I can answer that question in few words. Fanny Harrington is at this moment the belle of the Springs, and I have not given her a thought for two weeks. The reason of this is not far to seek. You will say at once, "Another woman." I reply, "Just so."

This other woman is Miss Harrington's half-sister—Mrs. Temple. She is a widow with one child, she is beautiful, and she is fascinating as only a few rare women—and those women of the world—know how to be. That sounds sane enough, does it not? It was my opinion the first evening I saw her, therefore I look back to it as an opinion correct in the main, for since that time I have been incapable of judging Marion Temple with anything approaching to coolness. On our first acquaintance she met me with very gracious kindness, and I don't think that I withstood her charm twelve hours. Before the sun of the next day went down I was madly in love with her.

Not so madly, however, that I did not recognize the full absurdity of the situation. I had joined Fanny Harrington with the determination to marry her, if possible, and lo! like a school boy of nineteen, I surrendered my heart to another woman as soon as my eyes rested on her. Such a change in our lives we all wander in a fool's paradise, and are glad to be fools in order to enter there. You may imagine, however, that this was something of a surprise to me, who fancied I had burnt out all power of emotion. A fever of passion took possession of me—so suddenly and so completely that I resigned myself without a struggle. What is the good of fighting when the bonds are sure? If ever a woman understood how to secure these bonds, that woman is Marion Temple. She commits herself in no slightest degree by word, look or tone, neither is there anything of ordinary coquetry in her manner. I saw her one afternoon, or by the river in the silver moonlight, and you will feel her spell in every fibre.

I will not bore you by describing in detail the drama of the past ten days. In all the throng of people I have seen but one face, been conscious of but one presence. And that face has smiled on me most kindly, that presence has been with me during long hours in some green gorge or on some towering hillside. The only third person who ever accompanies us on these rambling excursions of ours is Archie, Mrs. Temple's little son. You know I had always an odd power of attracting children and dogs. I made no unusual effort to attract Archie, but the child soon attached himself to me as if he had been a spaniel. In some respects he is a veritable *enfant terrible*, but I always bold and frank, and I look of his mother in his face that makes it cruelty for me to bear with him. I think Mrs. Temple knows that I like him genuinely, for she trusts him with me more than with any one else, and Archie at least is my staunch friend.

I say "Archie at least," for I begin to think that his mother is little more than a brilliant, heartless coquette. Why she has chosen to single me out so markedly for her favor I can not tell. Meanwhile, there is a young Develin—a sufficiently ordinary specimen of the *jeunesse dorée*—who has been devoting himself to Miss Harrington. I took no possible interest in the young man until Archie—who does not like him—enlightened me this morning on his probable relation to Mrs. Temple. I was out sketching, and had taken the child with me. Some remark of Develin's as we passed him on the lawn seemed to rankle in Archie's memory. Presently he said, "I hate him, Mr. Savage, and I don't ever mean to like him—not even when he comes to be my brother."

"You mean your uncle, don't you?" I asked, for I fancied he was thinking of Miss Harrington.

"No," he answered, "my brother. Mamma says he will be when she marries General Develin, but I don't think brothers can be made that way, do you?"

It was curious how my heart seemed compressed suddenly by a strong grasp, and how I felt the blood forsaking my face. I remembered a thing this before, yet it steadied me as a great blow often does. I looked at the child calmly enough. "When your mother marries General Develin?" I said. "Is she going to marry him?"

"To be sure she is," he answered. "Didn't you know it? She's was they call 'engaged' to him. But I don't like him, and I hate Mr. Oscar. I wish she was going to marry you, Mr. Savage. I told her so yesterday."

"Ah! What did she say to that?"

"She told me not to talk nonsense."

"Nonsense!" The word stung me even on the child's lips. The thought of marrying me would be nonsense—one whom she had led from fancy to passion, from passion to downright infatuation, by every art in her power. And all the time her faith—such as it is—is plighted to another man. Well, the story is old and scale enough. Women do such things every day, and feel no more remorse than you or I when we shoot a bird. My heart was nothing more to her than a trophy of her power. I had been a fool; in that all was said.

I returned to the hotel and found your letter, which I am answering by pouring my egotism upon you. But, as I said in the beginning, there are times when one must speak or die. My madness has reached its culminating point. This afternoon I am to take Mrs. Temple out on the river, and I shall ask her to marry me. Of course she will give but one answer. That answer, however, will serve to end this folly. When one is drunk, a plunge in cold water often sobers; I am ten times drunk, and therefore it may sober me to see how coolly a woman of the world will utter her disdainful "No."

Evening.—She has uttered it, but not disdainfully. Whether or not my plunge has sobered me, I do not know, but at least I am cool enough. The frenzy is over. When a man finds that he has been tricked and deceived—that he has been not only a victim, but a dupe—it is time for his manhood, if not his sense, to assert itself. I am steady enough to write out the scene. It may not interest you, but it will be a relief to me to put down in black and white the words still ringing through my brain.

We went out on the river just before sunset. A little below the hotel commences what is known as still water. The river, lately so noisy and impetuous, grows smooth and calm as a lake; instead of rocks, green islets dot its channel, and the great cliffs recede a little, so that they do not directly overshadow it. As we shot out into the centre of the stream, I looked at the fair face of the woman before me, and determined in my heart that she should not return until my suspense had been ended and all was clear between us.

We floated down stream, and as we neared one of the islets she began to speak of the Cherokee tradition which placed here a siren who lured hunters to destruction by the sweetness of her voice. "I suppose this Indian Lorelei fled away when the rude Anglo-Saxons came," she added.

"Perhaps she is here yet, and only silent," I said. "Sing, and see if the spirit of rivalry will not make her break her silence."

Of course this was only an excuse to hear her voice, for she sings divinely. She smiled—I wish you could see the slow sweet smile that shines in her eyes before it dawns on her lips—and began that song so fraught with the spirit of hopeless passion, "Ask me no more." Whether coquetry or carelessness made her choose it, I do not know, but she sang it with a meaning that might have thrilled a statue. Do you remember the last verse? *

Ask me no more; thy fate and mine are sealed;
I strove against the stream, and all in vain;
Let the great river take me to the main.
No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;
Ask me no more.

As her voice floated out over the water every sound in Nature was stilled. We were all alone with the gentle river, the lovely islets, the great heights on which the last rays of sunset light were resting.

The boat seemed floating on a glorified stream in a glorified world of light and color. And when at last her voice sank into silence I spoke.

What I said I do not remember, but there was something like sadness in her eyes—a trick of fascination, no doubt—as she looked at me and answered, "I am sorry, Mr. Savage, that you should have said all this. I am still more sorry that it has been my fault that you have done so. Often in my life I have had cause to cry *mea culpa*, but never before so much cause as now. I don't ask you to forgive me, for I can not forgive myself. I ought to have stopped you before this, and I meant to do so. I never meant to be forced to *tell* you that I am engaged to another man."

I knew it, but none the less it sounded from her lips like a death warrant. For a moment the certainty seemed to stun me; then I remembered how she had led me on for this poor empty triumph, and my soul leaped up in scorn. "Perhaps you will pardon me, or at least you will understand me," I said. "If I beg you not to trouble yourself to express a sorrow which can not be sincere. You have seen long before this—a woman of half your knowledge must have seen—that I loved you. Has the knowledge changed you one whit? Have you not still held to my lips your cup of Circe, and by every art in your power encouraged me to hope that which seems presumption? And now you coolly end everything by a few expressions of regret, and the announcement that you are engaged to another man! Happy man! I should congratulate him, if I knew him, on the possession of such inestimable faith."

You imagine, perhaps, that she flashed out upon me for such words of insult, as almost any other woman would have done. On the contrary, her eyes fell, her color rose, she clasped together the hands lying idly in her lap. "You are right," she said in a low tone: "I have acted shamefully. I can not, I do not pretend to justify myself."

"But you shall!" I said. "I have a right to ask why, out of all the men assembled here, you have chosen me alone for the subject of your cruel sport?"

Then she glanced up again, with some thing like a flash in her eye, "Did not you choose Fanny Harrington for the subject of a fortune-hunter's scheme?" she asked.

Then I saw it all as one sees a landscape in a flash of lightning. What a blind dupe I had been! The realization seemed to annihilate all things. From first to last every smile, glance, tone, had meant deception. Not one of them had been given to me, but only to the fortune hunter whom it was necessary to remove out of Fanny Harrington's path. Everything had been arranged, and Mrs. Temple had simply played her part as any accomplished actress on (or off) the stage might have done. She had succeeded admirably, and no doubt there were many besides Mrs Harrington and Mr Develin to laugh over the clever ruse—many who had watched my infatuation and would now exult at my discomfiture.

All these things came to me with a force that was overwhelming, and I marvel now that I was able to answer as calmly as I did at a time! "I owe you thanks for your candor. I understand everything now, and I congratulate you on the admirable manner in which you have played your part. Whether or not it is a part which you will be glad to remember hereafter, I leave for you to determine. For myself, I can only say that if you desired to make me you have chosen the best means to do so, all that in a matter of this kind I had rather suffer as the one who is duped than triumph as the one who duped."

"You forget what terms you are using," she said, flushing haughtily.

"Pardon me, I do not forget nor mistake," I answered. "But I am not likely to transgress again the courtesy to which a woman holds herself entitled, even if she has robbed a man of all that makes life worth having, for I shall never willingly see or speak to you again."

She looked at me with a startled, appealing expression which could not have been altogether art. "Have I really robbed you of anything that you will miss?" she asked. "I never dreamed of that. I thought you were like other men—too careless and selfish to love. I fancied you would amuse yourself by flirting, and that would be all. I have been sorry for some time that I ever attempted anything of this kind. I am more than ever sorry now."

I was in little mood for poetry, but Shakespeare suits all times and conditions of one's life, and I found myself muttering between my teeth—

"The offender's sorrow sends but weak relief
To him who bears the strong offence's cross."

In almost perfect silence we rowed back to the lonely place and parted at the door of the hotel. I have not seen her since.

To this record there is nothing to add except that I shall leave the Springs day after to-morrow. "Why not to-morrow?" I hear you say. Simply because public counsels me to stay. I have promised to take an active part in an excursion to Paint Rock, which is to take place to-morrow, and those who triumph to-night shall see that their triumph has not broken my heart. After that the deluge. I shall go away and try to forget the fair, fatal face of Marion Temple. *Such a face!* It is looking up from the page I write mine as I write, and the eyes are wistfully sad as when I saw them last.

[This letter breaks off here abruptly.]

LETTER VII.

[Mrs. Temple to a Friend.]

WARM SPRINGS, August 12, 1874.

MY DEAR STEPHANIE—Those who play with edged tools must expect to be wounded." These were your words when we parted; do you remember? I remember so well that I have the thought of you and your warning a great deal lately, and at last I feel in a measure compelled to tell you how it has been justified by events.

Your memory is good, I know, therefore I need not repeat the story which I told you when we saw each other last—the story of the indignant gentleman who was threatening to make a *boulevercement* of the family plans for my pretty half sister, Fanny Harrington. I told you also that I intended to throw myself into the breach and attract the ineligible admirer—which I had vanity enough to fancy that I might do without effort—in order to give Oscar a fair field with Fanny. You condemned the plan in the words quoted above. But to me it seemed very good, and I proceeded to execute it as soon as the admirer in question arrived on the scene.

But now comes something singular. Mr. Savage—for so I will call him—seemed suddenly to lose his power over me. I grew more and more indifferent to his fascinations, and, indeed, that I can not help fancying he was never seriously *epris* of Fanny—while I was rewarded for my duplicity by finding him one of the most agreeable men I have met in a long time. Rewarded, do I say? Punished, rather, if you know that I am by no means a heartless coquette, and that when I began to entertain a kindly liking for the young man, to find him a most pleasant companion and charming cavalier, I suffered not a few twinges of conscience in reflecting how I had entrapped him, and in fearing that our acquaintance might not prove so harmlessly agreeable to him as to me.

In short, I saw that he was on the brink of a *grande passion*, and I was seriously concerned, and in doubt what to do. I did not desire to punish him too severely for the very ordinary crime of seeking to marry a girl for her fortune; but it is easier to take a leap down than to put him down again, you know; and while I was deliberating how to end the matter without letting it come to a culmination, the culmination burst upon me.

You will blame me, Stephanie, but you will believe me also when I say that I never suffered a keener reproach than in listening to the avowal of his passion—and yet I felt low! He made it with so much simple earnestness—when a man feels strongly he is always simple—that it went straight to my heart, and made me feel that I had been cruel and dishonorable. I expressed my sorrow, but the words in such cases are always poor, and mine seemed poorer than most then. He was very indignant. Well, he had cause to be. I did not blame him for that, nor for some bitter words, which I bore patiently, feeling that he had a right to utter them. At last, however, I am sorry to say, I lost my temper. He demanded to know why I had selected him as the subject of my cruel sport." I answered by asking why he chose Fanny Harrington for "the subject of a fortune hunter's scheme." No sooner were the words uttered than I repented them. But their effect was even greater than I anticipated. I shall never forget the expression of his face. What he said it is not worth while to repeat. He spoke more moderately than I deserved; I felt that then, and I feel it now.

When we parted I did not expect to see him again, but the next day an excursion had been planned to Paint Rock, and no surprise he appeared, and even came up and addressed me as we were on the point of starting. "I have just seen Archie in a state of great distress because you refuse to let him go, Mrs. Temple," he said. "Will you permit me to intercede for him, and say that I shall willingly take charge of him if you will allow him to accompany the party?"

I have neglected to say that Archie has conceived the most violent attachment for Mr. Savage, which the latter has returned by a great deal of kindness. He really seems *disinterestedly* fond of the child. Nevertheless, I was unprepared for such a proposal as this, remembering what had occurred between us the evening before, and I looked at him in astonishment. "You are very kind, Mr. Savage," I said, "but I can not think of letting you trouble yourself with the charge of Archie. It would prove a greater charge than you imagine, for no monkey was ever more devoted to climbing, and there would be real and serious danger for him on those terrible rocks."

"It will be no trouble, but a pleasure, to me to have the child with me," he answered. "I will take the responsibility of keeping him out of danger if you will allow him to go."

After, that what could I say! You may imagine that I was averse to denying him any favor, and I had trusted Archie with him too often to fear that he would not take good care of the child. I gave my consent as graciously as possible, therefore, and soon after we set out.

Mr. Savage lingered behind, and I saw nothing more of him until we were on the Paint Rock, with the beautiful blue world spread below, and at our feet the French Broad with its fairy islets. Then he joined the party (Archie with him), for we were to take luncheon on the top of the rock. He did not come near me—which was natural enough—but amused himself with the nonsense that poured unceasingly from the tongue of a pretty belle in the party. Champagne flowed in profusion, as it usually does on such occasions, but in the midst of all the gay talk and laughter and popping of corks I saw Mr. Savage suddenly look round. Then he glanced at me for the first time. "Do you know what has become of Archie?" he asked.

"He was here a minute ago," I answered, looking round also. But in that minute the little wretch had vanished. Mr. Savage rose at once, leaving the champagne and the lively young lady, and went quickly toward the part of the mountain which overlooks Point Creek. "Archie was anxious to get some flowers growing on the rock here," he said. "He may have gone for them." I followed, but did not gain the edge of the cliff as soon as he did. As I reached his side and was about to look over, he turned suddenly with a face so white that I knew in an instant something dreadful and occurred. I suppose I was about to scream, for he laid his hand on my mouth. "Forgive me," he said in a low voice, "but if you utter a sound he may fall."

"Where is he?" I asked in agony.

"He is on a ledge of rock below us. If you are sure you will not utter any exclamation, look over and you will see him."

I did look over, and my very brain seemed to reel. There, on the face of precipice, was Archie, perched on a narrow, jutting ledge of rock, and look ing round uneasily, evidently uncertain how to get out of the precarious position in which he had placed himself. "For Heaven's sake, speak to him!" I said, for I knew I could not trust myself to do so.

"Draw back out of sight," he said.

Then he beckoned over and spoke as coolly as if the child had been by his side: "Archie, how did you get there?"

Archie looked up, ashamed, yet plainly relieved. "I climbed down," he answered. "I came along there," he pointed to several points of rock. "It's easy enough if you don't turn dizzy."

"Are you dizzy?"

"My head swims a little, but it'll get better after a while."

"Don't stir from your place, nor look down more than you can help. I'll come after you."

He was pulling off his boots as he spoke, and said to me, "Send some one to receive the child when I get him near the top. There's not more than footing for a monkey on some of those points, and near the summit where the crag juts out like a shelf, it will be very difficult to get him up unless some one is there to receive him."

"Will not I do?" I said.

"You! No," he answered. "Send a man."

I did not need a second bidding. I hurried back to the party, and called Oscar Develin. He came at once, and several other gentlemen. They could not help Mr. Savage—for, as he said, there was not room than footing for a monkey on some of the points—but they gathered about the edge and watched him. I watched him too, though at another time I should have shrunk from witnessing such a feat. He was very active, and descended lightly from one jutting escarpment to another until he reached the shelf where Archie stood. He only paused there a minute to speak a few words to the child, and then commenced the ascent. He did not attempt to carry Archie, but merely assisted him from point to point. How the terrible thing which happened at last occurred I can give you no clear idea. They were very near the top, and in some manner—in his efforts to give Archie safely into the hands of those above—he lost his footing, grasped vainly for a support, and—fell.

I did not faint. Is not that saying a great deal? I only felt as if I had fallen with him, and were lying stunned—dead, perhaps—on the terrible rocks below. I say, "dead, perhaps." But there was no perhaps in our thoughts at that awful moment. Not one of the lookers on had any hope of finding him alive. I read that in their faces as they put Archie into my arms and rushed away to follow a path which led around to the foot of the cliff.

I followed them. We found him senseless, but alive. His head was terribly cut, his arm was broken, his shoulder dislocated, but he was alive. I breathed after they assured me of that, and kneeling there by his side on the earth which might have been his deathbed, I registered a vow in my heart that if he should recover I would repay him for my share in my power for all that he had suffered through me and mine.

We carried him in slow procession down to the Springs. There he was delivered into the hands of the doctor, who says that he will recover after a time. Meanwhile, he suffers greatly, and I do not see him. I know how people would talk if I visited him, but I said once to my brother, if I might do so, and he declined "the honor."

is with him constantly, however, and from his accounts I judge that he is mending. When he is well my time will come.

Dear Stephanie, what do you think of it all? I throw myself on your charity. I have played with edged tools and