

dwelling, she said: "You can't come up, you know; it is much too late. And there isn't any need. I will let Jenny go to you as early as you like in the morning, if you give me your address, or you can come yourself to-morrow."

"Ah, don't be hard on me!" he pleaded. "I mustn't lose a night. Send her down to me, if I can't go up."

"Go on; the poor girl's asleep," she answered. "Where's the use in carrying on like a loony? Can't you take it coolly?"

In the end he had to go without seeing Jenny, having left his card on the understanding that she should be with him not later than ten in the morning, and that Miss L'Estrange should keep his address an inviolable secret.

The moment he was gone from her, Ermyne L'Estrange darted up the stairs, as if to catch something, and, on entering her flat, tripped into her bedroom, turned on the light, threw off her cloak, and put on the necklace before her mirror. It was a fine affair, and no mistake, all lights and colors playing bo-peep in the stones. She made a curtsy to her image, inspected herself on every side, stepping this way and that, daintily, like a peacock, keenly enjoying the gift, till the novelty of possessing it was gone stale. But at no time did she feel any gratitude to the giver, or think of him at all in connection with it—just the fact of having it occupied her mind, it didn't matter whence.

And the mere knowledge that it was so valuable proved it to be a bribe, pointed to a weakness in the giver. Some gifts to women, especially splendid ones, produce not only no gratitude, but a certain hardness of heart, contempt, and touch of enmity. Perhaps there is a feeling of "I ought to be grateful"; but being too happy to be grateful, they are bored with a sense of fault, and for this they punish the giver with the opposite of gratitude.

At all events, by the time Miss L'Estrange had taken off the string of gems, a memory had grown up within her of David Harcourt, and with it came a mild feeling of partizanship and liking for David as against Strauss. It was a wayward machine, that she-heart under the bodice of Miss Ermyne L'Estrange—wayward without motive, subtle without thought, treacherous for treachery's sake. As a matter of fact, before waking Jenny, it came into her head to give a friendly tip to David on the ground that he was "not a bad sort," and she actually went out of her way to send him a post-card, telling him that she had expected him to call on Jenny that day, and that, if he meant business, he must see her not later than nine-thirty the next morning, or he would be too late.

What a web, this, which was being spun round the young adventurer from Wyoming!

CHAPTER X.

The Marriage Lines

DAVID had not gone to interview Jenny the day before in obedience to Miss L'Estrange's first note, because of the sullen humor to which he relapsed after his experiences at three in the morning in the streets of London. He resented the visiting of the glimpses of the moon by a young woman who donned rubber overshoes before reëntering her house, and he said to himself, "The day's work, and skip the violets."

Then, the next morning came Miss L'Estrange's second letter—he "must see Jenny not later than nine-thirty," or he would be "too late." Again this failed to rouse him. With those lazy, lithe movements of the body which characterized him, he strolled for sometime about the flat after his early breakfast, uncertain what to do. He saw, indeed, that some one else must be after the certificates—Strauss—van Hupfeldt—if Strauss and van Hupfeldt were one; but still he halted between two opinions, thinking, "Where do I come in, anyway?"

Then again the face which he had seen at the grave rose before him with silent pleadings, a face touching to a man's heart, with dry rose-leaf lips which she had a way of wetting quickly, and in her cheeks a die-away touch of the peach, purplish like white violets. And how did he know, the jealous youth, by what hundred reasons her nightly wandering might be accounted for? Why did he nourish that sort of resentment against a girl who was a perfect stranger? Perhaps there was really some jealousy in it! At which thought he laughed aloud, and suddenly darted into action, snatched a hat, and went flying. But then it was already past nine.

When he reached Miss L'Estrange's flat, for sometime no one answered his ring, and then the door opened but a little way to let out a voice which said: "What is it? I am not dressed. She's gone. I told you you'd be too late."

"Is she gone?" said David blankly, eager enough now to see her.

"Look here! Why should I be bothered with the lot of you at this ungodly hour of the morning?" cried the fickle L'Estrange. "I can't help your troubles. Can't you see when anybody is in bed?" "But why did you let her go before I came?" asked David.

"You are cool! Am I your mother?"

"I wish you were for this once."

"Nice mother and son we little two would make, wouldn't we?"

"That's not the point. I'm afraid you are getting cold. You ought to have contrived to keep the girl till I came, though it is my own fault. But can't

anything be done now? Where has she gone?"

"To Strauss, of course."

"With the certificates?"

"I suppose so. I know nothing about it, and care less. I did try to keep her back a bit for your sake; but she was pretty keen to be gone to him when once she had his address, the underhanded little wretch!"

"But stop—how long is it since she has gone?"

"Not three minutes. It's just possible that you might catch her up, if you look alive."

"How can that be? I shouldn't know her. I have never seen her. We may have passed each other in the street."

"Listen. She is a small, slim girl with nearly white hair and little Chinese eyes. She has on a blue serge skirt with my old astrakhan bolero and a sailor hat. Now, you can't miss her."

"But which way? Where does Strauss live?"

"I promised not to tell, and I'm always as good as my word," cried the reliable Miss Ermyne L'Estrange; "but between you and me, it's not a thousand miles from Piccadilly Circus; and that is where Jenny will get down off her bus; so if you take a cab."

"Excellent! Good-by! See you again!" said David.

David was gone, in a heat of action. He took no cab, however, but took to his heels, so that he might be able to spy at the occupants within and on the top of each bus on the line of route, by running a little faster than the vehicles. At this hour London was already out of doors, going shopping, going to office and works. It was a bright morning, like the beginning of spring. People turned their heads to look at the man who ran faster than the horses, and pried into the buses. Victoria, Whitehall, Charing Cross, he passed—still he could see no one just like Jenny. He began to lose hope, finding, moreover, that running in London was not like running in Wyoming, or even like his run from Bucks. Here the air seemed to lack body and wine. It did not repay the lungs' effort, nor give back all that was expended; so that in going up the steep of Lower Regent-st. he began to breathe short.



"She Turned Funny, and Couldn't Catch Her Breath."

Nevertheless, to reward him, there, not far from the Circus, he saw sitting patient in a bus corner the sailor-hat, the bolero, the Chinese eyes, and reddish-white hair of Jenny.

The moment she stepped out, two men sprang forward to address her—David and van Hupfeldt's valet. Van Hupfeldt lived near the lower portion of Hanover Square, the way to which being rather shut in and odd to one who does not know it, his restlessness had become unbearable when Jenny was a little late; so he had described her to his valet, a whipper-snapper named Neil—for van Hupfeldt had several times seen Jenny with Miss L'Estrange—and had sent Neil to Piccadilly Circus, where he knew that Jenny would alight, in order to conduct her to his rooms. However, as Neil moved quickly forward, David was before him, and the valet thought to himself: "Hello, this seems to be a case of two's company and three's none."

David was saying to Jenny: "You are Miss L'Estrange's servant?"

"I am," answered Jenny.

"She sent me after you. I must speak with you urgently. Come with me."

Now, in Jenny's head were visions of nothing less than wealth—wealth which she was eager to handle that very hour. She said therefore to David: "I

don't know who you are. I can't go anywhere."

They stood together on the pavement, with Neil, all unknown to David, behind them listening.

"There's no saying 'No,'" insisted David. "You're going to see Mr. Strauss, aren't you? Well, I am here instead of Mr. Strauss in this matter."

But this ambiguous remark failed of its effect; for Neil, whose master had told him that in this affair he was not van Hupfeldt but Strauss, intervened with the pert words, "Begging your pardon, but I am Strauss."

However, this short way of explaining that he was there on behalf of Strauss was promptly understood by Jenny, who looked with disdain at the valet, saying, "You are not Mr. Strauss!"

"Of course, he isn't," said David quickly. "How dare you, sir, address this lady? Come right away will you? Come, now. Let's pump into this cab."

"Who are you? I don't even know you!" cried the perplexed Jenny.

"I didn't say I was Mr. Strauss himself," began Neil.

"Yes, you did say so," said Jenny, "and it isn't the truth; for I know Mr. Strauss very well, and neither of you isn't going to get over me, so you know!"

"Don't you see," suggested David, his wits all at work, "that one of us must be true, and as you are aware that he is false—"

"What is all this about?" demanded Jenny. "I have no business with either of you. Just tell me the way to Hanover Square, please, and let me go about my business."

"That's just why I'm here, to show you the way," said Neil. "I dun'no why this gentleman takes it upon himself—"

"Best hold your tongue, young man!" growled David. "You must be stupid to think this young girl would go off with you, a man she never saw before, especially after detecting you in a direct untruth."

"As for that, she don't know you any more than me, seemingly," retorted Neil. "Mr. Strauss sent me—"

"How is she to know that? Miss L'Estrange sent me. Didn't I know your name, Jenny, and your mistress's name?"

"Well, that's right enough," agreed Jenny.

"Then trust to me."

"But what is it you want, sir?"

"It is about the papers," whispered David confidentially. "It is all to your good to come with me first, and hear what I have to say. Miss L'Estrange—"

"Well, all right; but you must be quick," said Jenny, rushing to a decision.

David hailed a cab, and he and Jenny turned their backs upon the defeated valet, got in, and drove off. However, Neil, who had witnessed van Hupfeldt's fever of eagerness to see this girl, followed in another cab. David drove to the Tube Station near Oxford Circus—she would accompany him no farther—and while he talked with Jenny in a corner there, Neil, lurking among the crowd of shop-gazers across the street, kept watch.

"I propose to you," David said to Jenny, "to give the certificates to me, and in doing so, I understand that you are a poor girl—"

"That's just it," answered Jenny, "and I must know first how much I am to get for them—if it's true that I have any certificates."

"Right enough," said David; "but the main motive which I hold out to you is not what you will receive in hard cash, but that you will do an immense amount of good, if you give the papers to me. They don't belong to this Mr. Strauss; but they do belong to the mother and sister of a poor wronged lady, a lady whose character they will clear."

"Ah, no doubt," agreed Jenny, with the knowing leer of a born Cockney; "still, a girl has got to look after herself, you see, and not mind other people's troubles."

"What?" cried David. "Would you rather do the wrong thing and earn twenty pounds, or do the right thing and earn five pounds? You can't be in earnest saying that."

"It isn't a question of five pounds, nor yet of twenty!" snapped Jenny, offended at the mere mention of such paltry sums; "it's a question of hundreds and of thousands." Her mouth went big for the "thousands." "Don't think that I'm going to part with the papers under high figures, if so be I have any papers."

"Under what?" asked David—"under hundreds, or under thousands?"

"Under thousands."

"Now hold on a bit. Are you aware that I could have the papers taken from you this minute, papers that don't belong to you, which you propose to sell to some one other than the rightful owners?"

At this Jenny changed color, there was a policeman within a few yards, and she saw her great and golden dream dissolving.

"It remains to be seen if I have got any papers. That's the very question, you see," she said.

"You might be searched, you know, just to clear the point. Yet you needn't be afraid of that; for I'm disposed to meet you, and you aren't going to refuse any reasonable offer, with no trouble from the police to follow. So I offer you now—fifty golden sovereigns for the papers, cash down."

"You leave me alone," muttered Jenny sheepishly, turning her shoulder to him.

"Well, I thought we were going to be friends; but

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