

BEFORE THE GATE.

They gave the whole long day to idle laughter. To flit and sing and jest. To moods of sobriety as idle, after. And silences as idle, too, as the rest.

TRICKED.

Wild March weather; hurrying clouds coursing across the sky, driven by the keen north wind which was whistling round the dwelling places of men, sweeping majestically over miles of grass land which stretched inland from the frowning cliffs, and sporting in reckless abandonment of pleasure with his old playmate the sea, lashing the brave white horses to a swifter gallop, urging on the waters till they leapt high upon the rocks and dashed in mad glee against the steady, rugged old cliffs.

Noisy, bustling, rollicking north wind, in spite of all your rough ways, there was one who had come forth to meet your embrace, who loved you for your strength, for your grandeur. And the north wind met her, to kiss her laughing lips with the salt sea spray, strengthen her heart with her stirring song, touch the dark hair with his fingers, challenge the sparkling, smiling eyes, which resisted, outwitted, defied him, till he loved her in his own whole hearted fashion, and swept onward telling her name to sea and sky and shore—Marina, Child of the Ocean.

Sir Denis Beauchamp, making his way up the steep cliff, stood up for a moment gazing in silent wonder at the frail looking little figure, which not only withstood the tempestuous blast, but seemed actually to enjoy it. A smile parted his fine cut lips as he took in first the whole picture, and then the particular beauty of the sweet flowerlike face turned seaward.

Suddenly Marina turned and saw the stranger. He immediately accosted her, and she noticed that his smile lit up a somewhat plain face. "Lady Katharine has sent me to bring you home," he said.

"Then you are Sir Denis. But how did you know me?" "I fancied there could be but one young lady desirous of making friends with such a very rough customer as this north wind."

"We are great friends. It is delightful up here. Look at that tossing sea; isn't it beautiful?" "Beautiful!" he replied. But he was not looking at the sea.

Lady Katharine Dyson watched the pair approach as they came up from the beach into her well kept grounds. "All goes well," she murmured and smiled.

Lady Katharine, desiring a companion for the winter at Thirtown, had remembered her cousin Eleanor's orphan child, and Marina, being only seventeen and alone in the world, had been very thankful to make her home with Lady Katharine. All had gone well till the return of the bachelor squire of Heathcote Hall, who some weeks later startled Lady Katharine by a sudden remark on Marina's beauty.

Lady Katharine answered lightly: "Don't lose your heart too quickly. She does not quite carry her character in her pretty face."

sea maiden had wit enough to hold her own against his attack. It made the contest rather more interesting. Had she bent that dainty head of hers to his first touch, he would have left her and gone back to his old familiar haunts without giving her another thought. But she was a hardy little flower, and, seeing the bravery of her bearing, he waited on from day to day, from week to week. The season in town was a dull one; he had been a little bored before leaving, and this child was worth studying.

But Arthur Heathcote failed to understand the gradual change in her and wooed her still in his somewhat heavy fashion. He took courage to remark to Lady Katharine: "I declare I believe she likes me best. Isn't she a bit shy with Beauchamp? Just a little afraid of him, it strikes me."

Was she afraid of Sir Denis? Her words failed her now and then; her merry speech had a trick of dropping into silences when his hand touched hers ever so lightly. The sea murmured strange things as they wandered together in unfrequented ways.

"You love it?" he said, as she staid her steps beside it. "It is my world. I was born at sea. Its music was my slumbering song in infancy, my joy song in childhood, my dream song always."

Only a something in the voice, the look; only a bent head and lips which—stay; they did not brush the fairy dust from the pretty butterfly's wing. Not yet, not quite yet.

"Happy Marina!" he said; "happy child! My sea sings a rougher song. It is the sea of the world."

"You love it?" she questioned demurely, echoing his phrase and, beating back the riotous thoughts. "It loves me; is not that enough?" She laughed softly. "Quite enough. I am glad you do not love it more."

"Who taught you to scorn the world?" "Scorn it? I respect it as a mighty institution. Do I not listen with due reverence to the world maxims and world stories you and Lady Katharine repeat?"

There was a faint inflection of sorrow in his tone as he replied: "Don't let her spoil you, little one. The life song the sea sings you is a nobler one than ours."

"As God's world is nobler than man's." She stole away very quietly on their return, and left him alone with Lady Katharine. They talked on indifferent subjects.

"You are pleased to be dull, Denis. Are you beginning to be bored?" "Bored? No."

"You find Marina interesting?" "Very."

Lady Katharine fastened the door. Then she drew the child to her. "Marina, I want to speak to you quietly. You are very young, dear; your ignorance of the world's ways is pretty. You hardly seem to understand the rules of society."

Marina glanced up wonderingly. "You have no mother, dear, and must not quarrel with me for giving a word of warning. Really, my child, I must ask you to be more careful, and not dance quite so often with Sir Denis."

"Is that all?" laughed Marina softly; "I thought I must have done something very dreadful."

But she drew apart while speaking, and shivered slightly. "I have not been with him more than usual, have I?"

"But this is so public; and, my dear, he is a terrible flirt."

Then Lady Katharine lost her temper. "Don't stand there so calmly and think you can carry on as you like, and make a fool of such a man as Arthur Heathcote with impunity. Bah! you little fool; you have been played with like a doll, as many another has been before you. Ask your gay lover when he last saw his wife. Badly as he treats her, she may claim a little respect, and it is not decent to see you flirting publicly like this with him. I tell you he is a married man."

"I know it." Not a tremor, not a movement suggested the agony of the child standing with head erect, facing her foe, and acting the lie so bravely that her listener was fooled. She had meant to crush this beautiful little being to the earth; and, behold! the blow seemed to have glanced harmlessly aside.

"You know it? And are you not ashamed—you, who pretend to be so innocent, so far above the vanities of life?" "Pardon, Lady Katharine. How often have you not tried to instill into me some of the world's righteous doctrines? And is it not one of its first articles of belief that marriage opens the golden gate to flirtation? You yourself—would you be so very angry if some one were to flirt just a little with a married woman?"

The shot told, but Marina only noticed it with a sort of pity. She used her weapons of self defense with a heavy heart; she longed for escape—for death; but her voice never faltered.

"It is different altogether," cried Katharine wrathfully. "A married woman may do as she likes; but for a young girl to lead a man on so disgracefully is abominable!"

"We have only been amusing each other, Lady Katharine. There is no harm done," said Marina, with a little laugh. "Besides, I have only forestalled my privileges slightly. I shall very soon be married to Mr. Heathcote, and then, you see, I can do as I like."

The elder woman caught her by the arm in a frenzy of rage. "It is false! You are lying to me. You have refused him!"

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