In Male Attire by Joseph Hatton

Synopsis.

ZELLA BRUNNEN, a member of the Chicago Women's Athletic Club and typewriter to Hiram Dexter, millionaire, is insulted on her way home by a ruffianly miner, Abner Digges. Ned Glover, an Englishman and writer for the Daily Mail, interferes. Digges draws a knife and lunges at Glover, but is knocked down by a blow from Zella. Joe Williams, a detective, arrests Digges, but his case is dismissed with a light sentence. Digges swears vengeance on Glover. Amos Storey, proprietor and editor of the Daily Mail, is a personal friend of Hiram Dexter. Storey sends Glover to get an article on the life of the millionaire. Dexter takes a fancy to the young man and proposes to give him an interest in some mining ventures. Glover finds that he is living above his means, and upon mentioning the matter to Storey is advised to take a room at a certain boarding-house, which turns out to be the same one where Zella Brunnen lives. He there meets the girl who saved his life and whom he has sought for in vain. It is a case of love at first sight.

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CHAPTER IX—Continued.

AS for Zella, love came to her with a curious sense of elation, accompanied by a passion of secrecy. The light of her love did not break upon her dimly, or as in a silver mist, but hot and glowing, and the more the fire consumed her the more she tried to hide it. She was woman enough to see at once that the Englishman was madly in love with her; otherwise she might have given him a tender encouragement. As it was, she played with his passion. Mrs. O'Hagan, in her Irish way, said the girl "jest made a cock-shy av it, as the bhoys made targits av heads at Donnybrook!" But Zella only laughed, and professed all the more to make light of "the Chicago Mail man," as she called him, in jest. There were odd moments, however, when she turned upon Ned a pair of eyes that seemed to say, "Don't you see that I love you, without making me confess it?" And there were partings, now and then, when she allowed her hand to rest in his; and once he might have kissed her, if he had had the courage.

Glover was never happier, never more miserable. He saw in Mr. Dexter's kindness to Zella a far more serious obstruction and danger to his own hopes than he dared even whisper to Zella. Nevertheless, he was continually referring to Zella's position as one that was not altogether desirable in a young, unprotected woman. In the very word "unprotected" there was a ring of reminiscence that was like pleasant music. "Then let a foreigner protect you." This made her bear with patience hints that seemed to border on questionings that she would have deeply resented coming from any other person. She knew Mr. Dexter was fond of her; so was Mrs. O'Hagan; so was old Glencoe; so were the two professors at the athletic club. What of it? But she had not heard Dexter's confession to Storey and Glover, nor seen the passion in his face nor the agony of disappointment in his eye.

Nevertheless, Zella perceived a change in Mr. Dexter's manner toward her when she told him that Mr. Edmund Glover, who had written a certain charming sketch of a visit to his office, had come to live at Parkside. . . . "Don't you like Mr. Glover any more?" she had asked; "I thought you quite admired him—or, at any rate, considered his work very clever?" Dexter had replied, "Oh, yes. I guess he's a white man, as Britishers go; and he's right smart as a reporter." Zella did not fail to note Dexter's sneer on the word "reporter." This, however, she kept to herself. She had seen sufficient of the world to know how to be her own confidante. Without meaning it, Dexter had betrayed to the girl's quick apprehension that he had ceased to care for Glover from the moment he had gone to live in the house where she, too, boarded. . . . The discovery troubled her. She did not betray anything more than an ordinary surprise at Dexter's change of feeling; but it let in a flood of light upon many seemingly trivial things, that had hitherto passed comparatively unnoticed. . . . It occurred to her, all in a moment, that Mr. Dexter had often looked at her with something more than a curious interest when he had asked her questions concerning her girlish life, her hopes and her ambitions. He had once or twice dwelt upon the advantages of riches; and it now occurred to her that in one of his letters to a poor relative in California he had advised the young girl to marry the gentleman who could lift her above miserable surroundings. It was Dexter's habit to dictate all his letters, private or public, social or political; and of late he had written several to his "sweet young cousin" at San Francisco who had, it appeared, been left an orphan in poor circumstances, and who had declined the hand of a very prosperous and wealthy citizen, simply because he was twenty years older than herself. . . . Now it came into Zella's mind to doubt if this young lady ever existed. She felt the blood mount to her temples, as she sat down at her desk with this thought in her mind, and wondered that it had never occurred to her before—all the more so, as Mr. Dexter invariably posted these letters to his "sweet young cousin" himself. . . . But a woman's perception of things, and her outlook generally, undergo a keen sharpening the moment her wit feels the first touch of Cupid's arrow.

Notwithstanding Dexter's unmistakable change of feeling, he gave no indication of it to Glover; and he endeavored to repair the mistake he had made in letting Miss Brunnen into his secret by making a great pretense of entertaining a great interest in Glover's career. . . . Dexter was a shrewd, capable man in business, knew every rope of the Board of Trade at Chicago and every current of the tides in Wall street; but it was strangely new steering for him in the turbulent seas of the supreme passion that may come to a man late in life. Until the advent of Ned Glover, he had hoped to hold Zella by the affected ties of a fatherly interest. Once he had approached her with an expression of his real feeling; but only to excite such a panic in the young girl's mind as had made him promptly modify his attack, and confess for her a "genuine fatherly sentiment." She was an orphan. He was alone in the world. Why should he not try and act a father's part toward her? She had replied that no one could ever take her father's place; that being dead he still lived in her heart, and his spirit watched over her. Dexter had thereupon dropped every suggestion of a closer connection than that of employer. To keep this tie taut and strong, he had paid her no more than a moderate wage, and had employed her the full hours that he was entitled to. Thus, gradually, he had won the girl's good will, and a sense of gratitude for the unvarying kindness with which he had treated her. . . . So Glover called now and then on Mr. Dexter, and received for the Mail much valuable information about mining and other interests; and, whenever opportunity arose, Dexter offered Glover a drink, made Sam bring out his little silver tray, with its champagne, its Angostura bitters, its bowl of cracked ice, and its snips of lemon peel and basin of snow-like sugar dust; but Glover was always proof against the temptation. Dexter knew that it was a temptation; though Glover credited him with the most generous of hospitable intentions.

The boarding-house, as one man and one woman, soon came to the conclusion that the Englishman was over head and ears in love with Zella; and that the young lady herself, if she did not as cordially respond, was flattered by his attentions, for Glover was good looking, dressed well, talked well, sang a good song, looked well in the saddle on a horse or bicycle, and was already beginning to make a name, not only as a bright miscellaneous writer for the press, but as a contributor to the literary columns of the Sunday Mail, which counted among its authors celebrated names, both English and American, and was illustrated by artists of distinction. Glover had created some surprise by his varied knowledge, more especially in pure science, as well as practical engineering. "The beggar can write about anything, and with knowledge," Storey had said to Dexter, and Dexter had replied, "He's a devilish deal too clever. That's what's the matter with Edmund Glover!"

The remark was made with an animus that astonished Storey; who, after a pause replied, "Oh! that's what's the matter with Glover, eh? Too devilish clever. How long is it since you have made that discovery, Hiram?"

"It don't matter, Amos," said Dexter with cold courtesy. "That's my opinion."

"Oh! Very well. I guess it ain't going to make any difference between us?"

"Not that I imagine, Amos."

"But when you call me Amos I know there's a kink in your mind about something."

"You called me Hiram."

"I often do; but you invariably call me Storey."

"Oh! well, let it stand at Storey, then."

"What has gone wrong, my friend?"

"Oh! nothing."

"I thought you liked this English fellow; said you did, and even wanted to make his fortune."

"So I do still," said Dexter with a sudden change of manner. "In proof of which, send him to Platts Valley and I'll put a ten thousand dollar share to his credit in the new mine."

"You will?"

"Yes, and you can make whatever arrangements you please about the paper."

"I can always do that, Dexter," said Storey somewhat sharply.

"But I am your biggest stockholder."

"In this game of the Mail money does not speak in the management. And by God, Hiram Dexter, if you throw that in my teeth again I'll buy you out to-morrow!"

"Why, Storey, we seem to be quarreling; how is it?"

"You know best. But understand me," said Storey, towering up above his partner six feet of bone and brawn and a noble head with flowing gray hair, "I am the boss in this building; you came in with money as a friend. By —! if you assume any other position, if you were my twin brother, I'd chuck you into the street, and your money bags, too!"

Storey was rarely roused into passion, but when he showed fight he was a very devil.

Dexter knew his man. Moreover, the mention of Glover in connection with Platts Valley had set up a new idea in his mind that had acted as an instantaneous solace to his chagrin at the sudden interest Miss Brunnen had taken in Mrs. O'Hagan's new boarder.

"Storey, you are losing your temper," he said quickly.

"It's a devilish good thing for you, Hiram, that you have not lost yours at the same time. Do you know how I and my wife get on so well? We never lose our tempers at the same time. You provoked me, Dexter. Don't do it again."

"I will not," said Dexter, "but don't think I'm afraid of you, Storey. I think I was in the wrong."

"Say no more about it. Come and dine and go to the theater to-night, will you?"

"I don't mind if I do," said Dexter.

"Dinner at 7. I'll ask my wife's cousin to join us. She has just returned from Europe. You'll like her. She'll amuse you."

And so they made their quarrel up. It was the first time Dexter had seen Storey was greatly moved. When he was alone he sat and wondered how the trouble had arisen. It had come about through Ned Glover. He was out of humor when he called upon Storey. Storey had made him worse by praising Glover. Since the morning he hated Glover. Miss Brunnen had mentioned him twice. It was easy to see that she liked the beggar. Any fool could gather that from the expression of her face when she mentioned him. Of course the designing sneak had taken rooms at Parkside to be near her, to pester her with his attentions. He must be got out of the way before he had time to make any definite impression. It was strange, even to Dexter himself, to find how bitterly he could feel against a man who had done him no intentional wrong, and who, at their first intercourse, had excited in him an interest and a liking that no other individual had ever succeeded in achieving. But for the shadow of Zella Brunnen falling between them Ned Glover might have become Hiram Dexter's right hand.

CHAPTER X.

THE MASKED BATTERY OF A WOMAN'S HEART.

And so the time rolled on. Dexter dissembled his chagrin at the progress Glover had made in the affections of Zella Brunnen, but in private he suffered torments. He had only now begun to really appreciate how fiercely he loved her. Joe Williams contemplated the action of the amatory drama with no more than a passing curiosity. Storey and Dexter had entirely made up their quarrel that had broken out like a sudden storm in a blue sky and subsided quickly, as such storms will. Mrs. O'Hagan was, in her heart, almost as jealous of Glover as Dexter was; but she loved the girl too well to cross her in anything. Glover was the life and soul of the table whenever he was present; but his work often took him away for days together.

Digges had served his month at the house of correction, and it boded no good to Glover that he had met Hiram Dexter by appointment at the Palmer House, after the usual hours at which Dexter was in the habit of receiving callers. Not that there might have been anything inimical to Glover in such a meeting, seeing that Digges was the boss of a mining camp in the neighborhood of Platts Valley, where Dexter owned a vast property. Digges might have the appearance of a terrible ruffian drunk and brawling, in the streets of Chicago; but, away in the wilds of Colorado, a Chicago reporter would have described him as a picturesque type of the frontiersman and mining adventurer.

While Digges and Dexter were conferring on various questions that might be to their mutual advantage—one the capitalist and the other the miner, who has staked his claim and worked it with his own hands, Ned Glover and Zella Brunnen were sailing Zella's boat off a pleasant point on the lake, whence they could see the rooftops and the budding trees of their Parkside home.

Ned, in a suit of navy blue serge, was sitting in the stern of the tiny yacht, a white silk wrap about his neck. The wind having dropped, he had been rowing, and had just dropped anchor in the little cove, where Zella was often in the habit of reading a book or casting a line before going to her duties in a morning, or after the labors of the day, for the springtime had come, and the lake had dreamy hours, as she had—dreamy hours of sunny restfulness.

"A wonderful lake," Glover was saying, as she reclined amidships, among a pile of cushions. "Has its quiet, hopeful days, as we have, and its storms of doubt and disappointment."

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"Don't be anything of the kind; especially as it might not make any difference whether you were rich or not."

"You don't love me, Zella," he said, with a sigh.

"How do you know?" she replied.

"Because you are so impatient with me when I want to talk to you of my love for you, and urge you to promise that you will be my wife."

His words thrilled her, but she repressed any exhibition of real feelings.

"Why, we have only known each other some forty days or so, and you may have a past, as the Sunday novelists talk so much about, and I may have a past. And then according to the society novelists, let alone the dime story tellers, it is awful when two people are married to find they have each had a past the other knows nothing of."

"What do you mean by a past, Zella?" Ned asked with an anxious thought about his one serious shortcoming.

"I don't know; but the man with a past and the woman with a past are continually thrown in one's face, if one reads the stories in the Sunday Mail."

"Oh, damn the Sunday Mail!" exclaimed Glover, with an immediate and penitent apology. "I beg your pardon, Zella."

"Oh, I forgive you," she said, laughing. "But just reflect, now; if we had been married when you said 'damn the Sunday Mail,' you would very likely have flung the boathook at me."

"Zella!" he exclaimed, with a sigh that went to her heart.

"What a sigh was there," she said. "Dear Ned, you mustn't 'take on so,' as the housemaid says to the buttons in that English novel in last Sunday's paper."

"Zella, you are making me wretched. For God's sake don't talk about the Mail! I may leave it as soon as you say you will be my wife."

"Leave it?" she said, half-rising from her cushions.

"I began life as a mining engineer. I hope to turn my knowledge to account in that very Platts Valley. You know that Mr. Dexter has made me proposals?"

"Yes, yes; but, oh! would you quit Chicago?"

"To make a fortune and rise above the mean estate of a—space reporter."

"You know you are a great deal more than that; you know how highly Mr. Storey values your work."

"You said I was what they call a space reporter."

"Ned, dear, I did not mean to wound your pride."

"The wound is healed with that sweet adjective. If it were otherwise your reminder of the nature of my occupation would only stimulate me to a higher ambition. . . . And, Zella, talking of the past in a man's life, I must tell you something of mine. . . . Let me tell you now. . . . There can be no better time."

"I guess there can, Ned," she said quickly. "They are lighting the lamps; let us go ashore," shaking off her wraps and steadying herself against the mast.

"Now I have made you unhappy," said Ned.

"Oh, no!" she replied. "Haul up the anchor."

"A breeze is springing up; there'll be a moon," he said. "Let's set the sail and land by the harbor."

"Bridget will be anxious about us; we had better go home. You shall talk to me as we walk."

"And shall we go around by Prairie avenue?"

"Yes."

As she leaped ashore she took from her waist belt a whistle, which she sounded three times. In a few minutes it was answered by an old boatman.

"Pull her round to the quay, Ralph; moor her for the night and bring her round here by 6 in the morning."

"Yes, Miss Zella," said the man, climbing into the cutter and pushing it off.

Ned took Zella's hand. She did not resist. He drew her arm within his own.

"What were you in England, Ned?" she asked.

"What I have been trying to be here," he answered.

"A 'space reporter,' they call it in Chicago," she said. "Don't get mad. You have put me into a practical mood, and I 'want to know, you know,' as the inventor did in the book by Dickens."

"I had a regular and not unimportant engagement in London, but I lost it; and, though I have not quite mastered the journalistic methods of—of——"

"Of this God-forsaken country," she said. "You need not protest, Ned, I've heard the expression on the lips of more than one Englishman."

"You will never hear it on mine. 'God-forsaken?'—rather say 'God-created.' Why, Zella, if I knew nothing of the great good side of Chicago, only knew her at her worst, I would love the city for your sake and respect her in honor of Amos Storey! They were disappointed speculators, those Englishmen you speak of—or, what is worse, things we call cads in London."

"Thank you, Ned, Columbia curtsies to you."

"God-forsaken!" he went on. "If it was as base as England when the Pilgrims fled from it you would lift the scale of Hope and Virtue and Beauty until"—

"Ned! Ned!" she exclaimed, and tried to stop the flow of his exaggerated eulogium with her hand upon his mouth. But he only kissed it and spoke with still rising enthusiasm.

"Why, Zella, dear, God never made anything more lovely than you, nor anything more impressively mysterious than yonder mightly lake. Oh, if He had only given us a ship equipped for some peaceful port"—

"Where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest," she said, once more breaking in upon his fine speeches. "That's the only really peaceful port, they say, and we are not bound for that silent harbor at present, I trust."

"Wherever you are bound my sailing orders are the same," he said, "whether you will or no, Zella; yes, by heavens! whether you will or no!"

"They say all girls love a bold wooer, but you have the assurance of a free-born Yankee, pushing a book agency."

"Zella! It's true, then, you do not love me?" he said, despondingly.

"The Yankee, pushing the book agency, never desponds. I fear you don't possess his persistence; you wilt and sigh, and—er—give up, although you say I am to be yours, whether I will or no."

"You are incomprehensible, Zella. You make my heart ache."

"I'm real sorry," she said.

"What tree is this with its leaves coming out so quickly?"

She paused in the shade of it and looked up.

"I think it's a plane tree," he said, wondingly.

She looked around to see if any one might be near.

"Then kiss the plain young woman under it," she said; "and heal your broken heart!"

CHAPTER XI.

SHE LOVES HIM, BUT IS NOT A MARRYING GIRL!

Of course Glover was at the trysting-place long before 6 in the morning. He and the old boatman had everything shipshape by the time Zella put in an appearance. She looked fresh and bright as the morning. Naturally she expressed surprise at seeing Glover there. She had not invited him. . . . Nevertheless, when he looked disappointed at this salutation, she was fain to confess that she was glad to see him.

There was a breeze that carried them, with a lively motion, out to the north. . . . Ned was in heaven. He felt the had never lived until now. . . . While the cutter bent her sails to the breeze, there was a ripple of conversation; the talk that lovers make, punctuated with notes of interrogation. . . . Zella, however, came down now and then was a prosaic check upon Ned's eloquent protestations of devotion and his jubilant hopes of the future.

"They say you could drop England into Lake Michigan and lose her."

"Just as a fellow loses himself in the blue depths of your eyes, Zella."

"Why, certainly," she replied, laughing, "what are your English lakes like?"

"I remember meeting a countryman of yours who was making a tour of our English lakes, and he called them ponds."

"Too bad," said Zella, sympathetically, "But we do shake the flag, I believe, when we travel in Europe."

"He admitted, however, that he had never seen more beautiful ponds in all his travels."

"Come, now, that was better, and I expect they are just lovely, eh?"

"One day we will sail over them together, and I'll show you where Wordsworth lived and Coleridge and——"

"The lake poets! Oh, I know, and Southey, and 'Mary the Maid of the Inn,' and 'We Are Seven,' and 'The Ancient Mariner.' I guess that's where you beat us in your durn'd old country, as some of our folks affectionately call it; nary a poet that I know of ever lived on Lake Michigan——"

"Too big for any poet," said Ned, laughing. "I guess he'd get lost; yet it might inspire large ideas."

"You should have seen it at the World's Fair! It gave one a kind of idea what Venice and Florence and Rome and Greece and all the loveliest cities and sunniest lagoons one had ever read about or seen in pictures! And, oh, what a crowd! Talk of Babel and London and the great city of Japan; my, you can't imagine such a mixing up of the antique and the modern, the classic and the otherwise; it just made your head swim!"

"I should think so," said Ned, enchanted with the girl's lively enthusiasm. "Zella, you are a picture."

"Don't be foolish, Ned."

"You are, by Jove! You'd make the fortune of a painter who could realize you at this moment."

"You talk as if I were a bale of goods. Realize me, indeed! What price, Zella, eh?"

"What indeed! A life's devotion?"

"Not negotiable," she replied. And now she was leaning against the tiller, swaying with it as she kept the cutter's head to windward, her yachting cap pushed back upon her head, her face aglow, the pose of the body showing off its graceful lines. Ned might well exclaim upon the beauty of the picture.

"And do you know the Lake of Como?" she asked, reclining once more upon her cushions.

"Are you thinking of the play?"

"I guess I was. Don't know that I have seen the right kind of Melnotte; don't know that I admire him, either; but seems to me that I know that Lake of Como."

"Don't say it comes from Sheffield," said Ned, laughing in his turn.

"I won't. But it didn't require much imagination to see that marble palace lifting to eternal summer after sailing on a Sunday afternoon by the water buildings of the fair. I guess it taught us quite a good deal, that fairy city, with its treasures from every corner of the world."

"I might have described it for a London daily, but I didn't want to leave London just then. Only fancy, I might have seen you! Think of the time I have lost!"

"Not much, I guess; you wouldn't be likely to have taken notice of a green girl in short skirts—just a mere schoolgirl."

"Shouldn't I!"

"Why didn't you want to leave London just then?"

"My mother was living, Zella, and she was very fond of me."

"Oh," said Zella, giving the tiller a twist that headed the boat for her homeward point.

"She would have liked you, Zella. Next to my mother my best, indeed, my only friend was Dick Lorrimer. Some day you will meet him. What a delight that will be! Such a good fellow! An extraordinary fellow in many respects."

Ned's reference to the death of his mother clouded Zella's spirits. She sat watching the dip of the cutter's bows as the little vessel sped onward before a rising wind blowing landward, and Glover's eyes rested upon her with dreamy solicitude. Love has many and varied moods.

Home for breakfast, their bright and cheery faces were a rebuke to their fellow boarders.

"Faith, we've got the feathers of the bed in our eyes, and the dust of the night in our ears, compared with the liveliness of these airly roisers," said Mrs. O'Hagan, presiding over the morning meal. "I'm ould-fashioned, and luv the mornin's drames."

"I perfectly agree with you, Mrs. O'Hagan," said old Glencoe, smothering his dish of porridge with cream and falling to with a will.

"And I wonder at ye, takin' cream with your parritch," remarked Mrs. Ferguson. "A pinch of salt is Scotch and healthful."

"There's many things ye maun reckon healthful that's nae sae agreeable as takin' a wee bit risk wi' a dish that gi'es pleasure to the palate," replied Glencoe, making a second attack upon the cream.

Glover, at his end of the table, was telling Mrs. O'Hagan of the delights of seeing the morning when it is freshest, and Mrs. O'Hagan was helping Zella to the daintiest of the menu.

"It's the notice to quit I'll be serving on ye," she said, addressing Ned quietly, "before ye bring desolation upon me. What'll I do if ye rob me of Zella?"

"I will never rob you of Zella," said Ned. "You shall live with us; or we with you."

"What's that?" asked Zella, pricking up her ears. "You may well say the English have the impudence of the Old One!"

"And the greed av him!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Hagan. "Here's this globe-trotter, not contint wid sharin' yer companionship wid me, but is intraygin' to carry ye off, and wants to bribe me wid a promise that I'll be wan av the company!"

"Don't take any notice of him, Bridget, dear; he's only romancing."

"Faith! and it's no wonder, whin ye incourage him to lave his bed to go perambulatin' av the deep before the sun's well on it. And it's a scandal we'll be havin' at Parkside."

"If our lady skipper does not accept the hand of her infatuated passenger," said Glover.

"Infatuated nonsense!" said Zella. "Help yourself to the scrambled eggs and assist Mrs. Ferguson to the buckwheat cakes."

"Mrs. Ferguson is talking to her neighbor."

"And your neighbor is listening to every word you say," whispered Zella.

"She may," replied Ned. "The whole house already knows my secret."

"Then I guess you are just sillier than I thought you," Zella replied. "I'm off now."

She turned her face towards the company for a moment, bowed to them, and retired.

"The girl's mad wid ye," said Mrs. O'Hagan. "If she loves sentiment in her heart she's not wan that cares fer it wid scrambled iggs and a party 'ating their breakfast."

"I'm an ass, Mrs. O'Hagan," said Ned, folding up his napkin.

"Shure and ye are that same, Mr. Glover," said Mrs. O'Hagan; "but only under the provocation av a romantic disposition and the misfortune av yer birth."

"I'll follow her."

"Ye'll do nothing av the kind. Let her alone. Whist, ye blatherskite! would ye make the wimmin at the table understand ye've had a tiff and set the men laughin' at yer onaisiness? Are ye so blind, ye didn't see that Zella would have ye sthay wid me?"

So Ned sat at the table until the last; and then went into Mrs. O'Hagan's private parlor, where to his infinite delight he found Zella. She was not, however, dressed for walking.

"I have a day off," she said. "Mr. Dexter has gone to St. Louis and given me a holiday."

"Then I'll take one, too," said Ned.

"And phwat's to become av me?" Mrs. O'Hagan asked.

"We'll go and spend the day at Lake Forest; or I'll take you to a matinee; or we'll hire a buggy, and drive to a jolly restaurant I know at Edgeworth, where we can dine and there is a garden; or we might go somewhere further away on the cars; or——"

"Av coorse, av coorse," broke in Mrs. O'Hagan, "and we might come back to Parkside and find there's been the divvle to pay in me absince; cook quarrelin' wid the kitchin girl, both with the waitress, and all av 'em wid Ould Glencoe, and Glencoe wid the Senator from Kentucky, and the place all out av the winders. Have ye no engagement at the offices av the Chicago Daily Mail, Misther Glover?"

"There's only one engagement I'm looking for, Mistress O'Hagan, and that is with your Miss Zella Brunnen; which being concluded, I'm off to the auriferous regions they call Platts Valley and Platts Ridge, to pick up a fortune that is awaiting me, which said fortune is my wife."

Zella was rocking herself, with well-acted indifference.

"You do go on," she said.

"He talks shtraight," said Mrs. O'Hagan. "It's natural I'll lose ye some day; you're young, I'm ould. It's not many years I can be carryin' on at Parkside; and who's to look afther ye when I'm gone? . . . It's hateful to have any wan before me in yer affections. . . . But, when the tpime comes, I want him to have money enough to kape ye. It's a mere thrifle I can be leavin' ye."

"Biddy, dear," said Zella, bringing her rocking-chair to a stand still, "don't make me wretched. It would break me heart to lose you; and you have no right to speak of leaving me anything. You can leave me nothing I'll cherish half so much as the sweet memory of your kindness to me."

She rose as she spoke and flung herself into Mrs. O'Hagan's arms. When they had kissed each other and shed a few tears Mrs. O'Hagan said: "We're jist a pack av fools, that we are; and I'm the worst, to begin the mornin' wid invokin' the shadows av the night, and makin' each other miserable. It's all your fault, ye base and brutal Saxon!"

Half crying, half laughing, the old woman glowered at Glover and whisked out of the room, pulling the door to with a jerk of the snack; and Zella resumed her rocker.

"You have brought ructions and anxiety into the once peaceful home of Parkside," she said with affected seriousness. "Until you appeared I was the pet of the caravanserai and the envied and beloved of Mistress Bridget O'Hagan's paying guests."

"And now," said Glover, dragging his chair in close proximity to her rocker, "you are the admired and beloved of an infatuated stranger, who would lay down his life to please you."

"Just as they all propose to do in the Sunday Mail romances and the dime novels. It's just wonderful how they all want to do it. What for? Whether a girl loves a fellow or not she don't want him to lay his life down. Not that he wants to do it in reality. Not he; ain't such a goose; thinks it pleases the girls. It's just high-falutin' stuff and fizzle."

"You are in a dialetic mood this morning, Zella."

"Am I? Talking slang, ain't it?"

"I don't mind it, dear."

"Don't call me dear."

"What then, love?"

"You think that's smart, eh? Well, be happy; make yourself at home."

"I will try to do so, Zella."

"Think 'high-falutin's' slang, don't you?"

"I think it's very expressive."

"Mr. Glencoe says all our slang is just simply depraved English."

"And what's his kail-yard talk, that sounds like the bagpipes in convulsions? Is that depraved Scotch, I wonder?"

"I dinna ken," she answered, laughing; "I mean, I don't know."

"Zella, you're a witch."

"Calling me names now! Don't you think you had better go and attend to your business?"

"I am attending to it," said Ned. "It's my business to ask you——"

"If I love you," she said, interrupting him, with a merry twinkle in her eyes.

"Very well, that's good business. Do you?"

He leaned over her chair and seized her hand. She did not withdraw it. A pair of daintily slippered feet were swinging from beneath her white petticoat; a blue ribbon was fluttering from her full white throat; her red lips were parted with a smile that threatened to become a laugh, and a sunbeam was reddening a bunch of roses in a vase on the table. Ned thought he should go mad; but he kept his head.

"Do you love me?" he said, raising her hand to his lips. "Oh, Zella!"

"Yes—oh, Edmund!" she said, looking up at him with a coquettish light in her eyes. "But——"

He smothered the "but" with a daring assault on her lips that brought her to her feet, flushed, and bent on running away.

"No, you don't," he said, his back to the door.

"Very well, then," she answered, "you are not to do that again without an invitation. Now, sit down, and let me sit down."

"My dear Zella! Oh, if I was rich, for your sake!"

"Rich! And so you are, if you are the man I think you; rich in a generous heart, rich in an earnest hope; rich in a worthy ambition, rich in talent, backed by education. Material prosperity follows."

She spoke with flashing eyes and a glow of enthusiasm on her handsome face that set Ned's heart beating at a furious rate.

"If I am the man you think me!" he said presently, as she once more assumed her customary self-possession and swayed backwards and forwards on the rocker. "If I am the man you think me! And if I am not?"

"Oh! well, when a girl takes an interest in a man—as, it seems, she has to, whether she will or no—why, I guess she constructs her own ideal of him; just, of course, as he does of his girl."

"I am not what any one would call an ideal man."

"How can you be?" she said, with a mischievous smile. "You are a Britisher!"

"Yes; with all a Britisher's faults."

"And how many they are you may know by interviewing Mrs. O'Hagan on the subject."

"There are Britishers and Britishers," he said, with a sigh and a tug at his mustache. "I am not a bad sort, Zella; indeed, I think I am more than ordinarily decent, as men go; but I have been guilty of one grave fault."

"Only one?" she said, pausing in her rocking. "You are almost as good as George Washington—'First in love, first in war, first in the hearts of his countrymen'—I think that's how the jingle goes."

"You won't be serious, Zella."

"I don't want to be; but, if you insist, I guess I had better pull a long face, and have done with it."

Glover seemed to have his story on his mind as unconquerably as the Ancient Mariner, who buttonholed the Wedding Guest.

"I have mastered that grave fault that threatened to become a habit; mastered it, but not without a bitter punishment, nor without later temptation."

"Oh! Don't tell me!" Zella cried, responding with keen sympathy to the pained expression that had taken the color out of the young man's cheeks.

"I must tell you, dear. I could not ask you to be my wife without letting you know what kind of a man you would be marrying."

"I don't want you to ask me anything of the sort," she said; "and I am not a marrying girl."

"You have asked me more than once why I came to America," he said, not heeding her protesting declaration. "I have always shirked the question."

"Don't tell me!" she said again. "We are getting too serious; and I thought we would go somewhere to-day and have a good time, a drive or a bike ride; something pleasant"——

"So we will, dear. But when two people are going to become partners for life they should know all about each other."

"I don't know that the people you refer to are going to become partners for life, Ned. As for me, I have not said so. I have no wish to marry, and I don't think I am the sort of girl to make a good wife."

"You are the sort of girl that God designs for the best man on his wide earth," said Glover. "I am not that man; but your love has lifted me into a path of ambition and virtue and hope that is heavenly. Nevertheless, you must know who and what I am before I ask you finally to link your life with mine."

(Continued next week.)