Right at Last

A voice at her elbow aroused her.

"Have you made up your mind to go no further, Miss Joan?" said Lord Villiars, and he leant against the balustrade, looking not at the hall, but at her face, with its thoughtful, dreamy loveliness.

"I—I beg your pardon!" she said. "Yes, I am coming. How beautiful it all is!"

"You admire it?" he said, slowly. "Don't hurry! The rest have found their way into 'my lady's boudoir,' and are going into ecstacies over the hangings and the rosewood furniture. But this," and he waved his hand downward, "is worth them all."

There was a touch fo sudden gravity in his voice that caused Joan to look up at him.

"I was beginninng to think that you didn't care anything at all for it."

"Because I didn't wear my heart on my sleeve for daws to peck at," he said, just glancing in the direction the others had gone. "Ah! I thought you would have read me better," he added, with a gentle reproach.

Joan looked down underneath his intense gaze.

"There is not a room, not a step we have taken that has not touched me," he went on, in a low voice. "I feel like the prince in the story, the prince who made his way into the palace of the Sleeping Beauty, and expect every moment to find the whole place spring up into life and action."

Joan smiled.

"But the charm has to be performed, the mystic kiss which aroused the whole from sleep."

"Yes," said Joan, innocently; "but you have to find the Sleeping Beauty."

He looked at her for a second in silence, then he said:

"True! There is no Sleeping Beauty here," and he laid stress on the "sleeping" that would have brought a flush to the face of most women, but Joan moved on all unconscious. "I haven't the least idea where they have gone," he said, carelessly, and displaying no eagerness to discover.

"I will call to them," said Joan.

"And wake the echoes of the past!" he said, smiling. "No, let us see if we can find them; they went in this direction," and he went down the stairs.

At the bottom they found themselves opposite a door leading to a small quadrangle, in which was a square of velvety turf, a sun dial stood at one corner and some stone seats.

"An old bowling green," he said. "Is it large enough for tennis, I wonder?"

"Oh, yes," said Joan.

"Then perhaps some day we shall see the net across and the balls flying over, who knows?" he said. "Let us sit down for a minute or two, shall we?"

Joan hesitated.

"The others——" she began.

"Are amusing themselves, no doubt," he finished for her, and led her to one of the seats.

As he stood beside her, bending over her, a word of passionate longing trembled on his lips, and might have been uttered, but just then the rest of the party appeared in the doorway.

He straightened himself with a sudden start, almost like that of a man starting back from a precipice, and turned to greet them.

"You have found us, then," he said.

"Yes, at last," responded Julia, trying to look pleasant. "Where have you been? We have been all over the house for you!" and her eyes glared upon Joan sharply.

"We found the inspection rather exhausting and took a rest," he said, quietly. "But we are refreshed and ready to resume, are we not, Miss Joan?"

Joan got up, her eyes downcast under the spiteful glances bent upon her, and they re entered the house.

"Now, then, Mr. Craddock, where is this suite of rooms you were talking about?"

"Just here, my lord; the windows look out upon this grass plot," and he opened a door and ushered them into a small library.

It was dimly lighted and looked as uncared for as the rest of the house, but there were the ashes of a fire in the grate, and the table was strewn with books and pieces of torn paper.

"This is one of the rooms the late earl occupied when he was here last, my lord," he said; "the dining-room is beyond, and there are a bedroom and a dressing-room. This way," and he led them through the suite.

Lord Villiars went to the window and opened it.

As he did so he saw that the dust had been displaced on the table and elsewhere, and he remarked:

"Some one has been here lately, it appears."

"No, my lord," said the caretaker, dropping a curtsey. "No one has been here since my lord and earl died. Mr. Craddock kept the key and forbid us to enter here——"

Mr. Craddock looked up sharply.

"Quite right," he said. "I dusted the table as I came in, my lord, to save the ladies' dresses," and he bowed and grinned. "Everything is just as the earl left it."

"And here is the chair he sat in," said the colonel, lowering his voice. "Here's the newspaper, and his pen and ink, just as if it had been used yesterday, by George!"

Joan looked round with a little thrill, and as she did so noticed that Mr. Craddock's sharp little slits of eyes were wandering here and there as if searching for something furtively.

"Will you have the rooms entirely redecorated, my lord?" he asked.

"No," said Lord Villiars; "just have them cleaned and some of the old furniture replaced. What is that door there—a cupboard, or another room?"

"A cupboard, my lord; the earl kept his papers there."

"Have you the key?" Lord Villiars asked.

Mr. Craddock examined the bunch with with a fine air of uncertainty.

"I'm sure I don't know, my lord. Probably," he said. "This may be it. Shall I open it?"

"Lord Villiars nodded, and the old man tried some of the keys; the party looked on with faint interest, and Lord Villiars pointed out the view to Joan.

"It must be pleasant here on a summer's day," he said. "One can get a view of the sea from this end of the window." Then, as she went and looked where he pointed, he added in a low voice. "And the terrace! Dou you see where you and I sat the other night, Miss Joan?"

Joan blushed, but said nothing, and presently Mr. Craddock's creaky voice broke in upon the chatter of the two girls.

CHAPTER X.

"I've opened it, my lord," he said.

Lord Villiars walked to the door.

"There does not appear to be anything to repay you for your trouble, Mr. Craddock," he remarked. "It is empty, isn't it? Stop, what is that leaning at the end there? Bring it out, please?"

Mr. Craddock entered and took out a wooden case, about a yard square and six inches deep. It was painted black, and was fitted with a lock.

"Mysterious, by George!" said the colonel, surveying it through his eyeglass; the two girls murmured curiously, and Joan, from her place in the window, turned round to see what had happened.

"Is it locked?" asked Lord Villiars.

"Yes, my lord," replied Mr. Craddock. "Perhaps you have the key on there."

The old man, off his guard for a moment, shook his head, and then went through the form of searching the bunch.

"No, my lord; but I could easily open it; it's a plaything of a lock."

Lord Villiars sent for a chisel, and handing it to Joan, asked her to open the mysterious box.

Joan did as she was bid, and the slight lock gave way.

"Open the doors," he said, "and let us see what we have found."

With a momentary hesitation Joan drew the doors back and disclosed the portrait of a young girl.

An exclamation of surprise broke from the group, and was instantly followed by a low murmur of admiration.

The face was of unusual beauty, almost a perfect oval, with soft gray eyes and delicate mouth. A mass of rich chestnut hair fell low in lovely tendrills upon the white forehead and seemed to light up the whole face.

Mr. Craddock uttered a croak—it almost seemed of relief.

"It's the portrait of my lady, the countess," he said.

Lord Villiars stood looking over in silence for a moment, then he started, and his gaze travelled quickly from the picture to Joan's lovely face rapt in dreamy thoughtfulness.

As he did so, the sharp little eyes of Mr. Craddock shot in the same direction with a curious, puzzled and startled expression.

Joan became conscious of their dead gaze and looked up.

Lord Villiars smiled gravely.

"We have discovered a portrait of the lost countess," he said, "and that of Miss Joan at the same time."

"Joan's!" echoed the two girls, with displeased surprise. "Why—" then they both stopped short, for, looking from the pictured face to that of the fair living one opposite, even they could not deny the resemblance.

Joan stood paling and flushing in turn, her eyes fixed on the portrait. "Was it really like her?" she thought; then she was inclined to smile. "She like that lovely picture!"

"It is Miss Joan's reflection!" said Lord Villiars, with quiet decision. "It is very strange."

"I'll put it back, my lord," said Mr. Craddock, stretching out his pair of claws.

"Yes, put it back and lock the door, Mr. Craddock," said Lord Villiars. "It shall go back into its place in the gallery. Give me the key of the door, please."

"Yes, my lord," responded Mr. Craddock, and he began to fumble at the ring upon which the keys were strung.

"Presently will do," said Lord Villiars. "Let us go back into the sunlight. Have these rooms prepared at once. I shall come down in a week's time."

* * * * * * *

When an earl, possessed of two millions sterling, expresses a wish, it is generally gratified. Within a week the suite of rooms which Lord Villiars had chosen were made fit for him; and, and, in addition, the great hall and the corridors were cleaned and made presentable.

At the end of the week, much to the excitement of the people of Beercombe, the earl came down from London and took up his abode in the house of his ancestors.

He came without anything in the shape of a retinue, unless his valet and a couple of grooms could be so described, and without any fuss.

For a day or two he remained within the Wold grounds, sometimes vouchsafing to see the visitors who poured upon him, but more frequently declaring that he was not at home.

Occasionally the stalwart figure of the Earl of Villiars would be seen lounging down the steep village streets, or standing on the beach watching the fishing boats going out or coming in; but although always prompt to return the respectful greetings of those who came across his path, he did not invite conversation.

No one guessed that the great earl was in the throes of a virtuous resolution. And that resolution was one to the effect that he would not see any more of Joan Ormsby.

Inch by inch, imperceptably at first, she had crept nearer to his heart. So near that once, as he remembered too vividly, he had almost uttered the words which would have bound him to her for life, and Lord Villiars did not want to bind himself.

So the week passed. Lord Villiars nursing his virtuous resolution, while chafing against it; Joan keeping close to the house, in dread that she should meet him; and each, meantime, thinking daily, hourly, of the hour.

On the evening of the eighth day Joan was sitting at the window, looking at the sea.

A fresh, tempting breeze blew in and the gulls, as they whirled past with their shrill cry, seemed to invite her to join them in their flight.

With a sudden resolution she got her hat and the old frieze cloak, and went softly downstairs and out of the house.

For a moment or two she stood looking out at the sea breaking with blind fury against the rocks far away beneath her; then she sped on to her favorite place, a wild, eerie nook in the cliffs.

She reached the nook, and with a laugh of defiance to the wind, threw back her hood to get the full benefit of the breeze, when suddenly a stalwart figure rose from the rough-hewn seat and spoke her name.

She started, a thrill, of mingled joy and alarm running through her. She knew the voice only too well. It was Lord Villiars.

"Miss Joan," he said, and there was a strange tone of exhilaration and satisfaction in the word, "is it really you, or only a vision of you, on such a night?"

"Yes. What a lovely night! I came up here to get a breath of wind. I am going back now," she said, hurriedly, her heart beating fast.

"Wait a moment," he said. "You have not asked me how I like my lodgings at the Wold."

"I hope you like them," she said in a low voice.

"Well, yes," he said. "Why did you not come to call with the others?"

"I? Oh, I never call anywhere," she said, hurriedly. "You can see Lundy Light from here."

"I was coming up to the Elms to inquire after you," he said, disregarding Lundy Light altogether.

Joan was silent.

"I wanted to tell you that I have hung your portrait in the gallery."

"My portrait!"

"Yes. It is your—to me—it is the image of you," he said. Every moment the passion, which he had flattered himself he had been stamping under foot, was rising and getting the better of him. "I spend hours nightly looking at it."

"It is not like me, really," said Joan, trying to speak lightly.

"It is the image of you," he said; "the same beautiful eyes and red-golden hair."

"My hair is red, certainly," she said, forcing a laugh.

"It is a golden red, but we won't quarrel over that. It is golden to me—I can see the gold in it now."

She put up her hand and brushed the wild tendrils from her forehead.

"It is getting late," she said. "I must go back."

"We will go then," he replied. "Why are you in such a hurry to get home? Joan, I am afraid it is but a joyless home for you!"

She laughed sadly. Some truths are too palpable for denial.

"You, who ought to have such a loving home," he said, looking at her earnestly, "who would make such a loving home. Joan, look at me!"

She turned her face to him slowly, reluctantly.

"I can scarcely see," he said, coming nearer; "but I think your face looks paler than it did a week ago. Are they unkind to you there at the Elms?"

She bit her lips and turned her eyes away from him.

"I guessed as much," he said, almost fiercely. "They are like the swine to whom heaven cast the pearl. Joan——"

He paused a moment and drew nearer to her.

She noticed the simple "Joan," and would have shrunk from him, but she seemed incapable of movement.

"Joan, I have been thinking of you daily, hourly, this last week! I have been trying to realize what your life is. It must be harder even than I pictured it. It must not continue. You must not stay there, Joan!"

"Must—not—stay!" she said, wonderingly.

"No," he said, ihs breath coming and going in short, quick jerks. "No! You have borne too much too long already. Joan, I love you!"

Before she knew it, his arm was around her, and her head upon his breast.

For a second she surrendered herself, for a second she yielded to the paradise that opened to her; then, with an effort, she drew away from him.

"I love you, Joan!" he said, almost fiercely. "I have loved you since that night we met together in the moonlight. Joan, tell me, do you love me well enough to cast your lot with mine?"

CHAPTER XI.

"I love you! Do you love me well enough to cast your lot with mine?"

Had he really murmured the words, or was she dreaming?

For a moment the heavy sky seemed to part, and a light that "never shone on land or sea" shone right into her young soul.

The MINISTER'S WIFE.

BY FRED SCHAEFER.

With so many burdens to shoulder in life,
Who envies the white-faced minister's wife?
Is there a call for those frequent tasks
Which Christian duty of each one asks—
Teach a class that's left in the lurch,
Respect a dull sermon (nor doze a in church),
Sew for the heathen, visit the sick,
Bring peace twixt two whose tempers were quick?
We say, while we dodge and even pooh-pooh it,
"Oh, well, the minister's wife should do it!"
The minister's wife has many demands
Awaiting her busy but tired hands,
Who must rear up the perfect child,
Never by gossipers be beguiled,
Make fancy lace objects for the bazaar,
Wear lace on herself that is plainer by far,
Fill in at the organ, help out the choir,
Work for the church when all others tire?
You've guessed the reply—perhaps you knew it:
"Oh, well, the minister's wife should do it!"

The minister's wife can look ahead
To winning a crown and wings when dead;
While we, admitting her chance of reward,
Manage to make her way to it hard
The more that she does of our duty for us
And plods through life without any fuss.
But when the heavens in judgment burst,
And God calls the meek to rise up first,
Long habit will make us answer to it:
"Oh, well, the minister's wife should do it!"

It was the first time that Joan ever heard a man tell her he loved her. It was the first time the universal god struck upon the panels of the doorway of her heart, and a wild tumult filled her being, a tumult so rapturous that it was akin to fear.

"Joan, I love you!" he murmured again, so low that his voice seemed to be borne upon the wings of the wind and straight to her heart. "I love you! Have you nothing to say to me? Have I frightened you? Forgive me, dearest; I did not mean to do so. I——" He paused, for the thought flashed on him that he had not meant to speak at all. "I would rather die than frighten you, Joan! But how could I help speaking, meeting you like this—so solitary, alone, and friendless?"

"It——" she paused. "It was pity, then!" she just breathed, so quietly that he had to bend forward eagerly to catch the words.

"Pity?" he laughed. "No, Joan; it was love! I am not a schoolboy! I know my own heart! It was, it is—love! I love you as dearly, as fondly, as passionately as a man can love! Joan, will you try and love me in return? You will not steal my heart and keep yours locked fast from me!"

His hand tightened on hers, and he drew her closer.

"Joan, will you not speak to me? Why are you so silent? Why do you look at the sea? Look at me, dearest—one look, Joan! See, I am waiting!"

She turned her eyes, with a sweet, half-doubtful, half-wistful expression in them, upon him for a moment, and the glance made the blood leap in his veins.

"Well!" he said, eagerly, almost fearfully. "What will you say to me, Joan? I say to you, 'I love you!' I ask you if you love me. Do you love me, Joan?" he persisted, his voice making music of her name.

The faint look of trouble came into her eyes and grew more distinct.

"I do not know," she breathed, as if communing with herself.

"You do not know?" he said, drawing a long breath. "Ah! how can I teach you to know, Joan? Listen to me. Do you know why I know I love you?"

"Tell me," she whispered, not to him, but still to the sea.

"This way, dearest," he responded, slowly, impressively. "Because when I saw you first that night on the terrace, when you turned your face up to mine in the moonlight, my heart seemed to leap within me; and it was as if I had known you for years, and yet had been searching the wide world for you! Because when you had gone all the beauty of the night seemed to go with you and leave me cold and lonely. Because from that hour your beautiful face haunted me awake or asleep, floated beside me by day and hovered over me at night! Because, Joan, I feel that if you send me from you, I shall have lost all the joy that life can hold, and this life will be no longer worth living. This is why I know that I love you!"

(To be Continued.)

CHEERING UP THE GUIDE.

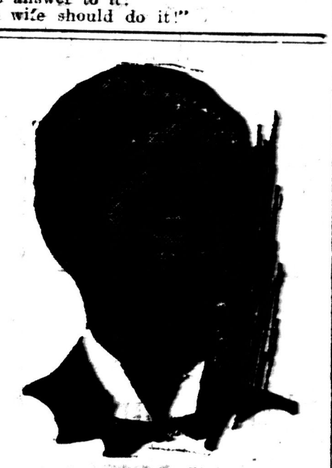
(Puck.)

"Remember, Henry," said the hunter who had arranged with the guide, "we're not hiring you—you're simply one of our party."

"What's on your mind?" inquired the guide.

"Well, you see, in case anything happens, we don't want to be troubled with this new employers' liability law," admitted the cautious hunter.

When people talk of what they are always inclined to think they mean well.



YUKIO OZAKI, LORD MAYOR OF TOKYO.

Here's the lord mayor of Tokyo, this Yukio Ozaki, who is here from Japan on a visit.

He isn't just a comic opera mayor of Tokyo, either. He's a real live fire over in Japan, although it probably doesn't sound like that in Japanese.

Ozaki is a born reformer. He reformed so hard back in 1888 that the government decided he was a radical and shooed him out of the country. When he came back he began to insurge some more, and about seven years ago was elected mayor of Tokyo. He also holds a seat in the Japanese parliament. His mayorial methods are said to resemble those of Mayor Gaynor and he is anxious to meet his American prototype.

TIN MILLIONAIRE WEDS CHORUS GIRL.

MRS. D. G. REID.

New York.—Miss Cabel Carrier, once a member of the famous Florodora sextette, is now the third wife of Daniel G. Reid, the tin plate multi-millionaire. It was frequently reported that they were married during the past two years, but neither admitted that the ceremony had been performed until recently. They are now spending their honeymoon at the Reid estate in Irvington.

Daddy's Way

Oh! do you know my Daddy?
He is so good and kind!
In town he often buys me things—
But leaves them, most, behind!

He took me to the bioscope—
I did not see it all!
For Daddy sat in front of me,
And Daddy is so tall!

He bought a box of chocolates,
The packet was undone—
He'd help himself while coming home,
And only left me one!

He bought a clockwork engine,
And tried to make it go,
But broke it, so it was no use
For me to try, you know!

He bought a book of fairies,
"I'll stance through it," he said;
Before he'd finished with the book,
I had to go to bed!

Oh! when I am a Daddy,
And have a lot of boys,
I'll eat their sweets, and read their books,
And play with all their toys!

THE PROCES BY WHICH TAPIOCA IS MADE.

Manoic, from the root of which tapioca is made, native of tropical America, introduced into the East Indies by the early Portuguese, has become an important production in the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States. During 1907 there were exported from this consular district 45,600 tons of 2,240 pounds each of tapioca, valued at $3,642,528, of which 9,176 tons, valued at $806,346, went to the United States.

Nearly all the tapioca shipped from this distrtet to the United States comes under the head of "Pearl tapioca" and is in three grades—small, medium and bullet. England and the Continent take practically all the flake and tapioca flour. An authority states that pearl tapioca is produced in the following manner:

The tapioca is produced by pressing, rolling and shaking the starch, still wet, in small round pellets, obtained by forcing them through a sieve on to a piece of cloth, which is kept constantly agitated. These pellets are then rolled or fall of their own weight on to an iron plate, which also is kept shaking and heated to a temperature of about 100 degrees centigrade. The heat causes a partial conversion of the starch into sugar and swells the pellets, which take on a gelatinous aspect. The product is called pearl tapioca.

TWO DILEMMAS.

(Life.)

"I want to see you just a minute," says the lady at the bottom of the steps, "but this hobble skirt is so tight I can't climb the stairs. You come out, won't you?"

"I would if I could, but this new hat of mine is too wide to go through the doorway," sighed the one on the inside.