

CHAPTER XXI

THIS LOVE

“LISTEN to me,” cries Age. “Take advantage of my experience.”

Youth cares not a jot for secondhand experience.

“I had pretty wings, prettier than those of yours, and the flame scorches so.”

Youth does not believe in the bygone beauty of Age’s wings. And as to the flame, Youth has not felt it as yet.

So Age goes on preaching unheeded, whilst Youth flutters on its way.

Pouff!

Youth can fly no longer, but creeps maimed and weary; and soon, in turn, raises the warning voice to other unheeding Youth.

It had cost Aunt Susie some heart-burning to stir to life the ashes of her bygone sorrow. But Aunt Susie, in her brisk, cheerful way, considered herself but little. Maggie, robust, healthy, happy-go-lucky, was dear to her kindly little aunt, and she would have borne a good deal to save her from sorrow.

Perhaps, then, it was well that the warm-hearted little spinster could not read Maggie’s thoughts, as she sat in silence after the ending of the tale.

“Aunt Susie was a fule,” so the girl thought to herself, “she did ought to have managed so as to get him tokened afore he left.”

For all she was young, and in so many ways profoundly ignorant, in others, Maggie was horribly wise.

So she took her aunt’s tale as a warning—not against dealings with gentlemen, but rather against “being too easy-going like to make he fast when you have the chanst of it.”

Little as poor Aunt Susie could have foreseen the fact, her interference was likely enough to hurry on the catastrophe she had sacrificed herself to avert.

Up to now, with only a vague thought or two of the future, Maggie had been quite satisfied if her "sweet-heartin'" was going on amorously enough for the enjoyment of the present. Now, she was setting her wits to work to make sure of the future. Maggie's intelligence, if narrow, was by no means feeble; and, in certain ways, as has been said, she was terribly wise.

Lorry Grainger, though actually older as years go, was in many respects much younger than she. He had been brought up strictly in a feminine household. As he grew towards manhood he had mildly rebelled, and had plunged into what he called dissipation. He had been seen supping at a fashionable restaurant with a girl who worked for his mother's dressmaker: a girl who—on secret investigation, carried out by the curate's wife and two austere spinsters—was found to be of anything but irreproachable character.

There was, of course, a scene. This, in spite of a certain discomfort aroused by his mother's tears, Lorry thoroughly enjoyed. He was such a Don Juan of a fellow, you see!

Next came sentence of banishment.

"Dear Lawrence has never been very strong. The doctors recommend the Cornish climate. He is learning farming down there. Quite the simple life."

The usual flimsy curtain of pretence through which, Mrs. Grainger was only too well aware, her lynx-eyed friends saw plainly.

So Lorry came to Trezelah and began to look round for amusement. Amusement, in the ordinary sense of the word, there was none. But of course there were girls.

Maggie was not the only one who was ready to wander in country lanes and exchange kisses with a gentleman. So Lorry bought himself smart ties and striking waistcoat and deemed himself a gay Lothario.

Curiously enough, he remained innocent at heart. Perhaps this was partly due to the fact that, with these warm-blooded Cornish lassies, he found himself not pursuer, but pursued. These buxom girls, with their well-developed forms, rosy cheeks and laughing eyes, were no slim nymphs to flee their god's embraces. Boldly did they pursue, and he, god-like, smiled now upon one and now upon another, whilst serving as his own High Priest in the temple of Vanity.

The short sturdy fishermen and the heavy-limbed farmers held the "foreigner" of little account. Still, they agreed that there was not "much harm," in him. Some even liked him in a half-hearted, slightly ashamed, fashion. That there was no enmity between him and them was, however, mostly attributable to the feminine skill, which managed not to alienate rustic lovers whilst toying with this butterfly thing which could, at the very best, be the prize only of one.

There may have been others equally determined, but Maggie had certainly made up her mind to be that one. At the same time she, too, kept her reserve rustic in the person of Andrew Thomas. The curious thing was—which, nevertheless, shows how some really acute-minded people can be blind where their own charms and those of others are concerned—the curious thing was that Maggie had not, in the beginning, thought of Cassin as a possible rival. Accustomed, since first she began to consider such things—which, in truth, was at a scandalously early age—to the knowledge that local admiration was always accorded to size and flesh, and a certain line of conduct, euphoniously described as "lively," it was natural that she should fail to see any allurements in her cousin's thin, girlish figure, quiet manner, and air of modest reserve.

She teased Cassin sometimes about the men.

"You did ought to cheek them some. They likes a bit of mischief in a girl. You're getting a bit of colour, and when you've done with them mourning things—there ain't no reason why you should wear your blacks week days, now—and you fills out in the bosom, and begins to lark a bit—there's no reason why the boys shouldn't be after you, same as me."

Which kindly intended remarks having injured Cassin's sense of modesty, she replied, proudly:

"I'm not wishing any boys to be—as you call it—after me."

This Maggie flatly refused to believe.

It was not often, however, she gave her cousin's affairs a thought. She was far too occupied with her own. Give her time, and she could—I am afraid in her own mind Maggie used the expression—she could "nobble" Lorry

Grainger. She was quite aware that the course of love ran more easily when it ran slowly. She had no objection to lasting out the pleasures of the chase, which were, indeed, too sweet to be hurried. On the other hand, there was always the chance that Lorry might have to go home, or (Maggie was too honest in her own fashion to burk the point) that he might become ensnared in the charms of some other girl. There was Patty Marshall, to Carleen, she'd give the eyes out of her head to get him—and dress!—she'd something new every fourth Sunday—and there was no telling where the money came from, them so poor and all.

No! Maggie decided it would never do for her to shilly-shally about till somebody else had twisted a promise out of him.

On the whole, the result of Aunt Susie's intervention was that Maggie made up her mind to lose no time in bringing matters to a conclusion. She looked thoughtful at times as she went about her work; and, more than once, when she had the house to herself, she paid a hurried visit to the little fire-place in her bedroom to make sure that the horseshoe was still there, and so, in some mysterious way, "on her side."

Meanwhile, as Maggie, with solid determination, pursued the well-clothed substantial thing she called love, for Cassin, too, the word had become embodied, though hardly as yet had it taken on flesh; rather was it a faint, diaphanous dream.

Maggie pursued her love with dogged feet and grasping hands that meant to have and hold. Cassin, with shy eyes beheld a vision, faint as yet but tremulous with glory a vision that was drawing nearer, making earth more beautiful as it came. Something so pure, so perfect, that hardly might it be thought of in the strong light of day. Something that hovered in her dreams, or knelt beside her as childlike, she added the petition to her virginal prayers: "Bless —."

Even to herself she named no name.

CHAPTER XXII

A "LOOE" PLACE

ABOUT the feast of St. Martin, Summer, regretful to have left a land so full of flowers and colour, returns to Cornwall.

The sun blazes down; the heat haze quivers above the gorse-gilded moorland; the land sighs with comfortable warmth; and forgets that winter is close at hand.

All through one such laggard summer's day, Maggie went about flushed, excited, a blaze of sunlight in her heart. Only the night before—the air was hot and languorous—Lorry had held her passionately to his breast. And to-night—her eyes blazed at the thought—to-night she had made up her mind they two should be safely "tokened."

"He's mine for the whistling," she told herself, excitedly. "I did ought to have got his promise last night. I was a fule that I didn't. I won't be a fule to-night."

The fact was, the night before Maggie had lost her head. The present, with its caresses, had been so sweet, that for once she had let go all thought for the hard-headed future.

She must be wiser to-night.

Before going out, she stole upstairs, and cautiously drew out the horseshoe from its hiding-place.

It was black with soot. Maggie hastily rubbed it on one of her "working" skirts that hung behind the door. Then, her hand damp with perspiration, she tucked it inside her blouse.

"Luck in love," she whispered. "He won't have no chance, seeing that's with I."

She crossed to the chest of drawers. The tiny looking-glass unkiudly revealed the outline of the hidden object beneath her thin blouse.

"That won't do," said Maggie. "I might put him in my pocket, but that there's a hole in this pocket. That I do know." She turned this way and that.

But the blouse, a ready-made one and not over generous

in material, persisted in giving away her secret. She thrust her hand into her pocket.

"'Tisn't but a little hole, neither," said she.

The horseshoe was somewhat large for the opening, but Maggie was urgent, and in it went.

Her hat, gay with cornflowers and poppies, was quickly skewered upon her head with large, glass-headed pins.

"Now, if that don't fetch him!" was Maggie's admiring comment.

"I'll have to take and step down without my Aunt Susie seeing, or she'll be after me about wearing my Sunday hat."

This little matter of diplomacy safely carried out, Maggie went gaily through the evening light to meet her lover.

As a rule they walked together along the highway or in the lanes, many of which wound across the country for miles, without hedge, bush, or cover of any kind. To-night's meeting was planned at a certain haystack in one of the Trezelah fields.

"They've cut out the hay and made a tidy 'looe' place where us can be all to ourselves." So Maggie.

Lorry had agreed.

He would have agreed to almost anything last night.

To-day was another matter.

After parting with Maggie on the previous evening, Lorry had sauntered into The First and Last. There were some fellows there. He had sung for them, accompanying himself on the piano—he had quite a nice little voice. He had also drunk several glasses of ale, and a little unconsidered whisky and soda on the top of that.

How distressed his poor mother would have been! And the curate's wife, and the two austere spinsters, how enjoyably shocked!

Overnight Lorry had been a splendid fellow. To-day, though not exactly sick or sorry, he was not quite at his ease.

It is so dreadfully unromantic. But, to tell the plain truth, Lorry was bilious.

As a consequence, he felt thoroughly dissatisfied with everything and everybody but himself. *He* was all right, of course, but every one else was confoundedly pig-headed

and cross. As a climax his horse had fallen lame, just when a good canter was the one thing he wanted.

And, as though all this were not enough, the evening's post had brought a letter from his mother. Not a bad letter, really, not nagging, or anything like that—quite loving and so on. Yet one of those letters that, somehow, for no explainable reason, make a chap feel a low-down beast. This letter was in Lorry's breast pocket when he set out to keep his appointment with Maggie Penrose.

He was distinctly ill-humoured as he went through the lane, over a stile, and along a field path. The stubble had lost its colour by now, part of the field was already ploughed, the ploughshare gleamed in the fading light. With the slim cane he carried Lorry cut viciously at any wayside flower that had presumed to lift its head since harvest-time.

Maggie was so persistent. That was the worst of girls. He almost wished he had not come this evening. But a man can't be a downright blackguard! It all came of clapping a fellow down in a dead-and-alive hole where there was nothing on earth to do.

Well, after all, matters might have been worse. This girl had, at any rate, no hold over him so far.

Thus, he patted his virtue—which was more than half cowardice—on the back, and made good resolutions for the future.

Across the fields to meet him came Maggie, glowing with the thought of her coming triumph, her handsome head bearing aloft the glories of her Sunday hat, the horseshoe swinging gently against her knee at every stride.

Her feet moved quickly.

Lorry's lagged.

So she was first at the meeting-place. Though the day had been summer's, the night would be autumnal. The short twilight would soon fade, already the air felt a little chill. But in Maggie's "looe" place it was still warm, for the warmth of the day's vivid sunshine lingered yet amongst the hay.

Maggie sat down to wait quite contentedly. In a land where watches are scarce, and clocks far from unanimous as to the time of day, patience is too frequently needed to be regarded as a virtue. So Maggie was content

to wait, though her cheeks were burning, and her tightly clasped hands were wet with the energy of her anticipations.

She was quite happy.

As Lorry drew near, the first thing that caught his eye was the unfortunate Sunday hat.

He made half a pause.

"If she has not put on that sickening thing!" he said.

Poor Maggie.

But Lorry had, at least, the elements of decency, so he whipped up his laggard spirits, and cast something of the lover into his words of greeting, as he sat down by Maggie on the yielding hay.

He felt awkward and stupid sitting there, half relieved and half disgusted to find the girl's near presence no longer had any charm.

"He isn't in no hurry to begin squeezin'," thought Maggie, making a little inviting movement with her shoulders.

Lorry did not notice it.

Pity she had such frantic taste in dress, he thought. Her blouse, a tawdry thing, was too small for full-throated Maggie, and was fastened behind with a safety-pin.

"He be too full of love to find of words." Maggie was rehearsing in her own mind the common plight of dukes and earls on the eve of a proposal (see *Happy Ending Stories*, any issue).

She slid her hand into his. Lorry took it, he could do no less. For the first time he noticed its size and coarseness. Then he grew hot.

Good Lord! There had been moments of madness when he had almost thought of marrying the girl!

He dropped her hand.

Maggie looked up at him. Her eyes were big and lustrous as ever. They woke no response in Lorry's. His passion, if it had ever been alive at all, was dead—quite dead.

The girl gave a little shiver.

"You're cold," said the young man, awkwardly, "hadn't we better walk about?"

"Hadn't we better walk about?" she replied, with suppressed passion, "be that all you've got to say to me, Lorry?"

"Can't we talk and walk, too?" He tried to put some lightness into the words, but he felt a beast.

"I'd sooner sit here." She did not look him in the face this time, but away to the west, where the light was dying. Her big hands were clasped round her knees.

"Something has come betwixt us." So she told herself.

Her thoughts worked busily, but there was no order in them. How could there be, when Maggie had never learned to think, only to have thoughts, thoughts born of a one-sided knowledge of life, crossed by an undigested mass of foolish letterpress?

Lorry drew out and lit a cigarette. He felt he ought to make an effort to ward off the quarrel that seemed to be threatening. Then he became vividly conscious of that letter of his mother's in his breast pocket. It might be that a quarrel would be the safest, the easiest way, to end matters. So he said nothing. His attention was apparently occupied with the invisible pattern he was prodding in front of him with his cane. He felt a beast, though.

Possibly, had Maggie been just a little more ignorant, just a little more childlike, without taking time to consider, she would have begun to cry. Lorry, being anything but hard-hearted, would have melted at her tears, and set to work to comfort her. That would have involved kissing her ripe lips and soft warm cheek. By that time it might have been too dark to distinguish the Sunday hat and that awful safety-pin—the silver wash had rubbed off and showed the brass below. And then there is no telling how all might have ended.

Unfortunately for her, the calculating, unchildlike portion of Maggie's brain worked fast. She had sense enough to perceive that for some reason, quite unknown, Lorry was to-night much farther from her than he had been the night before. Though she was so young, the short years since she left school (to go back no further) had been full of a certain kind of experience. Maggie flattered herself she knew how to deal with the other sex, and now, amid the general jumblement of her mind, one ugly little thought took prominence.

"You make him jealous and him will come round, for sure," so said the ugly little thought, leering round at

certain other still uglier little thoughts in the back of Maggie's mind.

She glanced at her companion. There was still enough light to see his face, upturned. He was making smoke rings, they were only just visible on the motionless air.

"He don't care, one bit," Maggie told herself, with a choking feeling in her throat, and something hot behind each eye.

"You make him care," whispered the ugly little thought.

Maggie flushed. She was resolved.

Lorry's smoke-rings had been far from giving him their usual satisfaction. He had always been proud of them since he had mastered the art in the hayloft at home, when his mother was out. But now he saw Maggie's flush, and felt more like a beast than ever.

"It's— isn't it?—a jolly evening," he remarked, airily.

Maggie grunted.

"For—October—I mean," Lorry went on.

She made no response. With another, quite praiseworthy effort, he went on.

"It's been a jolly summer altogether."

"The summer's done," she said. Her tone was ungracious, yet there was regret in her heart. She could have loved this man faithfully. His smallness of body was nothing to her, his lack of courage, his vanity, would not have mattered in the least. She would have enveloped him in a very real and abiding affection. Never had the girl, pressing greedily down the flowery way, so nearly grasped the reality of love as at that moment.

Yet she answered him roughly as the ugly little thought prompted.

"The summer's ended now."

"Maybe, it is better 'at it is," she added, a trifle more gently.

"All things must come to an end," Lorry returned, lightly.

But his heart was beating quickly. He wanted so very much to end it all, and be free of Maggie. Yet now that end was falling with the chill of autumn, he could not but acknowledge that the summer had been sweet.

He threw away his cigarette.

"We are both young," he said, "there'll be plenty more summers for us."

“ Not together.”

“ But why not ? ”

It was growing darker, and just for a moment Lorry felt something of the old thrill.

“ Things never is the same,” she remarked, sagely.

“ Sometimes they are better.”

“ Well, it be the fate of all. So I suppose.”

“ The fate of all—— ? ”

“ To be married.”

“ Married ? ”

Hammer, hammer, went Lorry's pulses. Thoughts galloped through his brain. Married? What had he said? what had he done?

What did the girl mean by “ married ” ? He wasn't going to be such a fool. Could she, by any possibility—— ? No! there had to be writing for that—besides——

He broke into a perspiration of relief.

He would not be of age until the coming spring.

“ Married ? ” he said, aloud.

There should have been a suggestion of tenderness, at least of wonder, in the word. There was only blank dismay.

“ Rub it in,” persisted Maggie's ugly little thought.

She laughed, recklessly.

“ Folks does get married, you know ! ”

Lorry tried to grasp something, the hay felt unstable beneath his fingers.

“ Look here, Maggie,” he said, with an effort, “ what are you driving at ? ”

“ It is some one be driving at me. Love-making be all very well for play. Us girls has to think of settling down.”

I am not twenty-one yet. I won't. I won't. The words seemed to be spinning through Lorry's brain.

Maggie went on.

“ Like enough I'll be married by next summer.” Though it was dark she turned away, and there was a catch in her voice. “ But I do suppose that be nothing to you.”

Nothing! It was all the world to Lorry. A gleam of hope! A glimmer of escape!

“ I'm not sure that I understand.”

He felt for a cigarette. Nothing like keeping cool. Confound it! That was his mother's letter. What a plague these women were, first and last!

"You don't take no thought for I," Maggie went on. It was all very well for ugly little thoughts to make suggestions; but the carrying of them out required a delicacy of touch that rather "went by" Maggie.

"My dear girl"—Lorry applied a match to his cigarette—"how *can* you say such a thing!"

"You don't care whether I be happy or not."

"Come, you know better than that."

Lorry's spirits were rising, he felt he was holding his own.

The cigarette was alight now.

"I care very much," he said.

Would it be diplomatic to take her hand? Lorry put the point to the council in his brain. The Noes had it. Everything depended on keeping cool.

"Anyhow, he be a good chap."

"I'm glad to hear it."

Lorry laughed. He was rather pleased with that laugh. It was not scornful, not in the least bitter—just careless, with a touch, a very slight touch, of regret.

So Lorry thought, though a disinterested hearer would probably have designated this subtle laughter as a "silly snicker."

"He can laugh, can he?" thought Maggie. Her anger was rising.

"He be a better chap," she said doggedly, "than lots that calls theirselves gentlemen. And what's more—I've only to lift my little finger and we's tokened."

Lorry was silent.

Really! what could he say?

"That's fetched him," thought Maggie.

She went on, aloud.

"I don't doubt he'll make a good husband to me. And he can give me a good home, too."

There was a long pause.

Lorry flicked the ash from his cigarette.

Maggie rose to her feet.

With something of alacrity the young man followed suit.

"You don't believe me?" questioned Maggie.

"Er—yes—yes—of course I do."

"I don't mind putting a name to he." This defiantly.

“ Oh, no ! please don't.”

Please don't ? Lorry was taking things so coolly that Maggie's temper rose.

“ But I will. It be Andrew Thomas, no less ! And him's a warm man too, if him isn't a gentleman.”

Andrew Thomas !

Perhaps, just for a moment, Lorry's complacency was stirred with a pin-prick of jealousy. It was rather nauseous for a gay sort of a dog—a gentleman, too—to be jealous of a fisherman. Then relief conquered.

“ Andrew Thomas is a good fellow, and I hope you'll be happy,” he said.

They stood for a moment in the dim light, face to face, both silent.

Then Maggie spoke, her voice was low.

“ You don't mean it, Lorry ? ”

“ Mean what ? ”

“ That you—you wish me happy.”

“ Of course I do.”

“ What ! with Andrew ? ”

“ Yes, with Andrew. Why not ? ”

“ Lorry ! I did think—I did think—as how you——”

“ That was all nonsense,” he replied airily. But though the light was dim, he did not look her in the face.

Maggie stood and stared into the gathering darkness.

So much, then, for the ugly little thought and its suggestion ! The game was played out. Lorry was not jealous. She had lost him.

He was obviously ill at ease, beating his gaiters with his cane, only anxious to be gone.

Maggie looked at him and saw him as a thing contemptible ; not strong enough to grasp what he certainly had at one time desired ; only strong enough to cast himself loose from that which was no longer desirable.

Maggie's scorn rose, and with it her fury. At that moment she hated Lorry.

She told him so.

She told him more than that. All sorts of terrible things she cast at him. Rude, coarse, old-world things ; things not spoken of, nor even hinted at, in decent modern times. Maggie in her anger was primitive. And she was quite unashamed.

Lorry stood blenching before her. If only his poor mother could have seen him then !

At last he could endure no more and, with a despairing spurt of courage, he turned and left her.

Choking, panting, dishevelled, she watched him go. Then she laughed, brutally. If she had had a weapon to her hand, it would have been flung straight at his head.

Quite suddenly her mood changed. She stretched out empty arms.

"Lorry, Lorry, come back. I was mad. It be false, 'bout Andrew and all of it ! False it be ! Come back !"

Lorry, even if he heard her call, was little likely to come back. He was only too glad to get away. He felt sick, physically sick, cruelly ill-used. Such things the girl had said ! Oh ! oh !—for once he wanted his mother.

What a devil of a dog, to be sure !

When the sound of his footsteps had died, and the stillness of night had settled all around, Maggie flung herself down upon the hay in the place his figure had so lately pressed, and burst into a flood of tears. Noisily, passionately, she cried, till her eyes were smarting and swollen, and it was difficult to breathe through her nose.

At last she sat up, and felt in her pocket for her handkerchief. The pocket was empty, her hand slipped through the bottom.

"I've lost my handkercher," she sobbed, like a child.

Then another thought smote her.

The horseshoe !

"It be gone, gone, and all along of that little hole," she wailed.

Quickly she was down upon the ground, feeling frantically with both hands. Once, with a momentary gleam of hope, she touched something hard and cold. It was Lorry's matchbox. He must have dropped it. There were some matches in it. Maggie struck them one after the other, searching diligently by their light amongst the coarse grass and dock-leaves, the trampled hay, the little tufts of nettles.

The horseshoe was not there.

It must have worked its way out as she walked across the fields.

“ ’Tis all along o’ that,” said Maggie, in the tone of one who bows to the inevitable.

She was trembling now with past emotion and superstitious awe. The summer was over and done, and the autumn night was chill.

CHAPTER XXIII

HONEY

SOME few days later, Lorry Grainger was riding slowly along a winding lane. His reins were upon his horse's neck; he was singing as he went. The sun shone brightly. On the tops of the "hedges" on either side the faded bracken glowed like copper against the brilliant sky; blackberries hung in over-ripe clusters amongst their purple and orange leaves. A robin, perched on a gatepost, tinkled out its autumn song.

Lorry looked the picture of cheery content. In truth, the matter of his parting with Maggie had not been allowed to damp his spirits for long. He was deuced lucky, so he told himself, that the little cat had not flown at his face. My! what a fury she had been in! On the whole his self-love was not a little flattered in that he had aroused such a passion. He wished her fisherman joy of her! He fancied, though, Andrew Thomas was not the chap to stand any nonsense. Fellows like that soon licked their womenkind into submission. Even to himself, now, Lorry would have denied the suggestion that once, in a moment of madness, he had contemplated a marriage with Maggie.

In any case, the episode was ended. He had not met the girl since.

He rode along, then, cheerfully enough, ready for fresh adventure.

Behold! before him in the way a slim figure in black and white. Lorry considered himself rather "fed up" with flaring colours and the bouncing style of beauty. Here, then, was something more to his taste.

Neat little ankles, by Jove!

He dismounted and, slipping his arm through the reins, overtook the maiden on foot.

"Good afternoon, Miss Morris. Pleasant day for walk."

"I am going to Trym for some honey," she answered, with a glance at the basket on her arm.

"Sweets to the sweet," he remarked floridly.

His tone jarred upon Cassin, and she made no answer.

"My way and yours lie together," the young man continued, trying to catch a glance of her eyes, which half hidden by their long lashes were fixed straight ahead.

She had never quite liked Grainger, there was always an inner something that warned her against him. She was vexed, now, that she had thoughtlessly told him her destination; otherwise, she might have turned off over one of the field stiles and rid herself of his company.

Lorry only thought her deliciously shy. To tell the truth the character of pursuer was likely to flatter his vanity even more than that of the pursued.

"May I carry your basket?"

"No, thank you."

Still her eyes did not meet his. What a little bit of a waist she had, though. And she went along so gracefully. Most of the girls about here waddled. It was no fun, though, walking like mourners in a funeral procession.

"I say," he ventured, "have I offended you?"

At last she looked at him; but her grey eyes were cold.

"No, indeed, how could you?"

"Oh! I don't know—I thought perhaps your cousin—er—she and I have had a bit of a quarrel, you know."

"She did not tell me so."

Lorry had the grace to feel rather mean. He hastened to change the conversation.

"Been down in the Cove, lately?"

"Yes, I go there quite often."

Lorry smiled slyly.

"I'm not to know what the attraction is, of course?"

"Indeed, you may. It is the sea. I love the sea." Cassin could not keep in her enthusiasm. "It is so beautiful here, and never the same, green and purple and most wonderful blue; silver, too, sometimes, and pink and gold at sunset——"

She paused for lack of words to fully express her admiration.

"Jolly fine, yes. Pity the summer's over, or I might have taken you out on the water."

To this proposition Cassin made no answer.

A bit hard to get on with!

Lorry put it down to shyness. And shyness, after the methods of Maggie, was vastly refreshing.

"Why doesn't he get on to his horse and ride away?" Cassin was thinking.

Then aloud.

"Your horse doesn't look tired."

"Rather not."

"Nor lame?"

"No. It was the off hind-leg, a bit of a strain, I thought. But it's right again, now."

"Then, why aren't you riding?"

"Oh! I say. Come now, Miss Morris. Don't you pretend you don't know why."

His ardent look pointed his words to such an extent that Cassin could not stay her rising colour.

"I think you are rather stupid," she said, half ashamed as she spoke, for the words sounded to her so rude.

Lorry looked delighted. She might have paid him a charming compliment to judge by the way in which he plumed himself. He drew nearer.

"Of course I'm stupid. I *feel* stupid when you look at me like that."

"I did not look at you anyhow, particularly."

"Oh yes, you did," teasingly.

According to Lorry they were getting on swimmingly, now.

She was quite a beauty when she blushed.

"Do you love the country as well as the sea?" he asked.

Cassin breathed more freely. His foolish sentiment bored, when it did not frighten her.

She acknowledged a love of the country.

Lorry waxed eloquent in reply.

"It's ripping, isn't it? blackberries and buttercups, and birds, and things. Only you seem to want some one to enjoy it all with you."

Cassin did not know about that.

But Lorry went on.

"I don't see why, both being fond of the same things, we shouldn't go a little walk together, now and again. You might tell me the names of the flowers and things.

I'm awfully fond of flowers and things, but I don't know their names."

He floundered a little. It really was hard work talking to a girl who, all the time, looked straight ahead.

"Don't you think we might?" he urged.

Cassin did not quite know what to answer, so concluded there was no harm in vaguely agreeing that they might.

"When?"

"Oh! some time."

"Some time is no time," this in the playful manner he had usually found so effective. "I must have something more definite than that."

Cassin withdrew herself as daintily as one might imagine a sensitive blossom refolding into the bud at a touch.

Lorry was too dense, or too much flushed with vanity to estimate her aloofness; so went on, complacently.

"How about to-morrow evening? Just about sunset, say?"

"I would rather not."

Had Lorry been less wrapped up in self he might have been warned by the very quietness of her voice to go no further. As it was, he blundered on.

"Don't like the dark? Come now, you wouldn't be frightened with *me!*"

"I shouldn't be frightened, *alone.*"

"Of course not," he returned heartily, "I knew you were a plucky little thing, first go off. I was only rotting about the dark. Shall we say to-morrow, then?"

"No, thank you, Mr. Grainger."

"Oh! I say—Mister—that's a bit stiff. Nobody Misters me about here. I'm just Grainger to the fellows," he said it with the lordly condescension of a king to his people. Then his voice dropped—"And all the girls call me Lorry."

Cassin wished he would not press so close to her side. The lane certainly was narrow; but surely the horse did not need so much room!

"I'm waiting——" said a very tender voice in her ear.

"Waiting for what?"

"For you to say it——"

"Say what?"

"My name of course. To call me Lorry."

“Thank you. I would rather not.”

“What a little Miss Puritan it is. Rather not this. Rather not that. Don't think I mind though. We shall get on like a house on fire, by and by. You see if we don't.”

Cassin's originally mild disapproval was already changed to active dislike. If their way lay much farther together she felt she would positively hate this over-confident young man.

“You come with me to-morrow,” he went on persistently. “Tell you what, I'll ride into Penzance in the morning on purpose, and bring you out some ‘chocs.’ Don't say you don't like ‘chocs,’ because I shan't believe you.”

Cassin's cheeks flamed.

“I'm not a child to be bribed by presents,” she said.

“I wish you were,” he returned, quite unabashed.

She stopped in the road and stamped her foot.

“I am *not* a child !”

“You are not,” he said soothingly, “and I don't really wish you were.” He looked at her admiringly. “You ask me why, and I'll tell you.”

She didn't ask him, but he told her, all the same, because it struck him as being rather clever.

“I don't wish you were a child because you are something ever so much better. And if you ask me what that is——”

He paused.

Cassin was tapping her foot impatiently. She wished he would make haste and finish what he had to say and give her a chance of wishing him good-bye. Even “this” Grainger could hardly go on walking with a girl when she had flatly bid him good-bye.

Lorry went on.

“You are something better than a child. The best of all things in the world—a woman——

“*A woman, therefore to be wooed,
A woman, therefore to be won.*”

It really was smart of Lorry to be able to bring in poetry like that. It must have lingered in his mind since his schooldays, for he certainly never had read any without compulsion.

Unfortunately, Cassin had no idea the words were a

quotation, and was, consequently, indignant at what she considered the young man's presumption.

Without any preliminary excuse, she bade him good-bye, and deliberately turned back the way she had come.

"I say though—how about the honey?"

"It does not matter," she threw over her shoulder.

Lorry gazed after her retreating figure, with a sigh.

"There's another," he said. "Lorry, my son, your evil star in is the ascendant."

He climbed into his saddle, and was about to proceed on his way, when a thought checked him. He turned his horse's head, and soon overtook the girl.

"Miss Morris."

"How much more?" she asked, wearily.

He bent from the saddle.

"Only to ask your forgiveness. I'm afraid I went on rather stupidly; but I didn't mean any harm. It was only fun."

Cassin looked up at him, gravely.

"I am not used," she said, "to fun of your kind."

"Am I forgiven?"

She nodded her head.

"Will you shake hands?"

She hesitated a moment, but there was nothing objectionable in the young man's manner, now, so she held up her hand.

It was small and thin and cool. Lorry would have liked to hold it longer, to have pressed it in his. But he did not dare.

So he relinquished it, gently, raised his hat, turned his horse and went off at a brisk trot.

"Fun of *your* kind"!

The words stuck in his mind like a tiny barbed shaft that would not be dislodged.

Perhaps a chap did get a bit free-and-easy—he wouldn't say bad-mannered—but a bit careless. What could you expect—shot down into a God-forsaken hole like this!

He dug his heels into his horse and put him on to a bit of turf.

This Morris girl was, he supposed, only a cottager like the rest. But what eyes! and what an air!

For good, for ill, Cassin had, for the time being at all

events, taken possession of the weathercock thing Lorry Grainger called his heart.

For her part, as soon as the sound of the horse's hoofs had died away, Cassin turned and quietly went, once more, along the road that led to Trym and the honey.

The way for her was still lit by sunshine, for she was not thinking of Lorry Grainger at all.

CHAPTER XXIV

JEALOUSY

FOR a day or two after the scene with Lorry, and her subsequent discovery of the loss of the horseshoe, Maggie went about the house glum and unapproachable. An air of depression had, in consequence, hung about the family generally. In spite of her faults, Maggie as a rule filled the house with life. A big, breezy, jovial life, that was far from uncongenial to its inmates. Now, she had not a cheerful word for any one. She did her work stolidly, and, that finished, she retreated to her own room.

Sometimes old Granma would gaze after her and shake her head and sigh; and its usually cheerful expression would die out of Aunt Susie's face. Cassin watched her cousin with troubled eyes. Only Uncle James, secure in the fact of his sex, ventured an untimely jest about love and measles, and the "catchun" nature of both.

But given an absolutely healthy body and an active outdoor life and ill-humour cannot long survive. So, before the week was out, Maggie was chattering and scolding and laughing and making her presence felt in the old lively way, and the household spirits went up like a barometer after a storm.

On the morning when Lorry Grainger had so disgusted Cassin with his undesired attentions, Maggie chanced to go on an errand to her Uncle John, who was ploughing one of the upland fields. From this point of vantage, she caught sight of a rider on a big brown horse. With a certain satisfaction in the dull pain she felt at the sight, she climbed a "hedge" to obtain a better view, and watched Lorry dismount and overtake a walking figure.

"Cassin!" she said, and bit her red lip and clenched her hands. "So it's her, him's after!"

The two passed out of sight.

Still Maggie, black-browed, stood at gaze, her bosom heaving stormily.

Presently she espied Cassin coming back alone.

Maggie was puzzled.

The next moment she laughed bitterly.

"I did think so much," she said.

The brown horse was returning, it stopped and the rider bent low from the saddle.

They were not so far off but that Maggie could see the movement distinctly; also that Cassin lifted her head towards his.

She shook an impotent fist at the pair.

"So that's who your kisses is saving for, Mr. Lorry. Now I knows!"

Her face was white, but her ears were burning red.

"I would like to kill he. I'd do it, too, for sixpence," she muttered.

"Eh—she's a shy little bit, Cassin. Her and her horseshoe! She'd best keep out of my way. That's all." She jumped down from the "hedge"; and, with the instinct of a wild beast seeking cover, she headed for home.

She was cleaning windows when Cassin returned.

"See Maggie," said the latter, raising the cover of her basket, "I've brought the four big pots Gramma wanted, and a dear little one Mrs. Nicholas gave me for myself. We'll have it for our teas."

Maggie dipped the cup she was holding into her pail of water, and sent the contents with angry emphasis against the window.

"I don't share sweets with no one." She flung the words as energetically as the water.

Cassin stared at her in grieved astonishment.

"No, I don't," went on Maggie. *Souse—souse*, went the water. "I don't go shares with nothing. And you may keep your honey for me. And your lover, too, for all I care!"

Swoop went the cup.

Splash!

The water was running down the panes like angry tears.

"Maggie, why are you so cross?" asked Cassin. She had received a kindly welcome at Trym. Old Osiah Nicholas had taken her to see some pups. Mrs. Nicholas had given her the honey which in anticipation she had enjoyed sharing with her cousin. The slightly disquieting episode of her outward way had slipped from her mind. Her homeward way had been bright with day-dreams.

And here was Maggie spoiling everything.

"What have I done?" Cassin asked, helplessly.

"If you don't know, I'm not going to tell you."

"But Maggie, dear, I don't know. Really I don't."

"You'd best not m'dear me. I hates a hypercrite, I do."

"Please tell me what is the matter."

"The matter is just you, yourself." Then, with added temper. "You and your horseshoe."

"Oh, Maggie, have you found it?"

"Found it? Not likely. And I do wonder at you, Cassin, brought up religious, singing in the choir and all the rest—to be going after them super-things. I tell you what it is—not so many years ago they'd have ducked you for a witch. So they would!"

Maggie stood, one arm akimbo, the cup hanging from the other hand. The bright late sunshine cast her shadow aslant across the path to Cassin's feet. The latter instinctively moved aside, that shadow seemed to bode her ill.

"Witches were old and ugly," she protested.

"There was young ones, too," returned Maggie with gusto. "You have bested I all along of that horseshoe. That's where it is."

"I can't see what the horseshoe has to do with it."

"Don't see, then," returned Maggie, rudely.

She moved on to another window.

Cassin was quite angry enough to turn away, leaving Maggie to her sulks. But a recollection of the dismal days of her cousin's recent ill-humour caused her to make one more effort at an understanding before it was too late.

So she followed along the flagged path.

"Maggie, do tell me what has made you so vexed?"

“Vexed?” retorted the other, “I’m not made of sugar and I hasn’t got milk and water for blood, neither. Vexed? That’s what the gentry is when it rains, or the cooking isn’t done to their liking. Vexed—is to pucker your face and look sour, and say nothing. That ain’t my way. I’m not vexed, I’se proper angry. And so would a saint for that matter.”

There was a choking sound in Maggie’s voice.

Cassin looked troubled.

“Maggie, dear Maggie, do tell me what it is. Is it something fresh?”

“Somethun fresh? Yes, it be somethun fresh for I to have my lover taken away from under my nose by some one else, a mean little thing a-creeping round and m’dearing of me—a girl what’s altogether too good and too mighty particular to go sweet-heartin’ decent by night, same as rest”—Maggie’s voice was growing shriller and shriller—“but she must go kissun and huggun in day-time, for every one to see.” She was panting now—swallowing hard. “And she don’t wait for a proper lover of her own, but she do go—and—takes mine—*mine!*” She stamped her foot, almost beside herself with passion.

“Maggie, who *do* you mean?”

“I means you!” Then, irritated to an unbearable pitch by the look of wondering innocence on Cassin’s face, she shouted fiercely:

“I means you and that Grainger.” As the words crossed her lips she stooped and, with well-directed aim, scooped up a cupful of water and dashed it straight into Cassin’s face. It ran down her neck and soaked the front of her blouse.

Cassin’s grey eyes flashed.

“I’ll never love you again, Maggie, never!” she cried, as she fled to the house.

“Love!” Maggie addressed her audience grandly. “Love!” She pointed over her shoulder derisively. “Her thinks she knows what love be. Oh, lor!”

She shot the contents of her pail against the lower panes of the window and went to the tap for more water. Her nostrils were distended and she laughed softly to herself.

She came back, sturdy, full-breasted, the pail hanging

from her left hand, her right arm extended. Her dark hair was tumbled about her flushed face.

Aunt Susie hesitated in her advance.

"What you been doing to Cassin?" she asked, perhaps not quite so authoritatively as she intended. "She's cryin' and she be wet as wet."

Maggie laughed.

"I done to her what I'll do to you, if you comes pesterin' of me," she said. As she set her pail down with a thump and slowly filled her cup, there was an unholy light in her eye.

Aunt Susie retreated to the house and after her she closed the door.