

AN UNEXPECTED RESULT

E. P. Roe

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"Jack, she played with me deliberately, heartlessly. I can never forgive her."

"In that case, Will, I congratulate you. Such a girl isn't worth a second thought, and you've made a happy escape."

"No congratulations, if you please. You can talk coolly, because in regard to such matters you are cool, and, I may add, a trifle cold. Ambition is your mistress, and a musty law-book has more attractions for you than any woman living. I'm not so tempered. I am subject to the general law of nature, and a woman's love and sympathy are essential to success in my life and work."

"That's all right; but there are as good fish—"

"Oh, have done with your trite nonsense," interrupted Will Munson, impatiently. "I'd consult you on a point of law in preference to most of the gray-beards, but I was a fool to speak of this affair. And yet as my most intimate friend—"

"Come, Will, I'm not unfeeling;" and John Ackland rose and put his hand on his friend's shoulder. "I admit that the subject is remote from my line of thought and wholly beyond my experience. If the affair is so serious I shall take it to heart."

"Serious! Is it a slight thing to be crippled for life?"

"Oh, come, now," said Ackland, giving his friend a hearty and encouraging thump, "you are sound in mind and limb; what matters a scratch on the heart to a man not twenty-five?"

"Very well; I'll say no more about it. When I need a lawyer I'll come to you. Good-by; I sail for Brazil in the morning."

"Will, sit down and look me in the eyes," said Ackland, decisively. "Will, forgive me. You are in trouble. A man's eyes usually tell me more than all his words, and I don't like the expression of yours. There is yellow fever in Brazil."

"I know it," was the careless reply.

"What excuse have you for going?"

"Business complications have arisen there, and I promptly volunteered to go. My employers were kind enough to hesitate and warn me, and to say that they could send a man less valuable to them, but I soon overcame their objections."

"That is your excuse for going. The reason I see in your eyes. You are reckless, Will."

"I have reason to be."

"I can't agree with you, but I feel for you all the same. Tell me all about it, for this is sad news to me. I had hoped to join you on the beach in a few days, and to spend August with you and my cousin. I confess I am beginning to feel exceedingly vindictive toward this pretty little monster, and if any harm comes to you I shall be savage enough to scalp her."

"The harm has come already, Jack. I'm hit hard. She showed me a mirage of happiness that has made my present world a desert. I am reckless; I'm desperate. You may think it is weak and unmanly, but you don't know anything about it. Time or the fever may cure me, but now I am bankrupt in all that gives value to life. A woman with an art so consummate that it seemed artless, deliberately evoked the best there was in me, then threw it away as indifferently as a cast-off glove."

"Tell me how it came about."

"How can I tell you? How can I in cold blood recall glances, words, intonations, the pressure of a hand that seemed alive with reciprocal feeling? In addition to her beauty she had the irresistible charm of fascination. I was

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wary at first, but she angled for me with a skill that would have disarmed any man who did not believe in the inherent falseness of woman. The children in the house idolized her, and I have great faith in a child's intuitions."

"Oh, that was only a part of her guile," said Ackland, frowningly.

"Probably; at any rate she has taken all the color and zest out of my life. I wish some one could pay her back in her own coin. I don't suppose she has a heart; but I wish her vanity might be wounded in a way that would teach her a lesson never to be forgotten."

"It certainly would be a well-deserved retribution," said Ackland, musingly.

"Jack, you are the one, of all the world, to administer the punishment. I don't believe a woman's smiles ever quickened your pulse one beat."

"You are right, Will, it is my cold-bloodedness—to put your thought in plain English—that will prove your best ally."

"I only hope that I am not leading you into danger. You will need an Indian's stoicism."

"Bah! I may fail ignominiously, and find her vanity invulnerable, but I pledge you my word that I will avenge you if it be within the compass of my skill. My cousin, Mrs. Alston, may prove a useful ally. I think you wrote me that the name of this siren was Eva Van Tyne?"

"Yes; I only wish she had the rudiments of a heart, so that she might feel in a faint, far-off way a little of the pain she has inflicted on me. Don't let her make you falter or grow remorseful, Jack. Remember that you have given a pledge to one who may be dead before you can fulfil it."

Ackland said farewell to his friend with the fear that he might never see him again, and a few days later found himself at a New England seaside resort, with a relentless purpose lurking in his dark eyes. Mrs. Alston did unconsciously prove a useful ally, for her wealth and elegance gave her unusual prestige in the house, and in joining her party Ackland achieved immediately all the social recognition he desired.

While strolling with this lady on the piazza he observed the object of his quest, and was at once compelled to make more allowance than he had done hitherto for his friend's discomfiture. Two or three children were leaning over the young girl's chair, and she was amusing them by some clever caricatures. She was not so interested, however, but that she soon noted the new-comer, and bestowed upon him from time to time curious and furtive glances. That these were not returned seemed to occasion her some surprise, for she was not accustomed to be so utterly ignored, even by a stranger. A little later Ackland saw her consulting the hotel register.

"I have at least awakened her curiosity," he thought.

"I've been waiting for you to ask me who that pretty girl is," said Mrs. Alton, laughing; "you do indeed exceed all men in indifference to women."

"I know all about that girl," was the grim reply. "She has played the very deuce with my friend Munson."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Alston, indignantly, "it was the most shameful piece of coquetry I ever saw. She is a puzzle to me. To the children and the old people in the house she is consideration and kindness itself; but she appears to regard men of your years as legitimate game and is perfectly remorseless. So beware! She is dangerous, invulnerable as you imagine yourself to be. She will practice her wiles upon you if you give her half a chance, and her art has much more than her pretty face to enforce it. She is unusually clever."

Ackland's slight shrug was so contemptuous that his cousin was nettled, and she thought, "I wish the girl could disturb his complacent equanimity just a little. It vexes one to see a man so indifferent; it's a slight to woman;" and she determined to give Miss Van Tyne the vantage-ground of an introduction at the first opportunity.

And this occurred before the evening was over. To her surprise Ackland entered into an extended conversation with the enemy. "Well," she thought, "if he begins in this style there will soon be another victim. Miss Van Tyne can talk to as bright a man as he is and hold her own. Meanwhile she will assail him in a hundred covert ways. Out of regard for his friend he should have shown some disapproval of her; but there he sits quietly talking in the publicity of the parlor."

"Mrs. Alston," said a friend at her elbow, "you ought to forewarn your cousin and tell him of Mr. Munson's fate."

"He knows all about Mr. Munson," was her reply. "Indeed, the latter is his most intimate friend. I suppose my cousin is indulging in a little natural curiosity concerning this destroyer of masculine peace, and if ever a man could do so in safety he can."

"Why so?"

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"Well, I never knew so unsusceptible a man. With the exception of a few of his relatives, he has never cared for ladies' society."

Mrs. Alston was far astray in supposing that curiosity was Ackland's motive in his rather prolonged conversation with Miss Van Tyne. It was simply part of his tactics, for he proposed to waste no time in skirmishing or in guarded and gradual approaches. He would cross weapons at once, and secure his object by a sharp and aggressive campaign. His object was to obtain immediately some idea of the calibre of the girl's mind, and in this respect he was agreeably surprised, for while giving little evidence of thorough education, she was unusually intelligent and exceedingly quick in her perceptions. He soon learned also that she was gifted with more than woman's customary intuition, that she was watching his face closely for meanings that he might not choose to express in words or else to conceal by his language. While he feared that his task would be far more difficult than he expected, and that he would have to be extremely guarded in order not to reveal his design, he was glad to learn that the foe was worthy of his steel. Meanwhile her ability and self-reliance banished all compunction. He had no scruples in humbling the pride of a woman who was at once so proud, so heartless, and so clever. Nor would the effort be wearisome, for she had proved herself both amusing and interesting. He might enjoy it quite as much as an intricate law case.

Even prejudiced Ackland, as he saw her occasionally on the following day, was compelled to admit that she was more than pretty. Her features were neither regular nor faultless. Her mouth was too large to be perfect, and her nose was not Grecian; but her eyes were peculiarly fine and illumined her face, whose chief charm lay in its power of expression. If she chose, almost all her thoughts and feelings could find their reflex there. The trouble was that she could as readily mask her thought and express what she did not feel. Her eyes were of the darkest blue and her hair seemed light in contrast. It was evident that she had studied grace so thoroughly that her manner and carriage appeared unstudied and natural. She never seemed self-conscious, and yet no one had ever seen her in an ungainly posture or had known her to make an awkward gesture. This grace, however, like a finished style in writing, was tinged so strongly with her own individuality that it appeared original as compared with the fashionable monotony which characterized the manners of so many of her age. She could not have been much more than twenty; and yet, as Mrs. Alston took pains to inform her cousin, she had long been in society, adding, "Its homage is her breath of life, and from all I hear your friend Munson has had many predecessors. Be on your guard."

"Your solicitude in my behalf is quite touching," he replied. "Who is this fair buccaneer that has made so many wrecks and exacts so heavy a revenue from society? Who has the care of her and what are her antecedents?"

"She is an orphan, and possessed, I am told, of considerable property in her own name. A forceless, nerveless maiden aunt is about the only antecedent we see much of. Her guardian has been here once or twice, but practically she is independent."

Miss Van Tyne's efforts to learn something concerning Ackland were apparently quite as casual and indifferent and yet were made with utmost skill. She knew that Mrs. Alston's friend was something of a gossip; and she led her to speak of the subject of her thoughts with an indirect finesse that would have amused the young man exceedingly could he have been an unobserved witness. When she learned that he was Mr. Munson's intimate friend and that he was aware of her treatment of the latter, she was somewhat disconcerted. One so forewarned might not become an easy prey. But the additional fact that he was almost a woman-hater put her upon her mettle at once, and she felt that here was a chance for a conquest such as she had never made before. She now believed that she had discovered the key to his indifference. He was ready enough to amuse himself with her as a clever woman, but knew her too well to bestow upon her even a friendly thought.

"If I can bring him to my feet it will be a triumph indeed," she murmured exultantly; "and at my feet he shall be if he gives me half a chance." Seemingly he gave her every chance that she could desire, and while he scarcely made any effort to seek her society, she noted with secret satisfaction that he often appeared as if accidentally near her, and that he ever made it the easiest and most natural thing in the world for her to join him. His conversation was often as gay and unconventional as she could wish; but she seldom failed to detect in it an uncomfortable element of satire and irony. He always left her dissatisfied with herself and with a depressing consciousness that she had made no impression upon him.

His conquest grew into an absorbing desire; and she unobtrusively brought to bear upon him every art and fascination that she possessed. Her toilets were as exquisite as they were simple. The children were made to

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idolize her more than ever; but Ackland was candid enough to admit that this was not all guile on her part, for she was evidently in sympathy with the little people, who can rarely be imposed upon by any amount of false interest. Indeed, he saw no reason to doubt that she abounded in good-nature toward all except the natural objects of her ruling passion; but the very skill and deliberateness with which she sought to gratify this passion greatly increased his vindictive feeling. He saw how naturally and completely his friend had been deceived and how exquisite must have been the hopes and anticipations so falsely raised. Therefore he smiled more grimly at the close of each succeeding day, and was more than ever bent upon the accomplishment of his purpose.

At length Miss Van Tyne changed her tactics and grew quite oblivious to Ackland's presence in the house; but she found him apparently too indifferent to observe the fact. She then permitted one of her several admirers to become devoted; Ackland did not offer the protest of even a glance. He stood, as it were, just where she had left him, ready for an occasional chat, stroll, or excursion, if the affair came about naturally and without much effort on his part. She found that she could neither induce him to seek her nor annoy him by an indifference which she meant should be more marked than his own.

Some little time after there came a windy day when the surf was so heavy that there were but few bathers. Ackland was a good swimmer, and took his plunge as usual. He was leaving the water when Miss Van Tyne ran down the beach and was about to dart through the breakers in her wonted fearless style.

"Be careful," he said to her; "the undertow is strong, and the man who has charge of the bathing is ill and not here. The tide is changing—in fact, running out already, I believe." But she would not even look at him, much less answer. As there were other gentlemen present, he started for his bath-house, but had proceeded but a little way up the beach before a cry brought him to the water's edge instantly.

"Something is wrong with Miss Van Tyne," cried half a dozen voices. "She ventured out recklessly, and it seems as if she couldn't get back."

At that moment her form rose on the crest of a wave, and above the thunder of the surf came her faint cry, "Help!"

The other bathers stood irresolute, for she was dangerously far out, and the tide had evidently turned. Ackland, on the contrary, dashed through the breakers and then, in his efforts for speed, dived through the waves nearest to the shore. When he reached the place where he expected to find her he saw nothing for a moment or two but great crested billows that every moment were increasing in height under the rising wind. For a moment he feared that she had perished, and the thought that the beautiful creature had met her death so suddenly and awfully made him almost sick and faint. An instant later, however, a wave threw her up from the trough of the sea into full vision somewhat on his right, and a few strong strokes brought him to her side.

"Oh, save me!" she gasped.

"Don't cling to me," he said sternly. "Do as I bid you. Strike out for the shore if you are able; if not, lie on your back and float."

She did the latter, for now that aid had reached her she apparently recovered from her panic and was perfectly tractable. He placed his left hand under her and struck out quietly, aware that the least excitement causing exhaustion on his part might cost both of them their lives.

As they approached the shore a rope was thrown to them, and Ackland, who felt his strength giving way, seized it—desperately. He passed his arm around his companion with a grasp that almost made her breathless, and they were dragged half suffocated through the water until strong hands on either side rushed them through the breakers.

Miss Van Tyne for a moment or two stood dazed and panting, then disengaged herself from the rather warm support of the devoted admirer whom she had tried to play against Ackland, and tried to walk, but after a few uncertain steps fell senseless on the sand, thus for the moment drawing to herself the attention of the increasing throng. Ackland, glad to escape notice, was staggering off to his bath-house when several ladies, more mindful of his part in the affair than the men had been, overtook him with a fire of questions and plaudits.

"Please leave me alone," he said almost savagely, without looking around.

"What a bear he is! Any one else would have been a little complacent over such an exploit," they chorused, as they followed the unconscious girl, who was now being carried to the hotel.

Ackland locked the door of his little apartment and sank panting on the bench. "Maledictions on her!" he muttered. "At one time there was a better chance of her being fatal to me than to Munson with his yellow-fever

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tragedy in prospect. Her recklessness to-day was perfectly insane. If she tries it again she may drown for all that I care, or at least ought to care." His anger appeared to act like a tonic, and he was soon ready to return to the house. A dozen sprang forward to congratulate him, but they found such impatience and annoyance at all reference to the affair that with many surmises the topic was dropped.

"You are a queer fellow," remarked his privileged cousin, as he took her out to dinner. "Why don't you let people speak naturally about the matter, or rather, why don't you pose as the hero of the occasion?"

"Because the whole affair was most unnatural, and I am deeply incensed. In a case of necessity I am ready to risk my life, although it has unusual attractions for me; but I'm no melodramatic hero looking for adventures. What necessity was there in this case? It is the old story of Munson over again in another guise. The act was that of an inconsiderate, heartless woman who follows her impulses and inclinations, no matter what may be the consequences." After a moment he added less indignantly, "I must give her credit for one thing, angry as I am—she behaved well in the water, otherwise she would have drowned me."

"She is not a fool. Most women would have drowned you."

"She is indeed not a fool; therefore she's the more to blame. If she is ever so reckless again, may I be asleep in my room. Of course one can't stand by and see a woman drown, no matter who or what she is."

"Jack, what made her so reckless?" Mrs. Alston asked, with a sudden intelligence lighting up her face.

"Hang it all! How should I know? What made her torture Munson? She follows her impulses, and they are not always conducive to any one's well-being, not even her own."

"Mark my words, she has never shown this kind of recklessness before."

"Oh, yes, she has. She was running her horse to death the other hot morning and nearly trampled on a child;" and he told of an unexpected encounter while he was taking a rather extended ramble.

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Alston, smiling significantly, "I think I understand her symptoms better than you do. If you are as cold-blooded as you seem, I may have to interfere."

"Oh, bah!" he answered impatiently. "Pardon me, but I should despise myself forever should I become sentimental, knowing what I do."

"Jack, had you no compunctions when fearing that such a beautiful girl might perish? We are going to have an awful night. Hear the wind whistle and moan, and the sky is already black with clouds. The roar of the surface grows louder every hour. Think of that lovely form being out in those black angry waves, darted at and preyed upon by horrible slimy monsters. Oh, it fairly makes my flesh creep!"

"And mine too," he said with a strong gesture of disgust; "especially when I remember that I should have kept her company, for of course I could not return without her. I confess that when at first I could not find her I was fairly sick at the thought of her fate. But remember how uncalled for it all was—quite as much so as that poor Will Munson is on his way to die with the yellow fever, like enough."

"Jack," said his cousin, affectionately, laying her hand on his arm, "blessings on your courage to-day! If what might have happened so easily had occurred, I could never have looked upon the sea again without a shudder. I should have been tormented by a horrible memory all my life. It was brave and noble—"

"Oh, hush!" he said angrily. "I won't hear another word about it even from you. I'm not brave and noble. I went because I was compelled to go; I hated to go. I hate the girl, and have more reason now than ever. If we had both drowned, no doubt there would have been less trouble in the world. There would have been one lawyer the less, and a coquette extinguished. Now we shall both prey on society in our different ways indefinitely."

"Jack, you are in an awful mood to-day."

"I am; never was in a worse."

"Having so narrowly escaped death, you ought to be subdued and grateful."

"On the contrary, I'm inclined to profanity. Excuse me; don't wish any dessert. I'll try a walk and a cigar. You will now be glad to be rid of me on any terms."

"Stay, Jack. See, Miss Van Tyne has so far recovered as to come down. She looked unutterable things at you as she entered."

"Of course she did. Very few of her thoughts concerning me or other young men would sound well if uttered. Tell your friends to let this topic alone, or I shall be rude to them," and without a glance toward the girl he had rescued he left the dining-room.

"Well, well," murmured Mrs. Alston, "I never saw Jack in such a mood before. It is quite as unaccountable as

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Miss Tyne's recklessness. I wonder what is the matter with HIM."

Ackland was speedily driven back from his walk by the rain, which fact he did not regret, for he found himself exhausted and depressed. Seeking a retired piazza in order to be alone, he sat down with his hat drawn over his eyes and smoked furiously. Before very long, however, he was startled out of a painful reverie by a timid voice saying:

"Mr. Ackland, won't you permit me to thank you?"

He rose. Miss Van Tyne stood before him with outstretched hand. He did not notice it, but bowing coldly, said:

"Please consider that you have thanked me and let the subject drop."

"Do not be so harsh with me," she pleaded. "I cannot help it if you are. Mr. Ackland, you saved my life."

"Possibly."

"And possibly you think that it is scarcely worth saving."

"Possibly your own conscience suggested that thought to you."

"You are heartless," she burst out indignantly. He began to laugh. "That's a droll charge for you to make," he said.

She looked at him steadfastly for a moment, and then murmured: "You are thinking of your friend, Mr. Munson."

"That would be quite natural. How many more can you think of?"

"You are indeed unrelenting," she faltered, tears coming into her eyes; "but I cannot forget that but for you I should now be out there"—and she indicated the sea by a gesture, then covered her face with her hands, and shuddered.

"Do not feel under obligations. I should have been compelled to do as much for any human being. You seem to forget that I stood an even chance of being out there with you, and that there was no more need of the risk than there was that my best friend's life should be blight—"

"You—you out there?" she cried, springing toward him and pointing to the sea.

"Certainly. You cannot suppose that having once found you, I could come ashore without you. As it was, my strength was rapidly giving way, and were it not for the rope—"

"Oh, forgive me," she cried passionately, seizing his hand in spite of him. "It never entered my mind that you could drown. I somehow felt that nothing could harm you. I was reckless—I didn't know what I was doing—I don't understand myself any more. Please—please forgive me, or I shall not sleep to-night."

"Certainly," he said lightly, "if you will not refer to our little episode again."

"Please don't speak in that way," she sighed, turning away.

"I have complied with your request."

"I suppose I must be content," she resumed sadly. Then turning her head slowly toward him she added hesitatingly: "Will you forgive me for—for treating your friend—"

"No," he replied, with such stern emphasis that she shrank from him and trembled.

"You are indeed heartless," she faltered, as she turned to leave him.

"Miss Van Tyne," he said indignantly, "twice you have charged me with being heartless. Your voice and manner indicate that I would be unnatural and unworthy of respect were I what you charge. In the name of all that's rational what does this word 'heartless' mean to you? Where was your heart when you sent my friend away so wretched and humbled that he is virtually seeking the death from which you are so glad to escape?"

"I did not love him," she protested faintly.

He laughed bitterly, and continued, "Love! That's a word which I believe has no meaning for you at all, but it had for him. You are a remarkably clever woman, Miss Van Tyne. You have brains in abundance. See, I do you justice. What is more, you are beautiful and can be so fascinating that a man who believed in you might easily worship you. You made him believe in you. You tried to beguile me into a condition that with my nature would be ruin indeed. You never had the baby plea of a silly, shallow woman. I took pains to find that out the first evening we met. In your art of beguiling an honest, trusting man you were as perfect as you were remorseless, and you understood exactly what you were doing."

For a time she seemed overwhelmed by his lava-like torrent of words, and stood with bowed head and shrinking, trembling form; but when he ceased she turned to him and said bitterly and emphatically:

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"I did NOT understand what I was doing, nor would my brain have taught me were I all intellect like yourself. I half wish you had left me to drown," and with a slight, despairing gesture she turned away and did not look back.

Ackland's face lighted up with a sudden flash of intelligence and deep feeling. He started to recall her, hesitated, and watched her earnestly until she disappeared; then looking out on the scowling ocean, he took off his hat and exclaimed in a deep, low tone:

"By all that's divine, can this be? Is it possible that through the suffering of her own awakening heart she is learning to know the pain she has given to others? Should this be true, the affair is taking an entirely new aspect, and Munson will be avenged as neither of us ever dreamed would be possible."

He resumed his old position and thought long and deeply, then rejoined his cousin, who was somewhat surprised to find that his bitter mood had given place to his former composure.

"How is this, Jack?" she asked. "As the storm grows wilder without, you become more serene."

"Only trying to make amends for my former bearishness," he said carelessly, but with a little rising color.

"I don't understand you at all," she continued discontentedly. "I saw you sulking in that out-of-the-way corner, and I saw Miss Van Tyne approach you hesitatingly and timidly, with the purpose, no doubt, of thanking you. Of course I did not stay to watch, but a little later I met Miss Van Tyne, and she looked white and rigid. She has not left her room since."

"You take a great interest in Miss Van Tyne. It is well you are not in my place."

"I half wish I was and had your chances. You are more pitiless than the waves from which you saved her."

"I can't help being just what I am," he said coldly. "Good-night." And he too disappeared for the rest of the evening.

The rain continued to fall in blinding torrents, and the building fairly trembled under the violence of the wind. The guests drew together in the lighted rooms, and sought by varied amusements to pass the time until the fierceness of the storm abated, few caring to retire while the uproar of the elements was so great.

At last as the storm passed away, and the late-rising moon threw a sickly gleam on the tumultuous waters, Eva looked from her window with sleepless eyes, thinking sadly and bitterly of the past and future. Suddenly a dark figure appeared on the beach in the track of the moonlight. She snatched an opera-glass, but could not recognize the solitary form. The thought would come, however, that it was Ackland; and if it were, what were his thoughts and what place had she in them? Why was he watching so near the spot that might have been their burial-place?

"At least he shall not think that I can stolidly sleep after what has occurred," she thought, and she turned up her light, opened her window, and sat down by it again. Whoever the unseasonable rambler might be, he appeared to recognize the gleam from her window, for he walked hastily down the beach and disappeared. After a time she darkened her room again and waited in vain for his return. "If it were he, he shuns even the slightest recognition," she thought despairingly; and the early dawn was not far distant when she fell into an unquiet sleep.

For the next few days Miss Van Tyne was a puzzle to all except Mrs. Alston. She was quite unlike the girl she had formerly been, and she made no effort to disguise the fact. In the place of her old exuberance of life and spirits, there was lassitude and great depression. The rich color ebbed steadily from her face, and dark lines under her eyes betokened sleepless nights. She saw the many curious glances in her direction, but apparently did not care what was thought or surmised. Were it not that her manner to Ackland was so misleading, the tendency to couple their names together would have been far more general. She neither sought nor shunned his society; in fact, she treated him as she did the other gentlemen of her acquaintance. She took him at his word. He had said he would forgive her on condition that she would not speak of what he was pleased to term that "little episode," and she never referred to it.

Her aunt was as much at fault as the others, and one day querulously complained to Mrs. Alston that she was growing anxious about Eva. "At first I thought she was disappointed over the indifference of that icy cousin of yours; but she does not appear to care a straw for him. When I mention his name she speaks of him in a natural, grateful way, then her thoughts appear to wander off to some matter that is troubling her. I can't find out whether she is ill or whether she has heard some bad news of which she will not speak. She never gave me or any one that I know of much of her confidence."

Mrs. Alston listened but made no comments. She was sure she was right in regard to Miss Van Tyne's trouble,

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but her cousin mystified her. Ackland had become perfectly inscrutable. As far as she could judge by any word or act of his he had simply lost his interest in Miss Van Tyne, and that was all that could be said; and yet a fine instinct tormented Mrs. Alston with the doubt that this was not true, and that the young girl was the subject of a sedulously concealed scrutiny. Was he watching for his friend or for his own sake, or was he, in a spirit of retaliation, enjoying the suffering of one who had made others suffer? His reserve was so great that she could not pierce it, and his caution baffled even her vigilance. But she waited patiently, assured that the little drama must soon pass into a more significant phase.

And she was right. Miss Van Tyne could not maintain the line of action she had resolved upon. She had thought, "I won't try to appear happy when I am not. I won't adopt the conventional mask of gayety when the heart is wounded. How often I have seen through it and smiled at the transparent farce—farce it seemed then, but I now fear it was often tragedy. At any rate there was neither dignity nor deception in it. I have done with being false, and so shall simply act myself and be a true woman. Though my heart break a thousand times, not even by a glance shall I show that it is breaking for him. If he or others surmise the truth, they may; let them. It is a part of my penance; and I will show the higher, stronger pride of one who makes no vain, useless pretence to happy indifference, but who can maintain a self-control so perfect that even Mrs. Alston shall not see one unmaidenly advance or overture."

She succeeded for a time, as we have seen, but she overrated her will and underrated her heart, that with deepening intensity craved the love denied her. With increasing frequency she said to herself, "I must go away. My only course is to hide my weakness and never see him again. He is inflexible, yet his very obduracy increases my love a hundred-fold."

At last after a lonely walk on the beach she concluded, "My guardian must take me home on Monday next. He comes to-night to spend Sunday with us, and I will make preparations to go at once."

Although her resolution did not fail her, she walked forward more and more slowly, her dejection and weariness becoming almost overpowering. As she was turning a sharp angle of rocks that jutted well down to the water she came face to face with Ackland and Mrs. Alston. She was off her guard; and her thoughts of him had been so absorbing that she felt he must be conscious of them. She flushed painfully and hurried by with slight recognition and downcast face, but she had scarcely passed them when, acting under a sudden impulse, she stopped and said in a low tone:

"Mr. Ackland—"

He turned expectantly toward her. For a moment she found it difficult to speak, then ignoring the presence of Mrs. Alston, resolutely began:

"Mr. Ackland, I must refer once more to a topic which you have in a sense forbidden. I feel partially absolved, however, for I do not think you have forgiven me anything. At any rate I must ask your pardon once more for having so needlessly and foolishly imperilled your life. I say these words now because I may not have another opportunity; we leave on Monday." With this she raised her eyes to his with an appeal for a little kindness which Mrs. Alston was confident could not be resisted. Indeed, she was sure that she saw a slight nervous tremor in Ackland's hands, as if he found it hard to control himself. Then he appeared to grow rigid. Lifting his hat, he said gravely and unresponsively:

"Miss Van Tyne, you now surely have made ample amends. Please forget the whole affair."

She turned from him at once, but not so quickly but that both he and his cousin saw the bitter tears that would come. A moment later she was hidden by the angle of the rock. As long as she was visible Ackland watched her without moving, then he slowly turned to his cousin, his face as inscrutable as ever. She walked at his side for a few moments in ill-concealed impatience, then stopped and said decisively:

"I'll go no further with you to-day. I am losing all respect for you."

Without speaking, he turned to accompany her back to the house. His reticence and coldness appeared to annoy her beyond endurance, for she soon stopped and sat down on a ledge of the rocks that jutted down the beach where they had met Miss Van Tyne.

"John, you are the most unnatural man I ever saw in my life," she began angrily.

"What reason have you for so flattering an opinion," he asked coolly.

"You have been giving reason for it every day since you came here," she resumed hotly. "I always heard it said that you had no heart; but I defended you and declared that your course toward your mother even when a boy

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showed that you had, and that you would prove it some day. But I now believe that you are unnaturally cold, heartless, and unfeeling. I had no objection to your wounding Miss Van Tyne's vanity and encouraged you when that alone bid fair to suffer. But when she proved she had a heart and that you had awakened it, she deserved at least kindness and consideration on your part. If you could not return her affection, you should have gone away at once; but I believe that you have stayed for the sole and cruel purpose of gloating over her suffering."

"She has not suffered more than my friend, or than I would if—"

"You indeed! The idea of your suffering from any such cause! I half believe you came here with the deliberate purpose of avenging your friend, and that you are keeping for his inspection a diary in which the poor girl's humiliation to-day will form the hateful climax."

They did not dream that the one most interested was near. Miss Van Tyne had felt too faint and sorely wounded to go further without rest. Believing that the rocks would hide her from those whose eyes she would most wish to shun, she had thrown herself down beyond the angle and was shedding the bitterest tears that she had ever known. Suddenly she heard Mrs. Alston's words but a short distance away, and was so overcome by their import that she hesitated what to do. She would not meet them again for the world, but felt so weak that she doubted whether she could drag herself away without being discovered, especially as the beach trended off to the left so sharply a little further on that they might discover her. While she was looking vainly for some way of escape she heard Ackland's words and Mrs. Alston's surmise in reply that he had come with the purpose of revenge. She was so stung by their apparent truth that she resolved to clamber up through an opening of the rocks if the thing were possible. Panting and exhausted she gained the summit, and then hastened to an adjacent grove, as some wounded, timid creature would run to the nearest cover. Ackland had heard sounds and had stepped around the point of the rocks just in time to see her disappearing above the bank. Returning to Mrs. Alston, he said impatiently:

"In view of your opinions my society can have no attractions for you. Shall I accompany you to the hotel?"

"No," was the angry reply. "I'm in no mood to speak to you again to-day."

He merely bowed and turned as if to pursue his walk. The moment she was hidden, however, he also climbed the rocks in time to see Miss Van Tyne entering the grove. With swift and silent tread he followed her, but could not at once discover her hiding-place. At last passionate sobs made it evident that she was concealed behind a great oak a little on his left. Approaching cautiously, he heard her moan:

"Oh, this is worse than death! He makes me feel as if even God had no mercy for me. But I will expiate my wrong; I will, at the bitterest sacrifice which a woman can make."

She sprang up to meet Ackland standing with folded arms before her. She started violently and leaned against the tree for support. But the weakness was momentary, for she wiped the tears from her eyes, and then turned to him so quietly that only her extreme pallor proved that she realized the import of her words.

"Mr. Ackland," she asked, "have you Mr. Munson's address?"

It was his turn now to start, but he merely answered: "Yes."

"Do—do you think he still cares for me?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Since then you are so near a friend, will you write to him that I will try"—she turned away and would not look at him as, after a moment's hesitation, she concluded her sentence—"I will try to make him as happy as I can."

"Do you regret your course?" he asked with a slight tremor in his voice.

"I regret that I misled—that I wronged him beyond all words. I am willing to make all the amends in my power."

"Do you love him?"

She now turned wholly away and shook her head.

"And yet you would marry him?"

"Yes, if he wished it, knowing all the truth."

"Can you believe he would wish it?" he asked indignantly. "Can you believe that any man—"

"Then avenge him to your cruel soul's content," she exclaimed passionately. "Tell him that I have no heart to give to him or to any one. Through no effort or fault of mine I overheard Mrs. Alston's words and yours. I know your design against me. Assuage your friend's grief by assuring him of your entire success, of which you are

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already so well aware. Tell him how you triumphed over an untaught, thoughtless girl who was impelled merely by the love of power and excitement, as you are governed by ambition and a remorseless will. I did not know—I did not understand how cruel I was, although now that I do know I shall never forgive myself. But if you had the heart of a man you might have seen that you were subjecting me to torture. I did not ask or expect that you should care for me; but I had a right to hope for a little kindness, a little manly and delicate consideration, a little healing sympathy for the almost mortal wound that you have made. But I now see that you have stood by and watched like a grand inquisitor. Tell your friend that you have transformed the thoughtless girl into a suffering woman. I cannot go to Brazil. I cannot face dangers that might bring rest. I must keep my place in society—keep it too under a hundred observant and curious eyes. You have seen it all of late in this house; I was too wretched to care. It was a part of my punishment, and I accepted it. I would not be false again even in trying to conceal a secret which it is like death to a woman to reveal. I only craved one word of kindness from you. Had I received it, I would have gone away in silence and suffered in silence. But your course and what I have heard have made me reckless and despairing. You do not leave me even the poor consolation of self-sacrifice. You are my stony-hearted fate. I wish you had left me to drown. Tell your friend that I am more wretched than he ever can be, because I am a woman. Will he be satisfied?"

"He ought to be," was the low, husky reply.

"Are you proud of your triumph?"

"No, I am heartily ashamed of it; but I have kept a pledge that will probably cost me far more than it has you."

"A pledge?"

"Yes, my pledge to make you suffer as far as possible as he suffered."

She put her hand to her side as if she had received a wound, and after a moment said wearily and coldly:

"Well, tell him that you succeeded, and be content;" and she turned to leave him.

"Stay," he cried impetuously. "It is now your turn. Take your revenge."

"My revenge?" she repeated in unfeigned astonishment.

"Yes, your revenge. I have loved you from the moment I hoped you had a woman's heart, yes, and before—when I feared I might not be able to save your life. I know it now, though the very thought of it enraged me then. I have watched and waited more to be sure that you had a woman's heart than for aught else, though a false sense of honor kept me true to my pledge. After I met you on the beach I determined at once to break my odious bond and place myself at your mercy. You may refuse me in view of my course—you probably will; but every one in that house there shall know that you refused me, and your triumph shall be more complete than mine."

She looked into his face with an expression of amazement and doubt; but instead of coldness, there was now a devotion and pleading that she had never seen before.

She was too confused and astounded, however, to comprehend his words immediately, nor could the impression of his hostility pass away readily.

"You are mocking me," she faltered, scarcely knowing what she said.

"I cannot blame you that you think me capable of mocking the noble candor which has cost you so dear, as I can now understand. I cannot ask you to believe that I appreciate your heroic impulse of self-sacrifice—your purpose to atone for wrong by inflicting irreparable wrong on yourself. It is natural that you should think of me only as an instrument of revenge with no more feeling than some keen-edged weapon would have. This also is the inevitable penalty of my course. When I speak of my love I cannot complain if you smile in bitter incredulity. But I have at least proved that I have a resolute will and that I keep my word; and I again assure you that it shall be known this very night that you have refused me, that I offered you my hand, that you already had my heart, where your image is enshrined with that of my mother, and that I entreated you to be my wife. My cousin alone guessed my miserable triumph; all shall know of yours."

As he spoke with impassioned earnestness, the confusion passed from her mind. She felt the truth of his words; she knew that her ambitious dream had been fulfilled, and that she had achieved the conquest of a man upon whom all others had smiled in vain. But how immeasurably different were her emotions from those which she had once anticipated! Not her beauty, not her consummate skill in fascination had wrought this miracle, but her woman's heart, awakened at last; and it thrilled with such unspeakable joy that she turned away to hide its reflex in her face. He was misled by the act into believing that she could not forgive him, and yet was perplexed

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when she murmured with a return of her old piquant humor:

"You are mistaken, Mr. Ackland; it shall never be known that I refused you."

"How can you prevent it?"

"If your words are sincere, you will submit to such terms as I choose to make."

"I am sincere, and my actions shall prove it; but I shall permit no mistaken self-sacrifice on your part, nor any attempt to shield me from the punishment I well deserve,"

She suddenly turned upon him a radiant face in which he read his happiness, and faltered:

"Jack, I do believe you, although the change seems wrought by some heavenly magic. But it will take a long time to pay you up. I hope to be your dear torment for a lifetime."

He caught her in such a strong, impetuous embrace that she gasped:

"I thought you were—cold to our sex."

"It's not your sex that I am clasping, but you—YOU, my Eve. Like the first man, I have won my bride under the green trees and beneath the open sky."

"Yes, Jack; and I give you my whole heart as truly as did the first woman when there was but one man in all the world. That is MY REVENGE."

This is what Will Munson wrote some weeks later:

"Well, Jack, I've had the yellow fever, and it was the most fortunate event of my life. I was staying with a charming family, and they would not permit my removal to a hospital. One of my bravest and most devoted nurses has consented to become my wife. I hope you punished that little wretch Eva Van Tyne as she deserved."

"Confound your fickle soul!" muttered Ackland. "I punished her as she did not deserve; and I risked more than life in doing so. If her heart had not been as good as gold and as kind as Heaven she never would have looked at me again."

Ackland is quite as indifferent to the sex as ever, but Eva has never complained that he was cold to her.