

When a Woman is Good.

Her lovely face, her extreme charm of manner, her exquisite dress, were calculated to make most women a little awkward, not to mention the natural shyness which anyone might be justified in feeling on coming into a big room full of strangers; all this flashed through the minds of many of the onlookers as they turned to watch the entrance of the new guests.

But there was no trace of shyness or awkwardness in the tall woman who came into the room followed by Dr. Burrows. There was only a certain emphasised dignity in her carriage, a little stateliness in the movements of her graceful figure, a certain queenliness in the pose of her head.

"Head well put on," a man whispered to Miss Bartlett.

"Where is your dowdy respectable prig?" the girl flashed back at him. "She is as well-dressed as our host herself!"

Mrs Garside's greeting of her guest was as graceful as she alone knew how to make it, and the astonishment she undoubtedly felt was in no way apparent. The woman before her was not in the least what she had expected to see.

This stately creature, with the beautiful face, the graceful, courteous manner, the pleasant, well-bred words, was not at all what she had pictured to herself.

Dr. Burrows had been absorbed into one of the laughing groups lower down the room. Garside stood talking to his wife's latest guest, a pleased expression on his face, a strong wish in his kindly heart that all his wife's guests were of that calibre, when the Duke sauntered in.

An amused look flashed into his eyes as took his place by Mrs Garside and whispered:

"Hullo! not quite a dowdy after all. Introduce me, please. By jove, what eyes!" he added under his breath as he bowed to the tall woman, whose head moved ever so slightly in response to his greeting, who ignored entirely his outstretched hand, and turned again, but decidedly, to her conversation with Mr Garside.

A little flush mounted to the Duke's forehead; he was unaccustomed to a rebuff, even of the politest kind. The blood in his veins was of the bluest blue, dashed with royal purple, and that one woman, with clear scornful eyes, should look at him as if he were an unwhipped schoolboy, annoyed him.

"I'll be even with her," he muttered. "She's only a woman, after all. I shan't fail."

"What do you think of your pet doctor's protégée?" he asked Mrs Garside later, as they sauntered together on the terrace.

"Think? Oh, she's very handsome, very good manners, very well dressed, I wish that—"

"You wish what?"

"I wish that her eyes were different."

"What's the matter with her eyes?"

"They're so clear," she said impatiently. "They—oh, I don't know what they do to me, not irritate me exactly. They are like a child's eyes, I think; they make me feel ashamed."

Her voice grew all at once low and wistful, a cloud fell upon her beautiful face. The Duke glanced at her in surprise, then laughed.

"My dear child, you've got the blues. Why on earth should that confounded woman's eyes make you ashamed? Cheer up! Come and give me a flower for my button-hole."

Katherine Ransome stood before the audience in the music room of the big house down on Long Island, a little flush on her face, a deep light in her clear eyes; and, as the first notes of her voice rang through the room, a hush fell on the crowd of smartly dressed, chattering folk in front of her.

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways—!" Softly, tenderly, each word as it came from her lips

was like a caress, and some of the hearts of the men and women there—careless, reckless, dried-up, many



of them were—quicken suddenly, and, as the tender voice swelled into a triumphant burst in the words—
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach . . . I love thee purely,
I love thee to the level of every day's most quiet need
I love thee with the breath of all my life
And if God choose, . . . I shall but love thee better after death.

The wonderful words rose and fell in the wonderful voice in a great outburst of song that died away at the end into a very passion of tenderness, which yet had in it more of divine than of earthly love.

As the last notes ended, her grey eyes—love-lit, were they, with the influence of the song?—met the intent gaze of the man who had brought her here to sing. A great wave of colour swept over her face as she moved away amid the thunders of applause that followed the end of her song.

"She knows the love that she sings about—no other," said Mrs Garside to the duke. "Don't sneer at her, I can't stand it somehow, and don't—"

"My dear lady, don't go into heroics. I think it is a deuce of a pity your doctor ever brought her here. I don't mind betting you a diamond brooch he means to teach her all she doesn't yet know about love. Did you see how he watched her to-night?"

"She is worth watching. Better worth it than the rest of us, perhaps," and Mrs Garside turned away from him, her eyes still dim, a curious softness upon her face.

But the duke scowled.

He had made one or two fruitless efforts towards friendliness with Miss Ransome, which she had quietly but decidedly crushed; and being unaccustomed to snubs, he was perhaps more attracted than he chose to own by the beautiful woman who seemed so impervious to his fascinations. 'Pooh! she is only a little American upstart," he said to himself.

He sauntered into the great conservatory after supper that night. Miss Ransome stood alone—convalescing for a tiny breathing space to this quiet place among the flowers.

The duke glanced at her approvingly. The flush brought to her face by her last song still lingered there. A certain soft brightness was in her

eyes, a little smile about her mouth. He strolled to her side.

"Tired, Miss Ransome?" he said.

She started. The brightness in her eyes died away. Her smile faded. She drew herself up.

"A little," she answered, and moved towards the door. But the duke barred her way.

"Don't be in such a hurry to run off," he exclaimed. "Why are you so afraid of me?" and he shot a laughing, insolent glance at her.

"Afraid of you?" Scorn rang through her voice.

"Well, you know, you are awfully unkind to me," he laughed. "You look at me as though I were some kind of reptile, and, you know, you can be charming when you like."

"Kindly let me pass," she said, glancing at him very much as though she did consider him of the reptile tribe.

"I'll be hanged if I will! Why can't you be friendly? Women are generally friendly to me."

"Are they?" Her voice was dangerously quiet.

He drew suddenly close to her and laid his hand on her arm.

"Give me a kiss and I'll let you go. You know you aren't as proper as you like to seem to be. Come, now," and the face whose handsome outlines coarseness was fast blurring out came close to hers.

"How dare you?" she said in a low voice. "How dare you touch me?" and she shook off his hand as though it had been some noxious beast. "Let me pass at once."

He drew back sullenly, cowed by the look in her eyes.

"You aren't going to scream, are you?" he muttered.

"Scream? I? Why should I scream? Her eyes swept the man from head to foot. "You are the first man who has ever insulted me," she



"You are the first man who has ever insulted me," she said.

said. "Is it a prerogative of European royalty to insult a woman?" and, with these words, she passed him swiftly and re-entered the house.

"The devil!" the Duke muttered. "The devil!"

II.

Mrs Garside moved restlessly to and fro in her tiny boudoir, which she called her sanctum. She had dressed early for dinner, and had planned a pleasant hour in the tiny, beautiful room that looked over the wide park to the lake. But she was restless. She could settle to nothing; she took up book after book, and put each in turn impatiently down.

"I have got the blues, I do believe!" she exclaimed, as for the fiftieth time she walked to the window and looked out.

A soft knock sounded on the door, and Mrs Garside turned hastily to see the very person she had been thinking of on the threshold.

Katherine Ransome looked her best always in evening dress. It gave full effect to the stately turn of her head, the beauty of her neck and arms.

"Please forgive me for bothering you," she said, in her low, pleasant voice. "I was told I should find you here; and, if it is not a great trouble, do you think I might run through my songs before dinner?"

"Of course. How stupid of me not to have thought of it. Please do come in. You shall try them here, if you will."

"May I, really? I should like to immensely," and her frank eyes looked smilingly into those of her hostess.

"What is it about her that makes me like her whether I will or not?" the thoughts of the other ran. "Is it her charm, or her frankness, or the sheer crystal purity in her eyes?"

In the other woman's mind much the same train of thought was passing about Mrs Garside.

"What a marvellous fascination there is about her. I could love her easily. And I don't believe all the stories one hears of her. They can't be true. It is impossible to believe them of a woman with her face."

Mrs Garside was alone in her small room when Katherine, for the second time, came into it.

"Come and sit down," the hostess said; "you need not begin to sing yet. Are you going to make us all weep again, as we did last night?"

"I hope not. I was not conscious of doing anything so unpleasant."

"You sang so very much as though your whole heart were in it." As Mrs Garside spoke she looked narrowly at her guest. "I still hear the echo of the words, 'How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.' It seemed as though they were already countless."

A little flush swept softly into the other's face.

"I do so love that song," she said simply. "I suppose I do put all my heart into it. It is like the personification of the love that is life. Isn't it?"

"You sang as though you knew—as though you knew." The words were almost a whisper.

But, though Katherine flushed again, her answer was quiet.

"I don't think one can reach my age without knowing something of the best thing in life."

"You do call it that?" the other asked eagerly.

"Of course, I think"—Katherine spoke dreamily, as though she had forgotten, for an instant, where she was, to whom she spoke—"I think wifehood and motherhood are the best a woman can ask for or get."

The evening light fell upon her face and on the shining of her eyes. Mrs Garside shrank back a little into the shadow.

"But—love?" she said. "Wifehood—and motherhood; with love, you mean?"

"With love? Oh, yes, yes! I should not want to take them unless they came as love's gift."

Silence fell between them.

Mrs Garside broke it first.

"You said yesterday you thought I was to be envied. Why did you think so?"

Katherine smiled.

"Your home is so lovely," she said simply, "and you have so many things that other women have to go without. Your husband—your children—"

"Some women would rather be without the children," the hostess said, a veiled sarcasm in her words, she looked curiously, almost searchingly, into her companion's face. "Are you as simple as you appear?" her look seemed to say.

But Katherine's eyes were fixed on the soft golden light upon the hills outside.

"Yes, some women say so, I know," she said. "It is hard to believe they really mean it. I think every woman who is a woman must feel the same; that to marry the man she loves and to be the mother of his children, is—Heaven." Her voice dropped a little; the colour again swept into her face.

"You have such dear little children!" she went on, and her clear eyes turned now and looked into the lovely face that had all at once flushed too. "It is no wonder that I think you are to be envied."

"Do you mean you would like to have children?" Mrs Garside watched her narrowly.

"I? Ah, yes, I can't tell you how I love little children! Katherine leaned forward and touched the white jewelled hand of her hostess. "I don't know why I am talking like this to you. I don't generally wear my heart on my sleeve; but I can't help talking to you."

"Yet I don't suppose that I am the sort of woman you generally like to