

**THE WHITE CAMELLIA**

(By Minnie Cecilia Paterson.)

It was very unfortunate that Sir Andrew Seton, who had a rooted horror of flirts, should, somewhat suddenly, have made the discovery that he was desperately in love with one. He had always imagined himself proof against the wiles of women. Tall, grave, severe-looking, deeply in earnest over everything, and lacking in a sense of humour, he seemed to look above the heads of frivolous womenkind. "If he would only unbend, how charming he would be!" was the general verdict of women.

But he never did unbend. Brought up with old-fashioned severity in a Scotch manse, he had early learned to take a serious view of life, and the sudden and unexpected plunge—soon after he had attained his majority—into an English title, a great wealth, and a London season was powerless to undo the teaching of his youth.

Perhaps he would have continued to hold such a very accomplished flirt as Lillian Kavanah in abhorrence had he not been compelled to do her a service. The sleeve of her pink chiffon gown caught fire at a party one night, and it fell to him to put it out.

Perhaps it was the startled terror in the usually laughing brown eyes, perhaps it was the quick turning to him for help. But, somehow or other, it was done, and Sir Andrew went home that night a changed man. He had fallen in love.

When he called at the Kavanah's house the next day to inquire after Lillian, she received him with extraordinary gentleness. She drew up her sleeve, and showed him her arm, in gratitude. Thanks to his promptitude there was scarcely a mark upon it. She had brown eyes set in a face of ivory whiteness, and she raised those dangerous eyes very sweetly to the grave eyes of Sir Andrew.

"How quick you were," she said softly. "I had to be quick!" he said, without any of the emotion that he was showing, but with a strange look.

Never had Sir Andrew looked at a woman as he was looking at Lillian Kavanah. And all the devotion of a heart which had never yet loved rose up in a strong allegiance. Being a young man of deliberate action, once that action was contemplated, he did not hesitate as to his course. He meant to try and win Lillian for his wife.

It never seemed to occur to Sir Andrew, as day by day he met Miss Kavanah and was encouraged by her sweet looks and gentle speeches to pursue his suit, that as she flirted with other men so she might be flirting with him. And her laughter at his earnestness hurt him.

"You take life too seriously, Sir Andrew," she said one afternoon, during a reception at his aunt's house, when he was discussing some social problem with her. "I am afraid I am of the butterfly order. I think of nothing in life at all but the flowers, and of which of them I shall alight upon next. I never trouble my head about the suffering and sorrow in the world. It wouldn't help the sufferer if I sat with my handkerchief to my eyes all day, would it?"

"No," he said, a little stiffly. "But you, with your hopeful spirit and charm of manner, might bring sunshine to many a clouded heart."

"But I am not of that sort, Sir Andrew. I don't believe I ever did a kindness to anyone in my life. I honestly don't think so. And certainly and most emphatically never at any expense to myself."

"You underrate yourself," he said gravely.

"I do not," she said. "I am a mere human butterfly, and my only thought is of the sunshine and the flowers."

"No wonder," he said, in a sudden burst of admiration, "for you are like a flower yourself—a white flower. Somehow or other you always put me in mind of a white camellia."

"Sir Andrew!"

But there was a note of pleasure in the little laugh which accompanied the surprised ejaculation.

Her face had indeed the whiteness of the flower in question. She could never blush, and that, in her capacity of flirt, was a matter of deep regret to her. It would have been so delightful if she could have felt a rush of warm colour to

her cheeks like the women in fiction. "There are some lovely white camellias in my aunt's conservatory?" he said in a tone which had an unusual vibration in it. "May I give you one to wear in your hair to-night?"

"Thank you," she said softly. He sprang to his feet.

"Will you really wear it?" he said in a glad voice. "You must have such lovely flowers sent to you always. Will you

really wear one if I give it to you? We will choose one now."

Together they passed into the beautiful conservatory.

"You will really wear it to-night," he said again, with almost a note of entreaty in his voice.

"Of course I will."

She spoke with a little laugh, but her fingers held the blossom tenderly.

"It is beautiful!" she said.

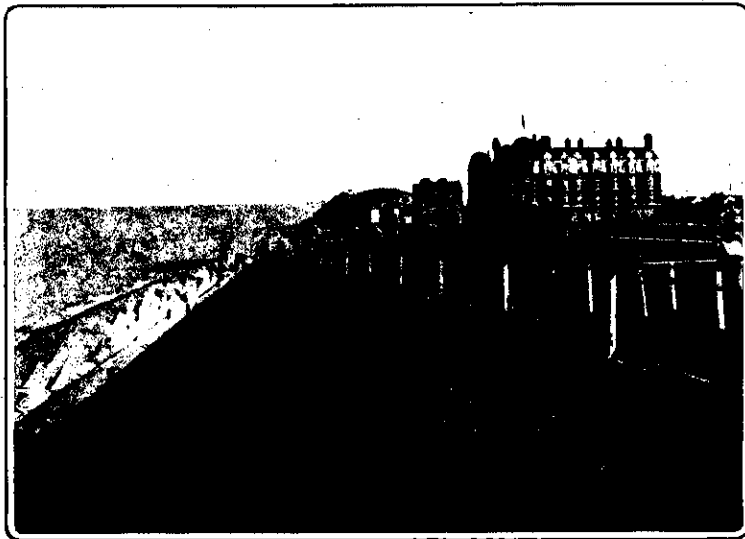
"It will look more beautiful in your most beautiful hair," he said in a low voice.

And his eyes told her a good deal as he strook hands with her a few minutes later.

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Sir Andrew, though always faultlessly groomed, took special pains with his toilet that night, and any woman might

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