

The Love Story of a Cad.

By M. GAUSS.

HERE were three girls in at Sills and Bannixter's one hot, hot day, just before the hour when the sea breeze springs up. The ugly one was Evelyn Sills, whose last fad it was to come down town and lunch with her father; she always came a little early, and while she waited she chatted graciously with the head clerk, whom everybody called "Jack." Then there was Lillian, the red-headed girl, who wore sleeve-protectors; and there was Pet. Pet worked in the stuffy little office opening from the warehouse; she was a fat girl with dead-white skin and black hair; she wore to the office white silk waists which were cleaned in gasoline; so that her presence suggested either motor-cars or light-house-keeping fooms, according to one's experience in life.

When Jack returned to the office after Evelyn had gone, Pet stopped work and one pretty arm drooped over the back of her chair. Jack was a big young man, very nicely dressed in pale grey summer clothes; he was brown-eyed, and he had a cleft chin. The fairness of his face was heightened by the purplish tinge upon his close-shaven chin.

"Oh, Mr DeLong!" exclaimed Pet, "our Young People's Circle is going to give a sociable to-night, and every young lady was to bring a young man friend." She had been a week gathering courage to ask him when Lillian was out of the way. The colour grew faint in her lips. "We'd be pleased to have you come," she concluded.

"A church sociable!" exclaimed Mr DeLong, with a slung of his shoulders. "Church affairs gets on my nerves; I don't think I dare go to one." Pet reclined in her chair—pale, trying to smile.

DeLong picked up her typewriter eraser and played with it. "Tell you what I'll do instead," he said; and paused a minute, studying his large white palm, in which were few lines, but all the "pound"—known to palmistry, swollen tip, flabby and soft. "I'll call for you about seven-thirty, and we'll go over to Clam Beach."

"Why, I'll be pleased to go," murmured Pet; and then somebody—an acquaintance of Jack's from the Stenographers' Union—came, wanting some letters written.

"I guess my gal could do the work," said Jack; but he could not mention Pet without self-consciousness—he lifted a pair of eyes as soft as a school-girl's. His friend glanced at Pet and coughed.

Jack's chin went into the air. "You want to insist on her taking pains," he said loftily. "These beach girls make mostly pi; but they know I won't put up with pi; they do my work right." He showed his friend into the office; and as he passed Pet's table his natty grey sleeve brushed a paper from it; he strolled on. The friend looked at Pet—he knew how Lillian would have sung out, "Here, you!"—but Pet meekly picked the paper up; and after the letters were finished Jack chatted with his friend and paid no attention to her. She overlooked Lillian going to lunch.

"Say, Lillian," she remarked, twining her pretty fat arm about the red-haired girl, "was you ever to Clam Beach? Is it a nice place?"

"All right, I guess. Why?"

"I'm particular where I go with a gentleman friend."

"When you going?" asked Lillian, in her rough, belligerent voice.

"This evening." Pet knew exactly what Lillian felt—a little pang of envy, a little pang of curiosity.

"DeLong?" inquired Lillian. (Lillian had never had a real beau.)

"Clam Beach is all right," she continued, "but I wouldn't go with him to a dog-fight. Why? Because he's a cad—that's why. He'll go with you and then brag he can kiss you!"

"You was to Mendale with him once, wasn't you?" inquired Pet, opening her eyes sweetly. "It was before I came, but the boys talked about it because it was the only time they ever see you with a fellow." A white spot appeared

on Lillian's cheek. "And I know he said he just asked you the once to see what you was like."

"He know better than to ask me again!" cried the red-headed girl, trembling with anger.

And that evening while Pet was dressing Lillian lay back upon the bed in the room they shared—watching Pet from behind wicked white eyelashes. Pet serenely got herself into her silk petticoats and her silk mull dress—plenty of powder, all her rings; then she expelled all the air in her lungs while Lillian viciously hooked the waist. But Pet did not care about Lillian, she was too happy. To Pet the moment of moments—far better than any pleasure you may get out of the trip—is the one when "he" arrives in the hall below; the

"You ought to have worn a thicker wrap," said Jack, in a very low voice; "I'll feel like I hadn't half taken care of you if you go and take col' when you're out with me." His face was so near Pet's that she could see nothing but a strip of low, white forehead, a strip of dark hair, a fair, cleft chin. She was all in a flutter, she turned her eyes toward the receding lights of the city.

Instantly Jack exchanged glances with a fat young man whom Pet could not see. Jack's eyes were dark and exceedingly pretty; the expression in them caught the eye of a young fellow with a cigarette, who joined the fat man.

"What's the joke?" he inquired. "Jack going to get married or something?"

"Guess not," replied the fat man.

"Kind of a pretty girl?"

"I don't think so—too fat, eyes too flat. Come over here, and I'll tell you about it." He resumed—"You see, this beach girl was down theyah at the Stenographers' Union, she come from San Jose, hunting a job. I tell you who she rooms with—that little red-headed Lillian; fellows don't fool with her much! Well, she was down there, and she got awful stuck on Jack, and Jack got awful stuck on her—that's how she got

fancy grey flannels—on whose arm rapturously hung a dark-haired girl, not so tall as he—strolled around the corner of the cabin. One end of the deck was somewhat screened from observation by the boat's machinery; and thither went Pet and her beau.

Pet leaned on the railing and watched a silver streak of moonlight along the sea; the lights of Clam Beach were faintly visible; at the other end of the deck a hand softly played, "Oh, Promise Me!" His face drew nearer hers; his breath was laden with cigar smoke, and Pet loved the masculine weed. She turned her face toward his, her chin upturned, her flat, dark eyes very wide open.

At last his rough cloth sleeve brushed her arm, and then began to steal about her. It was very dark where they stood; Pet did not think anyone could see. To check the pounding of her heart, she leaned hard on the boat-rail. His arm still about her, he pointed out a skiff which was playing around the pier and slipping off into dangerous water. From commencing upon the occupants of the boat, he drifted upon the subject of courtship.

"The man gets the hand end of it every time!" asserted Jack. "Now, me—I couldn't be turned down; I never was turned down yet; I wouldn't give the gal the chance till I was mighty sure what her answer would be. I recall once I was in love with a gal up here at Ba'stow—that is, I fancied I was in love. My real opinion is, a man don't fall in love but once." An ecstatic silence ensued. "And I'm mighty glad to-night that I never offered myself to that Ba'stow girl—but I wouldn't be a single man to-day if I hadn't been built just like I am." Pet leaned backward upon his arm—it was too dazzling a thing to expect, too dazzling to expect! With his free hand he pressed hers. "But she never met me half way, she expected me to address her and then maybe be turned down—and I ain't built that way. So I'm a single man to-night. And I said to myself, afterwards, 'It's just as well; I couldn't have been happy with a gal that didn't love me enough to meet me half way.'"

There was a silence. She knew he was going to kiss her, when he drew her head back against his shoulder. His face came nearer, bringing the scent of sen- sen and cigars; their lips—met. And Pet's dazzled heart beat nearly as fast as other people's; and her head remained on his shoulder; and her fingers returned the pressure of his.

But the timbers of the pier were now visible, and the men were making ready to cable—giving about two minutes in which to become—engaged!

And suddenly Jack ceased speaking. He drew his arm away and stood looking across the water. A full minute passed in dead silence. "Did I hurt your feelings?" murmured Pet. He shook his head. "What was you going to say?" He turned his soft eyes on her; the people began to surge past them, going toward the exits; they were in the midst of a crowd.

"I'd hate to hurt anybody's feelings when I felt toward them as I do to you," said Pet, nearly crying.

"Felt—how?" asked Jack, with his lips right against her hair.

"You needn't be anxious about me turning you down," whispered Pet, laying her fingers on his sleeve.

He silently pressed her hand.

"All aboard!" Jack began to hurry her toward the exit, pushing her by the elbow through the thickest of the throng. They passed Mr Sills again, and a fat man for whom Pet had that afternoon written three letters. Jack hurried her down the plank and gallantly assisted her to the pier whence they could see the waiting trolley. Pet lifted her eyes to his as they reached the pier, and dragged a little upon his arm. She thought there might still be time.

"If we don't walk up, we won't get a seat!" said Jack; and she had to race along a strip of moonlit sand, little shells crunching beneath her feet,—not knowing if she were engaged or not.

Jack pushed her up the steps of the trolley-car, and she sank, panting, into her place beside him.

It might be supposed that Jack would avoid being recognised by Miss Sills. He did nothing of the kind; he settled himself nicely, pulled up the knees of his trousers, and gave elaborate attention to Pet. Now and then he took a stealthy glance at where Evelyn was sitting with her chin in the air. "I called on Miss Sills Sunday afternoon," remarked Jack airily to Pet.

Pet could see Evelyn's haughty little head with the face averted; and she



"Say, Pet," she finally asked, "how do they get at proposing? What do they say?"

landlady sends up to tell you; you trail down, greeted by a whiff of cigar smoke.

"I guess DeLong da-vent go to Sillses more than once in the week," remarked Lillian.

"He don't go to Sillses!" asserted Pet.

"He does go to Sillses! I heard him brag that old man Sills was awful nice to him, too."

Pet didn't say anything.

"She can have him for all of me!" said Lillian.

Pet choked on her reply.

"Oh, he'll go with any girl he thinks he can kiss!" said Lillian.

And just then Jack arrived.

In due time Pet sat beside him on the deck of one of those dinky little pleasure launches which ply about the coast. Mr Sills was aboard with Miss Evelyn; sooner or later the young lady would see Pet and her beau; Pet reclined placidly in her chair, her white hands crossed in her pink mull lap.

a job with Sills and Bannixter. So the fellows jollied him about it, and finally they kep' a jollyin', and somebody said she'd turned him down, wouldn't go with him. That made Jack hot in the collar and he offered to bet on it. Oh, they knowed she was stuck on Jack, they was just a jollyin'—but anyhow he had to take her over the bay to-night, to show 'em. He said she'd propose to him if he'd give her a chance—and I wouldn't wonder if it's so, Jack's been proposed to plenty of times—he can prove it. The girls are all kinds of fools over him."

He shifted his position and resumed—"No, Jack ain't going to marry this here girl—that don't say he ain't stuck on the girl, he is stuck on the girl. But Jack is liable to marry a girl worth money—don't let on I told you. Her old man's right in for it, too; can't be too nice to him. You know Jack's a way-up swell, goes to swell places."

He stopped abruptly. A young man in