

'Of course, you can have a cushion if you want it; for myself, I'm tired of swinging,' and in a moment she was on her feet. There was nothing languid in the movement. She stood beside him, tall, alert, good to look upon, and a glancing sunbeam turned the brown-curl softness of her hair to gold. Somewhat disarranged that hair had become by her reclining attitude in the hammock, and a daring wind lifted a loosened curl, and playfully caressed it. Madness came upon Robert. He leaned over, caught the truant curl and touched it to his lips. He saw the hot flush mount from her neck to face and brow, while in absolute hurt silence she turned away from him.

Desperately he sought for words with which to apologise, to explain. There were none in his vocabulary equal to this emergency. Then gravely and simply he offered her his love and asked her to be his wife.

Still there was silence; still her face was turned from him; her wistful questioning glance had passed to the golden wheatfields over the river, stretching to the purple mountains that were ever bravely reaching for the sky. Then breaking the tension at last, in a tree above them a bobwhite called shrilly to its mate; and she turned in glad surrender, her answer in her eyes.

Some one cleared his throat—a footstep sounded back of them, and Brown was there. He had come upon them unawares, for the Point was hidden from view until the downward slope of the hill began, but it was obvious to him that he had interrupted a *tete a tete*, which he considered was a wise and proper thing to do in this case.

'I came down to take a look at the river,' he remarked affably. 'I see you have been reviewing it also.'

'Yes, it's still here,' Rob returned disagreeably, and all three gazed with unseeing eyes at its blue waters.

'This is a fine day,' it was Brown who volunteered the highly original remark, when the silence had grown oppressive.

'You do not find it warm?' There was something of a challenge in Rob's tone; actually the nerve of this man in joining them was being excelled by him staying.

Dorothy spoke abruptly. 'I'll run on up to the house,' she said; 'I've just got time to dress for lunch. No, I don't want either of you to come with me. Stay, and look at the river,' and with a laugh hidden somewhere in her voice, she was gone.

Rob did not insist on following. It had occurred to him that Brown ought to be told the news, for he was gazing after Dorothy with a calmly possessive glance.

'Nice girl,' he remarked approvingly, as he searched his pockets for matches preparatory to lighting a cigar.

'Yes, and she's going to marry me,' Rob informed him, wasting no moments to present the news in a diplomatic fashion.

Brown's face did not change a particle. The match fell from his hand.

'Let me congratulate you,' he said, then, with apparent sincerity and he advanced to shake hands with Rob. 'I'm so glad you told me of this interesting matter, as I leave here to-night. Doubtless you had heard of my intended departure?'

Rob had not heard; indeed, Brown himself had only so decided on Rob's announcement.

'You must manage to be on hand to dance at our wedding,' the fortunate man remarked. The taunt struck home.

'Who knows what may happen?' Brown replied meaningly, 'she has not married you yet.'

But Rob turned, and walked toward the house, asking himself whether he had been rather brutal, and realising that hereafter a black-eyed Susan would bring a bitter memory to Brown and the song of a river must be ever hateful to him.

Luncheon was the usual boarding-house affair; and the length of the table was between Rob and Dorothy. When the meal was over an old lady de-

tained Rob to tell him about her son who had died at just about his age. He finally managed to escape, but Dorothy was nowhere in sight, though he searched all her favorite outdoor nooks. Coming on the landlady in the neighborhood of the dairy, he asked her if she could inform him of the girl's whereabouts.

'Why, yes, she's with your mother in the living-room,' the woman told him. 'I wonder now,' she continued, eyeing him sharply, 'if it's settled?'

Rob knew that Mrs. Moore and Dorothy were good friends. 'I don't mind telling you,' he returned smiling, 'that it is.'

'Well, I'm glad,' she said sincerely, 'Mr. Brown, they say, has more money, but in my opinion you are the better man. I do hope, though, you'll stop Miss Dorothy from working so hard.'

Rob stiffened. Was even the landlady making an ill-timed jest of his love's failing?

'What do you mean?' he questioned, and there was anger in his tones.

'My, my,' Mrs. Moore answered, 'There I've let the cat out of the bag, after promising Miss Dorothy not to tell, but I'll have to explain now. The whole family used to come out here for the summer, even when they were considered well off, but when Mr. Ingolence died he didn't leave anything except debts. Miss Dorothy was a delicate slip of a girl, then attending high school, and Mr. John was at college, with a reputation for being somewhat wild. A rich relative offered to take the girl, considering Mr. John a good-for-nothing, unequal to supporting her. The young man was furious and, of course, the brother and sister wanted to be together, so Mr. John said he'd show the relative what he could do. He and Miss Dorothy took a little flat together, and things went nicely until he discovered that his sister was writing picture plays to help out their income. He forbade her doing so—as it was up to him to support her. No Ingolence woman had ever worked before. They are great on blue blood and all that stuff, and this work he claimed was lowering—beneath her. She gave it up, but his salary as a bookkeeper was inadequate without the assistance of her earnings, so he brought home extra work to do at night, and his health failed. The doctor ordered rest and change, so they came to me, but still Mr. John is as obstinate as ever, and in his nervous state it does not do to cross him. He believes all expenses are being paid from the sale of a diamond ring of their mother's that he gave Dorothy to dispose of, but she felt it was too precious to sell if there was any other way to manage, so night after night she sits up (after he has gone to sleep) to write the stories that pay their bills. I feel sorry for her, if he discovers the truth; and, of course, she means to tell him sometime.'

'So that is the reason,' Rob said, slowly, while a very tender look came into his eyes, 'that she is tired and sleepy sometimes. I must go and find her at once.'

Entering the house, Rob paused at the open door of the living-room. Yes, Dorothy was there, seated just opposite the door, though not facing it. Over the back of her chair he could see the brown curls he loved, and one little hand hung down at her side, but close beside her stood Brown.

Was it a betrothal? So it seemed to Rob. Wild rage was in his heart. His mother had been right after all. The girl was only a flirt, unworthy of a man's affection. He sprang upstairs to his room. He would go away at once. Of course, Dorothy would claim that she had never said she would marry him, which would be quite true as far as words went, but he would not trouble her to explain, since she was that kind of a girl. From its place on the dresser Dorothy's picture, a snap-shot, smiled at him. He caught it up, wrathfully determined on destroying it, but as he looked at the brave eyes and smiling lips something seemed to choke him. Ah! the pity of it that one with eyes so true could be so false!

With other of his belongings he dropped the picture into his valise.

**Thos. B. RIORDAN, 183 Cashel Street, CHRISTCHURCH**

DENTAL SURGEON (Redpath's Buildings, Opp Union Steam Ship Co.'s Office)——PHONE 3975.