And then she added, "It's—it's my spare hair, you know. Don't you think that I did right to bring my spare hair along, dear?"

Mr. Gamboge kissed her, and said that he thought she did.

III.

THE PARLEY UNDER FALSE COLORS.

THAT Mrs. Gamboge was a trifle melancholy during the day following her entry into Mexico cannot be denied; but her gloom was of a gentle, unobtrusive sort, and by no means affected the general high spirits of the party at large.

Violet Mauve, to be sure, was disposed to consider herself personally injured by her arrival at El Paso without having had the opportunity to enjoy the enlivening experience of a train robbery in Texas. Her earnest desire had been to come down to Vera Cruz in Rowney's yacht and to join the expedition in the City of Mexico; for she was convinced that Lafitte still sailed the Gulf, and it was the highest ambition of her life to be captured by a real pirate. Rowney's diplo-

matic suggestion that their train was pretty certain to be held up and robbed by Texan desperadoes alone had reconciled her to making the journey by rail; and as this pleasant possibility had not been realized, she felt herself to be a person whose rights as a lover of spirited adventure had been trampled upon.

"Don't you think that Rowney has treated me very badly, Mr. Smith?" she asked, with a good deal of indignation, when the safe arrival of the party in El Paso had made further chances for encounters with desperadoes impossible. "He as good as promised me that we should have a train robbery—and I always have so wanted to be in one—and for all that we have had in the way of adventure, excepting the horrible risks of our lives at the railway restaurants, we might as well have been spending our time riding backward and forward between Philadelphia and New York. Oh, how I wish now I'd insisted upon coming down in the yacht! Meeting a pirate in a long black schooner

with a black flag and a skull and crossbones, and a desperately wicked crew, would have been so delightful! Don't you think so? And don't you think I have been very badly used indeed?"

"Well, in the matter of train robbers and pirates, Mrs. Mauve, I can't say that I have had enough personal experience to justify me in venturing on a very positive opinion, though I've no doubt they are great fun, just as you say. But as a Philadelphian I do know about eating"—Pem spoke with much feeling—"and I must say that on that score I think that you and all the rest of us have been treated abominably. It is not so much that the food is so wretched at these railway places, you know—for at some of them it really wasn't; but it's this horrible fashion the railway people have of treating their passengers as though they were locomotives—things that food and drink can be shovelled into and pumped into at the end of a section with a rush. But even a locomotive, I fancy," said Pem, gloomily, "would resent hav-

ing all the coal and water that is to keep it going for the next six hours poked under and into its boiler in twenty minutes; and that's just what happens to the passengers, you know. I assure you, Mrs. Mauve, I haven't had the faintest approach to a comfortable meal since we left the Missouri River; and I know that I have made a long start toward ruining my digestion for the rest of my life.

"Of course the railway officials themselves must feed in this shocking way when they are travelling on their own trains. Now, I wonder," continued Pem, meditatively, "I wonder what a railway official is like? Do you suppose, Mrs. Mauve, that he has an inside, you know, like ordinary people; or that he is some form of highly specialized life from which environment, and selection, and that sort of thing has eliminated the digestive function altogether? I wish Darwin wasn't dead; I'd write and ask him."

Violet, whose knowledge of the doctrine of evolution was somewhat limited, was

rather mystified by the turn that Pem had given to the conversation; but she accepted his suggestions in good part, and, seeing her way clear to answering a portion, at least, of his utterance, asked him, with a very fair show of sympathy, if his friend had been dead long.

Violet did not always quite understand what Pem was talking about; but she recognized the fact that he was a good deal of a piece, in his lazy, easy-going, queer ways, with her own husband, and she liked him accordingly. Indeed, the disposition of the entire party toward its Philadelphia member was of the friendliest sort. In speaking of his great-great-great-uncle, a distinguished Philadelphian of the past century, he had pleased and interested Mr. Mangan Brown by stating that this gentleman had been extensively engaged in the leather business. He had won the heart of Mrs. Gamboge by telling her—shortly after Mr. Gamboge had been giving one of his rather frequent funny little exhibitions of extreme vacillation of

purpose—that he greatly admired her husband because of his firmness of character. He commended himself to Mr. Gamboge by the thorough soundness of his rather old-fashioned views upon dinners. The young women of the party liked him because he had the knack of doing and saying just the right things at the right time; of never being in the way, and of always being amusing. And the young men liked him because he could talk shop with them intelligently, and took a lively interest—since the work was to be done by somebody else—in their several artistic projects. In short, Pem found himself, as he was in the habit of finding himself, a general favorite.

"What a pity it is, Van," Rose observed to her husband in the privacy of their chamber in the little Hotel Central in Aguas Calientes, "that your friend Mr. Smith does not get married. I'm sure that he has the making of a very good husband. Of course he wouldn't be a husband like you, dear, and his wife couldn't expect to be as happy as I

am with you. But for just the ordinary sort of husband, I'm sure that he'd be much better than the average."

"He'd be obliged to you if he heard that somewhat qualified expression of approval."

"Yes, I suppose he would," Rose answered, in good faith. "But I think that he quite deserves it, for I believe that he would make a very good husband indeed. And do you know, Van," she continued, presently, "I think that there are a great many happy marriages in the world. I mean," she added, by way of expressing herself with absolute clearness, "marriages which are happy when they seem as if they certainly mustn't be."

Van looked a little puzzled.

"Now, you know those people we have noticed sitting opposite to us in the restaurant: the nice little Mexican woman, you know, and the German-looking man in black with the big nose?"

"The man like an underdone undertaker, who drinks beer, and who never opens his mouth except to give an order to the waiter?

You don't mean to say that that is a happy marriage, do you, Rose?"

"Indeed I do, and it was because I was thinking about those people that I said that a great many marriages which didn't seem happy really were. She is a dear little woman, Van, and her life has been a regular romance. She has had such heavy sorrows; and now everything has come right, and she is as happy as the day is long."

"Why, what do you know about her, child? Has she been telling you her life's history?"

"That's just what I'm coming to. It is so interesting—just like a heroine in an old-fashioned novel. This morning—while you were gone to look at those horrid dead dried-up monks, you know—I wanted Luciano to bring me some drinking-water. I never shall get used to having chambermen instead of chambermaids, Van: I quite agree with Aunt Caledonia—I think it's horrid. Well, I went out into the gallery and clapped my hands, and when Luciano came I said *agua*, and then I pointed to my mouth. And he said

something in Spanish, and pointed to the full water-bottle on the wash-stand. 'But I want fresh water, cool water,' I said. And Luciano did not understand at all, and only grinned at me. And just then that dear little Mrs. Heintzbach came out of her room and said in such nice English—she 's lived part of her life in California, she told me—that I needed a little help. And then she made Luciano understand what I wanted. So, of course, we got into talk then, and I invited her into our room, and she came, and she was so lady-like and so sweet that we got to be friends almost immediately."

"What! you made friends with that woman in that off-hand way!" Van seemed to be a good deal horrified, and he also seemed to be inclined to burst out laughing.

"I must say that I don't see what there was very remarkable about it," Rose responded, with some dignity. "She is a very charming woman, and not a 'that woman' sort of person at all. She belongs to very nice people, I'm sure."

"Yes, I'm sure she does, too—on her husband's side, especially," Van answered, with a chuckle. "Go on, Rosekin; I'm immensely interested."

"It's about her husband that I was going to tell you. For all his silent, grave way, he is a delightful man, Van; as good and as kind as he can be. You see, when Mrs. Heintzbach was a young girl, a mere child of sixteen, her father and mother made her marry a horrid, rich Mexican, a friend of theirs, old enough to be her grandfather. He led her a perfectly shocking life. His jealousy was terrible! Why, he wouldn't even let her look out of a window on the street. He had all the front windows of their house bricked up, and never let her stir outside of the front door unless he went along with her. She told me with tears in her eyes that she knew that it was very wicked, but she couldn't help being so glad when he died that she wanted to dance! It was pretty horrible, when you come to think of it, to want to dance because your husband is

dead; but, really, considering what sort of husband he was, I don't know that I can blame her."

"And then she married the gam — Mr. Heintzbach, I mean?"

"Yes—at least in a little while. She met him soon after her husband's death. And she had a chance to get to know him then, because she was a widow and it was all right for her to see him alone and talk with him comfortably. I never shall get used to the way women are treated here, Van; young girls kept perfect prisoners, and only married women and widows and very old maids given the least bit of freedom. It's shocking.

"Well, she saw a good deal of him, and she liked him from the first; and of course he liked her. And so, as soon as he decently could, he told her that he loved her; and the end of it was that in less than a year they were married. And he has made her such a good husband, Van! He is so loving and trustful and affectionate, so unlike her first husband, she says."

Brown was chuckling softly. "Did she say anything about her husband's business?" he asked.

"No, not directly. She spoke about his going every evening to the bank, I remember. But it can't be managed like our banks," Rose added, reflectively; "for our banks are not open in the evening, are they?"

Brown continued to chuckle. "Some of them are," he answered.

"And she spoke about his being kept out very late—till two or three o'clock in the morning. That isn't like our banks, I'm sure. And they are travelling almost constantly. She says that there is not a large city in Mexico that she has not visited with her husband. Her own home is in Guanajuato, and she has promised to give us letters of introduction to her people there; they must be very important people, from the way she spoke about them. Won't it be nice, Van, to have letters to the best people in Guanajuato? I thanked her ever so much; and I asked her to come and see us when she

is in New York, and she said she certainly would. And early to-morrow morning, after she comes back from church—she is a very religious woman, and goes to church every morning, she says—we are to take a walk together in the little San Márcos park. She is very lonely in the early morning, she says, for her husband never gets up till ten o'clock. Aren't you pleased, Van, that all by myself I have made such a pleasant friend?"

Brown was silent for a moment or two, and then startled his wife by exclaiming: "Well, by Jove! Rose, you have excelled yourself! You've picked up some queer friends at one time and another, but I never thought you'd ring in this way with the wife of a Dutch gambler!"

Rose sprang up with a little gasp. "Van! What do you mean?" she cried.

But her husband, instead of answering her, burst into such fits of laughter that he fairly held his sides. "Oh, what a commentary on all the tracts of the Tract Society," he said, at last, speaking with difficulty. "Upon my

word, I'll write a tract myself and call it, 'The Mexican Gambler's Wife; or, The Happy Home'—the gambler a model of all the domestic virtues, you know, and his wife a shining example of simple, unostentatious piety! O Rose! Rose! what a treasure-house of unexpected delights you are!" And Brown threw himself on one of the little beds and laughed until the tears rolled from his eyes.

"When you are *quite* done laughing, Van," said Rose with severity, but at the same time with a decidedly frightened look, "will you please tell me just what you mean? I know, of course, that this good Mr. Heintzbach is not a gambler; but he may be something—something perhaps a little queer. Oh, have I done anything *very* silly, Van?" And Rose manifested symptoms of collapse, which were intensified as her husband enfolded her in his arms.

"It is as true as gospel, Rose," said Van, still laughing gently. "Your friend's husband is a gambler, and no mistake. His

visits to the principal cities of Mexico are strictly professional. He has come to Aguas Calientes for the fair, and just at present he is the dealer at the table here in the hotel; that's the 'bank' he goes to every evening and stays at until three o'clock the next morning. And I don't doubt that every word his wife said about his domestic virtues was the literal truth. In his way Mr. Heintzbach is a person of the utmost respectability; but—but perhaps when you see your friend again you might say something about our return to New York being a little uncertain; and I don't think I'd say anything more about their visiting us, if I were you. If Mr. Heintzbach were on Wall Street, now, it would be all right; but as his game isn't in stocks, it might be as well—yes, I'm sure quite as well—for us to fight a little shy of him. But oh, Rose, my angel, what a delightful thing this is that you have done! And what a perfect howl there will be to-morrow when I tell how you and the gambler's wife have become sworn friends!"

"Van!" cried Rose, springing away from him and facing him with every sign of energy and determination, "if you ever breathe so much as the first syllable of this to anybody I'll—I'll drown myself!"

"No, don't drown yourself, Rose. Think how draggled you'd look. Do it, if you really think you must do it, in some way that will be becoming. Why, my poor little girl!"—Rose was beginning to sob—"it's wicked to laugh at you," and Brown succeeded by an heroic effort in mastering another outburst. "After all, it was a natural enough sort of thing to do; and nothing will come of it to bother you, child, for we shall leave here day after to-morrow, and of course you'll never lay eyes on the gambler's wife again; and I'll never speak about it to a soul, I give you my word. But—but don't you think there is something just a *little* funny in it all, Rose?"

It was one of the small trials of Vandyke Brown's life that his wife never saw the amusing side of this adventure. As for Mrs.

Heintzbach, she set down to the general queerness of Americans the peculiarity of Mrs. Brown's manner when, next day, she presented to that lady the promised letters to her Guanajuato relatives. For while Rose strove hard to maintain a tone of friendly cordiality, the underlying consciousness that she did not really want to be cordial and friendly rather marred the general result. Nor was Mrs. Heintzbach ever able to formulate a satisfactory hypothesis that would account for the fact that, while the American party certainly visited Guanajuato, the letters of introduction as certainly remained unused.