

He steamed off Torquay-wards half an hour later.

I have had a pleasant chat with Mr. Willoughby, who appeared this afternoon. He looks at life and all things much as I do. He is a distinct relief from Mrs. MacGill, a distinct relief; and though he has made no special reputation as yet, he is bound to succeed, for he has decided talent.

VIII

Mrs. MacGill

MY words have taken effect; it is often disagreeable to have to give unasked advice, but one should always do it. Sir Archibald has gone. It is a pleasant thought that any simple words of mine may have been the means of saving the young man from that designing person.

She conceals her disappointment as well as she can, and is doing her best to look as if nothing had happened in one way or another; but I can see below the surface of that new hat. She has taken her mother off to Torquay for a few days. It is a large town seemingly, though I have heard that there are no men there; but as the guide-book says the population is twenty-five thousand, that is probably an exaggeration. However, Miss Pomeroy won't stay long in Torquay in that

case, but will return to New York, where she would fain make us believe they are as plentiful as in a harem. They cannot all be millionaires at least, for she says that many American writers live on what they make by their books.

Cecilia would like to stay on here, I think. She has been up to the top of a quarry looking at gorse along with that so-called artist, Mr. Willoughby.

Miss Pomeroy has infected her, I am afraid, and the bad example is telling, even at that age.

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 We have had several nice quiet days here alone since the Pomeroy's left. There has scarcely been a sound in the hotel, except when the wind pounces upon the window frames in the sudden annoying way that it has here. Twice I have got up, to endeavour to fasten the window, and each time have lost a toothbrush. It shakes my nerves completely when the windows clatter suddenly

through the night. Yesterday as we sat in the dining-room I heard a crunching noise.

"Can that be another motor?" I exclaimed. "I hope not. It is a class of people I do not wish to associate with any further."

"It is a motor," called Cecilia, who sat next the window. "A scarlet motor, too."

In another moment the door opened, and Sir Archibald Maxwell Mackenzie came in.

"Dear me, Sir Archibald," said I, "what has brought you back again so soon? You will have a nice quiet time here now, for we are the only people in the hotel."

He seemed strangely put out and unlike himself, and passed my chair without even replying to my speech. I could see that he was thoroughly unnerved, very much in the same state that I was when we came back from that terrible drive. It is no wonder; motoring must tell on the strongest nerves in time.

Later in the day Cecilia came in smiling.

"Sir Archibald has gone away again," she said. "He has not made a long stay this time!"

"No," I observed, "that sort of nervous excitement grows on people. I know myself that if I once begin to get excited over a bazaar, for instance, I get off my sleep, and worn out in no time. I suppose he has rushed off farther into the moor."

"He has gone to Torquay," remarked Cecilia, "quite an easy run from here."

I was much annoyed. It seemed probable that he would meet Miss Pomeroy again there, though possible that among twenty-five thousand women he might fail to recognize her. I think Cecilia and I must take a day or two at Torquay on our way home. It would soothe me after this mountain air and the desolation of Grey Tor, and I could get some fresh bead trimming for my velvet mantle, which has been much destroyed by all that I have come through in this place. Our packing will be very easily done. Poor

Mr. MacGill used always to say, in his playful manner, that he could stand anything except a woman's luggage, which is the reason that I always try to travel with as little as possible. So there will be only our two large boxes and the holdall and my black bag and the split cane basket and the Holland umbrella-case, with two straps of rugs and the small brown box, and the two hat boxes, and a basket with some food. Miss Pomeroy's boxes were like arks. I'm sure if she succeeds in her design, I pity the man that has to take them back to Scotland; they would never go in the motor. I think Grey-toria and the pony chaise will manage all our little things quite nicely. She seems the quietest animal in the stables, so I must just trust myself in it once more.

There goes Cecilia again, walking on the gravel at the door with that Mr. Willoughby. We must certainly leave to-morrow morning.

One affair such as that of Miss Pomeroy

and Sir Archibald is enough for me to endure without being witness of another.

One would suppose common modesty would prevent a young gentleman and lady from indulging in a love-affair whilst inhabiting an ordinary country inn; but there is no limit to the boldness of these Americans. I sometimes think it is a pity that they were discovered, for they have been a bad example to more retiring and respectable nations.

Sir Archibald Maxwell Mackenzie

TORQUAY

THAT dreary week of uncertainty in London seemed more foolish than ever, when Johnson and I struck the familiar road from Stoke Babbage to the moor. What a silly ass I was, I thought, to kick my heels at the Carleton all those tiresome days when I might have been with Virginia!

It all looked exactly the same as we came up the hill from the little town, — the bare walls of the hotel, Grey Tor with a row of tourists on the top, moor ponies feeding all over the place, with their tiny foals running after them. It was a lovely, cloudless day, with "blue distances" enough to please all the artists in creation, and the hot air quivered over the heath as I've seen it do at home on an August afternoon. I seemed to hear Virginia's voice already, to see her

standing on the step in one of her pretty new frocks, and my spirits went up with a bound. But when I got to the door there was no one there. I went into the dining-room; the tables were changed; the one at which we all used to sit together in the window was pushed into the middle of the room. At a small table on the side were seated Mrs. MacGill and Miss Evesham, while the Exeter artist was at another one not far off. Miss Evesham and he seemed to be having a pretty lively conversation, while Mrs. MacGill looked thoroughly out of it and decidedly sulky.

"What!" cried Miss Evesham, seeing me, "You are back, Sir Archibald! Had London no attractions?"

"I hate town in the heat," I replied.

Of course I wanted to ask where the Pomeroy's were, but could n't bring myself to do it, — especially before Mrs. MacGill. I had pointedly ignored her, and had every intention of continuing to do so. After lunch, at

the bureau, I found that the Pomeroy's had left some days ago. I could n't bring myself to ask for their address, with about a dozen people listening, so I had to hang about and wait for a chance of seeing Miss Evesham alone. It was after dinner before I got it. I could see that she was laughing at me, under the rose — confound her impudence! — and that she seemed to take a kind of pleasure in keeping me waiting. She and the artist chap appeared to be as thick as thieves, but at last she sent him off and began teasing me in her quiet way.

"Are you a good sailor, Sir Archibald?" she asked irrelevantly.

"Not particularly. Why?" was my reply.

"The Atlantic is a wide ocean, and generally very rough, I have heard," said she, with a queer look at my face.

"Oh!" cried I involuntarily. "Have they crossed?"

She burst out laughing.

"You're fairly caught!" she said. "Am I supposed to know who 'they' are?"

Then of course I had to let on. I could see Miss Evesham knew all about it, though she did not say much, being more inclined to laugh; I'm sure I don't know why. The Pomeroy's had gone to Torquay, but she either could not or would not tell me their address, or how long they were going to stay, or where they were going next.

"Torquay is a big place," I said, discouraged, "all hotels and lodgings. How the deuce shall I find them?"

"Oh," she replied coolly, "people generally find what they want very much — if they are really in earnest."

With that she nodded me good-night, still laughing. I did not see her again, for of course I made an early morning start for Torquay next day.

And the devil of a hunt I had, when I got there! What silly idiots women are! (Of course I mean Miss Evesham.) There are

about one hundred hotels, three hundred boarding-houses, and one thousand furnished apartments in Torquay, and search as I might, I could not find the Pomeroy's name on any of their lists, or discover a trace of them anywhere. It was a broiling hot day, the sun beat down without mercy, and the glare beat up from the beastly white roads and pavements till I was nearly blind. I was never so nearly used up in my life as at the end of that day, and it was not only with bodily fatigue, but with utter and most cruel disappointment; for I was convinced that the Pomeroy's had left Torquay, and that, like an utter fool, I had missed my only chance of being happy with a woman.

At last between six and seven of the evening, I found myself sitting on the edge of a little sort of wood, below a garden overhanging the sea. The trees were cut away, here and there, to show the view, and to the right you looked along the coast and saw some red rocks and a green headland

jutting out into the water. It was sunset; I was watching a little yawl in full sail slipping round the headland, and when it was out of sight, I looked at the headland itself. There was one figure on the piece of green downs at the top, — a tall, slight figure, a woman's, all in white, with a red parasol.

My heart jumped into my throat. I knew it was Virginia. There was a piece of white scarf or veil floating out behind her as she walked, and there is no woman in the world but Virginia who stands like that or wears a scarf like that! — Oh! Virginia, so dear and so distant, how, how could I reach her, not having the wings of a bird? Long before I could get there she would be gone, — lost again in that howling wilderness of hotels and lodging-houses.

A man came along the path where I was standing.

“How do you get to that place?” I inquired, pointing to the headland, “and what is it called?”

“It's called Daddy Hole Plain,” said the man, “and you get there by the road. I can't direct you from here; you must inquire as you go along.”

“Is there no short cut?” I inquired impatiently.

“Not unless you can swim or fly!” said the man, with a grin.

I never wished before to be a bird or a fish; mere feet seemed a most inadequate means of getting me to Virginia. But I set off, very nearly at a run: The wrong turns that I took, the hills that I went up, the hills that I went down, the people that I asked, the wrong directions they gave me, — they seemed quite innumerable. Daddy Hole Plain was about as difficult to get to as Heaven, and when I got there the angel would be flown!

But she was n't. . . . For when at last I saw before me the bit of green downs with the seats facing the bay, the white figure was there. Virginia was sitting looking out

Virginia Pomeroy

TORQUAY, SOUTH DEVON

BELLA VISTA HOTEL

June, 19—

IF he had come the next day, or even the same week, he would have had a cold welcome, for on the whole I did not understand, nor did I fancy, his methods.

But I had had time to think, time to talk it over with mamma, time to write Breck Calhoun that there was no use in our discussing the old subject, for I feared, though I was not absolutely sure, that there was "some one else." Always dear old Breck has finished by saying, "Jinny, there is no one else?" And there never was till now.

Now there is not only some one else, but there is also in very truth "no one else" who counts! All is absolutely different from, and yet precisely like, everything that I have imagined ever since the foundation of the

earth. In love, he is, what all good men and good women ought to be, something quite unlike his former self, or the outer self he shows to the world. He has lost himself and found himself again in me, and I have gone through the same mysterious operation. He has place for no troublesome uncertainty of mind now, although mamma and I have decreed a year of waiting in which we shall have ample time to change if we choose. But we shall not choose; we were made for each other, as we have both known ever since the day we had luncheon together at The Mug o' Cider in Little Widger.

What chapters, what books, we talked sitting in the gorse bushes on Daddy Hole Plain! In the evening of my days I shall doubtless be glad that I climbed those heights, remembering that Archibald had to exert himself somewhat arduously in order to ask me to marry him. I wanted to be alone and feast my eyes on the dazzling blue of the sea, one broad expanse of sapphire,

stretching off, off, into eternity; a blue all be-diamonded with sunlit sparkles; a blue touched with foam-flecks wherever it broke on the rocks or the islets. Granted that any view has charms when one is young and in love, the view from Daddy Hole Plain would inspire an octogenarian, or even a misogynist.

"It was in Exeter we really met, you remember?" I reminded Archibald.

"I am not likely to forget it."

"Do you chance to know the motto that your virgin queen, Elizabeth, bestowed upon Exeter? It was *Semper fidelis*."

"That's a good omen, is n't it," he said. "You always do find out the cleverest things, Virginia! How am I ever to keep up with you?"

"Don't try!" I answered, quite too happy to be anything but vainglorious. "Gaze at me on my superior intellectual height, and when I meet your admiring eyes you can trust me to remember that though you are voluntarily standing on a step below, your

head is higher than mine after all! Archibald, do you know what I am to give you for a wedding present?"

"No," he answered gravely; "is it your mother?"

"No, I am going to lend mamma to Miss Evesham for a little, until her turn comes, — dear old Cecilia!"

"Do you think it will ever come?"

"It's only just round the corner; Cupid is even now sharpening his arrows and painting little pictures on the shafts."

"Oh, I see! Well, is it Greytoria? for I don't mind saying that I'm quite ready to give her a stall in my stables at Kindarroch; though of all the ill-conducted and lazy little brutes" —

"Be careful, Archibald," I exclaimed warningly, "you owe some few hours of martyrdom, but many a debt of gratitude, to that same Greytoria."

"I remember only one," he said, looking at me in a very embarrassing way, "and by

George, she cut that one short! But I give it up — the wedding present; I can't guess, and I don't care specially, so long as you come along with it."

"I shall come with it, and in it, if the faithful Johnson will steer me, — it's going to be a new motor!"

"Well, you owe it to me, Virginia!" he cried with enthusiasm, "for mine is n't worth a brass farthing at this moment. I knew before I had been at Grey Tor twenty-four hours that it was going to be knocked into smithereens, but I had n't the pluck to take it or myself out of harm's way. Now we are both done for!"

"Which do you prefer?" I asked, "your old motor or me?"

"You, with a new one," he answered unblushingly. "We'll take our wedding journey in it, shall we? Early this autumn would be a good time."

"And mamma and Cecilia and Mrs. MacGill can follow behind with Greytoria."

“I don't mind their trying to follow,” Archibald responded genially, as he lighted his pipe, “so long as they never catch up; and they never will — not with that little brute!”

