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trembled in her eyes. Then he knew. The lace around her white neck was fastened with a little gold brooch bearing a four-leafed shamrock in emeralds. He looked at her with a profound reverence, and caught her by the shoulders.

"My dear," he murmured, "you are very like your mother."

"I am glad," she said, and kissed him.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HOUSE THAT STOOD UPON A
ROCK

A WEEK passed. In the fickle memory of the outer world the story of the Gulf Rock lighthouse was becoming mellow with age. Men now talked of war in Africa, of the Yellow Peril, of some baccarat squabble in a West-end club. But its vitality lingered in Penzance. There were side issues which Pyne's device had kept from the public ken, but which the town's folk pondered. Lady Margaret Stanhope, obeying her son's behests, tantalized her friends by smiling serenely and telling them nothing when they pestered her with questions. That is to say, she spoke not one word about the lady who was being nursed back to health in the lighthouse-keeper's cottage, but filled their souls with bitterness when she hinted at marvels concerning Constance and Enid.

In such a small place, where every man's affairs are canvassed by his neighbors, it was impossible to prevent an atmosphere of mystery from clinging to Mrs. Vansittart. Again, the gossips were greatly concerned about Enid. For a young woman "in her position"

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to be engaged to an officer in the Royal Navy and admitted to the sacred ranks of the aristocracy was a wonderful thing in itself. But that she should be on open terms of the greatest intimacy not alone with the elderly Mr. Traill, but with his good-looking nephew, even calling the latter "Charlie" and treating him as a near relative, was an amazing circumstance only surpassed by the complacency with which Lady Margaret and her son regarded it.

The actors in this comedy seemed to be sublimely indifferent to public opinion. That was the worst of it. Enid was escorted about the town by each and all of the men at all hours. Now she was at the hospital, cheering Bates and Jackson or the injured people from the wreck, now arranging for the departure of some of the poorer survivors when they were able to travel, now flitting over to Marazion to see Jim Spence, and once actually visiting Mr. Jones, the inn-keeper.

At last a part of the secret eked out. Enid went with her father to ask how Mr. Emmett, the sick chief officer, was getting on. They found him smoking in the front garden of the house in which Brand had lodged him.

He started when he saw them approaching, and his weather-beaten face wore the puzzled look with which he regarded Enid one night on the lighthouse stairs.

Traill noticed the sailor's covert glances at Enid, so he said:

"By the way, Mr. Emmett, you were on the *Britannic*

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when my wife and I, her sister, and two children, came to England before the *Esmeralda* was lost?"

"Yes, sir." He paused.

During many an Atlantic crossing he and Mr. Traill had talked of that last joyous journey, when he, a boy who had just joined the service, sat at their table, as was the custom of junior officers in those years.

Mr. Traill smiled. He knew what was in the other man's mind.

"Do you see a likeness in this young lady to anyone you have ever known?" he asked.

"Well, sir, I hope it will not hurt your feelings, and it's a good many years ago now, but I could have sworn — well, I must out with it. She is the living image of your wife."

"Indeed, that cannot hurt my feelings, as she is her daughter."

"Her daughter! Your daughter!" gasped Emmett.

A small serving-maid, with the ears of a rabbit, was listening spell-bound at the open window. Here, indeed, was a choice tit-bit for the milkman, and the postman, and the butcher's and grocer's boys. From this lower current the stream of talk flowed upwards until it reached the august drawing-room of Mrs. Taylor-Smith.

She drove in frantic haste to Lady Margaret's villa, and fired questions broadside.

"Oh, yes," said Jack's mother, suavely. "It is quite true. Of course I have known it from the first. According to present arrangements the marriage will take

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place in the spring. Enid's marriage settlement will be nearly quarter of a million."

Like most women, she loved that word. A million, even in fractions, is so glib, yet so unattainable.

The only person who was slightly dissatisfied with the progress of events was Pyne. Constance never appeared. She shared with Mrs. Sheppard the care of her mother. Enid, blithe and guileless in the public eye, did the house-keeping and represented the household.

Brand, too, save for a couple of visits to the hotel, remained invisible. He did not mention Mrs. Vansittart's name. He was pale and worn, a man at war with himself. The young Philadelphian — for Pyne's family home was in the Quaker City, though his estate lay principally in New York — was not pleased by the slight signs perceptible behind the screen of Brand's reserve.

"Constance takes after her father," he told himself. "There may be trouble about her mother. In the scurry I may get left. I must think this out."

At last came a day of warm sunshine, when Enid announced that the invalid, by the doctor's orders, was carried downstairs.

"Has Mr. Brand seen her yet?" asked Pyne.

"No," replied Enid, with a little cloud on her fair face. "He never mentions her. And how we wish he would. He is suffering, but keeps silent, and neither Constance nor I can make any suggestion."

"But what will be the outcome?"

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"How can I tell? That night — after we left the hotel — he told us the story of his married life. It did not seem to be utterly impossible to straighten matters, but we knew nothing of her career during so many years. Was she married again? I have asked my father. He believes she was, but is not certain."

"Father" was Mr. Traill; Brand remained "dad." Thus did Enid solve the difficulty.

"Is she aware that Constance knows she is her mother?"

"We think so. Indeed, we are sure. She has been so ill, and is yet so fragile, that we dare not excite her in the least degree. So Constance has been very careful, but every look, every syllable, shows that her mother is in no doubt on that point."

"It's a pretty hard nut to crack," said Pyne. He blew cigar smoke into rings. Seemingly the operation aided reflection.

"Say, Enid," he went on. "If the weather is fine tomorrow, do you think Connie would come out for a drive?"

"I don't know. Certainly she needs some fresh air. What between her anxiety and her mother's illness, they are beginning to look like sisters."

"Just mention to Connie, in her father's presence, that if the sun shines at eleven, I will be along in a dog-cart. Mrs. Vansittart will be downstairs by that time?"

"Yes."

"And if Connie comes out with me, you just find an

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errand in town. Rope Jack into the scheme, or any old dodge of that sort. Take care Mr. Brand knows of it. By the way, send Mrs. Sheppard out too."

"What in the world —"

"You're just too pretty to think hard, Enid. It causes wrinkles. Do as I ask, there's a good girl."

Enid was delighted to find that Brand strongly supported the suggestion that Constance should take the drive. Pyne, sharp on time, drew up a smart pony in front of the cottage, and did not twitch a muscle when Constance, veiled and gloved, ran down the pathway.

"Excuse me getting down," said Pyne. "I dispensed with a groom. I guess you know the roads round here."

She climbed to the seat beside him.

"It is very good of you to take this trouble," she said, and when he looked at her a slight color was visible through the veil.

"How is your mother?" he asked, abruptly.

He felt, rather than saw, her start of surprise.

She did not expect the relationship to be acknowledged with such sudden candor.

"She is much better," she assured him.

"That's all right," he announced, as if a load were off his mind. And then, somewhat to her mystification, he entertained her with the news.

Elsie and Mamie had quitted Penzance the previous evening, an aunt having traveled from Boston as soon as the first tidings of the wreck reached her.

"She was a young, nice-looking aunt, too," he said.

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cheerfully. "And I was powerful fond of those two kiddies."

"The association of ideas might prove helpful," she suggested, with a touch of her old manner.

"That is what struck Elsie," he admitted. "She said she didn't know why I couldn't marry Aunt Louisa right off, and then we could all live together sociably."

"Oh! And what did the lady say?"

"She thought it was a great joke, until I said that unfortunately I had made other arrangements. Then she guessed her nieces had got a bit out of hand."

"Have you seen the poor fellow whose arm was broken? Enid has not had a moment to give me details of events since we landed."

From that point their conversation dealt with generalities. Soon the girl perceived his intent. His sole desire was to place her at her ease, to make her realize that no matter what troubles life held they could be vanquished if faced with a smile. She responded to his mood, and enlivened the drive with comments on the people they met and the houses and villages they passed. For two hours the world went well because it was forgotten.

Enid, the conspirator, waited until the pair in the dog-cart were out of sight. Then she went to the little room at the back of the cottage where Brand pretended to be busily engaged in compiling a scientific account of his auriscope.

"I am going out, dad," she said, trying to appear unconcerned.

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"All right," he answered, laying down his pipe.

"I only came to tell you because Mrs. Sheppard is out, too."

Obviously Enid was determined that if Pyne's calculations were worth anything they should have fair play.

"Oh," he commented sharply, "but the maid is in?"

"Yes. She is such a stupid girl in some things. If — if our guest rings you will hear her. Would you mind asking Mary what it is in case she gets muddled?"

He glanced at her. She was pulling on her gloves, and vastly bothered by a refractory button.

"If I hear the bell, I will inquire," he said, and she escaped, feeling quite wicked.

When he was alone, he did not resume his task. In the next room, separated from him only by a brick wall, was his wife. A wall! Why should there always be a wall between them? It was not of his building. Had she made it impassable during the long years? And what would be the outcome, now that Constance was in daily communion with her mother? The doctor, in kindly ignorance, had told him that Mrs. Vansittart was convalescent and would be able to travel in a few days. In response to a question, the doctor added that the lady herself asked when she might be moved.

What was her plan? Mr. Traill, that day, had written him a sympathetic letter, mentioning the fact that Mrs. Vansittart had voluntarily rescinded her promise to marry him, and, indeed, judged by the light of present knowledge, had determined on that course since she first knew that her former husband was living.

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Suddenly Brand pushed back his chair from the desk at which he sat.

"The young dog!" he growled. He had in fact followed the exact mental process which Pyne mapped out for him. The letter, the drive, Mrs. Sheppard's absence, Enid's uneasy wriggling at the door, were all parts of an ordered plan. He was to be given an opportunity of seeing his wife and disentangling the twisted strands of twenty years. He rose impatiently, and paced the room, quietly withal, lest the woman in the next room should hear him. A decision had been forced on him. He could shirk it no longer.

"Pyne has contrived this," he muttered. "He thinks he can see more clearly into the future than a man twice his age. Enid is in the plot, too. And Connie! No, not Connie. Dear heart! She is worn with anxiety, yet she has never once mentioned her mother to me since she carried her into the house like an ailing child."

Back and forth he walked, wrestling with the problem. See his wife he must, and before she quitted Cornwall. Was it advisable, in her present state of health, to take her by surprise? Pyne evidently thought so. And the doctor! Good Heavens! was the doctor in the thing, too?

At last, he tugged at the bell.

"Mary," he said, "ask Mrs. Vansittart if she feels able to see Mr. Brand."

There; it was done.

Mary, rosy-cheeked and soft of speech, dreading only

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Mrs. Sheppard's matronly eye, knocked at the door of the sitting-room. He heard her deliver his message. There was no audible answer. He was lamenting his folly, hoping against hope that no ill results might be forthcoming to the invalid thus taken by surprise, when he caught Mary's formal "Yes'm," and the girl came to him.

"Please, sir," she said, "the lady says she is anxious to see you."

He walked firmly to the door, opened it and entered. He had made up his mind what to say and how to say it. It would be best to ask his wife to discuss matters in a friendly spirit, and, for their daughter's sake, agree to some arrangement whereby Constance should see her occasionally. There need be no tears, no recriminations, no painful raking through the dust-heaps of the vanished years. The passion, the agony, of the old days was dead. Their secret had been well kept. It was known only to those whom they could trust, and they might part without heart-burnings, whilst Constance would be spared the suffering of knowing that her mother and she were separated forever.

These things were well ordered in his brain when he looked at his wife. She was seated near the window, and her beautiful eyes, brilliant as ever, were fixed on his with harrowing intensity. They shone with the dumb pain of a wounded animal.

He walked towards her and held out his hand. Her illness had brought out certain resemblances to Constance. She looked younger, as some women do look

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after illness. Surely he could not, even had he harbored the thought, use cruel words to this wan, stricken woman, the wife whom he had loved and for whom he had suffered.

"Nanette," he said, with utmost gentleness, "do not be distressed. Indeed, there is no reason why our meeting should be painful. It is better that we should have a quiet talk than that we should part again in anger and bitterness."

She caught his hand in both of hers. Still she said nothing. Her large eyes gazed up at him as if she sought to read in his face the thoughts he might not utter, the memories he might not recall. Her lips distended. He saw her mouth twitching at the corners.

"Nanette," he said again, though his voice was not well under control, and something rose in his throat and stifled him. "I appeal to you not to give way to — to emotion. You may — become ill again — and I would never forgive myself."

Still clinging to his hand, she sank on her knees by his side. But there was no wild burst of tears; her sorrow was too deep for such kindly aid.

"Stephen," she whispered faintly, "I cannot ask you to forget, but you have spoken of forgiveness. Can you forgive?"

He bent over her and would have raised her; she clung to him with such energy that he desisted.

"My poor wife!" he murmured, "who am I that I should deny that which I hope to obtain from my Creator."