

"Can you sing the final duet in 'La Favorita' with Miss Brazeale ?-Fernando's part? If you can, your presence behind the scenes is greatly desir-

He rose and followed the messenger. Bert met him.
"Well?" he said.

"I can sing the part," 'Vane answer-l. "Introduce me to Miss Brazeale." Irma sat in the window, talking to a young man. On their way to her they had to pass Miss Gray. Bert presented his friend. The heiress in her long, pink gown swept him a little haughty

"I have met Miss Gray before," Vane said, holding out his hand to her. She "A summer acquaintance," she said.

"Merely a summer acquaintance," he answered. "I was one of the summer insects that danced in the light of Miss Gray's smile. Fortunately I got

Irma started up as she heard his voice, and looked towards him. He turned his head and came on to where she was sitting. She knit her fingers together until they were purple in the effort to restrain her emotion. For she knew him. She knew him to be the man she had seen by the flash of lightning on the bank of the bayou—the man whose boat she had taken—the man who knew she had killed Solon Vanhorn, and knew that she had not been drowned.

Her head swam dizzily. Would he know her? His eyes were upon her, but they held no look of recognition. His face gave no sign. They talked of the duet. "Yes," he said, "he thought he could take Fernando's part though he had not sung it in part, though he had not sung it in Presently Irma had to chant the Hindoo priestess' prayer in a scene representing the burning of an Indian widow. After which came the casket scene from the "Merchant of Venice"; and then Irma appeared again in some large tableaux. Lastly, she sang the with a passion and abandon that made even Bert Fontenoy wonder. She inspired Fernando, and he too sang with fervor. A storm of applause showed how well the audience appreciated the duet. Vane quickly gathered up the bouquets and wreaths and led Irma off the stage, seating her in a retired

"It was a success," he said, bending close to her. "I wondered at my own audacity, but I got over ground somenow. And you-you were superb; but wonder they did not give you some of these delicious flowers" (burying his Grecian nose in a mass of fragrant 'when you played 'Judith.' had played it in real life-Irma Weir. She looked up at him quickly. Her wild terror, that he glanced around in dread lest some one had noticed her.

"Come out with me into the fresh he said, 'the grounds are lovely." He did not want for her to give her consent. He drew her hand through his arm, folded a mantle around her and led her out by a side exit into the open air. Miss Gray looked after them with a clouding face. They were outthey were walking along side by side and still he did not speak. She could not speak. At last he said :-"When is Miss Gray and her cousin to be married?' 'in a few weeks," Irma answered

huskily.
"If the Fates do not interfere. There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," he answered. "The Fates have their own way with us some

"So I feel to-night," she said. "I appear to you as a kind of fate, I know. You thought I did not know you. I did not until I saw you as 'Ju-It was your very look—the look

'Hush!" she cried. "For God's sake, do not speak of it! But why do I ask it? Of course you will tell! Of course you will betray me to these people-

He was stient a moment. Then he said:—"One never knows what one will do. A slight circumstance will turn a purpose. We will talk all this over to-morrow. Till then let us not think of it-let us not speak of it."

He began to talk on other subjects. He spoke of the stage. "You would make a fine tragic actress. Have you never thought of going upon the stage?" he asked Irma.
"No." she said, "I have formed no idea of what I will do with myself, I have not seemed to belong to myself, but to some power outside my own

Tell me how you came here under the name you bear. How came these people to believe you to be——?" "I will tell you to-morrow when we have our talk. I am all unnerved tonight, she said. "See, everyone has gone. The last carriage has driven away. Let us go in."

CHAPTER VII.

They went into the drawing-room, where the family alone were seated. Belle was exulting over the success of the entertainment. Everything had the entertainment. Everything had gone off so well and so much money had been taken in. Miss Gray, all muffled in a pink-and-white nubia, sat pouting in a corner. Vane went and sat on a low seat almost at her feet and began talking to her. At first she hardly noticed him, but it was not long before she was listening to him with interest. Perhaps his tone was the most fascinating thing about him. It had tones of imperiousness, but also of caressing. It could be very sweet and persuasive.

"It is late. It is time you were all in your beds," said Mr. Fontenoy, coming to the door of the room "I move you all bid each other good-night."

Vane rose from his seat beside Miss Gray, and advanced to the middle of

"Before we separate for the night," he said, "now that we are all here together, I have something to say."

Irma turned cold. He had looked at
he snow.

friends and strip me of the mask I

He still looked at her. He came to her side, and took her hand.
"I wish," he said, "before you all to claim a long-neglected sister, and to beg her forgiveness for this neglect." "Aimee Brazeale your sister!" cried

a chorus of voices.
"Yes: Almee Erazeale is my sister.
Do you not remember, Mrs. Fontenoy,
that when my mother left her husband in that when my mother left her husband in that temporary aberration of mind and went to her sister, Mrs. Vane, in Texas, that she had two children? Little Almee was but a few months old, but the boy Harold was several years of age. My old Aunt Vane never liked my fether and when my methor liked my father, and when my mother returned to him she persuaded her to

leave me with her. She adopted me. She gave me her name. She made me promise to have nothing to do with my father—a promise I bitterly regret keeping, since it was not only unfilial and deprived me of a father's blessing. but it has kept me from the love and companionship of a sister so sweet as this. If you will permit me I will try to make amends by future love and devotion for my neglect in the past."

As he spoke he drew Irma to him.

She was too bewildered to resist. A silence of profound surprise had fallen upon the company. Mrs. Fontenoy was first to speak.

"I do remember all you have recalled, Mr. Vane," she said, "or Harold, if you will let me call you so. It is a pity that your prejudiced aunt kept you from knowing your good father and your sister. I am glad that even at this late hour you have resolved to make amends to Aimee by your future devotion. I am sure she will appreciate your affection and respond to it."
"I am not so sure," Harold said,
turning to Irma. "She does not look

as though she would forgive me. There are but two of us in the world, my I have done wrong, I know but I pledge you now a brother's true affection; will you not give me your confidence and a little of your love in

His look was tender, his voice plead ing, the smile on his beautiful mouth was winning as a child's. Irma was bewildered. Almost she felt as though this was reality—as though here was a true brother pleading for her love who had always so longed for a brother, she who felt as though a bro-ther's love would be so sweet a shelter. She let him put his arms around her, draw her to him and press a kiss upon her lips.

That kiss awoke her. It was not the kiss of brotherly love. It tingled through all her frame—the kiss of pas-

She shrank from him. 'I cannot yet feel that he is my brother," she said, in answer to a reproachful exclamation from Mrs. Fontenoy. They came around her with congratulations-Dr. John, Bert, Mr. Fontenoy—even Miss Gray, who indeed seemed delighted at the revelation, and kissed Irma so warmly that it fill-

She forced herself to smile, but she could say nothing. She stood there with Harold holding her hand, feeling. "this puts the seal on my deception," and unable to frame a word with her

Dr. John came to her aid. "We must not keep you a moment longer," he said. "Your eyes are shining and you are as white as your dress. You have had too much excitement this evening. Say good-night to us

and go to bed at once."
She obeyed him gladly. She fled calm her. She sat down and pressed er hands to her burning forehead. She feit as though she were wandering in nome wild maze. What did this new turn in her life mean? Why had Harold Vane claimed her as his sister? What was his motive? What new lications would this bring into her life? His kiss burned on her lips.

There must be no more of this. she said to herself. "In our talk tomorrow he must understand that he take no more such privileges untery he is! He will explain himself to-morrow he said. I must wait until

The clock was striking two when she laid her head upon her pillow. deep sleep that was one of the few blessings vouchsafed her fell upon her, and she lay like a breathing statue until the morning sun awoke her. As she dressed herself she saw the flush of excitement in her cheek. She felt like She went down to the breakfast room under this strain, but struggling for self-control. Harold Vane stood at the turned around when he heard her step and came to meet her. He would have kissed her, but a look in her warned him not to attempt it. He was cool and self-possessed, and as she looked at him and saw that subtle expression in his dark eyes, she said to

"Yes; he has some motive in what He had a spray of pale pink roses in his hand. Its half-opened buds and leaves glistened with dew. A bud to match those on the spray was pinned

to the lapel of his coat. 'We are all here but Fannie Gray,' Mrs. Fontenoy said. "She is always late to breakfast, and we never wait

They sat down to the table. Miss ray's vacant place was almost opposite Vane's. He quietly laid the rose beside her plate-so quietly that no one noticed it but Irma, who was watching his movements to get some clue to his motives. Miss Gray came in presently, looking a little flushed and excited in her blue cashmere morning dress. She sat down; she saw the rose, and her quick eye went round the table. She saw the bud upon Harold's coat, and the pink deepened in her cheeks. He looked cool and unconscious. No word was said, but after breakfast Irma saw the rose pinned under Fannie's delicate throat. Miss Gray lingered in the hall, and her eyes wandered away from Dr. John, who was saying some good-bye words, to where Vane stood beside Irma. But he did not look at her. He said to Irma :-

"We will walk in the grounds and have the promised talk. I have much to say to you."
She put on a broad walking hat, and went out with him.

They went along the winding walks, and he talked of the beauty of the morning and the blossomy shrubbery, shining with dew, until they came to what the shaded with

summer-house, shaded with African honeysuckle.

"Let us sit in here," he said and placed her on the rustic seat inside.

He seated himself beside her. He would have put his arms around her, would have put his arms around her, but she drew away from him, with the look that had repelled him before.
"Did ever a fellow have a sister so sweet and so cold?" he said, with his half smile. "You will not always treat me so, my Ice-cream. I shall not permit it."

mit it."

"You know well I am not your sister. You have no right to take these privileges. Why do you claim me as your sister, when you know it was false?"

"Tell me first, my princess, why I find you here as Aimee Brazeale—Aimee Brazeale, who was my sister?"

"I will tell you how it happened. It came about in a strange, fateful way. I got on the boat in which your sister was ill with the yellow fever. None of the passengers knew it. No one went near her; she suffered for attention. They put me in the room with her at my request. I nursed her until she died. In her delirium she raved of you. She grew calm after the terrible black vomit. She gave me her clothes—her trunk with her name upon it. She told me where she was going, and black vomit. She gave me her clothes
—her trunk with her name upon it.
She told me where she was going, and

what she had been engaged to do. She made me promise to write to these people, and tell them why she had not come. I concluded to stop here and not come. I concluded to stop here and see them. I had no destination. I was just adrift. I stopped at the hotel in town. Mrs. Fontenor came. She took me to be Aimee Brazeale. They all welcomed me as Aimee Brazeale. And I—I did not undeceile them. The temptation was too strong to shelter myself—fugitive that I was—under an expect of the strong to shelter myself—fugitive that I was—under an expect of the strong to shelter myself—fugitive that I was—under an expect of the strong to shelter myself—fugitive that I was—under an expect of the strong to shelter myself—fugitive that I was—under an expect of the strong to shelter the strong to shelter the strong that I was—under an expect of the strong to shelter the strong that I was—under an expect of the strong to shelter the strong that I was—under an expect of the strong that I was—under an expect of the strong that I was not the strong that I myself—fugitive that I was—under another's name and identity, and to find home and rest and kindness, when I

had looked to be only a wanderer."
"Who could blame you?" Vane said,
his hand closing softly over hers that
lay on her knee. "Who could blame
you, poor girl? And you did the best
thing you could have done when you
changed your name and identity into changed your name and identity into that of Aimee Brazeale."

"You knew that I was here," she said. "You came because of that?"
"No, I came to this house with a purpose, but you had nothing to do with it. I thought you were dead. thought it was you the deck-hands of the 'Monsoon' buried in the sandbar. I thought so until r saw you as Judith with that look on your face so like-

She interrupted him.
"Is he dead?" she asked, looking into his face with wild, intent eyes. "Did you imagine he could live? Why, the artery in his neck was nearly severed. Before he could get surgical aid he had lost as much blood as I think any other man has in his veins.
The wonder is that he did not die then instead of lingering for weeks."
She had sunk her face in her hands, shuddering. She was silent a long while. Then she said:
"God knows I did not mean to kill

I had no thought of murder." "He was a mere animal, with no soul whatever. You did no great wrong morally speaking. The wrong was in marrying him—the wrong to yourself. You had seen no men better than he, but your woman's instincts ought to have repelled you from him." "Tell me," she said suddenly, "why did you not betray me? You knew I was not drowned. Why did you not inform against me when a reward was offered for information? You look like

him. It was an impulse of self-defence.

a man who, who-'Who would do things for money. Yes, I have done many things for money. Why did I not inform against you? Well, my motives were mixed. In the first place, I had no pressing need of filthy lucre just then. And saw you were no common woman and would have no common destiny. felt we would meet again, and I knew I held your secret—a secret that would give me power over you always. And to possess power over a woman like you is better than money to a man who likes to experiment in feelings and experiences. But since then I have been strongly tempted to betray you," he went on. "I got lower in finances, and Vanhorn raised his offer of reward. I set out with the resolve to find you, and deliver you to the Philistines. Does that make you hate

"It does not surprise me," she said. "Go on."
"I found you easy to trace. People had seen you going down the river in the skiff. Then I heard all about you in the little town where you sold the skiff and took a steamboat—the 'Mon-

"It was very plain sailing, indeed," she said. "Why did you not find me at once and deliver me to the authori-

"It was not such plain sailing afterward. Did you know that the 'Monsoon' was burned at the wharf the night after she got to New Orleans was no registered name of Irma Weir? The clerk died of yellow fever three gers knew of Aimee Brazeale's death. found only one deck hand and the stewardess who could tell me anything of a girl who was a passenger said the girl had died and was buried on a sandbar on the river side. you see, Irma Weir is no longer in existence. I could not find any proof grave in the sand." "But you have found her now. Vanhorn's money is waiting for you. a streak of luck—sold a story—a worth—less sensational thing for six hundred afraid." Weir to be a woman I would not like o betray, even for Michael Vanhorn's whose pluck I admire, who eauty I adore-a woman a man might

oxicates men like wine. And capable of love beyond most women's concepyou ever loved? In the old bayou days you had never seen a man better than Solon Vanhorn. But since then? This Bert Fontenoy, most wo-men find him irresistible. I saw him ok at you as though he loved you. Tell me, is there any bond between

'There is none," she said. "You do not love him? 'You have no right to ask." "Have I not? Look at me, Irma Weir, I hold your secrets in my pos-session—two secrets, either of which you had rather die than have dis losed. I am, as it were, your Fate. shall be merciful. I shall not speak anless you exasperate me. You can lo so by loving another man. You may not love me, but you must not you shall not, love another. I love you

and if I were not a poor devil, I would marry you if you would have me, though I dislike marriage. It is sometimes a disagreeable necessity. But I can never marry you. I must marry for money. I am here for that purpose now. Can you not guess?"
"You can not mean that you are here for the purpose of winning Dr. Fontenoy's betrothed from him?" "Why not? All is fair in love. She does not care for Fontenoy. She is not capable of much love for any one; but she cares more for me than for any man, simply because I was in-different to her last summer. I was the only man who did not humor caprices and show myself eager for her smiles. She did her best to number me among her captives. She was piqued into thinking about me and taring for me. She has sent me flowers and cards and other anonymous trifles, since she has been here, and know by keeping up my role of half ndifference, half-covert devotion, I

an easily break off the engagement between her and the solemn John." "Do you love her?" "Can a man love a buterfly? The woman has no soul. She is merely charming little toy. But she las a hundred thousand dollars safe'y willed to her. No, I love you, my gazelle eyed sister, more than any woman I ever knew. It is a thousand pities I can knew. It is a thousand pities I can not ask you to marry me. You would refuse me, perhaps. Well, I should love you all the more. I hate women who are won easily. Now, I have shown you my hand, my Irma, I want you to play into it. an you not make a conquest of this John Fontenoy? Already he has almost too great an interest in you. He devoured you with his eyes to-night."

his eyes to-night."

"If I could make him care for me, do you for an instant think I would be so base?"

"That is a siur upon me. Well, I will take it from you. If it was Bert Fontenoy, though, you would not be so conscientious, perhaps. You have no scruples in winning him away from the girl he seems to be engaged to. Well, I have warned you as to Bert Fontenoy. You must not dare encourage him. You must not dare love him. If you do— You know what I can do."

man, indeed, held a power over her that he was, in a manner, her Fate.

CHAPTER VIII. If Fannie Gray expected a tete-a-tete with Vane this morning she was disappointed. He went off shooting with Bert, and did not return until late in the afternoon. They had a full game bag. Vane was a good shot, and Bert was noted the country round for his game in Surface. his success in gunning.

After dinner \ ane played tennis with Maddie and Florence Bellamy. Miss Gray joined in the game at first, but she soon professed herself disgusted and went and sat in a swing under one of the big live oaks, where she slowly swayed back and forth and picked to pieces a bouquet of roses that John had sent her from Grobeck.

That evening Vane was the centre of attraction in the sitting room. Bert drew him out to talk. He had a great fund of incident and anecdote in his memory. In the midst of his narration of some adventure that happened to him in Mexico, he rose, ostensibly to lean over a vase of flowers on a stand near by and inhale their fragrance. But when he sat down again it was on the lounge by Irma. seated himself carelessly, and took Irma's hand and went on with his story. She made a motion to withdraw her hand, but she knew that all in the room believed her to be his sister, and such an act would seem

strange to them. Vane had a seemingly half-uncon-scious way of doing impudent things. Later in the evening, Irma was at the piano and Miss Gray sat near the window. A light wrap had half fallen from her shoulders. Vane went up to her, and drew it around her-letting his fingers touch her half-bare arms. She looked up resentfully, but his quiet face disarmed her. He sat in the window and played with her fan and talked to her a few minutes. She was cross and he was sarcastic, and some sharp repartee passed between them. "You two are always quarreling," Maddie said. 'If you don't like each other why don't you keep apart?"

Vane looked at Fannie. Their eyes

he quoted softly, so that she alone "And with cold words they try to hide
The burning secret of their hearts."
With a deep blush she took the fan
from him and hid her face in its soft

met, and lowering his to the pink fan,

feathers. The next day opened gray and misty. Soon there was a regular downpour, which lasted all day. Irma got through with the music and French lessons and began to read a new book Bert had brought her. Presently a message came

"Come down into the library, I want to talk to you. She disregarded the request and went on with her book. Maddie came in, ex-

"There is John on horseback in his dripping Indiarubber cloak. He has been to see some patient. Miss Aimee, ome downstairs and see him." 'Where is Miss Gray? "Coiled up on the sofa in the parlor

in one of her moods. She will not speak to John or come out to see Irma went down. She always liked to hear John Fontenoy talk. She found

him in the back perch, helping his mother lift some plants out of the too abundant rain. "Let us sit here and watch the rain splash and the little water streams run down the walk. The rooms are so warm," Maddie sad, pulling her big half-brother down upon a crimson cane-bottom settee. "Sit down with us, Miss Aimee. Now, Dr. John, tell us where you have been this morning "I have been since four o'clock at bedside of Minnie Walters. She has heart disease, you know. She had a painful attack last night. She bore bravely. She & a little heroine. You should see the work she manages

to do, sitting up in bed-the fine embroidery and netting. Its sale helps their poor little income, I have no "And you have been riding in the dark and rain and working to help a poor girl, when you knew you would

you, Dr. John' "I love you," she said. He drew her head to his shoulder. "Do you really love me, Madcap

never get a cent for it? Let me kiss

Then, I have found Irma had not some out to see him. She was, as Maddie had said, coiled up on was, as Maddie had said, coiled up on the parlor a novel in her hand, which she was not reading. the little music room, curtained playing a Beethoven sonata. Presently Fannie was sure he was improvising. He played on and on, and the rain beat softly against the windows. At last, Fannie rose and went into the

music room "I can't read." she said. music has given me the blues. When do you play such melancholy things? "They suit the day-and my mood,"

he answered "Your mood? Are you ever sad? What have you to make you sad?' He rose from the piano and faced her, looking at her with his subtle

"Do you think, Miss Gray, because you are so fortunate, an helress, and soon to be married to a man you love, that others are as happy as you are, that there are no wretched hearts hiding their disappointment under the mask of levity?" Her eyes dropped.

"How do you know I am so happy? she asked, "You have everything to make you o-money and friends-and love."

She made an impattent gesture. "People are always telling me thatalways saying how fortunate I am. They do not know. They cannot look into my heart. Now, I think you are the fortunate one—a man, gifted, free, independent, able to laugh at the world or with it. What should you have to trouble you? Tell me."

He bent close to her. His breath was against her cheek as he whispered:
"You are the last one that I could tell my trouble to."
He left the room abruptly, and Miss Gray, sinking into a seat, murmured.
"He loves me, but he will never tell
me so, because I am bound to someone else. Oh! that hateful bond!"
Bert had been loafing about the stable and grounds all the morning.

He came in now and threw off his water-proof wrappings. He found and joined the party on the back porch.

"You are finely employed," he said.

Maddie was throwing grains of corn out into the muddy water streams, to see the long-iegged Shanghai rooster and two shanky half-grown chickens wade from their shelter to get it, and scurry back out of the rain. The

"We are not so silly as you might suppose," Maddie said. "John has been quoting poetry, and Miss Aimee has duoting poetry, and Miss Aimee has told us a story."

"I wish you would tell it again,"
Bert said. And looking at Irma's loveby face under the red hood, he thought:
"I wish I were free to tell her a story.
I will be free before another day. I will not be bound to what my heart has no part in."

He had a talk with his mother that day in her room. She always kept her

others were looking on amused.

day in her room. She always kept her bed, with neuralgia, or the fear of it when the weather was bad. He was sitting by her side, softly rubbing her hand.

"Mother," he said, "I have determined to tell Florence Bellamy that I do not love her and can never marry beat"

"Oh! my son!"

"Mother, would you have me marry a woman I do not care for?"

"You did care for her until—until this girl came." this girl came."
"I haed her. I thought I loved her

well enough to marry her. I did not know my own heart, its capabilities for love." "And you will marry Aimee Braze-ale?" Mrs. Fontenoy said, in a tone

"I am afraid Aimee Brazeale will not marry me. But I shall surely ask "And she will surely catch at a match so wonderfully good for her."
"So wonderfully good! That girl is gifted and lovely enough for a prince, much less a commonplace fellow, with

The mother sighed resignedly "You have always pleased yourself, my son," she said. "I suppose you must do it in this thing also." "I am deeply sorry not to be able to do as you want me, mother. But my heart revolts against it. I believe-I am sure you will be satisfied with my choice. You love Aimee Brazeale." "Yes; but-"

"But she has no money." "No social position, my son."
"I will give her mine. She would grace a far higher one. You know it, mother dear." He put his mother's slim. fair hand

to his lips. She drew nim to her, and "Go, Bert, and do as your heart dictates. I want you to be happy. But poor Florence!" Poor Florence, indeed! Bert's heart smote him as he prepared to go over and have that decisive interview with her. He knew she loved him. He knew

that he had given her reason to think he cared for her. He found her alone. She seemed to know intuitively why he had come, and her pride awoke to sustain her. When he faltered something about changed feelings, she interrupted him quickly. "Do not say any more," she said. "I "Do not say any more," she said. "I understand you fully. You wish to be released from the half engagement there is between us. I free you with all my heart, since I know it is your desire. Don't think I will nine away.

desire. Don't think I will pine away. after the manner of stage henoines. am going to the ball to-night with Mr. Everton. He has not turquois eyes, like yours, but he has a true heart. I don't think he is a bit fickle." "And I am, I suppose?" She turned to the piano and sang: "A true heart, a loyal heart, It is worth more than gold, my dearie." She went with Bert outside the door,

and pulled a Nile lily from a mass of broad green leaves that filled a great tub on one side of the porch. "Take it to Aimee Brazeale," she said. "It reminds me of her, stately

and sweet, with a strange foreign sweetness and grace." He thanked her, and kissed the hand she held out to him. He looked back half regretfully at the tall, pale girl, who bore her disappointment so proudly. There was a smile on ner lact. He wondered if it covered a heart-There was a smile on her face.

"Did she really care?" he thought. "I hardly believe it."
He would not have doubted had he her, a few minutes afterwards, walking the floor and slowly wringing her hands, while hot tears of love and wounded pride dropped over her cheeks. All the same, she went to the ball

that night, and looked her own bright self, and danced every set. No one could have guessed that her eyes had shed such tears. And Bert was free-free to offer his hand to the woman he had grown to love so dearly. Late that afternoon she came down for a walk. She often went to a hill near by, to see the sun set. Maddie usually accompanied her, but this evening she was alone.

Bert was glad of his opportunity. He sked if he might walk with her, and after a little emparrassed hesitation, When they reached the top of the hill, they sat down under a clump of pines, and watched in silence the sun setting over the picturesque town and serpintine river. As the flery globe

sank out of sight, Bert turned to "I had a special object in wishing to share your walk," he said. "There is something I want to say to you. I am free to say it now; hitherto. I have hardly felt myself to be so, but now I am free to tell you, dear Aimee, that I love you, and to ask you to be my

For a moment she was silent. He Presently she turned it toward him. Her eyes were sad, and she was very pale, but her voice was quite

"I am sorry you feel this way for re," she said, "because I can never be your wife.' Bert's heart sank as he looked at her. He felt that she spoke earnestly, but he caught her hand, and pleaded with

words and eloquent eyes. "Do not say that, Aimee. Do you not care for me a little? I will be so devoted that you can but give me a return for my love. Aimee, your looks, your manner to me have given me hope. Do not dash it to the ground. You have seemed to care for me.' "I do not care for your," she said; 'but I can never marry you." She was beginning to tremble. She

was losing her self-possession. It was a great relief that she heard, at this moment. Madcap's merry voice crying: "Ah! you stole a march on me, but Irma welcomed her gladly. was silent. He hardly spoke during the walk home. After tea he went to his mother's room. She was sitting in her

easychair, her delicate face looking whiter by contrast with the crimson wrapper she wore. Irma was reading At Bert's entrance she looked up,

colored, and closed the book.
"I will come back after awhile," she said to Mrs. Fontenoy, and left the Bert sat down in the softly-cushioned rocker his mother pushed toward him, and asked after her health. Her

quick eyes detected the gloom on his "What has gone wrong with you, Bert?" she asked, tenderly. "Mother, some time ago, I told you that if I should offer myself to Aimee Brazeale, I should be very doubtful of her accepting me."
"Yes, and I though it a very about

"It was not absurd. It has been verified this afternoon. I offered myself to her and was rejected." "Rejected! You, Bert?" "I was very firmly rejected, and I am miserable. I shall never be happy again. I love her as I can never love

another woman!"
Mrs. Fontenoy was silent. Her look
of astonishment changed to one of
anxious sympathy, and dwelt upon the
son who was her idol.

Son who was her idol.

At length she said:

"Bert, Aimee Brazeale loves you; I am sure of that. She refused you because she thought that to listen to you would be ungrateful to me. She knew that I had another marriage in view for you. Let me talk with her; let me tell her how fully your father and I consent to your marriage with her. You will see that this is the only obstacle—her feeling that it would be ungrateful to accept your love, when she knew we cherished other views for you. Do you consent that I shall talk to her?"

you. Do you consent that I shall talk to her?"

"Yes," he answered after a little reflection. "I am willing that you shall say anything to her that your heart and judgment prompt. But I have little hope that it will make any difference. You do not know how firmly she said, 'I can never marry you!"

"A girl often speaks more decidedly than she feels," Mrs. Fontency said. "I will see Amee this very evening.
Don't despond, my loy. I am sure it
will all be well. Now, go into the
parlor, and listen to some music. I
hear Fannie Gray at the piano. I will
send for Aimee."

To be Continued.

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