

A Woman's Whole Existence.

"The soul has growing pains as well as the body, and every woman capable of growth must go through them when she learns that man's love is of his life, a thing apart."

"What I can't realize," said Elsie, "is that you are Drake the actor. You don't know how it startles me; when I hear one of the piazza ghouls point you out, or see those silly little girls posing in your pathway. To me you are just—" Drake leaned forward and met her eyes squarely.

"I am just—" Drake repeated.
"A man—"
"Well?"
"Whom I—"
"Well?"

"You may think those girls are looking through that telescope, but they aren't," said Elsie, nodding towards a group on the other side of the wide porch. "They're watching every movement you make."

"Well, they will see something worth watching in about two minutes, if you don't look out. Are you going to finish that sentence?"

Elsie recognized that it was time to retreat. He never made empty threats.

"Why, to me you just Stephen Drake, a man I've known at the seaside this summer," she said. "I mean you don't carry your profession around with you. You don't walk it, or stand it, or speak it."

"Perhaps that is because I take it so seriously."

"You have a right to. But its because of your family and education and all that. You're too well bred to advertise yourself. Yet, when I think about it, I can see the actor in you."

"How?"

"Well, in a way you have two inner selves, and one is always the audience watching the other. If you have an emotion its perfectly genuine and yet you always recognize, at the time, that you have it, and what is its picturesque value. It is a sort of mental self-consciousness. Are you listening?"

He dropped his head on his hand and moved his stick until it touched her foot.

"Elsie, Elsie, I've an emotion now," he said half under his breath. "Won't you recognize it? Don't you want me to love you?"

She seemed absorbed in the figures of her dimity gown.

"Elsie?"

"I'm afraid I do," she said, with a catch in her voice. Then the barrier was down, and she looked straight into his eyes. "I love you—dreadfully," she said. "Don't you know it?"

The night before Drake went back to town, they strolled down the moonlit beach, his arm across her shoulders the instant the bluff hid them from the hotel.

"To think that I have never seen you act!" she said. "It is the biggest part of your life, and I know nothing about it except that everybody calls you the coming man. It half frightens me. I feel so far away from you. I never dreamed I should marry a genius."

"You won't. You'll marry a man, not a career," said Drake, with emphasis. "Take away every scrap of talent I possess, and I should love you just the same. And marry you, too," he boasted.

She laughed happily. They were standing on a smooth strip of beach set in a half circle of rocks. In the unreal light of the summer moon it was not unlike a stage, with the ocean stretched out like a great rustling audience in front. She dropped down on the sand, leaning against a rock.

"Act something for me," she commanded. He threw aside his hat, and stood looking down at her over folded arms.

"For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes this vault a feasting presence full of light" he began. The voice between them opened the door to a new world of meaning, behind the words:

She lay thrilled and breathless as he went on:

"I will stay with thee; And never from this palace of dim night,

Depart again."

Great tears were rolling down her cheeks, but she did not take her eyes from his face.

"Eyes, look your last!

Arms, take your last embrace! and lips, O you

The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss,

A dateless bargain to engrossing death."

He kissed her—not an actor's kiss—then lifted his head to take the poison.

"Here's to my love."

Drake's own eyes were wet, and his audience was sobbing heart brokenly. He took her into his arms and rocked her and made inarticulate love to her till she was quieted. He had never seen her cry before. It hurt him deliciously. He realized that they were inserting a date into their private history; that whatever happened, neither of them would ever lose the vivid memory of this hour.

After she had gone to her own room Elsie sat with her arms on the window sill, staring out over the ocean, till a clock striking two, startled her back to reality.

"Oh, he is wonderful!" she said, with a deep breath. "No one ever acted like that before. The world will go wild over him! He must live for his work first and me second. Whatever happens, I shall never let him put me first. Oh, my dear, my dear! I wonder if other girls care like this?"

The theater was crowded on the opening night of "Lady Betty." Rose Atherton would have been sure of that even if she had not been supported by Stephen Drake, who had risen so wonderfully in the few years of his stage life that he was on the verge of becoming a star himself. There had been nothing meteoric about his career. It had been the steady, sure advance of talent and serious ambition.

Elsie sat back against the wall of the box and shivered with excitement as the preliminary scenes dragged themselves out on the stage. She was very happy, and very proud. How the people would sit up and stare and stamp for her Stephen! They would call him before the curtain, and he would smile at her and—

There was a laugh, a door was flung open, and in came Drake. He was rumpled, out of breath, and shaking with laughter—such laughter! The house roared in sympathy, with no idea why, as he mopped his eyes, and broke out over again.

Lady Betty's flaxen head was thrust through the portieres.

"You didn't, you didn't!" she called mockingly.

"I will, then!" And he was off after her with an abandon that endeared him for the evening with the house.

But Elsie felt strangely chilled. He had never laughed like that with her, never given her a glimpse of that rollicking, boyish side. Did it take a flaxen haired, fascinating Lady Betty to bring out the fun that was in him? "Why, I don't know him at all, and he knows every bit of me," she thought, feeling suddenly very lonely and unimportant. If he had once looked at her it might have been different. But during all the three hours while he danced to Lady Betty's piping it never seemed to occur to him that there was some one in the stage box. At the end, when the flaxen head dropped meekly down on his shoulder he might have sent her a glance just to show that he realized it was all play acting. But he merely smiled down on Lady Betty.

Elsie went home silent and depressed, dreading to face Drake, who was coming up to supper.

"It's all so silly and unreasonable," she thought miserably. "Yet I feel it, and I can't help showing it. I'm utterly cold, and he'll see it and be hurt. I wish he wouldn't come."

But when Drake came, an actor, catching her alone, held out both hands to her, the look in his eyes changed the whole aspect of the evening in an instant. She went to him impulsively.

"So you liked me to-night?" he said, thinking her excitement was for the actor.

She gave a happy little laugh of relief. Her past trouble seemed a foolish, meaningless whim, quite unworthy to be remembered.

"Liked you?" she said, "Liked you? Oh, my dear!"

The farcical "Lady Betty" was followed by a more serious drama, that, according to the papers, "showed the versatile Drake in a new light."

To one member of the audience it was startlingly new. Elsie stared at this exalted, passionate lover with set lips. There was a great, tormenting weight in her chest, and the triumphant scene at the end left her cold and faint. She sent word to Drake that she was too tired to see him, and endured in rigid silence till she was safe in her own room.

Then she flung herself down and faced it.

"Oh, I'm jealous; miserably, idiotically jealous!" she cried, burying her

face in the cushion. "I can't help it and I can't bear it. I know better in my mind, but it doesn't make any difference when he—he—oh, he had no right to kiss her like that! Of course, I'm not jealous of her as a woman—"

She broke off and lay very still for a moment, as though listening to some one else. Then a little sob shook her.

"Yes, I am!" she said under her breath. "I could kill her when she pushes back his hair. And he kissed her fingers one by one, just as he does mine. I know he isn't acting with me—but he doesn't seem to be acting with her, either. Oh, I'm so ashamed! I don't deserve him. I know perfectly well that I'm first with him. But I'm jealous, jealous! And I can't help it."

Drake came up to see her the next morning, looking tired and worn.

"Was the play too much for you?" he said, throwing himself down on the divan. He held out his hand to her, but she stood leaning on a chair.

"Yes it was." Her voice sounded constrained. "I've thought about it all night and I can't see any way out of it. The truth is, Stephen, I'm unbearably jealous."

"My dear girl! What on earth—"

"Oh, I know how you care for me! It's just that I can't bear it, to see you make love to some one else like that. It hurts me like knives! I'm ashamed of it but it's so true that I came away sick and cold last night. And I was jealous at 'Lady Betty,' too, though I wouldn't confess it."

Drake came and put his hand on her shoulder.

"Is there something you're not telling me, Elsie? Have you heard any silly tales about me?"

"No, honestly. I shouldn't believe them if I did. It's just sitting there and—watching you. It kills me. If you weren't such a good actor, or I, such a good lover, it would be all right," she ended, trying to smile.

"But you know it is every bit acting. You will realize that in a little while," he urged. "Truly, Elsie, you will get used to it."

She lifted his hand to her face and bit it gently with her little sharp teeth.

"When I get used to seeing you make love to another woman for any earthly reason, it will be time to break our engagement," she said. "I'm not that kind of a woman. But I'll try."

Night after night she went to the theatre, trying faithfully to "get used to it;" and it seemed to her as if every night it hurt her in a new place. To see little gestures and tricks of love making, that she had believed sacred to her, offered up to this tinsel goddess for the amusement of the public made her quiver with an anger she was too proud to explain; and of course Drake did not understand. She had vowed that his work should always come before her, but it stung her that he never seemed to dream that it could come anywhere else. Sincerely as he loved her, he lived for his profession, and gave it his best, reserving nothing.

Their relations grew strained and uncomfortable, for Drake was overworked and irritable, and did not half understand the barrier that was growing up between them.

It was the opening night of the Shakespearean week that brought matters to a climax. The play was "Romeo and Juliet." Rose Atherton showed herself the very spirit of Juliet, young, innocent, passionate, and Drake seemed to be laying the cornerstone of a great fame. Every word and gesture told. They pictured the perfection of warm, human, elemental love, and the audience sat motionless before it.

"For here lies Juliet—"

Drake's voice was strangely thrilling. The house vibrated to it.

"Eyes, look your last!

Arms, take your last embrace!"

A girl in the audience murmured something to her companion, as Romeo fell they stole quietly out. She was very pale.

"No, it's nothing. I'm just a little faint. I want to get home," she said. She closed her eyes, but could not shut out the picture that haunted them—a strip of black set in a half circle of dark rocks, and a man kneeling beside a girl who watched him with wet cheeks.

"Eyes, look your last!" she sobbed to herself as she ran to her own room, dragged off her gloves, and sat down at her desk.

"It is no use" she wrote. "I can't bear it. That scene was the most sacred thing in my whole life—I could hardly have spoken to you about it! And all the while to you it was merely a rehearsal. You could copy it in every tone and inflection and gesture, for anybody."

Even that night, you were studying effects, quite collectedly, while I was utterly carried away. I'm not blaming you. You can't help it. If you were a novelist, you would write up our dearest moments into love scenes, and wonder why it hurt me. You are watching yourself live while I am living from head to foot, blindly. Oh, I can't put it into words! I can have only such a small part of your life that it is better I should stay outside of it altogether. I can't give the whole and get back such a little corner. This ends it. Good-bye."

She slipped out and mailed the letter, then stood at her window staring at a red glow that was lighting up the city. The whistle of a fire engine came to her faintly. Smoke was rolling up, thick with red sparks. A faint echo of confusion and alarm spread even to her quiet neighborhood. She watched the fire till it died down and left the city dark again. After she went to bed she lay awake hour after hour, starting up nervously at intervals to fling herself into a new position.

"Oh, why do things hurt me so!" she exclaimed, clasping both arms tightly around her pillow. "Stephen, I had to do it. I couldn't bear it any longer, and, oh my dear, you won't suffer like this."

A sound of wheels in the empty street made her start up, listening. The swift clash of hoofs on the asphalt seemed to be spelling out her name. She went to the window and saw a cab draw up to consult the numbers, and then approach more slowly. There was still a faint odor of smoke in the air.

The cab stopped at her house, as she had known it would. Flinging on a wrapper, she stole downstairs and opened the front door. A grotesque figure stood there, wearing a modern overcoat over medieval slashed trunks and silk tights. His hair fell in curls on his shoulders, but his face was white behind the marks of his make up.

"Does Miss Elsie McIver live here?" he asked, so unconscious of his appearance that she stiffened herself to meet the worst news of all.

"Yes, I am Miss McIver."

"Then you're safe," he exclaimed. "Drake was in such distress about you that the doctor sent me—"

"What do you mean? What has happened?"

"Weren't you at the theatre? Didn't you know that it took fire—"

She caught his coat with trembling hands.

"Stephen?"

He hesitated, then looked away.

"Pretty badly hurt, I'm afraid."

"Will you take me to him? I can be ready in a minute. I—her voice broke—"I am going to marry him."

She was back in a few moments, wonderfully controlled, though he felt her tremble as he helped her into the cab. "I left the theatre just after — he drank the poison," she said, "Please tell me what happened." "Why, not three minutes later, flames shot out at the left wings. Nobody knows how they started. In a second the whole scene was on fire, and of course there was a panic. We tried to fight it, but it was too much, and we escaped by the stage door."

"But Stephen?"

"He wouldn't come. He—he wanted to see if you got out safely, of course, so he dropped down over the footlights and tried to find you. And then he was caught in the jam on the stairs and was—"

"Oh, not burned, not burned!" sobbed Elsie.

"No, no; truly! But when the roof fell, those — that could—surged forward, and he was crushed against the wall. It may be that he has only broken a rib or two. The doctor hadn't finished when I left. The main thing was to quiet him about you."

Elsie lay back in the corner, her face in her hands. At the very moment when he had been fighting his way through a burning building to find her she had been sitting safe at home, writing him a cold-blooded, brutal, selfish letter, telling him that he did not care enough, and giving him up for a pang of hurt vanity. She had been small and mean. She waited for herself where another woman would only have rejoiced for him. She saw herself in a new light, mercilessly, and the sight was unbearable. She waited in the hall while her companion whispered with the doctor. Drake was talking feverishly, and the words hurt her like blows.

"Where is she? Oh, for God's sake, why can't I find her? Stop jamming, you brutes, Fifth row, aisle —"

"She is all right, Drake," some one said. "She got out safe. Don't worry."

"Oh, you're just lying, to keep me

quiet" he answered, but his voice was more rational.

"Here she is herself to prove it." They opened the door wide, and, with a sudden new strength, she came quietly in and took his hands.

"Here I am, Stephen," she said, and kissed him on the forehead.

He clung to her, with little exclamations that made her lips tremble, but she talked to him and ran her fingers through his hair until he relaxed into sleep, still holding her hand.

Then she turned to the doctor with a question in her eyes.

"We will know better in the morning," he answered evasively. "I expect a trained nurse any—ah, here she is," as a woman entered, followed by the motley figure in doublet and curls.

The latter carried a cup of hot coffee and some little twisted rolls which he put on a chair beside Elsie. She dared not drop Drake's hand, so Mercutio, kneeling beside her, held the saucer and broke off little pieces of the rolls for her, so kind and earnest, and so unconscious of his streaked face, that she smiled without realizing it and faced the morning with new courage.

Early in the day the doctor came, bringing a colleague, and they held a whispered conference. When the consulting physician had gone Elsie turned a questioning to the other.

"Things are going better than I dared hope," he said. "With good care, I think he'll come out all right."

"And—his acting?" She hardly dared form the question. It had hung over her all night, side by side with her fear of his life. Can he go on with that?"

"Oh, yes, I think so, when he is strong enough."

She caught his hand in both hers.

"I am so thankful," she whispered.

"I—I couldn't have borne that."

Mercutio, in modern clothing, came in with an envelope in his hand.

"Here's a letter for him. Will you take charge of it?"

"Yes—I'll take charge of it," said Elsie, slipping it into her pocket.

CAPTURED 40 GUNS.

The Ashanti Relief Force Surprised the Enemy.

A despatch from London, says:—The Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Earl of Selborne, announced in the House of Lords on Thursday that the Governor of the Gold Coast Colony, Sir Frederic Mitchell Hodgson, with six hundred native soldiers, commanded by Major Morris, left Kumassi June 23rd. He added that Captain Bishop and 100 native soldiers remained there, with rations sufficient to last until July 15th. Col. Willcocks promises to personally relieve Kumassi by that date, under any circumstances.

The news of the Governor's leaving Kumassi was contained in a despatch from Col. Willcocks, dated Fumusu, July 4, which adds:—

"Burroughs with four hundred native soldiers arrived at Dompso July 1. The enemy was completely surprised, and evacuated the stockades Burroughs captured forty guns and ammunition, and killed thirty of the enemy."

A SUCCESSFUL UNION.

A Polish couple came before a Justice of the Peace in an American town to be married. The young man handed him the marriage license and the pair stood up before him.

Join hands, said His Honor.

They did so, and the justice looked at the document which authorized to unite in matrimony Zacharzewicz Perczynski and Leokowarda Jeulinseika.

Ahem! he said. Zacha—h'm—h'm—ski, do you take this woman—? and so forth.

Yes, sr, responded the young man. Leo—h'm—ah—ska, do you take this man to be—? and so forth.

Yes sir.

Then I pronounce you man and wife, he said, glad to find something he could pronounce; and I heartily congratulate you both on having reduced those two names to one.

WAY AHEAD.

Sunny Slope—So you wuz in de regular army fer three years? How did yer like it?

Northern Litze—Oh, it wuz simple! Only fer de grub, de drills de clothes, de officers, de barracks and de pay, it would lay way over de average.

FEMALE POSTAL OFFICIAL.

The head of the Postal Department at Gibraltar is a woman, who has occupied the position for 10 years. She receives a salary of \$2,750 per annum being the highest paid woman in the postoffice service.