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subordinate at his side, who dashed off at the word:

"I am sorry it is too late to invite you on board, Mesdames; but in a few moments you shall see Mr. Henry Stuart if they can wake him."

MRS. COBB, with her hand pressed to her heaving bosom, sank down on one of the packing cases with which the wharf was encumbered. As for me, the blood roared in my head. In a few moments I should see him again! How would he greet me? For my base desertion of the other day had he forgiven me? Did he still—

Across the scudding whirl of my thoughts broke the voice of Mrs. Cobb. "Oh, Lili, Lili, what shall I do? Do you think that I ever, ever shall see him again?"

I turned toward her with a start. Him? But of course she meant Victor. And my heart was smitten with sudden compassion as I saw how old she looked under her tiara, how tired and grief smitten and desperate.

"Oh, Lili, there's no use talking, he did look noble when he stood up and defied me—yes, just as stubborn as me every whit, a real chip of the old block. Everybody said so. Yes, Lili, it's the strangest thing, but everyone seemed to admire him. You see, it was plain to be seen that he threw you down, not you that went off and jilted him. Yes, my boy seemed to make quite a hit—that is, with everyone except the Duchess. And I think that perhaps even she would forgive me if she thought that you were going to make a good marriage with someone else, after all."

My heart leaped to pain. "Hush! Who knows? So you are going to forgive Victor, after all?"

She made a gesture of desperation. "Who would have thought he'd have made such a hit? And, besides, he's my boy—my only boy. That little rat of a girl—it's hard to take her in. But, after all, if she really loves my boy—"

Al! Mrs. Cobb's iron will, meeting with its match at last, had to buckle and bend like that of any other loving woman. And then, as she said, Victor had made such a hit! So he wouldn't have to swing to that strap that he hated so, after all? I was glad; for when your heart is running over with happiness it is nice to think that other people are going to be happy, too.

"Then you'll speak to the Duchess, dear Lili? If only she could be prevailed on to come to Bar Harbor, after all!"

"I'll speak to her myself—or, no, if you'll give me a card, I'll write her a line that you can send her. This very night, immediately!"

I thought of Portia and smiled. Small danger that the trip to Mount Desert, with such alluring prospects, would be refused!

"You'll come too, dear Lili, of course? You'll be a daughter to me just the same?"

"Lili!" It was Henry's voice. Tall and pale in the electric light, he came tearing down the gangplank. He did not kiss me—though I should not have minded if he had. He just seized my two hands and held them tight as though he'd grind them to powder.

Lili, what has happened?"

"Oh, Henry, I'm free! I've come to find you. Oh, Henry, don't go away!"

"What?" he said in a dazed way like a child suddenly waked from sleep.

I tried to tell what had happened; but got things so mixed up—Mrs. Cobb kept putting in explanations and defending Victor, whom no one, to be sure, was accusing.

But Henry never listened to a word she said. He never glanced near her. He kept looking at me as though his eyes would drink me up, and holding my fingers as though his flesh would enter into mine.

"You radiant star, dropping down out of the night! You mean you've come to belong to me? You're mine now—mine, mine!"

"Yes, Henry, yes, with my whole heart, if you want me!"

He straightened himself with a violent effort as though to shake off the daze that held him, while the desire of my heart rushed into my lips in a cry:

"Oh, Henry, don't go away! Oh, Henry, stay with me!"

He took a long breath. "No, Lili, I'm not going to stay, because you're coming with me!"

"Oh, oh!" I could only gasp, while I heard Mrs. Cobb's voice protesting:

"Mr. Stuart, are you crazy? She cannot go without any chaperon. And, besides, she has no things—the steamer's on the point of sailing—"

He continued to address me as though Mrs. Cobb's voice were that of a noisy child. "Listen, sweetheart! I'll go to the Captain and ask him to delay the sailing for half an hour or so. My firm is counsel for the French Line. I think they'll do that much for me. Beside, he's a Frenchman, and when he hears that it's for a wedding—"

"A wedding, Mr. Stuart?"

"Oh, Henry, a wedding?"

My head turned round. I began to laugh out loud, I own it, like a child who sees bonbons.

"Oh, Henry, Henry!"

He swept on. "Come, Darling, we'll rush and take a taxi and get your maid and your things. There's an old friend of mine, Dr. Jordan, a minister, on board, and he'll marry us as soon as we get to the three-mile limit, where we shall not need a license. Then, after we arrive in France, we'll be married again as much as you and your family please."

Henry, leaping forward in that quick way in which he does everything, made his request to the Captain. Ah! he is important! Henry, I could see that, even if I had doubted it before; because here of that great individual, the commander of a ship, he was able to get what he wanted.

"Half an hour, then. But half an hour, sharp, Mr. Stuart!"

"Half an hour, Captain, on the dot!"

And, seizing my arm, Henry began hurrying me down the long, shadowy wharf shed. How different it looked from a moment ago, now that I was no longer alone!

Beside us, Mrs. Cobb trotted with agitated steps. I cried:

"Oh, Henry, I am so ashamed of the other day! And yet, what else could I do?"

"Cruel, wicked Lili! I'm glad you are ashamed. No, a thousand kisses will not be enough to pay for that desertion! Do you know that night when I found you gone I came very near putting a bullet through my brain? And my poor mother, too! I never saw her so overcome! It seems she was very much attached to your family in France. This will make her happy! Ah, dear Mother—if she were only here with us now!"

The automobile was still waiting there with the taxi winding up. But who cared for that? Off we flew.

HALF an hour later, in the same motor, we dashed again down the same empty street. Half an hour, that was all—one little half-hour, so short a time to change two lives into one and earth into heaven!

The steamer was still there, after all. So my husband took me home—my husband that I had traveled so far to find and found at last. And I had found him, after all, in the most stupid, blundering way in the world, all by chance and blind accident—I who prided myself on my intelligence and my philosophy!

Ah, my poor philosophy! What is it, after all, but a pale fabric of sad dreams pieced together to console us when we can't get what we want? And when we once get that, where's the use of speculating about it? Who wants philosophy, when she has love?

THE END

WAY OF THE WORLD

ience gave a flavor to the cups. Finally he told her about Mrs. Courtenay and Mrs. Lessing. "I really thought they were in love with me," he admitted shamefacedly. "I didn't know which of them I loved until tonight; then I thought I discovered. That was a mistake too, like everything else has been. Everything is rotten!" he added bitterly.

Somewhere near them a girl began to sing softly to her partner. The tune was a new one in Malta; so were the words. They ran like this:

If love is half the joy of life,
Then friendship is the rest;
Perhaps, after all,
Friendship is the best.
No—

The voice broke off suddenly, and the little Snubbins girl spoke in her turn. "Friendship is the best," she repeated in a low voice. "Don't you see everything isn't lost? Half the world's left; you've all the realms of friendship to explore."

Peter looked up as she stopped, and something in his glance made the little Snubbins girl's heart beat strangely, deliciously. She was standing very near the half of the world that men call love, and she didn't know it.

Peter put the question to her squarely. "Will you show me the way to this new kingdom?" he asked her. "Will you come with me and help me to get back my faith?"

There was no coquetry in the little Snubbins girl's honest glance. Her eyes met Peter's with a childish directness. "Of course I'll help you!" she cried. "We're put in the world to help one another—that's life!"

Peter smiled, the genuine smile of one who has a keen sense of humor. "Yes—that's life!" he said.



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