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to England recently, in order to meet you.

"To meet me?" cried Stranleigh.

"Yes; and an amazed girl she was to learn that you were in America. She came back by the next boat. She has a gigantic scheme in hand which requires heavy financing. My brother hasn't sufficient money, and I, of course, am a church mouse for poverty, so Constance thought—if she could interest you, as the leading capitalist of England—"

"Great heavens, my dear!" interrupted Trenton, the perspiration standing out on his brow, "consider what you are saying! Lord Stranleigh made a proviso that—Oh, hang it all, Sis, you've put your foot in it this time, sure enough."

The flippant young lady turned to her brother.

"Why, Ned," she said, "you're actually scolding me! I promised Constance I would help her, and my way of accomplishing a thing is to go directly at it."

"Mrs. Vanderveldt," said the Earl of Stranleigh, quietly, "please go on with what you were saying, and ignore this wretched man, whose reticence is finding him out."

The only person embarrassed by this tangle of concealments and revelations was Constance Maturin, who had indulged in neither the one nor the other. The Earl of Stranleigh found it difficult to become acquainted with her. She seemed always on her guard, and never even approached the subject which he had been given to understand chiefly occupied her thoughts.

ON the day appointed for their automobile ride, Miss Maturin appeared at the wheel of the very latest thing in runabouts; a six-cylinder machine of high power, that ran as silently and smoothly as an American watch. Stranleigh ran his eye over the graceful proportions of the new car with keen appreciation, walking round it slowly and critically, quite forgetting the beautiful girl who regarded him with amusement. Looking up at last, he saw the smile playing about her lips.

"I beg your pardon," he said.

"I'm not sure that I shall grant it," she replied, still smiling. "To be ignored for even the latest project in engineering, is not flattering, to say the least."

"Not ignored, Miss Maturin," said Stranleigh, "for I was thinking of you, although I may have appeared absorbed in machinery."

"Thinking of me!" she cried. "You can't expect me to believe that! The gaze of a man fascinated by machinery is quite different from that of a man interested in a woman. I know, because I have seen both."

"I am sure you have seen the latter, Miss Maturin. But what I have just been regarding is an omen."

"How mysterious! I thought you saw only an automobile."

"No; I was looking through the automobile, and beyond, if I may put it that way. I am quite familiar with this car. Although it is yours by purchase it is mine by manufacture. Your money bought it, but mine made it, in conjunction with the genius of a young engineer in whom I became interested. Perhaps you begin to see the omen. Some time ago I was so fortunate as to be of assistance to a young man, and the result has been an unqualified success. To-day perhaps I may be permitted to aid a young woman with a success that will be equally gratifying."

Stranleigh gazed into the clear, honest eyes of the girl, who returned his look with a half-amused smile. She seemed suddenly covered with confusion; flushing slightly, she turned her attention to the forest that surrounded them. Presently she said:

"Do men worship only the god of success?"

"Most men wish to be successful, but we all worship a goddess, too."

"I'm sorry," said Miss Maturin,

quietly, "that Mrs. Vanderveldt mentioned my search for a capitalist. I have abandoned the quest. Please take a seat in this car of yours, Lord Stranleigh; I am now merely your guide to the lakes."

The young man stepped in beside her, and a few moments later they were gliding, rather than running, over a perfect road, under the trees, in a machine noiseless as the forest was at that hour. The Earl of Stranleigh had seen many beautiful regions of the world, but never any landscape just like this. Its artificiality and its lack of artificiality interested him. Nothing could be more business-like than the construction of the stout dams, and nothing more gently rural than the limpid lakes, with the grand old forest trees marshalled round their margins like a veteran army that had marched down to drink, only to be stricken motionless at the water's edge.

IT seemed that the silence of the motor had enchanted its occupants into silence. The girl devoted her attention to the machine, while Stranleigh sat dumb, and gave himself up to the full enjoyment of the Vallombrosic tour. For more than half an hour no word was spoken; finally the competent driver brought the car to a standstill at a view point near the head of the valley, which offered a prospect of the brawling main stream.

"We have now reached the last of the lakes in this direction," she said, quietly. "I think your automobile admirable, Lord Stranleigh."

"Thank you; and permit me to say that as a landscape artist on a tremendous scale, you are without a competitor, Miss Maturin."

The girl laughed.

"Your compliment is to Mother Nature rather than to me," she said. "I have merely led the wilderness alone, so far as road-making and dam-building would allow."

"In your very moderation Hes genius—the leaving alone! Will you forgive the inquisitiveness of an unimaginative man, whom you suspected, at our outset, of success-worship, if he asks what practical object you have in view?"

"I should have thought that was self-evident to an observant person like yourself," she replied, airily. "These lakes conserve the water, storing it in time of flood for use in time of scarcity. By means of sluices we obtain partial control of the main stream."

"Is conservation your sole object, then?"

"Is not that enough?"

"I suppose it is. I know little of engineering, but I have seen its marvels along your own lines in America, in Egypt, India, and elsewhere. As we ran along, I could not help noticing that the dams built to restrain these lakes seemed unnecessarily strong."

A shadow of annoyance flitted across the expressive countenance of Constance Maturin, but was gone before he saw it.

"You are shrewder than you admit, Lord Stranleigh, but you forget what I said about floods. The lakes are placid now, but you should see them after a cloudburst back in the mountains."

"Nevertheless, the dams look bulky enough to hold back the Nile."

"Appearances are often deceitful. The dams are only strong enough for the work they have to do. American engineering practice does not go in for useless encumbrance. Each dam serves two purposes. It holds back the water, and contains a power house. In some of those power houses turbines and dynamos are already placed."

"Ah, I understand! You recognize that I am very stupid."

"You are persistent," said the young woman, decisively.

Stranleigh laughed.

"Allow me to take advantage of that reputation by asking what you intend to do with the electricity when you have produced it?"



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