

"We have no plans."
 "I say!"
 "What do you say?"
 "That was merely an Anglicised expression of astonishment."
 "Don't you believe me?"
 "Hardly."

They were sitting together on the automobile seat, deep in the shade of the foliage above them, but when he caught sight of the indignant face she turned toward him, it almost appeared as if the sun shone upon it. She was about to speak, thought better of her impulse, and reached forward to the little lever that controlled the self-starting apparatus. She found his hand there before she could carry out her intention.

"I am returning," she said, icily.
 "Not yet," said Stranleigh, repressing a sigh and regarding her with covert admiration.

Miss Maturin leaned back in the seat.

"Ned told me you were the most courteous of men. I have rarely found him so mistaken in an impression."

"Was it a courteous man you set out to find on your recent Atlantic voyage?"

AS the girl made no reply, Stranleigh went on: "My politeness is something like the dams we have been considering. It contains more than appears on the surface. There is a concealed power within it. You may meet myriads of men well qualified to teach me courtesy, but when this veneer of social observance is broken, you come to much the same material underneath. I seldom permit myself the luxury of an escape from the conventions, but on rare occasions I break through. For that I ask your pardon. Impressed by your sincerity, I forgot for the moment everything but your own need in the present crisis."

"What crisis?" she asked, indignantly.

"The financial crisis caused by spending your available resources on this so-called conservation policy. To all intents and purposes you are now a bankrupt. Mrs. Vanderveldt has contributed all she can, and both you and she are afraid to tell her brother the true state of the case. You fear you will get little sympathy from him, and already you have felt his annoyance at the lawsuit in which you have involved him. Hence your desperate need of a capitalist, Miss Maturin. A really polite man would be more pleasant as a companion than I am, but he would not be worth that!"

Stranleigh removed his hand from the lever long enough to snap finger and thumb, but he replaced it instantly when he saw her determination to start the machine.

"The man of the moment, Miss Maturin, is a large and reckless capitalist. I am the man of the moment."

He released his hold of the lever, and sat upright. The sternness of his face relaxed.

"Now, Miss Maturin, turn on the engine; take me where you will. Dump me into any lake you choose; the water is crystal clear, and I am a good swimmer," and with this Stranleigh indulged in a hearty laugh, his own genial self once more.

"You are laughing at me," she said, resentfully.

"Indeed, I am not. Another contradiction, you see! I am laughing at myself, and ruefully, Miss Maturin. There's nothing I loathe so much as strenuousness, and here I have fallen into the vice. It is the influence of that brawling river below us, I think. But the river becomes still enough, and useful enough, when it reaches the great lake at Powerville, which is big enough to swallow all these little ponds."

The girl made no motion toward the lever, but sat very still, lost in thought. When she spoke, her voice was exceedingly quiet.

"You complimented Nature a while ago, intending, as I suppose, to compliment me; but I think, after all, the greater compliment is your straight-

forward talk, which I appreciate, although I received it so petulantly. I shall make no apology, beyond saying that my mind is very much perturbed. Your surmise is absolutely correct. It isn't that I've spent the whole of my fortune and my friend's fortune in this conservation scheme, but because I have built a model town on the heights above Powerville. I was promised assistance from the banks, which is now withheld; largely, I suspect, through the opposition of John L. Boscombe, a reputed millionaire. To all intents and purposes Boscombe and I are the owners of Powerville and the mills there, but although this place was founded and built by my father, I am a minority stockholder, and powerless. Boscombe exercises control. Any suggestions of mine are ignored, for Boscombe has little faith—no faith at all, in fact,—in the business capacity of a woman.

"I have tried, as I hinted, to enlist the co-operation of other capitalists, but experience has taught me that any appeal is futile that does not impinge directly upon cupidity. If there is the least hint of philanthropy in the project, every man of money fights shy of it."

"I am an exception," said Stranleigh, quietly. "Philanthropy used to be a strong point with me, though I confess I was never very successful in its exercise. What humanitarian scheme is in your mind, Miss Maturin?"

Again she sat silent for some moments, indecision and doubt on her fair brow. Presently she said, as if pulling herself together:

"I will not tell you, Lord Stranleigh. You yourself have just admitted disbelief, and my plan is so fantastic that I dare not submit it to criticism."

"I suppose your model town is in opposition to the old one down in the valley. You, alone, are going to compete with Boscombe and yourself?"

"That is one way of putting it."

"Very well; I am with you. Blow Boscombe, say I. I've no head for business, so I shan't need to take any advice. I shall do exactly what you tell me. What is the first move?"

"The first move is to set your brokers in New York at work, and buy a block of Powerville stock."

"I see; so that you and I together have control, instead of Boscombe?"

"Yes."
 "That shall be done, as quick as telegraph can give instructions. What next?"

"There will be required a large sum of money to liquidate the claims incurred through the building of the town."

"Very good. That money shall be at your disposal within two or three days."

"As for security, I regret—"

"Don't mention it. My security is my great faith in Trenton, also in yourself. Say no more about it."

"You are very kind, Lord Stranleigh, but there is one thing I must say. This may involve you in a lawsuit so serious that the litigation of which Ned complains will appear a mere amicable arrangement by comparison."

"Forget that; it doesn't disturb me in the least. I love a legal contest, because I have nothing to do but place it in the hands of competent lawyers. No personal activity is required of me."

THE second part of the programme was accomplished even sooner than Stranleigh had promised, but the first part hung fire. The brokers in New York could not acquire any Powerville stock, as was shown by their application to Miss Maturin herself, neither had their efforts been carried out with that secrecy which Stranleigh enjoined. He realized this when John L. Boscombe called upon him. He went directly to the point.

"I am happy to meet you, Lord Stranleigh, and if you'll excuse me, I'd like to say that you are in greater



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