

had made a remark once that was always remembered: "One's tongue was not meant to tell but to conceal things." No one could deny that she practiced the theory.

Whether she meant now to marry Guthrie was uncertain; it was said she was likely to do a thing because it was the unexpected, and so consistent was her inconsistency that for the same reason she might do the ordinarily expected. The women said she was not the same with Guthrie as with other men; when asked how she differed the question only elicited reiteration; the fact seemed to be the reason, and the masculine mind paused dazed before such involved logic.

After dinner the night before Christmas, as they were leaving for a supper at an inn among the hills, Miss Cranston took one of the women aside a moment.

"I want you to start without me, Jean, for I have been detained. I shall keep Chester with me and join you in an hour! Please go, and before you miss us we shall be with you, shall we not, Chester?" she said, turning to the man who had come over to them.

"Whenever you like," he answered gravely.

"You don't mind not being with them?" the woman asked as they watched the departing sleighs. "I am going first a couple of miles up the mountain with some presents for a little child. Her father has worked on the place for years and she is my namesake—a dear little thing! I tried to go today, but was prevented, and tomorrow would not be Christmas for her without a full stocking. Here is Jane now with the parcels and John will bring the sleigh around at once; we shall not be far behind the others."

"You know I should rather be with you Georgine; what are the others to me?"

"They are clever, charming people, Chester."

"Your friends would be, dear, but they are not you."

"No, I am—I, worse luck! Are the parcels well stowed in, John? Then we are ready."

The man stood back and the horses started in a sharp trot that took all Guthrie's attention for a few minutes. The road wound through the woods, but showed clearly in the bright moonlight that filtered through the trees.

"Georgine."

"Yes!"

"I must go back the day after tomorrow!"

"Oh, I wish you would not! Must you, Chester?"

"That is for you to decide, dear."

The snow creaked beneath the horses' hoofs and the sleigh sped smoothly along for an infinite time, it seemed to Guthrie, before Miss Cranston spoke:

"I understand, of course, but I—I cannot, Chester."

"Is it impossible, dear?"

"I have tried so hard to make it possible; you do not know! I care for you so, dear, but not that!"

"How is it?"

"I love you dearly, Chester, and I respect you—that sounds odd, does it not, 'respect'?" She gave a hard little laugh; "the word is nearly obsolete; *fin de siècle* has taken its place!"

"Georgine!"

"Have I shocked you? Forgive me. But you do not begin to know me, Chester. There is a part of my nature that is never called out with you. You are honest and good, my dear; cynicism and skepticism have no part in your being, and, except the influence you have over me, I am nothing else!"

"Admitting that to be true, dear, which I do not, you might change if you would let me help you."

"I am afraid to. Your standards and ideals are too high, Chester; they are beyond me, and I am—what I am!"

"The best woman on earth!"

"That is just it!" she exclaimed. "You have idealized me. It is what you think I am that you love, not what I know myself to be. I am not speaking lightly, Chester; there is no one in the world that knows himself better than I."

"You are morbidly critical!"—

"No, I am honest, and usually one lies to oneself for very obvious reasons. I am wholly self-centred, Chester; except for you there is no one I care for, and not enough for you, evidently, to forget myself."

"Do not talk so, dear."

"You never saw me in this mood before, did you, yet it is the common one? I am simply what society has made me. Debutantes were really to be pitied, Chester; perhaps they are now; I do not know. But when I came out girls had illusions; they believed the world a beautiful place where one had joys unlimited, and that men were creatures that only lived to love and give them pleasure. It was by experience they learned that only externals are beautiful—that it is never safe to peer below the surface—and while men may live to love, it is themselves, not women, that come first, and that the greater love the more satisfaction in the number of conquests. Women are the same, too, oh yes. Society seems to be in a state of *en garde*, and the man or woman that can parry and at the same time thrust most successfully, excites its greatest admiration as a clever person."

"Georgine!"

"It sounds vicious, does it not, and it is! Playing with edged tools! There is a tremendous fascination in the duelling. It is never fatal; one's pride will prevent such an absurdity! It is only that one's sweetness and freshness get worn through, and in their place comes cynicism that is invaluable to the most subtle attacks. That is why women cultivate cynicism, Chester, and if it is used cleverly and delicately it seems *piquant*; some women keep it so always; others make it hard and brutal and their charms cease!"

The man broke in agast.

"How can you live your life, Georgine, when you make it such a terrible thing? It is awful to hear a woman talk so!"

"I suppose it does sound terrible; that is why we keep our thoughts to ourselves! But one must 'drive one's weird,' you know, and I drink to a short life and a merry one! You do not realize what I have done, Chester, in talking so, but it will help you to know I am not what you think—honest, and good, and pure in thought."

The man leaned down and kissed her gently.

"You have just proved yourself honest and good, dear; it is your surroundings that are not healthy and they have tainted your moral lungs; get away from them!"

Miss Cranston laughed drearily.

"I have lived so long in them that I could not exist in any other! The atmosphere is a subtle poison that stimulates, and as it does, one drinks in larger quantities. I wish I were a weepy woman, Chester; I should love to cry now, but somehow I never can! Just see those shadows in the woods, dear; like lace, are they not? I am glad my last evening alone with you is so beautiful. You will go away day after tomorrow, and the next time we meet everything will be different. Next spring I will drive through here with someone not at all like you, Chester. Other men seem to have untounded belief in their own cleverness, and our conversation will undoubtedly be repartee, which sounds well and means nothing. It will enervate one's mind as the spring weather does one's muscles. I—I believe there are tears in my eyes, Chester. Fancy! One might think I had a heart

instead of only an organ that pumps blood! Tears make one's eyes red, don't they? It is so long since I cried that really I have forgotten! Don't touch the horses with the whip, dear; see, they will not stand it! I wish I did not care so much for you, Chester; why did you make me honor and respect you? Perhaps I might have loved you otherwise—as other women love!"

"I do not want love without honor and respect," the man said, sternly.

"No, I know you do not; that is why I give them. That is arguing in a circle, is it not? Perhaps some time I shall love some man without those; women can do strange things. I believe I shall try! It would be novel and interesting, perhaps, and so few things are that. I tried smoking, but it left such a rank odor in one's hair and clothes; and I went to a gay supper once where the women drank quantities of champagne, and I poured mine on the floor. It seemed rather beastly, I thought, to deliberately drink too much. Decidedly I shall cultivate a *passion*. Who, I wonder, would be the most entertaining! Chester!"

The whip had fallen with a stinging lash across the horses' backs, and with a bound that nearly tore the reins from the man's hands they sprang forward beyond control.

The woman spoke again quietly as though nothing unusual was happening:

"The road is on a bluff here, Chester, and just above it turns sharply. We shall probably go over there; it is rocky below!"

But the man's strength was concentrated in an effort to pull in the animals, and he made no answer.

"If only we can be killed and not horribly injured! There; there is the turn!" Miss Cranston said, still with the same calm manner.

"Jump!" the man said. "It is death to go over!" He dropped the reins and tore back the rug from her knees to leave her free, but she only looked at him and smiled, though her pallor was ghastly.

"Perhaps not," she whispered; "and what does it matter?"

With a plunge the horses went over, dragging the sleigh.

The searching party found them the next morning. The woman was huddled face down. Her neck was broken, they said afterward. The man's left arm was about her waist, and the other was stretched out as though to ward off a blow. His face was drawn and strained, but hers was perfectly serene.

Death is sometimes easier than life.—The Dramatist.

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#### SHERIFF'S SALE.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, THAT by virtue of an order of sale issued by the clerk of the district court of the Third Judicial district of Nebraska, within and for Lancaster county, in an action wherein Newport Savings Bank, a corporation, duly organized, existing and doing business under and by virtue of the laws of the state of New Hampshire, is plaintiff, and Ernest A. Jones, et al., defendants. I will, at 2 o'clock p. m., on the 2nd day of March, A. D. 1897, at the east door of the court house, in the city of Lincoln, Lancaster county, Nebraska, offer for sale at public auction the following described real estate to-wit:

All of lot twenty-three (23), in block three (3), in Lincoln Driving Park Company's second sub-division, all in the city of Lincoln, Lancaster county, Nebraska. Given under my hand this 27th day of January, A. D., 1897.

2 27 John J. Trompen,  
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