

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAGIC OF A NAME

The newcomer proved to be Goldstein, the manager of the Continental. His face was frowning and severe as he rudely marched up to the group and, without the formality of a greeting, pointedly addressed the Stanton girls.

"What does it mean?" he demanded in evident excitement, for his voice shook and the accusing finger he held out trembled. "How does it happen that my people, under contract to work for the Continental, are working for other firms?"

Maud paled and her eyes glistened with resentment as she rose and faced her manager. Florence pulled her sister's sleeve and said with a forced laugh: "Sit down, Maud; the man has probably been drinking."

He turned on the young girl fiercely, but now it was Arthur Weldon who seized the manager's arm and whirled him around.

"Sir, you are intruding," he said sternly. "If you have business with these ladies, choose the proper time and place to address them."

"I have!" cried Goldstein, blusteringly. "They have treated me

shamefully--unprofessionally! They have played me a trick, and I've the right to demand why they are working for a rival firm while in my pay."

Mrs. Montrose now arose and said with quiet dignity:

"Mr. Goldstein, you are intruding, as Mr. Weldon says. But you have said so much to defame my nieces in the eyes of our friends, here assembled, that you must explain yourself more fully."

The manager seemed astonished by his reception. He looked from one to another and said more mildly:

"It is easy enough for me to explain, but how can the Stantons explain their conduct? They are under contract to act exclusively for the Continental Film Company and I pay them a liberal salary. Yet only yesterday, when I was kind enough to give them a holiday, they went down to the beach and posed for a picture for our rivals, the Corona Company!"

"You are mistaken, sir!" retorted Arthur. "The young ladies were in our company the entire afternoon and they did not pose for any picture whatever."

"Don't tell me!" cried Goldstein. "I've just seen the picture down town. I was going by one of the theatres when I noticed a placard that read: 'Sensational Film by Maud Stanton, the Queen of Motion Picture Actresses,

entitled "A Gallant Rescue!" First run to-night.' I went in and saw the picture--with my own eyes!--and I saw Maud Stanton in a sea scene, rescuing a man who was drowning. Don't deny it, Miss," he added, turning upon Maud fiercely. "I saw it with my own eyes--not an hour ago!"

After a moment's amazed silence his hearers broke into a chorus of laughter, led by Flo, who was almost hysterical. Even A. Jones smiled indulgently upon the irate manager, who was now fairly bristling with indignation.

"The Corona people," remarked Arthur Weldon, "are quite enterprising. I did not know they had a camera-man at the beach yesterday, but he must have secured a very interesting picture. It was not posed, Mr. Goldstein, but taken from life."

"It was Maud Stanton!" asserted, the manager.

"Yes; she and some others. A man was really drowning and the brave girl swam to his rescue, without a thought of posing."

"I don't believe it!" cried the man rudely.

Here A. Jones struggled to his feet.

"It is true," he said. "I was the drowning man whom Miss Stanton saved."

Goldstein eyed him shrewdly.

"Perhaps you were," he admitted, "for the man in the picture was about your style of make-up. But how can you prove it was not a put-up job with the Corona people? How do I know you are not all in the employ of the Corona people?"

"I give you my word."

"Pah! I don't know you."

"I see you don't," returned the youth stiffly.

"Here is my card. Perhaps you will recognize the name."

He fumbled in his pocket, took out a card and handed it to the manager. Goldstein looked at it, started, turned red and then white and began bobbing his head with absurd deference to the youth.

"Pardon, Mr. Jones--pardon!" he gasped. "I--I heard you were in our neighborhood, but I--I did not recognize you. I--I hope you will pardon me, Mr. Jones! I was angry at what I supposed was the treachery of an employee. You will--will--understand that, I am sure. It is my duty to protect the interests of the Continental, you know, sir. But it's all right now, of course! Isn't it all right now, Mr. Jones?"

"You'd better go, Goldstein," said the boy in a weary tone, and sat down again.

The manager hesitated. Then he bowed to Maud Stanton and to the others, murmuring:

"All a mistake, you see; all a mistake. I--I beg everybody's pardon."

With this he backed away, still bowing, and finally turned and beat a hasty retreat. But no one was noticing him especially. All eyes were regarding the boy with a new curiosity.

"That Goldstein is an ill-bred boor!" remarked Uncle John in an annoyed tone.

"I suppose," said Maud, slowly, "he thought he was right in demanding an explanation. There is great rivalry between the various film manufacturers and it was rather mean of the Corona to put my name on that placard."

"It's wonderful!" exclaimed Patsy. "How did they get the picture, do you suppose?"

"They have camera-men everywhere, looking for some picture worth while." explained Mrs. Montrose. "If there's a fire, the chances are a camera-man is on the spot before the firemen arrive. If there's an accident, it is

often caught by the camera before the victim realizes what has happened. Perhaps a camera-man has been at the beach for weeks, waiting patiently for some tragedy to occur. Anyway, he was on hand yesterday and quietly ran his film during the excitement of the rescue. He was in rare luck to get Maud, because she is a favorite with the public; but it was not fair to connect her name with the picture, when they know she is employed by the Continental."

Young Jones rose from his chair with a gesture of weariness.

"If you will excuse me," he said, "I will go to my room. Our little conversation has given me much pleasure; I'm so alone in the world. Perhaps you will allow me to join you again--some other time?"

They hastened to assure him his presence would always be welcome. Patsy even added, with her cheery smile, that they felt a certain proprietorship in him since they had dragged him from a watery grave. The boy showed, as he walked away, that he was not yet very steady on his feet, but whether the weakness was the result of his malady or his recent trying experience they could not determine.

"What staggers me," said Maud, looking after him, "is the effect his name had on Goldstein, who has little respect or consideration for anyone. Who do you suppose A. Jones is?"

"Why, he has told us," replied Louise. "He is an islander, on his first

visit to this country."

"He must be rather more than that," declared Arthur. "Do you remember what the manager said to him?"

"Yes," said Beth. "He had heard that A. Jones was in this neighborhood, but had never met him. A. Jones was a person of sufficient importance to make the general manager of the Continental Film Company tremble in his boots."

"He really did tremble," asserted Patsy, "and he was abject in his apologies."

"Showing," added Flo Stanton, "that Goldstein is afraid of him."

"I wonder why," said Maud.

"It is all very easy of solution," remarked Arthur. "Goldstein believes that Jones is in the market to buy films. Perhaps he's going to open a motion picture theatre on his island. So the manager didn't want to antagonize a good customer."

"That's it," said Uncle John, nodding approval. "There's no great mystery about young Jones, I'm sure."