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The effect upon Swithin of the interview with the Bishop had been a very marked one. He felt that he had good ground for resenting that dignitary's tone in haughtily assuming that all must be sinful which at the first blush appeared to be so, and in narrowly refusing a young man the benefit of a single doubt. Swithin's assurance that he would be able to explain all some day had been taken in contemptuous incredulity.

'He may be as virtuous as his prototype Timothy; but he's an opinionated old fogey all the same,' said St. Cleeve petulantly.

Yet, on the other hand, Swithin's nature was so fresh and ingenuous, notwithstanding that recent affairs had somewhat denaturalized him, that for a man in the Bishop's position to think him immoral was almost as overwhelming as if he had actually been so, and at moments he could scarcely bear existence under so gross a suspicion. What was his union with Lady Constantine worth to him when, by reason of it, he was thought a reprobate by almost the only man who had professed to take an interest in him?

Certainly, by contrast with his air-built image of himself as a worthy astronomer, received by all the world, and the envied husband of Viviette, the present imputation was humiliating. The glorious light of this tender and refined passion seemed to have become debased to

burlesque hues by pure accident, and his aesthetic no less than his ethic taste was offended by such an anti-climax. He who had soared amid the remotest grandeurs of nature had been taken to task on a rudimentary question of morals, which had never been a question with him at all. This was what the exigencies of an awkward attachment had brought him to; but he blamed the circumstances, and not for one moment Lady Constantine.

Having now set his heart against a longer concealment he was disposed to think that an excellent way of beginning a revelation of their marriage would be by writing a confidential letter to the Bishop, detailing the whole case. But it was impossible to do this on his own responsibility. He still recognized the understanding entered into with Viviette, before the marriage, to be as binding as ever,--that the initiative in disclosing their union should come from her. Yet he hardly doubted that she would take that initiative when he told her of his extraordinary reprimand in the churchyard.

This was what he had come to do when Louis saw him standing at the window. But before he had said half-a-dozen words to Viviette she motioned him to go on, which he mechanically did, ere he could sufficiently collect his thoughts on its advisability or otherwise. He did not, however, go far. While Louis and his sister were discussing him in the drawing-room he lingered musing in the churchyard, hoping that she might be able to escape and join him in the consultation he so earnestly desired.

She at last found opportunity to do this. As soon as Louis had left the room and shut himself in upstairs she ran out by the window in the direction Swithin had taken. When her footsteps began crunching on the gravel he came forward from the churchyard door.

They embraced each other in haste, and then, in a few short panting words, she explained to him that her brother had heard and witnessed the interview on that spot between himself and the Bishop, and had told her the substance of the Bishop's accusation, not knowing she was the woman in the cabin.

'And what I cannot understand is this,' she added; 'how did the Bishop discover that the person behind the bed-curtains was a woman and not a man?'

Swithin explained that the Bishop had found the bracelet on the bed, and had brought it to him in the churchyard.

'O Swithin, what do you say? Found the coral bracelet? What did you do with it?'

Swithin clapped his hand to his pocket.

'Dear me! I recollect--I left it where it lay on Reuben Heath's tombstone.'

'Oh, my dear, dear Swithin!' she cried miserably. 'You have compromised me by your forgetfulness. I have claimed the article as mine. My brother did not tell me that the Bishop brought it from the cabin. What can I, can I do, that neither the Bishop nor my brother may conclude I was the woman there?'

'But if we announce our marriage--'

'Even as your wife, the position was too undignified--too I don't know what--for me ever to admit that I was there! Right or wrong, I must declare the bracelet was not mine. Such an escapade--why, it would make me ridiculous in the county; and anything rather than that!'

'I was in hope that you would agree to let our marriage be known,' said Swithin, with some disappointment. 'I thought that these circumstances would make the reason for doing so doubly strong.'

'Yes. But there are, alas, reasons against it still stronger! Let me have my way.'

'Certainly, dearest. I promised that before you agreed to be mine. My reputation--what is it! Perhaps I shall be dead and forgotten before the next transit of Venus!'

She soothed him tenderly, but could not tell him why she felt the reasons against any announcement as yet to be stronger than those in favour of

it. How could she, when her feeling had been cautiously fed and developed by her brother Louis's unvarnished exhibition of Swithin's material position in the eyes of the world?--that of a young man, the scion of a family of farmers recently her tenants, living at the homestead with his grandmother, Mrs. Martin.

To soften her refusal she said in declaring it, 'One concession, Swithin, I certainly will make. I will see you oftener. I will come to the cabin and tower frequently; and will contrive, too, that you come to the house occasionally. During the last winter we passed whole weeks without meeting; don't let us allow that to happen again.'

'Very well, dearest,' said Swithin good-humouredly. 'I don't care so terribly much for the old man's opinion of me, after all. For the present, then, let things be as they are.'

Nevertheless, the youth felt her refusal more than he owned; but the unequal temperament of Swithin's age, so soon depressed on his own account, was also soon to recover on hers, and it was with almost a child's forgetfulness of the past that he took her view of the case.

When he was gone she hastily re-entered the house. Her brother had not reappeared from upstairs; but she was informed that Tabitha Lark was waiting to see her, if her ladyship would pardon the said Tabitha for coming so late. Lady Constantine made no objection, and saw the young girl at once.

When Lady Constantine entered the waiting-room behold, in Tabitha's outstretched hand lay the coral ornament which had been causing Viviette so much anxiety.

'I guessed, on second thoughts, that it was yours, my lady,' said Tabitha, with rather a frightened face; 'and so I have brought it back.'

'But how did you come by it, Tabitha?'

'Mr. Glanville gave it to me; he must have thought it was mine. I took it, fancying at the moment that he handed it to me because I happened to come by first after he had found it.'

Lady Constantine saw how the situation might be improved so as to effect her deliverance from this troublesome little web of evidence.

'Oh, you can keep it,' she said brightly. 'It was very good of you to bring it back. But keep it for your very own. Take Mr. Glanville at his word, and don't explain. And, Tabitha, divide the strands into two bracelets; there are enough of them to make a pair.'

The next morning, in pursuance of his resolution, Louis wandered round the grounds till he saw the girl for whom he was waiting enter the church. He accosted her over the wall. But, puzzling to view, a coral bracelet blushed on each of her young arms, for she had promptly carried

out the suggestion of Lady Constantine.

'You are wearing it, I see, Tabitha, with the other,' he murmured. 'Then you mean to keep it?'

'Yes, I mean to keep it.'

'You are sure it is not Lady Constantine's? I find she has one like it.'

'Quite sure. But you had better take it to her, sir, and ask her,' said the saucy girl.

'Oh, no; that's not necessary,' replied Louis, considerably shaken in his convictions.

When Louis met his sister, a short time after, he did not catch her, as he had intended to do, by saying suddenly, 'I have found your bracelet. I know who has got it.'

'You cannot have found it,' she replied quietly, 'for I have discovered that it was never lost,' and stretching out both her hands she revealed one on each, Viviette having performed the same operation with her remaining bracelet that she had advised Tabitha to do with the other.

Louis was mystified, but by no means convinced. In spite of this attempt to hoodwink him his mind returned to the subject every hour of the day.

There was no doubt that either Tabitha or Viviette had been with Swithin in the cabin. He recapitulated every case that had occurred during his visit to Welland in which his sister's manner had been of a colour to justify the suspicion that it was she. There was that strange incident in the corridor, when she had screamed at what she described to be a shadowy resemblance to her late husband; how very improbable that this fancy should have been the only cause of her agitation! Then he had noticed, during Swithin's confirmation, a blush upon her cheek when he passed her on his way to the Bishop, and the fervour in her glance during the few moments of the imposition of hands. Then he suddenly recalled the night at the railway station, when the accident with the whip took place, and how, when he reached Welland House an hour later, he had found

no Viviette there. Running thus from incident to incident he increased his suspicions without being able to cull from the circumstances anything amounting to evidence; but evidence he now determined to acquire without saying a word to any one.

His plan was of a cruel kind: to set a trap into which the pair would blindly walk if any secret understanding existed between them of the nature he suspected.

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