

HIS "COMRADE."

CHAPTER I.

'Sydney congratulate me; you are always so sweet, that anything which affects my happiness is sure to enlist your sympathy.' The person addressed looked up from her easel, with a glance from her great blue grey eyes, half-questioning, half-examining.

The man who spoke the words leaped against the mantelpiece, from which position he could command a full view of the artist's form and face, and the painting on which she was engaged.

He was three or four-and-thirty, the girl probably about twenty-four or five; most people would say she was 'very pretty,' a few said Sydney Desmond was 'very lovely.'

Among the few was Rex Dare and Rex Dare was always counted an excellent judge of beauty, whether in a human being or a picture.

He himself was handsome, with fine, clear-cut features, and dark eyes, at once brilliant and soft.

Just now they looked very soft and tender, as he claimed the congratulation of his 'comrade' Sydney.

'So you are engaged?' the girl said, archly, noting the look.

Perhaps in her heart was a swift pang. The camaraderie between the artist and the studio-patron would inevitably suffer, if not altogether cease, and it had been sweet to the lonely girl—she knew not how sweet nor, indeed, did Rex, probably.

He laughed and nodded.

'How did you know?' he said.

'Am I blind?'

Sydney took up her brush, and added, idly, a few touches.

She had swiftly scolded herself for the pang, which she deemed selfish.

'Tell me, Rex.'

'But you don't congratulate me,' said he.

'Before I know who the lady is and what she is like?' rejoined the girl, with again, that pretty touch of archness: 'that would be as—' as rash as you are!'

'Am I rash?'

'Well, impulsive, at any rate. Do I know the chosen one?'

'No; I met her a few weeks ago at a country house—the Warwick's,' you know. Your artist soul would be pleased with her, I am sure Sydney,' the man said, with glowing eyes. 'She is as beautiful as a dream; but—' he caught himself up, half laughing—'lovers' rhapsodies are not very trustworthy, you will say. See for yourself, as far as a photograph can do justice to her.'

He drew forth and placed in Sydney's hand a cabinet photograph, an exquisite specimen of the photographer's art, as Sydney at once saw, and the artist eye of the girl was caught and fix in a kind of breathless admiration.

The picture represented a girl, somewhere probably, about Sydney's own age, with exquisite, almost infantile, softness of outline, large long-lashed eyes, that looked out with a kind of innocent wonderment on the world, a Cupid's bow, and masses of fluffy light hair.

And yet it was with a curious pain somewhere that Sydney looked so long at the picture—looked with a kind of searching for something that the artist-soul demanded.

She began to feel that Rex might misapprehend her long, silent scurrying, and that made the colour flush her own soft cheek.

'She is very lovely,' she said, looking up, with a half-sigh, but a smile, too. 'Rex, I don't wonder!'

'It was love at first sight, literally,' Rex said, half laughing. 'Sydney, don't be surprised—' you know what a volcano I am—I always told you how it would be. It was all settled in three weeks!'

For a second or two Sydney made no answer.

Then she shook her curly head, with an arch smile.

'Oh, Rex,' she said 'what can you get to know of a girl in three weeks?'

'Enough to be sure I shall be supremely happy,' returned Rex. 'She is one of Nature's children, Sydney—innocent transparent; she doesn't take much studying—and yet,' he added, rather quickly, 'there's a great deal in her really. What I said might give the impression that she is shallow, but there's a lot in her, Sydney. She's not so intellectual and clever as you, for instance, nor so mentally developed as you—but, then, what does that matter?'

'Delightful task—for you to develop intellect, etcetera!' said Sydney, with a touch of dryness. 'Well, Rex, tell me all about her, if I may know.'

'If you may know, comrade!' said Rex, with a half-tender intonation. 'Why, aren't you the first person to know of anything that gives me either joy or pain? I shall bring her to see you as soon as she comes to town. Sydney—she'll be delighted with you.'

Sydney might have had a doubt on that point.

These artistic comradeships were apt to be misunderstood by brides-elect out of Bohemia—or in it for that matter.

'Her name is Gertrude Brereton. She is well born, but not well off, poor child! and is staying with Mrs. de Lacy; at least I believe she is half-companion-guest, if you understand the combination. It's a cruel sort of portion for the child—a sensitive girl. But she's coming to stay with Mrs. Hayward. Gertrude has no friends in town, and I strongly object to the companion-guest business. And now, Sydney, I'm going to ask a favor—all in the way of business, mind,' said Rex, 'or' with mock melodramatic action—'I take my commission elsewhere.'

'Don't be absurd, Rex, said Sydney

'I'm not going to do anything in the way of business for you.'

There was a little break in her voice that she hastily covered by laughing.

'You'd better get some big swell to paint Miss Brereton,' she said.

'I'd rather you did. I'll back you against any of the 'big swells,' as you call them,' returned Rex, serenely. 'There isn't one of them that has got your Italian coloring. Be a good girl, and fix the first sitting, and please leave the 'business' part to me.'

Sydney was silent a few moments, then she said looking up brightly—

'Very well, Rex; I'll do as you wish. When does Miss Brereton come to town?'

'Next week; can you begin at once?'

'Oh, yes—what do you think of Thursday. Shall we say the afternoon at three? and then you can have some tea, said Sydney, and Rex thought that would do very well, and looked at his watch.

'I must be off,' he said; 'I really ought not to have come in this morning, disturbing you; but I always must rush to you with the first news of anything good, or the reverse.'

'There haven't been many reverses,' have there?' said the girl, with a smile that was a little wistful, as he held out her hand.

'Perhaps all my troubles are to come,' answered Rex, jestingly, and somehow, the just made Sydney inwardly wince. 'I'll bring Gertrude next Thursday, then; au revoir.'

Sydney turned back into the studio with a half-sigh, when she had seen Rex to the door, and sat down with a kind of feeling as if everything was flat and uninteresting.

Of course Rex's engagement must, in the natural course of things, interrupt that happy camaraderie to which the girl had been accustomed; but Sydney's generous nature could have, though with regret for personal loss, spared him to the woman he loved, it she knew that woman to be worthy of him, and that in her love he could be entirely happy.

But this girl to whom he had so quickly, so impulsively plighted his troth.

Was she in very truth a woman who could eventually satisfy all the needs of a man of Rex's temperament.

Was this sudden love of his more than the fascination exercised by great personal charms, and the kind of unspoken appeal to his strength and his chivalry which lay in the girl's nature, and in her dependent position in the world?

Sydney was by nature a good physiognomist, and her profession had rendered keener this gift of insight; her heart misgave her about Gertrude Brereton. Rex had said her artist soul would be satisfied with the lovely picture he presented of his betrothed; yet it was not so; her artist-eye was satisfied, but Gertrude spoke nothing to the soul. And in three months after marriage, if not before, Rex Dare would find out, too, that the woman he had married spoke nothing to his soul.

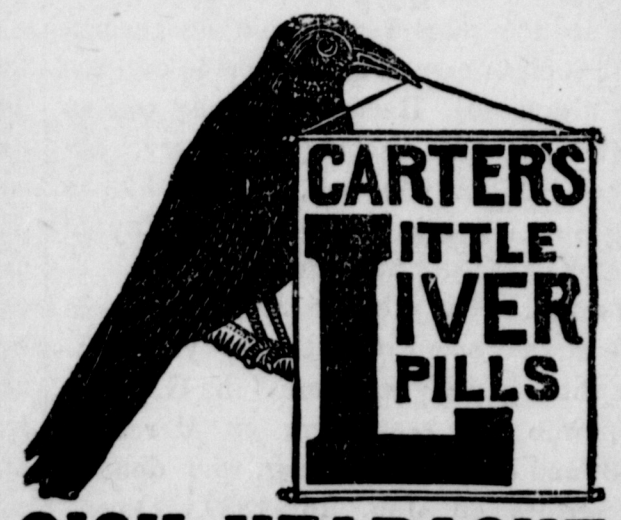
'But she may improve on acquaintance,' Sydney said, striving to comfort herself with the thought; 'or marriage may develop her. I shall be able to form a better opinion when I talk with her.'

CHAPTER II.

It was not without some anxiety that Sydney awaited the arrival of Rex and the bride-elect—'anxiety not on her own behalf, but on his.

She so wanted the reality to give the lie to her fears, and yet, she dared not hope that this would be the case.

She was looking eminently picturesque this afternoon, in a charming tea-gown of artistic make and hues and had decorated her studio with a profusion of fresh flowers, so that nothing should be wanting on her part to make Rex see that Miss Brereton was welcome.



SICK HEADACHE
Positively cured by these Little Pills.

They also relieve Distress from Dyspepsia, Indigestion and Too Hearty Eating. A perfect remedy for Dizziness, Nausea, Drowsiness, Bad Taste in the Mouth, Coated Tongue, Pain in the Side, TORPID LIVER. They Regulate the Bowels. Purely Vegetable.

Small Pill. Small Dose. Small Price.

Substitution
the fraud of the day.

See you get Carter's,
Ask for Carter's,
Insist and demand
Carter's Little Liver Pills

Glancing at the clock, Sydney smiled; it was already half-past three.

'Unpunctual,' she said to herself. 'That is not Rex! I suppose the young lady has kept him waiting.'

But she had not long to wait after this, and turned from an easel at which she had been trying to sketch, as the door opened and the servant announced visitors.

Sydney's first impression, as she went forward with outstretched hands, was of a beauty dazzling enough to take away one's breath.

The girl was brilliant; her photograph did not do her justice, since it could not reproduce the exquisite tints of coloring; and in her heart Sydney hardly wondered that a man—and an impulsive man—should be so dazzled by it as to forget to look for more than the outward graces that certainly Gertrude Brereton possessed in abundance.

The artist's greeting was warm and affectionate, Gertrude's a little constrained. Probably she was somewhat shy.

But no one long remained reserved with either Rex or Sydney, and the girl was soon chattering away with the brightness and with something of the insouciance of a child, fluttering from easel to easel, from this thing to that, asking all manner of questions, and declaring that it was the greatest fun to come to an artist's studio.

'I've never been to one in my life,' said she, 'and it's too delightful for words. It will be splendid having my portrait painted. How are you going to do me Miss Desmond? I've got a lovely ball-dress, all yellow and that, you know.'

Rex looked critically at the girl.

Rex laughed, too.

'Don't you know, Gertrude,' he said, 'that Miss Desmond wages an eternal war against the conventional ball-dress, from an artistic point of view?'

'And yellow isn't just the color for you, either,' added Sydney, with a smile. 'If you will put yourself into my hands with regard to your costume, I'll engage to turn you out perfect.'

Gertrude laughed, stared a little, and looked whimsical.

'Are you very autocratic, Miss Desmond?' said she.

'In my own department—very,' responded the artist, gravely. 'Now come and have tea before, before we discuss position and frocks.'

Gertrude came, hovering about in the prettiest manner, and subsided into the armchair which Sydney brought forward for her, Rex taking a low chair beside his fiancée.

Sydney, with seeming to do so, addressed herself to 'drawing out' her guest.

She had the two-fold motive of the artist and the friend.

As an artist about to paint a portrait, she must get to know something about her subject.

As a friend of Rex's, she wanted to sound the depths of the woman who was to be his companion through life.

Alas! it did not take the keen intuition of Sydney long to discover that the 'depths' were but shallows; that, when the conversation began to leave the channels of the common-places—the mere chattering of the drawing-room—Rex's fiancée was silent, and that, even in light interchange of chaff and fun, she was 'out of it.'

Sydney tried to persuade herself that the girl was shy, or that she was unused to society, and so did not 'come out' on a first interview; but there was no symptom of shyness about her, and she 'came out' sufficiently in trivialities.

Sydney was glad when the visit came to an end; she felt pained, and disappointed, and dulled; she had looked for some one so different to be Rex's wife.

The sittings were arranged, and Gertrude was very delighted at the prospect of wearing a beautiful frock—though its proposed style did not quite fit in with her ideas of beauty—and seeing her lovely countenance on canvas.

Sydney felt strangely lonely when her visitors had gone.

You've known Miss Desmond a long time, I suppose,' Gertrude said, on the way back to her friends', where Rex was to dine.

'Oh, yes, ever since we were boy and girl,' he answered, with a laugh. 'A pair of art enthusiasts.'

'Ah! and flirted sadly. I'll warrant,' said Gertrude, archly.

'No, I don't think we ever flirted,' rejoined Rex; 'Sydney isn't that kind of girl at all.'

'Nor you that kind of man?' still archly.

'Nonsense, dear! not with regard to serious friendship; you don't understand art friendship at present,' said Rex, a trifle vexed with the tone of his fiancée, yet unable to find out what it was that vexed him.

'Perhaps not,' rejoined Gertrude, sweetly.

She gave a little start just then, and a swift side-glance at Rex, as a man brushed somewhat rudely passed her.

'That cad didn't bow to you, did he?' Rex asked, with a frown.

'I don't think so,' she answered, smiling. 'Perhaps he may have done so in apology for his rudeness.'

'He bowed, I thought, before he almost ran against you.'

'Oh, no, Rex. What a fire eater you are!' said the girl, laughing. 'Do you want to trash him?'

Whereat the 'fire eater' laughed, too, and dismissed the little incident from his mind.

The sittings went on prosperously.

Gertrude used to come over to the artist's studio three times a week at first, and Rex would generally drop in also, and while Sydney painted, they would discuss all sorts of matters.

But Gertrude was 'out of it' when the talk went deeper than the surface of things. Sometimes the young lady pouted and frowned, and made herself disagreeable afterwards to Rex, throwing out 'feelings' as to his friendship for Sydney, making him angry in order that she might have

the pleasure of reconciliation, and to show her power.

One day she drove up to the studio alone and Sydney got to work and painted away busily, Gertrude chattering like a jay about dinners, balls, &c., and what she was going to wear, and her approaching marriage.

Sydney listened and smiled, and put in a word or a question now and then, and wondered, with a vague pain at her heart, how Rex would get on with this sort of thing after the honeymoon.

'Rex hasn't turned up today!' she remarked, by way of saying something, when Gertrude had for a moment relapsed into silence. Miss Brereton laughed, and there was the slightest possible toss of the golden head.

'He won't come!' she said, airily; 'he's in a rage with poor little me!'

'In a rage, Gertrude? What have you been doing to put him in a rage?' asked Sydney, half smiling.

'Oh, its good for men to get in tiffs sometimes, they enjoy the making of them up so, you know! It isn't good for them to be all honey!'

'What, then or you—do you mean?'

'Oh—there you are, Miss Precise!' cried Gertrude, who was in the habit of jumbling up her phrases unmercifully. 'I mean it isn't good for a girl to be all honey to a man. There! is that clear?'

'Oh, yes—that's clear,' said Sydney, dryly.

'But you don't approve,' said Gertrude tartly.

'I don't think it's wise to have quarrels for the sake of making them up again, and the man generally tires of the fun after the girl's his will.'

'Oh, you've got notions!' was all the rejoinder she got. And Sydney made no answer, which did not please Miss Brereton.

'It's no business of mine,' returned Sydney.

'Not your friend's quarrels? And you are such comrades; that was why we quarrelled,' said Gertrude, complacently smoothing down her satin robe. 'At least—I don't mean that exactly—but I was very naughty, you must know, and cross because, last time, Rex would keep on talking with you about some 'problem play' as you called it. Now, I don't know even what a 'problem play' is. I felt shamefully neglected, and told him so, and he said I was silly, and ought to listen to 'improving conversation,' and try and take an interest in things he liked.'

'So like a man! I wasn't going to be spoken to like that, so I pouted, and gave him the cold shoulder. My lord said I was 'a child,' and so on, and he shouldn't come to the studio if I didn't behave myself; so I said he might keep away—I didn't want him, though I didn't know about other people.'

'He marched himself out of the room—I'm not sure that he didn't bang the door—and he hasn't come, you see. To-morrow he'll be wretched. That's the way to keep men up to time,' said Gertrude, stopping to take breath, and looking like an angel who has made a joke.

And it was said with a drollery at which Sydney wanted to laugh, only that she couldn't be sure there were not little pen-knife pricks under it all.

She looked grave. Gertrude's tactics savoured to her of vulgarity.

'Well, why don't you say something?' said Gertrude, impatiently. 'Of course, I was only in fun about your talking. You mustn't be offended—you aren't are you?'

'Not in the least, you silly child,' answered Sydney, laughing. She concluded that Gertrude was an 'irresponsible,' and not to be taken seriously. 'But,' she added, more gravely, 'that sort of thing doesn't pay with all men—not with Rex, it carried too far.'

'Oh, he's all right, bless you!' Gertrude said, with wide eyes. 'He'll be giving me some lovely present—just to show he's not angry any more.'

'As one gives sweets to a baby—I understand.'

'You sarcastic thing!' cried Gertrude. 'I think it's nice.'

'I don't fancy I should like to be treated as a baby,' returned Sydney; 'isn't it a little—humiliating?'

'Oh! if you get a diamond bracelet along with it, I can swallow the humiliation, as you call it. Only, I think it's the other way about!'

'Then, I shouldn't like to humiliate the man I was to marry,' said Sydney, dryly.

'You've got notions,' rejoined the young lady, by way of settling the matter. 'Talking of bracelets, Sydney, do you know—'

And she went into a description of jewels and clothes that lasted till the sitting was over.

How glad Sydney was when the time came! How heart-sick she was!

When Rex was married, she would lose her friend—that she could foresee, and she had nobody but Rex—the familiar comrade of years; so familiar, so much a part of her life, that it never entered her head that he could be anything but a comrade. And if he had married a nice girl, they could have gone on just the same; but Gertrude would be jealous—that she could see—and it would be impossible.

'Don't forget next Sunday,' said Sydney, when Gertrude was ready at last. 'Your picture will be finished, and it's my Show Sunday; a few friends and art critics are coming.'

'I'll come—and bring Rex,' answered Gertrude, coquettishly. 'I'll wear my new—whatever it is he makes up with.'

CHAPTER III.

Sydney Desmond looked the embodiment of artistic grace as she stood at the door of her studio receiving her guests, and full as the room was of lovely pictures, she was the most lovely the most picturesque. The last painting, the portrait of Gertrude Brereton, stood on a tall easel, in a good light, and challenged attention, as much by the exquisite finish of its execution, its rich coloring and poetic atmosphere, as by the loveliness of the subject.

Certainly, the young painter had done justice to the original.

There was a buzz of admiration as everyone crowded round this picture, and the art critics present complimented the girl, and the ladies went into raptures over the beautiful costumes.

'You designed it, of course?' remarked an art critic.

'Yes,' Sydney answered. She did not enlarge.

She was, naturally, pleased with her success, but she was free from the restless vanity that can talk eternally of self.

'I brought a man with me,' the art critic pursued. 'I knew I might—a rich American, or, at any rate, he has been in the States, and passes for rich. I want him to see this picture.'

'It's very good of you,' said Sydney, 'but you know, this portrait's not for sale.'

'No? Oh, I suppose not—of course, Dare has bought it. Well, never mind, there are other pictures here.'

Mr. Merton looked about the room as he spoke, and lifted his hand to someone in the crowd near the door.

'There he is, Miss Desmond. Here, Tyrell, I want you.'

A tall man, at whom Sydney looked somewhat critically—though this could not be observed—shouldered his way through the groups to where she stood near Gertrude's portrait; though just at present there were too many round it to allow of its being seen by him to advantage.

'Let me present you to Miss Desmond, Mr. Tyrell,' said Merton, and Sydney bowed and gave her slim hand to the art critic's friend, the while scanning him with the inward eye, the outward resting on his face without seeming to 'take stock' of him.

He was a loose-limbed man, of perhaps thirty five, with a good looking countenance, the mouth half concealed by a thick moustache; and dark, almost black, eyes; which were lustreless and set too close together.

Altogether, Sydney thought she did not like Mr. Tyrell's face, though she could not have said exactly why.

'Delighted to meet so distinguished an artist,' said he; he shook hands with some effusion, which was not particularly well-bred. 'Now, Merton, where's this wonderful picture?'

'There's an opening; let's get in here,' said Merton, and the group before the portrait falling back to allow the critic and Sydney way, the lovely face and form of Gertrude Brereton—living, breathing, it seemed, on the canvas—was in full view.

'By Jove!' uttered the man beside Sydney.

She heard the exclamation under his breath, and glanced, with a swift sort of inquiry, into his face.

'Was it a flush of recognition she saw there?'

'Do you know the face?' she asked him; and the American flushed, and, just for a second, she would have said he seemed confused.

'I? Know the face? Oh, no; of course not. How should I? he half stammered; then, with a little awkward laugh; 'But, you know, Miss Desmond, the face is one to impress you, and as to your work—well, it takes one's breath away!'

Sydney smiled. Rex would have understood the smile.

Truth to say, she did not think the man was any judge of her 'work.'

'But she only said—'

'Yes, it is a face to strike one. The original will be here presently, and you will have an opportunity of seeing whether the portrait is a true one.'

'Indeed! Who is the lady, if I may ask?'

'Miss Brereton.'

'Oh! not married?'

'Engaged, though,' said Merton, before Sydney could make any answer. 'You might know such a beauty wouldn't be long an "unappropriated blessing." Is Rex coming, Miss Desmond?'

'Probably he will bring Miss Brereton,' answered the girl; and then she moved away to speak to someone else.

'Is that her fiancée, this Rex?' asked Tyrell, of his friend.

'Yes. He's a young swell whose mad on art; a real connoisseur—none of your studio-baunters, who don't know a Millais from a Botticelli. A fully nice fellow, and rich too.'

'The young lady has made a good thing of it,' observed the American—if such he was—with a scarcely perceptible sneer. 'I should think, though, she could have married a duke or a prince with that face.'

Merton laughed, and shook his head.

'Not that I should have chosen her,' he said, lowering his voice, 'when the artist of this was by! But each man to his taste! And here comes the beauty—and that's Rex Dare with her!'

The stranger turned and looked to where

(CONTINUED ON FIFTEENTH PAGE)

EVERY MOTHER SHOULD Have it in the House

For common ailments which may occur in every family. She can trust what time indorses. For Internal as much as External use. Dropped on sugar it is pleasant to take for colds, coughs, croup, colic, cramps and pains.

I have used your Anodyne Liniment in treating our infant (only six months old) for colic, and our little three year old daughter for summer complaint and bowel diseases generally, and found it to be excellent. JOHN L. INGALLS, Americus, Ga.

JOHNSON'S ANODYNE LINIMENT

Relieves Every Form of Inflammation. Originated in 1810 by an old Family Physician. No remedy has the confidence of the public to a greater extent. Our book on INFLAMMATION free. Price 25 and 50c. I. S. JOHNSON & CO., Boston, Mass.

Parsons' Pills

'Best Liver Pill made.' Positively cure Biliousness, Sick Headache, all Liver and Bowel complaints. They expel impurities from the blood. Delicate women find relief from using them. Price 25c. I. S. JOHNSON & CO., Boston, Mass.