

Family Circle. MARGARET TORRENTING. OR, THE VOYAGE OF LIFE.

By the Author of "Faded Tulle," "Sir Julian's Wife," "The Sinner," &c.

"No, indeed," I thought; "not if I never go to Maple Cottage any more. I could not avoid his escort to-night, indeed I should be most ungrateful did I not confess that I was extremely glad to see him; but I will take care it does not occur again."

But it did occur again—so far as Tom was concerned—very quickly. The next day—Saturday—while Gussie and I were changing books at the library, he came into the shop, and advised us to read "Handy Andy," and "Ten Thousand Toppas Shot-blocks," or something very like it, and selected the "Dog Fiend" for his own especial edification, and mortally offended Gussie by offering to purchase for her "The True History of Mother Bunch."

"I don't envy Tredgold; I would rather be as poor as a church mouse than have such a wife as Sissy will make him. It will be great fun to go and see them when the honeymoon is well over, and Sissy is shining out in her frug colors, and Gilbert is just getting disenchanted. The miserable fellow! he will not be able to say his wife is his own."

"You do not know Gilbert Tredgold," I replied. "Unless he is greatly altered he is not the man to succumb to any woman's temper; but you are sure that he intends Sissy to be his wife?"

"It really looks very much like it—that is all I can say; but how he can like such a wax doll of beauty I cannot imagine. I hate that smooth golden hair, and those turquoise blue eyes, and a skin that looks as if it would spoil, like a bounce, if it were caught in a heavy shower. No, no, Margarita bella; a 'nut-brown maid' for me."

"With plenty of 'tin' of course!" I remarked, half-amused, and half wondering whether a compliment was paid to my own waxy face, and then I said, "No! I don't care about tin now. I like choice; but that is all over, Margaret. The wife I choose must be a handsome, spirited, clever, good, of course a gentlemanly, and a capital musician. She must be younger than myself, of course—about five years, say, not more. I don't want a baby, or a mere bread-and-butter girl. As for money, I do not care a jot about it."

"That is quite a new decision," I replied. "It is now I came to about two months ago, and I had a talk with the governor. It was all your doing."

"All my doing?" I exclaimed in great affright. "Oh, Tom! what can you mean?"

"Don't you remember my telling you what a lot of scrapes I was in—money scrapes you know? I didn't do it, I advise me to go to the governor, and tell him all about it, instead of borrowing fresh at nobody's know what percent? Well, I took your advice and went, Margaret; and so, how the jolliest row you can imagine, I never saw my father in such a rage; he would have been so angry that he declared I should bring down his grey hair with sorrow to the grave, and all that kind of thing, you know. It doesn't mean much; and governors always say it when they get aggravated; but it is decidedly unpleasant to listen to—particularly when you know you are in a fix, and can only say, 'I am sure I am very sorry; I had no idea it was half as much, etc.'"

"But what had your confession to do with—?"

"With getting married? Oh! my father asked me if I had any objection to wedded happiness; and I replied at once, 'None in the world, provided I might have the girl of my choice.' But of course there was the question of supplies to be considered, and the beloved pater-proprietor, Miss Agatha Druce as being a very fine young woman, and also as being in the enjoyment of an independent fortune! But, Margaret, I repeat that I had no opinion of double alliances, and that I would see the fair Agatha drowned before I would make her Mrs. Crofton! At last, after a very tempest of a row, we came to something like an arrangement. I told them—for my mother joined action when the fray was at its height—that I would marry one person or nobody at all, and as they want to see me settled down, and as sober as a judge, they were forced to give way. So that is just how the matter stands at present, but you do not ask me, Margaret, who the lady is who has enchanted my long-wandering affections?"

take it without more ado? Tom had really said nothing yet, and it would not do to proceed to extremities on that subject. However well founded they might be, I could not well appear too anxious, so I moved quietly to the empty corner, being all the time that Mr. Sanderson's sternest gaze was fixed upon me. (To be Continued.)

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