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## .. A .. Bloodless Conflict

BY BELL BLOSSOM

**A**T 8 o'clock, of a lovely night in midsummer, in one of the upper rooms of the principal hotel at Mt. Desert, stood a girl of rare and wonderful beauty, donning her armor for the coming fray—an armor whose breastplate was invisible, whose weapons were hidden, but none the less impenetrable and keen for that.

Her maid had put the finishing touches to a toilet of most artistic loveliness. Her deep blue eyes were black with excitement and triumph.

Three nights before she had received a challenge—not an openly-worded challenge, but fully understood for all that. Of course she had accepted, though her acceptance was tacit, too; but she and Jack Raymond understood it, and each other. No more was necessary. They required no witnesses among the world.

She had met him only a week before. She had not known him ten minutes before she felt he was one of the few whose friendship she would be glad to possess—nay, more, whom she would feel pride in bringing within the scope of her power.

Of course she would escape herself; of that she had no passing doubt. She had played with fire too long to fear its scorching now. She was already in her twenty-second year, and numberless as were her victims, no one of them possessed a single trophy of even a momentary triumph. Why, then, need she fear to add a fresh name to the list?

"You have a heart? I should like to make it stir!"

This had been the challenge, spoken in low, earnest tones, heard only by herself and the listening moon sailing in its awakening beauty in the ether above their heads.

"Is it in your sight so poor a thing you wish to make of it a toy?" she had answered, flashing one bewildering glance into his down-bent face.

"Give it to me but for an hour and see the use that I would put it to. You will not willingly, I know, but I mean to make the struggle for its possession."

"You would glory in my defeat, then?"

"Yes, if you choose to call it by that name. Most women would call it victory, since for all so grudgingly given I return to you tenfold."

It was a strange, a novel way of wooing, and it held a fascination of its own. Most men had approached her as suppliants, carefully hiding their mode of attack upon the citadel of her affection, lest she should see and fortify it. This man boldly asserted not only his method, but laughed to scorn her defense, in his proud confidence that the colors which so long had floated to the free breezes of heaven would lower themselves in obeisance before him.

It was nonsense, of course. It was audacity unparalleled on his part; but it was audacity most charming, and Ethel Marcus felt a little premonitory shiver run through her veins, which would have warned her already of danger, had she known or recognized it. Alas! her greatest danger was in her perfect security.

She tossed a little triumphant smile at her own reflection in the mirror, and with it still lingering about the perfect rose-red lips, ran lightly down the stairs. At the foot he awaited her coming. How sure she had been that she would find him there!

"Do you know that our waltz is half-finished?" he asked, in low tones of reproach. "Do you know that I have begrudged every moment of which you have robbed me?"

"I have robbed myself equally," was the low-murmured reply. "Cannot that plead my pardon?"

"For what could you sue at my hands I would not grant?" he answered.

"Remember those words," she said. "Some day I may remind you of them."

The next moment they were in the merry maze of dancers. But thrice had they floated through the room, when the music ceased. Drawing her

hand within his arm, they stepped out upon the piazza.

The moon was almost at its full. It smiled upon them most gracious welcome.

He spoke no word, but she could feel the earnest gaze of his dark eyes fixed upon her face, compelling her own at length to meet them.

What wonderful eyes they were! How full of strength, and tenderness, and loving purpose!

She felt hot blood rush to her cheeks—a commingled sense of pleasure and of pain, yet the latter almost sweeter than the former. A faint glimmering of possible danger in this instance of silence dawned upon her; a faint breath from a fire with which she might not play. A little shiver passed over her.

The man saw it and spoke.

"Are you cold?" he questioned.

"No," she said. "I am afraid it was a little tremor of cowardice. I fear, as a duelist, you are too strong for me."

"I wish I might be. Suppose you lay down your weapons, then, and trust to my generosity?"

"I prefer to trust to that and my good steel, too. How like a man, to wish the glory of conquest without the brunt of battle!"

"No—you mistake me: it is because I know the battle will be so fierce and long that I wish to save us both the scars of many wounds."

"Ah," she replied, with a little, low trilling laugh. "Use this most wonderful consideration, I pray, for yourself. Look at me!" upraising her face, the moonlight falling full upon its almost flawless beauty. "Can you see any signs of former scars?"

"None!" he answered; "but, by the heaven above us, you shall yet acknowledge one wound, which, if it leave no scar, is only because it refuses to heal!"

Again she shuddered, and again a pain, which yet was keenest pleasure, smote her heart.

The days glided on. The moon full and waned. A month had passed since Jack Raymond had flung down the gauntlet, and she, with fearless fingers, had stooped and picked it up. A month! but what had it brought to them both? No longer they jested as before—no longer they spoke of triumph or defeat; yet each knew their blades were crossed, and they themselves in the hottest of the fight.

August was nearing its close. The pleasant summer was almost at an end.

"The winter soon will be here," said Ethel, as they sauntered together, late one afternoon, upon the cliffs, with the sea lashing itself far below them into white, impotent foam. "Are you sorry?"

"I have not thought of it," he replied.

The next moment the girl clapped her hands.

"Oh, look!" she exclaimed. "The new moon. Let us wish!"

An instant they stood silent, regarding the pale crescent far above them.

"What was your wish?" she questioned.

"That you would ordain that for me there should be no winter, but an eternal, glorious summer," he answered, earnestly, turning and taking both her hands.

It had come, then. She had seen it from afar; yet its coming found her all unprepared to meet it. Her very soul was in chaos. She had lost the power to think or reason.

"I—what have I to do with changing the seasons?" she stammered, at last, with a little, embarrassed laugh.

"Ethel, do not trifle! Must I tell the wonderful fascination you have exercised over me from the first moment of our meeting? Is the road to your heart so long, so hard a one, that, after all my struggle, I have missed my way?"

How subtly sweet were his words! One moment she was tempted to uplift the lovely eyes and let him read

his answer; the next, she steeled herself against it.

He had boldly prophesied this way—not thus should his prophecy be fulfilled. Were he earnest, the future would tell it; were he jesting, the jest should not be at her expense.

"Has the play grown monotonous, that you would ring the curtain down so soon?" she said.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I—I have enjoyed it so much that I almost hate to have it end," she answered. "You are a capital actor, Mr. Raymond."

His grasp tightened on her arm—his face grew very white.

"Dare you tell me you have been only acting, Ethel? Unsay those words! I love you, darling! Have you no return for me?"

Again she hesitated. Could it be love which was tugging at her heart-strings—love which tempted her to lay down her weapons, and declare defeat sweeter than any victory? Not yet—not yet!

She looked up in his face; she fancied she detected a little glimmer in his eyes, stern and dark though they were.

"Do you know what I wished?" she said, in answer to his question, and pointing to the moon. "I wished my new dresses, on their way from Paris, might be a success. Worth is so apt to make blunders, nowadays. Let us go in, Mr. Raymond. It is almost tea time, and I am growing hungry."

"Certainly!" he answered, haughtily, and in silence they returned to the house.

But, that evening, Ethel looked for her friend in vain. On going to her room, she found on her table a note. Hastily tearing it open, she read these lines:

"It is right that you should have the pain of victory. Freely I accord it you. I staked all, and lost. You staked nothing, and won! I loved you—heartless, soulless though you are—I loved you in the first hour we met. Gods knows I would have striven to prove it to you, even as I shall now strive to wrench it from my heart. Were you at my feet as I a few hours ago was at yours, I would turn your prayer to mockery, as you turned mine. My one earnest wish for your future happiness is that your Parisian toilets always may prove a success."

This, and the signature, were all. Once, twice, thrice, Ethel read and re-read the cold, cutting words.

"Were you at my feet, I would turn your prayer to mockery, as you turned mine!" So soon, then, he had ceased to love her, and she—ah, in this moment her punishment had commenced.

She had but meant to try a little longer. She had forgotten a man's dignity, a man's love, are not always to be valued at a woman's weak caprice.

She had thrust her bare, unprotected hands into the flame, and willed that it should not burn. Now that it had eaten its cruel way into the flesh, she could not wring them in impotent anguish, knowing that she herself had thrust aside the cool, healing balm which would have brought oblivion of any pain.

All night she lay with wide-open eyes, fully dressed as she had thrown herself upon her couch, and the letter—the first and only letter Jack had ever written her—tightly clasped in her fingers.

Now and then a sob forced its way upward through the quivering frame. But no tears came! her eyes were dry and burning.

Strange! strange! In all her life she had known no want, no void. Now the future seemed filled with emptiness.

Where were her weapons? Shattered and useless! Where her armor? Rent asunder, so that, look where she would, she saw but her naked, pain-tossed soul. She realized now the depth and earnestness of words which she already answered by a mocking lie. Ah, already his wounds were healing but hers—she had said rightly, she would wear no scar, only because hers would not heal.

At last the day dawned. She watched it break, wondering if any other heart in all the wide world was as leaden-weighted as her own. How should she meet him? Pride must now be her reliance. What he had thought of her, let him think to the end. Had he not spurned the unspoken prayer for pardon? He had anticipated, indeed! She and her own soul could keep their secret—aye, and would! But for the present a meeting was spared her.

Mr. Raymond went out at daybreak with the fishermen, some one volunteered. "It is a bad day, too, gray and squally."

She felt a sudden fear oppress her, as they added this; but nonsense! no accident had happened all the summer on the coast. By 12 o'clock he surely would have returned.

She took a seat on the piazza, where she could watch his approach; but the long, slow hours wore on, and she watched in vain.

At 4 o'clock some one came to her and said:

"There has been an accident. Miss Marcus. Have you heard? One of the fishing-smacks was overturned, and two fishermen and a gentleman drowned. We fear it may be Mr. Raymond."

A momentary blackness swept over her, but she conquered it.

"God could not be so cruel!" she said, but she did not know that she had spoken.

She heard about her the buzz of inquiry, the bustle of excitement, but she sat still and white, as though carved from marble. This—this was the end! Until this moment when hope had died, she had not known all that had lived and perished with it.

The day wore on. The night fell. Still she sat motionless, watching the sea. Her end of the piazza was deserted. A gloom hung over the hotel. The young moon shed its faint rays upon her, as though it alone guessed her secret and gave her its pity.

"Alone—alone," she murmured, "forevermore! Oh, my love—my love!"

Had her cry conjured up his wrath? From whence had he sprung? An instant before no one was in sight—now he stood close beside her. She did not pause to think. She rose, and with one wild sob threw herself upon his breast.

"Jack! Jack! Forgive me!" she cried.

But it was no ghost which wiped away her tears and, hushed her sobs with his kisses.

When they were calmer, he told her of his escape. One poor fellow, indeed, had been drowned; but he, with the others, had been saved by a passing craft, whose destination had been some little distance down the coast. But Ethel only realized that he was with her; for the rest she cared nothing.

"I—I shall never wear another one of Worth's dresses!" she said, at last, penitently.

"Hush, darling! No rash vows," he answered, once more kissing the sweet lips to silence. "You shall send one more order, at least, ere many days have sped, and that, my love, for the dress in which you give to me the priceless gift of your own dear self."—Saturday Night.

**THE OUN-OF-DOOR INSTINCT.**  
**Habits of the Animals as Exemplified in the Wild.**

A cat turns around before it lies down because its jungle ancestors had to crush the grass to make a bed, and the instinct still persists. Perhaps mankind takes to the woods in summer for the same reason. The groves were man's original abode as well as God's first temples. But while the longing to get back to nature at this season is nearly universal, the instinct for enjoying the wilderness is much less widely distributed.

While some persons are exuberantly happy at getting away from civilization, others who fancy that they want to leave the town behind are made perfectly miserable by the lack of their accustomed conveniences. The splash of the water on the boat's sides or the hum of the reel to such persons is no compensation for the lack of ice, of comfortable beds and of rocking chairs. At the first sign of a mosquito they are overcome with annoyance, and sunburn to them is an evil quite without recompense.

Your true sons of the woods, city bred though he may be, counts all the suffering that belongs to life out of doors as not grievous, but joyous. The discomforts are not to be compared, in his opinion, to the delights of camping and fishing and hunting. His enthusiasm is, indeed, inexplicable to the man who has not fallen under the same spell.

There is no telling the lover of the woods from the town devotee by his appearance. The bookish-looking fellow may be a mighty fisherman, while the athlete may be miserable out of reach of a car line. Perhaps the difference in temperament may be traced back to childhood. A person may be made almost anything if he is caught young enough. The psychologists have a theory that all kinds of instinct manifest themselves for a time in the growing child and then disappear unless special attention is given to their development.

This may account in part for the diversity of feeling toward nature that exists so unaccountably among men and women of otherwise congenial tastes. Unless a person fished with a bent pin as a child he isn't likely to become enthusiastic over the sport as a man. The woods may lure, but they aren't likely to captivate unless the devotee early learned their ways. The taste for out of door life may be cultivated to some degree, but unless it was developed in youth it is not apt to prove robust.—Kansas City Star.

### Every Town Should Advertise.

In the opinion of the Four-Track News, one of the first requisites of a good business man, in this age of mercantile activity, is that he should understand the art of advertising. The same rules that govern private concerns should govern the business affairs of cities. Every civilized town that has industrial aspirations and hopes to grow and prosper, must needs let the world know what it has to offer by way of inducements. Manufacturing enterprises, educational institutions, business and professional men are ever seeking desirable locations, and it is a noticeable fact that comparatively few cities and towns are attracting them. This is because many towns which possess good water power, good shipping facilities, good school and residential advantages, lack the life and enterprise to let the world know what they possess. They do not grow because they are unknown. They are like the drowsy merchant who doesn't think it worth while to advertise, but prefers to sit and watch the spiders spin webs across his doorway. Every new enterprise that locates in a town adds to the prosperity and business possibilities of every dealer in the place, and every citizen who has his own good and the good of the community at heart should take a hand in getting his town into touch with the busy, wide-awake world.

### Destroyed His Smell.

It was found the other day in London that a stolen dog which failed to identify its owner had been dosed with aniseed by the thief. Aniseed destroys the sense of smell temporarily. The dog did not recover for two or three days.

### Anti-Typhoid Serum.

Dr. Allan Masfadyen, Director of the Jenner Institute, in London, has obtained an anti-typhoid serum by expressing the juices from typhoid bacilli, first rendering them brittle by freezing them with liquid air.

### Economy of Hearing.

The venerable John H. Ketcham, of Dover Plains, N. Y., for many years a member of Congress, is noted for his generosity and kindness. The General is quite deaf, and many a yarn is related about that defect. One morning he was standing in the lobby of the House looking over his mail, when an impetuous employe of Congress, one of that sort who is always borrowing but never repays, stepped up and accosted him:

"General, can you let me have \$5 till pay day?"

"Eh, how's that?" said the General. The employe, remembering the General's reputation for being easy, concluded to take advantage of it.

"I say can you let me have \$10 till pay day?"

"No," said the General; "I'll let you have \$5; that's what you asked me for at first."—Philadelphia Ledger.