

THE VAGRANT.

BY RICHARD HARDING DAVIS.

HIS Excellency Sir Charles Greville, K.C.M.G., Governor of the Windless Islands, stood upon the veranda of Government House surveying the new day with critical and searching eyes. Sir Charles had been so long absolute monarch of the Windless Isles that he had assumed unconsciously a mental attitude of suzerainty over even the glittering waters of the Caribbean Sea, and the coral reefs under the waters, and the rain-bow skies that floated above them. But on this particular morning not even the critical eye of the Governor could distinguish a single flaw in the tropical landscape before him.

The lawn at his feet ran down to meet the dazzling waters of the bay, the blue waters of the bay ran to meet a great stretch of absinthe green, the green joined a fairy sky of pink and gold and saffron. Islands of coral floated on the sea of absinthe, and derelict clouds of mother-of-pearl swung low above them, starting from nowhere and going nowhere, but drifting beautifully, like giant soap-bubbles of light and color. Where the lawn touched the waters of the bay the coconut-palms reached their crooked lengths far up into the sunshine, and as the sea-breeze stirred their fronds they filled the hot air with whispers and murmurs like the fluttering of many fans. Nature smiled boldly upon the Governor, confident in her bountiful beauty, as though she said, "Surely you cannot but be pleased with me to-day." And, as though in answer, the critical and searching glance of Sir Charles relaxed.

The crunching of the gravel and the rattle of the sentry's musket at salute recalled him to his high office and to the duties of the morning. He waved his hand, and, as though it were a wand, the sentry moved again, making his way to the kitchen-garden, and so around Government House and back to the lawn-tennis court, maintaining in his solitary pilgrimage the dignity of her Majesty's representative, as well as her Majesty's power over the Windless Isles.

The Governor smiled slightly, with the ease of mind of one who finds all things

good. Supreme authority, surroundings of endless beauty, the respectful, even humble, deference of his inferiors, and never even an occasional visit from a superior, had in four years lowered him into a bed of ease and self-satisfaction. He was cut off from the world, and yet of it. Each month there came, *via* Jamaica, the three weeks' old copy of *The Weekly Times*; he subscribed to Mudie's Colonial Library; and from the States he had imported an American lawn-mower, the mechanism of which no one as yet understood. Within his own borders he had created a healthy, orderly seaport out of what had been a sink of fever and a refuge for all the ne'er-do-wells and fugitive revolutionists of Central America.

He knew, as he sat each evening on his veranda, looking across the bay, that in the world beyond the pink and gold sunset men were still panting, struggling, and starving; crises were rising and passing; strikes and panics, wars and the rumors of wars, swept from continent to continent; a plague crept through India; a filibuster with five hundred men at his back crossed an imaginary line and stirred the world from Cape Town to London; Emperors were crowned; the good Queen celebrated the longest reign; and a captain of artillery imprisoned in a swampy island in the South Atlantic caused two hemispheres to clamor for his rescue, and lit a race war that stretched from Algiers to the boulevards.

And yet, at the Windless Isles, all these happenings seemed to Sir Charles like the morning's memory of a dream. For these things never crossed the ring of the coral reefs; he saw them only as pictures in an illustrated paper a month old. And he was pleased to find that this was so. He was sufficient to himself, with his own responsibilities and social duties and public works. He was a man in authority, who said to others, "Come!" and "Go!" Under him were commissioners, and under the commissioners district inspectors and boards of education and of highways. For the better health of the colony he had planted trees that sucked the malaria from the air; for its better

morals he had substituted as a Sunday amusement cricket-matches for cock-fights; and to keep it at peace he had created a local constabulary of native negroes, and had dressed them in the cast-off uniforms of London policemen. His handiwork was everywhere, and his interest was all sunk in his handiwork. The days passed gorgeous with sunshine, the nights breathed with beauty. It was an existence of leisurely occupation, and one that promised no change, and he was content.

As it was Thursday, the Council met that morning, and some questions of moment to the colony were to be brought up for consideration. The question of the dog-tax was one which perplexed Sir Charles most particularly. The two Councillors elected by the people and the three appointed by the crown had disagreed as to this tax. Of the five hundred British subjects at the seaport, all but ten were owners of dogs, and it had occurred to Sassoon, the chemist, that a tax of half a crown a year on each of these dogs would meet the expense of extending the oyster-shell road to the new cricket-grounds. To this Snellgrove, who held the contract for the narrow-gauge railroad, agreed; but the three crown Councillors opposed the tax vigorously, on the ground that as scavengers alone the dogs were a boon to the colony and should be encouraged. The fact that each of these gentlemen owned not only one, but several dogs of high pedigree made their position one of great delicacy.

There was no way by which the Governor could test the popular will in the matter, except through his secretary, Mr. Clarges, who, at the cricket-match between the local eleven and the officers and crew of *H. M. S. Partridge*, had been informed by the other owners of several fox-terriers that, in their opinion, the tax was a piece of "condemned tommy-rot." From this the Governor judged that it would not prove a popular measure. As he paced the veranda, drawing deliberately on his cigar, and considering to which party he should give the weight of his final support, his thoughts were disturbed by the approach of a stranger, who advanced along the gravel walk, guarded on either side by one of the local constabulary. The stranger was young and of poor appearance. His bare feet were bound in a pair of the rope sandals worn by the na-

tives, his clothing was of torn and soiled drill, and he fanned his face nonchalantly with a sombrero of battered and shapeless felt.

Sir Charles halted in his walk, and holding his cigar behind his back, addressed himself to the sergeant.

"A vagrant?" he asked.

The words seemed to bear some amusing significance to the stranger, for his face lit instantly with a sweet and charming smile, and while he turned to hear the sergeant's reply, he regarded him with a kindly and affectionate interest.

"Yes, your Excellency."

The Governor turned to the prisoner.

"Do you know the law of this colony regarding vagrants?"

"I do not," the young man answered. His tone was politely curious, and suggested that he would like to be further informed as to the local peculiarities of a foreign country.

"After two weeks' residence," the Governor recited, impressively, "all able-bodied persons who will not work are put to work or deported. Have you made any effort to find work?"

Again the young man smiled charmingly. He shook his head and laughed. "Oh dear no," he said.

The laugh struck the Governor as impertinent.

"Then you must leave by the next mail-steamer, if you have any money to pay your passage, or, if you have no money, you must go to work on the roads. Have you any money?"

"If I had, I wouldn't—be a vagrant," the young man answered. His voice was low and singularly sweet. It seemed to suit the indolence of his attitude and the lazy, inconsequent smile. "I called on our consular agent here," he continued, leisurely, "to write a letter home for money, but he was disgracefully drunk, so I used his official note-paper to write to the State Department about him, instead."

The Governor's deepest interest was aroused. The American consular agent was one of the severest trials he was forced to endure.

"You are not a British subject, then? Ah, I see—and—er—your representative was unable to assist you?"

"He was drunk," the young man repeated, placidly. "He has been drunk ever since I have been here, particularly in the mornings." He halted, as though

the subject had lost interest for him, and gazed pleasantly at the sunny bay and up at the moving palms.

"Then," said the Governor, as though he had not been interrupted, "as you have no means of support, you will help support the colony until you can earn money to leave it. That will do, sergeant."

The young man placed his hat upon his head and turned to move away, but at the first step he swayed suddenly and caught at the negro's shoulder, clasping his other hand across his eyes. The sergeant held him by the waist, and looked up at the Governor with some embarrassment.

"The young gentleman has not been well, Sir Charles," he said, apologetically.

The stranger straightened himself up and smiled vaguely. "I'm all right," he murmured. "Sun's too hot."

"Sit down," said the Governor.

He observed the stranger more closely. He noticed now that beneath the tan his face was delicate and finely cut, and that his yellow hair clung closely to a well-formed head.

"He seems faint. Has he had anything to eat?" asked the Governor.

The sergeant grinned guiltily. "Yes, Sir Charles; we've been feeding him at the barracks. It's fever, sir."

Sir Charles was not unacquainted with fallen gentlemen, "beach-combers," "remittance men," and vagrants who had known better days, and there had been something winning in this vagrant's smile, and, moreover, he had reported that thorn in his flesh, the consular agent, to the proper authorities.

He conceived an interest in a young man who, though with naked feet, did not hesitate to correspond with his Minister of Foreign Affairs.

"How long have you been ill?" he asked.

The young man looked up from where he had sunk on the steps, and roused himself with a shrug. "It doesn't matter," he said. "I've had a touch of Chagres ever since I was on the Isthmus. I was at work there on the railroad."

"Did you come here from Colon?"

"No; I worked up the Pacific side. I was clerking with Rossner Brothers at Amapala for a while, because I speak a little German, and then I footed it over to Puerto Cortez and got a job with the

lottery people. They gave me twenty dollars a month gold for rolling the tickets, and I put it all in the drawing, and won as much as ten." He laughed, and sitting erect, drew from his pocket a roll of thin green papers. "These are for the next drawing," he said. "Have some?" he added. He held them towards the negro sergeant, who, under the eye of the Governor, resisted, and then spread the tickets on his knee like a hand at cards. "I stand to win a lot with these," he said, with a cheerful sigh. "You see, until the list's published I'm prospectively worth twenty thousand dollars. And," he added, "I break stones in the sun." He rose unsteadily, and saluted the Governor with a nod. "Good-morning, sir," he said, "and thank you."

"Wait," Sir Charles commanded. A new form of punishment had suggested itself, in which justice was tempered with mercy. "Can you work one of your American lawn-mowers?" he asked.

The young man laughed delightedly. "I never tried," he said, "but I've seen it done."

"If you've been ill, it would be murder to put you on the shell road." The Governor's dignity relaxed into a smile. "I don't desire international complications," he said. "Sergeant, take this—him—to the kitchen, and tell Corporal Mallon to give him that American lawn-mowing machine. Possibly he may understand its mechanism. Mallon only cuts holes in the turf with it." And he waved his hand in dismissal, and as the three men moved away he buried himself again in the perplexities of the dog-tax.

Ten minutes later the deliberations of the Council were disturbed by a loud and persistent rattle, like the whir of a Maxim gun, which proved, on investigation, to arise from the American lawn-mower. The vagrant was propelling it triumphantly across the lawn, and gazing down at it with the same fond pride with which a nurse-maid leans over the perambulator to observe her lusty and gurgling charge.

The Councillors had departed. Sir Charles was thinking of breakfast, the Maxim-like lawn-mower still irritated the silent hush of mid-day, when from the waters of the inner harbor there came suddenly the sharp report of a saluting gun and the rush of falling anchor-chains. There was still a week to pass before the



"OH, I SAY, HE'S MAKING IN FOR YOUR PRIVATE WHARF."

mail-steamer should arrive, and H. M. S. *Partridge* had departed for Nassau. Besides these ships, no other vessel had skirted the buoys of the bay in eight long smiling months. Mr. Clarges, the secretary, with an effort to appear calm, and the orderly, suffocated with the news, entered through separate doors at the same instant.

The secretary filed his report first. "A yacht's just anchored in the bay, Sir Charles," he said.

The orderly's face fell. He looked ag-

grieved. "An American yacht," he corrected.

"And much larger than the *Partridge*," continued the secretary.

The orderly took a hasty glance back over his shoulder. "She has her launch lowered already, sir," he said.

Outside the whirl of the lawn-mower continued undisturbed. Sir Charles reached for his marine-glass, and the three men hurried to the veranda.

"It looks like a man-of-war," said Sir Charles. "No," he added, adjusting the binocular; "she's a yacht. She flies the New York Yacht Club pennant—now she's showing the owner's absent pennant. He must have left in the launch. He's coming ashore now."

"He seems in a bit of a hurry," growled Mr. Clarges.

"Those Americans always—" murmured Sir Charles from behind the binocular. He did not quite know that he enjoyed this sudden onslaught upon the privacy of his harbor and port.

It was in itself annoying, and he was further annoyed to find that it could in the least degree

disturb his poise.

The launch was growing instantly larger, like an express train approaching a station at full speed; her flags flew out as flat as pieces of painted tin; her bits of brass-work flashed like fire. Already the ends of the wharves were white with groups of natives.

"You might think he was going to ram the town," suggested the secretary. "Oh, I say," he exclaimed, in remonstrance, "he's making in for your private wharf."

The Governor was rearranging the focus of the glass with nervous fingers. "I believe," he said, "no—yes—upon my word, there are—there are ladies in that launch!"

"Ladies, sir!" The secretary threw a hasty glance at the binocular, but it was in immediate use.

The clatter of the lawn-mower ceased suddenly, and the relief of its silence caused the Governor to lower his eyes. He saw the lawn-mower lying prostrate on the grass. The vagrant had vanished.

There was a sharp tinkle of bells, and the launch slipped up to the wharf and halted as softly as a bicycle. A man in a yachting-suit jumped from her, and making some laughing speech to the two women in the stern, walked briskly across the lawn, taking a letter from his pocket as he came. Sir Charles awaited him gravely; the occupants of the launch had seen him, and it was too late to retreat.

"Sir Charles Greville, I believe," said the yachtsman. He bowed, and ran lightly up the steps. "I am Mr. Robert Collier, from New York," he said. "I have a letter to you from your ambassador at Washington. If you'll pardon me, I'll present it in person. I had meant to leave it, but seeing you—" He paused, and gave the letter in his hand to Sir Charles, who waved him towards his library.

Sir Charles scowled at the letter through his monocle, and then shook hands with his visitor. "I am very glad to see you, Mr. Collier," he said. "He says here you are preparing a book on our colonies in the West Indies." He tapped the letter with his monocle. "I am sure I shall be most happy to assist you with any information in my power."

"Well, I am writing a book—yes," Mr. Collier observed, doubtfully, "but it's a log-book. This trip I am on pleasure bent, and I also wish to consult with you on a personal matter. However, that can wait." He glanced out of the windows to where the launch lay in the sun. "My wife came ashore with me, Sir Charles," he said, "so that in case there was a Lady Greville, Mrs. Collier could call on her, and we could ask if you would waive etiquette and do us the honor to dine with us to-night on the yacht—that is, if you are not engaged."

Sir Charles smiled. "There is no Lady Greville," he said, "and I personally do

not think I am engaged elsewhere." He paused in thought, as though to make quite sure he was not. "No," he added, "I have no other engagement. I will come with pleasure."

Sir Charles rose and clapped his hands for the orderly. "Possibly the ladies will come up to the veranda?" he asked. "I cannot allow them to remain at the end of my wharf." He turned, and gave directions to the orderly to bring limes and bottles of soda and ice, and led the way across the lawn.

Mrs. Collier and her friend had not explored the grounds of Government House for over ten minutes before Sir Charles felt that many years ago he had personally arranged their visit, that he had known them for even a longer time, and that, now that they had finally arrived, they must never depart.

To them there was apparently nothing on his domain which did not thrill with delightful interest. They were as eager as two children at a pantomime, and as unconscious. As a rule, Sir Charles had found it rather difficult to meet the women of his colony on a path which they were capable of treading intelligently. In fairness to them, he had always sought out some topic in which they could take an equal part—something connected with the conduct of children, or the better ventilation of the new school-house and chapel. But these new-comers did not require him to select topics of conversation; they did not even wait for him to finish those which he himself introduced. They flitted from one end of the garden to the other with the eagerness of two midshipmen on shore leave, and they found something to enjoy in what seemed to the Governor the most commonplace of things. The Zouave uniform of the sentry, the old Spanish cannon converted into peaceful gate-posts, the aviary with its screaming paroquets, the botanical station, and even the ice-machine were all objects of delight.

On the other hand, the interior of the famous palace, which had been sent out complete from London, and which was wont to fill the wives of the colonials with awe or to reduce them to whispers, for some reason failed of its effect. But they said they "loved" the large gold V. R.'s on the back of the Councillors' chairs, and they exclaimed aloud over the red leather despatch-boxes and the great



seal of the colony, and the mysterious envelopes marked "On her Majesty's service."

"Isn't it too exciting, Florence?" demanded Mrs. Collier. "This is the table where Sir Charles sits and writes letters 'on her Majesty's service,' and presses these buttons, and warships spring up in perfect shoals. Oh, Robert," she sighed, "I do wish you had been a Governor!"

The young lady called Florence stood looking down into the great arm-chair in front of the Governor's table.

"May I?" she asked. She slid fearlessly in between the oak arms of the chair and smiled about her. Afterwards Sir Charles remembered her as she appeared at that moment, with the red leather of the chair behind her, with her gloved hands resting on the carved oak, and her

"MAY I?" SHE ASKED."

head on one side, smiling up at him. She gazed with large eyes at the blue linen envelopes, the stiff documents in red tape, the tray of black sand, and the goose-quill pens.

"I am now the Countess Zika," she announced; "no, I am Diana of the Crossways, and I mean to discover a state secret and sell it to the *Daily Telegraph*. Sir Charles," she demanded, "if I press this electric button is war declared anywhere, or what happens?"

"That second button," said Sir Charles, after deliberate scrutiny, "is the one which communicates with the pantry."

The Governor would not consider their returning to the yacht for luncheon.

"You might decide to steam away as suddenly as you came," he said, gallantly, "and I cannot take that chance. This is Bachelor's Hall, so you must pardon my people if things do not go very smoothly." He himself led them to the great guest-chamber, where there had not been a guest for many years, and he noticed, as though for the first time, that the halls through which they passed were bare, and that the floor was littered with unpacked boxes and gun-cases. He also observed for the first time that maps of the colony, with the coffee-plantations and mahogany belt marked in different inks, were not perhaps so decorative as pictures and mirrors and family portraits. And he could have wished that the native servants had not stared so admiringly at the guests, nor directed each other in such aggressive whispers. On those other occasions, when the wives of the Councillors came to the semiannual dinners, the native servants had seemed adequate to all that was required of them. He recollected with a flush that in the town these semiannual dinners were described as banquets. He wondered if to these visitors from the outside world it was all equally provincial.

But their enjoyment was apparently unfeigned and generous. It was evident that they had known each other for many years, yet they received every remark that any of them made as though it had been pronounced by a new and interesting acquaintance. Sir Charles found it rather difficult to keep up with the talk across the table, they changed the subject so rapidly, and they half spoke of so many things without waiting to explain. He could not at once grasp the fact that people who had no other position in the world save that of observers were speaking so authoritatively of public men and public measures. He found, to his delight, that for the first time in several years he was not presiding at his own table, and that his guests seemed to feel no awe of him.

"What's the use of a yacht nowadays?" Collier was saying—"what's the use of a yacht, when you can go to sleep in a wagon-lit at the Gare du Nord, and wake

up at Vladivostok? And look at the time it saves; eleven days to Gib, six to Port Said, and fifteen to Colombo—there you are, only half-way around, and you're already sixteen days behind the man in the wagon-lit."

"But nobody wants to go to Vladivostok," said Miss Cameron, "or anywhere else in a wagon-lit. But with a yacht you can explore out-of-the-way places, and you meet new and interesting people. We wouldn't have met Sir Charles if we had waited for a wagon-lit." She bowed her head to the Governor, and he smiled with gratitude. He had lost Mr. Collier somewhere in the Indian Ocean, and he was glad she had brought them back to the Windless Isles once more.

"And again I repeat that the answer to that is, 'Why not?' said the March Hare," remarked Mr. Collier, determinedly.

The answer, as an answer, did not strike Sir Charles as a very good one. But the ladies seemed to comprehend, for Miss Cameron said: "Did I tell you about meeting him at Oxford just a few months before his death—at a children's tea party? He was so sweet and understanding with them! Two women tried to lionize him, and he ran away and played with the children. I was more glad to meet him than any one I can think of. Not as a personage, you know, but because I felt grateful to him."

"Yes, that way, distinctly," said Mrs. Collier. "I should have felt that way towards Mrs. Ewing more than any one else."

"I know, 'Jackanapes,'" remarked Collier, shortly; "a brutal assault upon the feelings, I say."

"Some one else said it before you, Robert," Mrs. Collier commented, calmly. "Perhaps Sir Charles met him at Apia." They all turned and looked at him. He wished he could say he had met him at Apia. He did not quite see how they had made their way from a children's tea party at Oxford to the South Pacific islands, but he was anxious to join in somewhere with a clever observation. But they never seemed to settle in one place sufficiently long for him to recollect what he knew of it. He hoped they would get around to the west coast of Africa in time. He had been Governor of Sierra Leone for five years.

His success that night at dinner on the

yacht was far better. The others seemed a little tired after the hours of sight-seeing to which he had treated them, and they were content to listen. In the absence of Mr. Clarges, who knew them word by word, he felt free to tell his three stories of life at Sierra Leone. He took his time in the telling, and could congratulate himself that his efforts had never been more keenly appreciated. He felt that he was holding his own.

The night was still and warm, and while the men lingered below at the table, the two women mounted to the deck and watched the lights of the town as they vanished one by one and left the moon in unchallenged possession of the harbor. For a long time Miss Cameron stood silent, looking out across the bay at the shore and the hills beyond. A fish splashed near them, and the sound of oars rose from the mist that floated above the water, until they were muffled in the distance. The palms along the shore glistened like silver, and overhead the Southern Cross shone white against a sky of purple. The silence deepened and continued for so long a time that Mrs. Collier felt its significance, and waited for the girl to end it.

Miss Cameron raised her eyes to the stars and frowned. "I am not surprised that he is content to stay here," she said. "Are you? It is so beautiful, so wonderfully beautiful."

For a moment Mrs. Collier made no answer. "Two years is a long time, Florence," she said; "and he is all I have; he is not only my only brother, he is the only living soul who is related to me. That makes it harder."

The girl seemed to find some implied reproach in the speech, for she turned and looked at her friend closely. "Do you feel it is my fault, Alice?" she asked.

The older woman shook her head. "How could it be your fault?" she answered. "If you couldn't love him enough to marry him, you couldn't, that's all. But that is no reason why he should have hidden himself from all of us. Even if he could not stand being near you, caring as he did, he need not have treated me so. We have done all we can do, and Robert has been more than fine about it. He and his agents have written to every consul and business house in Central America, and I don't believe there is a city that he hasn't visited.

He has sent him money and letters to every bank and to every post-office—"

The girl raised her head quickly.

"—but he never calls for either," Mrs. Collier continued, "for I know that if he had read my letters he would have come home."

The girl lifted her head as though she were about to speak, and then turned and walked slowly away. After a few moments she returned, and stood, with her hands resting on the rail, looking down into the water. "I wrote him two letters," she said. In the silence of the night her voice was unusually clear and distinct. "I—you make me wonder—if they ever reached him."

Mrs. Collier, with her eyes fixed upon the girl, rose slowly from her chair and came towards her. She reached out her hand and touched Miss Cameron on the arm. "Florence," she said, in a whisper, "have you—"

The girl raised her head slowly, and lowered it again. "Yes," she answered; "I told him to come back—to come back to me. Alice," she cried, "I—I begged him to come back!" She tossed her hands apart and again walked rapidly away, leaving the older woman standing motionless.

A moment later, when Sir Charles and Mr. Collier stepped out upon the deck, they discovered the two women standing close together, two white, ghostly figures in the moonlight, and as they advanced towards them they saw Mrs. Collier take the girl for an instant in her arms.

Sir Charles was asking Miss Cameron how long she thought an immigrant should be made to work for his freehold allotment, when Mr. Collier and his wife rose at the same moment and departed on separate errands. They met most mysteriously in the shadow of the wheel-house.

"What is it? Is anything wrong with Florence?" Collier asked, anxiously. "Not homesick, is she?"

Mrs. Collier put her hands on her husband's shoulders and shook her head.

"Wrong? No, thank Heaven! it's as right as right can be!" she cried. "She's written to him to come back, but he's never answered, and so—and now it's all right."

Mr. Collier gazed blankly at his wife's upturned face. "Well, I don't see that," he remonstrated. "What's the use of

her being in love with him now when he can't be found? What? Why didn't she love him two years ago when he was where you could get at him—at her house, for instance. He was there most of his time. She would have saved a lot of trouble. However," he added, energetically, "this makes it absolutely necessary to find that young man and bring him to his senses. We'll search this place for the next few days, and then we'll try the mainland again. I think I'll offer a reward for him, and have it printed in Spanish, and paste it up in all the plazas. We might add a line in English, 'She has changed her mind.' That would bring him home, wouldn't it?"

"Don't be unfeeling, Robert," said Mrs. Collier.

Her husband raised his eyes appealingly, and addressed himself to the moon. "I ask you now," he complained, "is that fair to a man who has spent six months on muleback trying to round up a prodigal brother-in-law?"

That same evening, after the ladies had gone below, Mr. Collier asked Sir Charles to assist him in his search for his wife's brother, and Sir Charles heartily promised his most active co-operation. There were several Americans at work in the interior, he said, as overseers on the coffee-plantations. It was possible that the runaway might be among them. It was only that morning, Sir Charles remembered, that an American had been at work "repairing his lawn-mower," as he considerably expressed it. He would send for him on the morrow.

But on the morrow the slave of the lawn-mower was reported on the list of prisoners as "missing," and Corporal Mallon was grieved, but refused to consider himself responsible. Sir Charles himself had allowed the vagrant unusual freedom, and the vagrant had taken advantage of it, and probably escaped to the hills, or up the river to the logwood camp.

"Telegraph a description of him to Inspector Garrett," Sir Charles directed, "and to the heads of all up stations. And when he returns, bring him to me."

So great was his zeal that Sir Charles further offered to join Mr. Collier in his search among the outlying plantations; but Mr. Collier preferred to work alone. He accordingly set out at once, armed

with letters to the different district inspectors, and in his absence delegated to Sir Charles the pleasant duty of caring for the wants of Miss Cameron and his wife. Sir Charles regarded the latter as deserving of all sympathy, for Mr. Collier, in his efforts to conceal the fact from the Governor that Florence Cameron was responsible, or in any way concerned, in the disappearance of the missing man, had been too mysterious. Sir Charles was convinced that the fugitive had swindled his brother-in-law and stolen his sister's jewels.

The days which followed were to the Governor days and nights of strange discoveries. He recognized that the missionaries from the great outside world had invaded his shores and disturbed his gods and temples. Their religion of progress and activity filled him with doubt and unrest.

"In this century," Mr. Collier had declared, "nothing can stand still. It's the same with a corporation, or a country, or a man. We must either march ahead or fall out. We can't mark time. What?"

"Exactly—certainly not," Sir Charles had answered. But in his heart he knew that he himself had been marking time under these soft tropical skies while the world was pushing forward. The thought had not disturbed him before. Now he felt guilty. He conceived a sudden intolerance, if not contempt, for the little village of whitewashed houses, for the rafts of mahogany and of logwood that bumped against the pier-heads, for the sacks of coffee piled high like barricades under the corrugated zinc sheds along the wharf. Each season it had been his pride to note the increase in these exports. The development of the resources of his colony had been a work in which he had felt that the Colonial Secretary took an immediate interest. He had believed that he was one of the important wheels of the machinery which moved the British Empire; and now, in a day, he was undeceived. It was forced upon him that to the eyes of the outside world he was only a green-grocer operating on a large scale; he provided the British public with coffee for its breakfast, with drugs for its stomach, and with strange woods for its dining-room furniture and walking-sticks. He combated this ignominious characterization of his posi-

tion indignantly. The new arrivals certainly gave him no hint that they considered him so lightly. This thought greatly comforted him, for he felt that in some way he was summoning to his aid all of his assets and resources to meet an expert and final valuation. As he ranged them before him he was disturbed and happy to find that the value he placed upon them was the value they would have in the eyes of a young girl—not a girl of the shy, mother-obeying, man-worshipping English type, but a girl such as Miss Cameron seemed to be, a girl who could understand what you were trying to say before you said it, who could take an interest in rates of exchange and preside at a dinner table, who was charmingly feminine and clever, and who was respectful of herself and of others. In fact, he decided, with a flush, that Miss Cameron herself was the young girl he had in his mind.

"Why not?" he asked.

The question came to him in his room, the sixth night of their visit, and he strode over to the long pier-glass and stood studying himself critically for the first time in years. He was still a fine-looking, well-kept man. His hair was thin, but that fact did not show; and his waist was lost, but riding and tennis would set that right. He had means outside of his official salary, and there was the title, such as it was. Lady Greville the wife of the birthday knight sounded as well as Lady Greville the marchioness. And Americans cared for these things. He doubted whether this particular American would do so, but he was adding up all he had to offer, and that was one of the assets. He was sure she would not be content to remain mistress of the Windless Isles. Nor, indeed, did he longer care to be master there, now that he had inhaled this quick, stirring breath from the outer world. He would resign, and return and mix with the world again. He would enter Parliament; a man so well acquainted as himself with the Gold Coast of Africa and with the trade of the West Indies must always be of value in the Lower House. This value would be recognized, no doubt, and he would become at first an Under Secretary for the Colonies, and then, in time, Colonial Secretary and a cabinet minister. She would like that, he thought. And after that place had been reached, all things were

possible. For years he had not dreamed such dreams—not since he had been a clerk in the Foreign Office. They seemed just as possible now as they had seemed real then, and just as near. He felt it was all absolutely in his own hands.

He descended to the dining-room with the air of a man who already felt the cares of high responsibility upon his shoulders. His head was erect and his chest thrown forward. He was ten years younger; his manner was alert, assured, and gracious. As he passed through the halls he was impatient of the familiar settings of Government House; they seemed to him like the furnishings of a hotel where he had paid his bill, and where his luggage was lying strapped for departure in the hallway.

In his library he saw on his table a number of papers lying open waiting for his signature, the dog-tax among the others. He smiled to remember how important it had seemed to him in the past—in that past of indolence and easy content. Now he was on fire to put this rekindled ambition to work, to tell the woman who had lighted it that it was all from her and for her, that without her he had existed, that now he had begun to live.

They had never found him so delightful as he appeared that night. He was like a man on the eve of a holiday. He made a jest of his past efforts; he made them see, as he now saw it for the first time, that side of the life of the Windless Isles which was narrow and petty, even ridiculous. He talked of big men in a big way; he criticised, and expounded, and advanced his own theories of government and the proper control of an empire.

Collier, who had returned from his unsuccessful search of the plantations, shook his head.

"It's a pity you are not in London now," he said, sincerely. "They need some one there who has been on the spot. They can't direct the colonies from what they know of them in Whitehall."

Sir Charles fingered the dinner cloth nervously, and when he spoke, fixed his eyes anxiously upon Miss Cameron.

"Do you know," he said, "I have been thinking of doing that very thing, of resigning my post here and going back, entering Parliament, and all the rest of it."

His declaration met with a unanimous chorus of delight. Miss Cameron nodded her head with eager approval.

"Yes, if I were a man, that is where I should wish to be," she said, "at the heart of it. Why, whatever you say in the House of Commons is heard all over the world the next morning!"

Sir Charles felt the blood tingle in his pulses. He had not been so stirred in years. Her words ran to his head like wine.

Mr. Collier raised his glass.

"Here's to our next meeting," he said, "on the terrace of the House of Commons."

But Miss Cameron interrupted. "No; to the Colonial Secretary," she amended.

"Oh yes," they assented, rising, and so drank his health, smiling down upon him with kind friendly glances and goodwill.

"To the Colonial Secretary," they said. Sir Charles clasped the arms of his chair tightly with his hands; his eyes were half closed, and his lips pressed into a grim, confident smile. He felt that a single word from her would make all that they suggested possible. If she cared for such things, they were hers; he had them to give; they were ready lying at her feet. He knew that the power had always been with him, lying dormant in his heart and brain. It had only waited for the touch of the Princess to wake it into life.

The American visitors were to sail for the mainland the next day, but he had come to know them so well in the brief period of their visit that he felt he dared speak to her that same night. At least he could give her some word that would keep him in her mind until they met again in London, or until she had considered her answer. He could not expect her to answer at once. She could take much time. What else had he to do now but to wait for her answer? It was now all that made life.

Collier and his wife had left the veranda and had crossed the lawn towards the water's edge. The moonlight fell full upon them with all the splendor of the tropics, and lit the night with a brilliant, dazzling radiance. From where Miss Cameron sat on the veranda in the shadow, Sir Charles could see only the white outline of her figure and the indolent movement of her fan. Collier had left his wife and was returning slowly towards the step. Sir Charles felt that if he meant to speak he must speak now, and quickly. He rose and placed himself be-

side her in the shadow, and the girl turned her head inquiringly and looked up at him.

But on the instant the hush of the night was broken by a sharp challenge, and the sound of men's voices raised in anger; there was the noise of a struggle on the gravel, and from the corner of the house the two sentries came running, dragging between them a slight figure that fought and wrestled to be free.

Sir Charles exclaimed with indignant impatience, and turning, strode quickly to the head of the steps.

"What does this mean?" he demanded.

"What are you doing with that man? Why did you bring him here?"

As the soldiers straightened to attention, their prisoner ceased to struggle, and stood with his head bent on his chest. His sombrero was pulled down low across his forehead.

"He was crawling through the bushes, Sir Charles," the soldier panted, "watching that gentleman, sir"—he nodded over his shoulder towards Collier. "I challenged, and he jumped to run, and we collared him. He resisted, Sir Charles."

The mind of the Governor was concerned with other matters than trespassers.

"Well, take him to the barracks, then," he said. "Report to me in the morning. That will do."

The prisoner wheeled eagerly, without further show of resistance, and the soldiers closed in on him on either side. But as the three men moved away together, their faces, which had been in shadow, were now turned towards Mr. Collier, who was advancing leisurely, and with silent footsteps, across the grass. He met them face to face, and as he did so the prisoner sprang back and threw out his arms in front of him, with the gesture of a man who entreates silence. Mr. Collier halted as though struck to stone, and the two men confronted each other without moving.

"Good God!" Mr. Collier whispered.

He turned stiffly and slowly, as though in a trance, and beckoned to his wife, who had followed him.

"Alice!" he called. He stepped backwards towards her, and taking her hand in one of his, drew her towards the prisoner. "Here he is!" he said.

They heard her cry "Henry!" with the fierceness of a call for help, and saw her

rush forward and stumble into the arms of the prisoner, and their two heads were bent close together.

Collier ran up the steps and explained breathlessly.

"And now," he gasped, in conclusion, "what's to be done? What's he arrested for? Is it bailable? What?"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Sir Charles, miserably. "It is my fault entirely. I assure you I had no idea. How could I? But I should have known, I should have guessed it." He dismissed the sentries with a gesture. "That will do," he said. "Return to your posts."

Mr. Collier laughed with relief.

"Then it is not serious?" he asked.

"He—he had no money, that was all," exclaimed Sir Charles. "Serious? Certainly not. Upon my word, I'm sorry—"

The young man had released himself from his sister's embrace, and was coming towards them; and Sir Charles, eager to redeem himself, advanced hurriedly to greet him. But the young man did not see him; he was looking past him up the steps to where Miss Cameron stood in the shadow.

Sir Charles hesitated and drew back. The young man stopped at the foot of the steps, and stood with his head raised, staring up at the white figure of the girl, who came slowly forward.

It was forced upon Sir Charles that in spite of the fact that the young man before them had but just then been rescued from arrest, that in spite of his mean garments and ragged sandals, something about him—the glamour that surrounds the prodigal, or possibly the moonlight—gave him an air of great dignity and distinction.

As Miss Cameron descended the stairs, Sir Charles recognized for the first time that the young man was remarkably handsome, and he resented it. It hurt him, as did also the prodigal's youth and his assured bearing. He felt a sudden sinking fear, a weakening of all his vital forces, and he drew in his breath slowly and deeply. But no one noticed him; they were looking at the tall figure of the prodigal, standing with his hat at his hip and his head thrown back, holding the girl with his eyes.

Collier touched Sir Charles on the arm, and nodded his head towards the library. "Come," he whispered, "let's us old people leave them together. They've a good

deal to say." Sir Charles obeyed in silence, and crossing the library to the great oak chair, seated himself and leaned wearily on the table before him. He picked up one of the goose quills and began separating it into little pieces. Mr. Collier was pacing up and down, biting excitedly on the end of his cigar. "Well, this has certainly been a great night," he said. "And it is all due to you, Sir Charles—all due to you. Yes, they have you to thank for it."

"They?" said Sir Charles. He knew that it had to come. He wanted the man to strike quickly.

"They? Yes—Florence Cameron and Henry," Mr. Collier answered. "Henry went away because she wouldn't marry him. She didn't care for him then, but afterwards she cared. Now they're reunited—and so they're happy; and my wife is more than happy, and I won't have to bother any more; and it's all right, and all through you."

"I am glad," said Sir Charles. There was a long pause, which the men, each deep in his own thoughts, did not notice.

"You will be leaving now, I suppose?" Sir Charles asked. He was looking down, examining the broken pen in his hand.

Mr. Collier stopped in his walk and considered. "Yes, I suppose they will want to get back," he said. "I shall be sorry myself. And you? What will you do?"

Sir Charles started slightly. He had not yet thought what he would do. His eyes wandered over the neglected work, which had accumulated on the desk before him. Only an hour before he had thought of it as petty and little, as something unworthy of his energy. Since that time what change had taken place in him?

For him everything had changed, he answered, but in him there had been no change; and if this thing which the girl had brought into his life had meant the best in life, it must always mean that. She had been an inspiration; she must remain his spring of action. Was he a slave, he asked himself, that he should rebel? Was he a boy, that he could turn his love to aught but the best account? He must remember her not as the woman who had crushed his spirit, but as she who had helped him, who had lifted him up to something better and finer. He would

make sacrifice in her name; it would be in her name that he would rise to high places and accomplish much good.

She would not know this, but he would know.

He rose and brushed the papers away from him with an impatient sweep of the hand.

"I shall follow out the plan of which I spoke at dinner," he answered. "I shall resign here, and return home and enter Parliament."

Mr. Collier laughed admiringly. "I

love the way you English take your share of public life," he said, "the way you spend yourselves for your country, and give your brains, your lives, everything you have—all for the empire."

Through the open window Sir Charles saw Miss Cameron half hidden by the vines of the veranda. The moonlight falling about her transformed her into a figure which was ideal, mysterious, and elusive, like a woman in a dream. He shook his head wearily. "For the empire?" he asked.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC.

BY MARY E. WILKINS.

OLD hero pricked and goaded without rest
By thy sharp thorn of flesh, thou fighter born,
Fiercer for conflict when more fiercely torn,
And holding odds of self or foe the best
Of aids to conquest and thy knightly crest,—
Thou boaster of great powers, still not forsworn,—
Thou ruler of thy love, though all lovelorn,—
There's a poor brotherhood will hold thee blest,
Now thou hast won and passed,—who through their time
Over the candor of great souls must wear
Indignities and buffoon-masks of flesh,
While pointing fools with glee-distempered stare,—
Thy action makes their comedy sublime,
Thy grave shall keep their laurels ever fresh.

LOVE'S DEAREST MOMENT.

BY CURTIS HIDDEN PAGE.

LOVE'S dearest moment is not when the hands
Are clasped in marriage, and the world looks on;
Nor yet when all the importunate world has gone,
And flaming passion like the archangel stands
Between two souls, and welds with fire the bauds
Of impotent human law; nor when alone
Upon the morrow they and love are one,
Triune and chrismed, pure, as God commands;
It is not in the many morrows' track
While love by loving grows more rich and wise
Till age counts up love's wondrous, wondrous sum.
Love's dearest moment is far back, far back—
When first they looked within each other's eyes,
And in the silence knew that love was come.