

STORIETTES

An Affair of the Heart.

WHEN her maid had put the finishing touch to her hair, Mrs. Cordery left her dressing-room and walked slowly and deliberately down the softly tinted hall to the door of her husband's apartments. The faint odor of cigarette smoke indicated the presence of that gentleman.

She knocked.

The door was opened by Mr. Cordery's man, who, bowing discreetly, slipped aside as she entered.

Her husband smiled cheerfully.

"Ah, my dear," he said, as he held out his arms for the man to help him on with his coat, "good-evening! You may go, Peters," he told the man, who retreated noiselessly. "You look very fit to-night," he added as he drew up a comfortable leathern chair for her to sit in. "What's on? The opera?"

"No." There was a short pause, as Mr. Cordery, surveying himself critically in the cheval glass, toyed with a few stray aristocratic hairs that were displayed on a partly bald and wholly immaculate head. "This is one of my simplest gowns. I had no thought to put on anything elaborate—this evening."

"Quite right. You look best in simple things. Is there"—he surveyed her composedly, with an air of considerate curiosity—"anything I can do for you?"

"I have come for something that I very seldom ask for—advice. I find myself in love."

"In love? Why, I thought you and I had outgrown that sort of thing!"

"So did I. But I find that I was mistaken."

"The affair, then, is serious?"

"Yes."

Mr. Cordery glanced at his watch, lighted another cigarette, and placed himself at ease on a divan, where he could look full upon his wife's face as the light from the chandelier fell upon it. She moved slightly, so that she would be more in the shadow.

"Adèle," he said quietly, "it has always been my wish to make you happy. The responsibility of catering to your wants has been with me continually, more or less. But that I feel incompetent to

advise you I am free to admit. The fact is, I am disappointed."

"Are you disappointed in a general sense because I'm in love, or disappointed in *me* because I'm in love?"

"In you. I had hoped for better things from you."

"You have just said that it has been your wish to make me happy. If I can gather any happiness from this hitherto unknown experience, why should you care?"

"It is not so much because I care. I try not to disturb myself too much about the personal peculiarities of others. But since we have been married I have taken a real interest in you—haven't I, Adèle?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"Very well! And it comes to me now with a certain feeling of disappointment that you are not fulfilling my expectations."

"You do not believe, then, in love? Your narrow, shrunken, selfish, self-centered little man's soul cannot conceive of such an absurd and undesirable human emotion? And to think that I should have so debased myself as to come to you—for advice!"

She rose.

"Calm yourself, my dear," he said. "I do believe in love. Perhaps it may interest you to know that I too am in love."

"With whom?"

"With you."

She smiled scornfully.

"Since when?"

"Since we have been married and have lived—apart."

"What have you done to show me that you loved me?"

"I have kept away from you—knowing that you did not love me. What more could you desire?"

"If that is your idea of the matter, you have certainly done your part. And now you expect me to believe this nonsense!"

"Not at all. I merely mentioned the matter so that you might know that I fully sympathize with you in your present difficulty."

"Robert, I had hoped that——"

"That in some manner it might be arranged for you to—to——"

There was a pause. They gazed at each other intently.

"There is no reason," he said at last, "why in time such an affair cannot be arranged. When two people really love each other, why should a husband interfere? Absurd! Only it would have been

"Mr. Robert Cordery?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are my prisoner!"

Mrs. Cordery sprang forward and tore the evening paper from the hand of her husband's valet, as he stood there clutching it nervously and looking blankly at



"YOU ARE MY PRISONER!"

better if you had not waited—if you had come to me before. You see, my dear, I was in ignorance of your wishes."

"But now?"

"Now, the man has come to me first."

"What!"

"Yes. He also came to me for advice. I don't think I ever knew such a considerate pair of—lovers."

"When did he come?"

"This afternoon—at the club—an hour ago."

"What happened?"

Outside in the street below there was a low murmur, which gradually increased in volume. A chorus of strident voices was calling.

"Extra! Man shot at the Gotham Club! Extra!"

There was a loud knock at the door. A man forced his way in, closely followed by Cordery's valet.

his master and the detective. She sank back.

Her husband went over to her quietly and put his hand gently on her head.

"Don't be alarmed, my dear. He will recover. It was a bad shot. I missed his heart by fully two inches." Turning to the detective he said: "And now, sir, I am at your service!"

Tom Masson.

Clorinda's Highwayman.

I.

CLORINDA had not enjoyed Mrs. Dorset's dinner. She had ungraciously characterized the man who had taken her out as pitifully imbecile, and the star guest, the Tibetan explorer, as cheaply pyrotechnic. The women, she had declared to herself, were nonentities or worse. Even