

"I—I thought—you could not get from the ledge," I muttered. It was too absurd, too ridiculous. It was no wonder that they all screamed with laughter at the fool's errand they had come upon, and stamped about and clung to one another. But when he laughed, too, there was not an ache or pain in my body—and I had cut my wrist to the bone against a splinter of rock—that hurt me one-half as much. Surely he might have seen another side to it. But he did not; and so I managed to hide my bandaged wrist from him, and papa drove me home. There I broke down entirely, and Clare put me to bed, and petted me, and was very good to me. And when I came down next day with an ache in every part of me he was gone.

"He asked me to tell you," said Clare, not looking up from the fly she was tying at the window, "that he thought you were the bravest girl he had ever met."

So he understood now, when others had explained it to him. "No, Clare," I said coldly, "he did not say that exactly; he said 'the bravest little girl.'" For, indeed, lying up stairs with the window open, I had heard him set off on his long drive to Laerdalsören.

HIS STORY.

I was not dining out much at that time, partly because my acquaintance in town was limited, and something too because I cared little for it. But these were pleasant people, the old gentleman witty and amusing, the children, lively girls, nice to look at and good to talk with. The party had, too, a holiday flavor about them wholesome to recall in Scotland Yard; and as I had thought, playtime over, I should see no more of them, I was proportionately pleased to find that Mr. Guest had not forgotten me, and pleased also to regard his invitation to dinner at a quarter to eight as a royal command.

What with one delay owing to work, and another caused by a cabman strange to the ways of the town, it was twenty-five minutes after the hour named when I reached Bolton Gardens. Mr. Guest greeted me kindly, hushed my apologies, took me down the table, and said, "My daughter," and Miss Guest shook hands with me and pointed to the chair at her left.

I think that I never saw so remarkable a likeness—to her younger sister—in my life. She might have been little Bab herself, but for her dress and some striking differences. Miss Guest could not be more than eighteen, in form almost as fairy-like as the little one, with the same childlike, innocent look on her face. She had the big, grey eyes, too, that were so charming in Bab; but in her they were more soft and tender and thoughtful, and a thousand times more charming. Her hair, too, was brown and wavy; only, instead of hanging loose or in a pig-tail anywhere and anyhow in a fashion I well remembered, it was coiled in a coronal on the shapely little head, that was so Greek, and in its gracious, stately, old-fashioned pose, so unlike Bab's. Her dress, of some creamy, gauzy stuff, revealed the prettiest white throat in the world, and arms decked in pearls, and, so far, no more recalled my little fishing mate than the sedate self-

possession and assured dignity of this girl, as she talked to her other neighbor, suggested Bab making pancakes and chattering with the landlady's children in her strangely and wonderfully acquired Norse.

"Have you quite settled down after your holiday?" she asked, staying the apologies I was for pouring into her ear.

"I had until this evening, but the sight of your father is like a breath of fiord air. I hope your sisters are well."

"My sisters?" she murmured wonderingly, her fork half-way to her pretty mouth and her attitude one of questioning.

"Yes," I said, rather puzzled. "You know they were with your father when I had the good fortune to meet him. Miss Clare and Bab."

I really began to feel uncomfortable. Her color rose, and she looked me in the face in a half-proud, half-fearful way as if she resented the inquiry. It was a relief to me, when, with some show of confusion, she at length stammered, "Oh, yes, I beg your pardon, of course they were! How very foolish of me. They are quite well, thank you," and so was silent again. But I understood now. Mr. Guest had omitted to mention my name, and she had taken me for some one else of whose holiday she knew. I gathered from the aspect of the table and the room that the Guests saw a good deal of company, and it was a very natural mistake, though by the grave look she bent upon her plate it was clear that the young hostess was taking herself to task for it.

"You were nearly drowned, or something of the kind, were you not?" she asked, after an interval during which we had both talked to others.

"Well, not precisely. Your sister fancied I was in danger, and behaved in the pluckiest manner—so bravely that I can almost feel sorry that the danger was not there to dignify her heroism."

"That was like her," she answered in a tone just a little scornful. "You must have thought her a terrible tomboy. Now tell me did you not think so?" she murmured, graciously leaning the slightest bit toward me, and opening her eyes as they looked into mine in a way that to a man who had spent the day in a dusty room in Great Scotland Yard was sufficiently intoxicating.

"No," I said, lowering my voice in imitation of hers. "No, Miss Guest, I did not think so at all. I thought your sister a brave little thing, rather careless as children are apt to be, but likely to grow into a charming girl."

I wondered, marking how she bit her lip and refrained from assent, whether, impossible as it must seem to any one looking in her face, there might not be something of the shrew about my beautiful neighbor. Her tone when she spoke of her sister seemed to impart no great goodwill.

"So that is your opinion?" she said, after a pause. "Do you know," with a laughing glance, "that some people think I am like her?"

"Yes?" I answered gravely. "Well, I should be able to judge, who have seen you both and yet am not an