

SAINT MARGARET

By DEREK VANE

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"WHAT are you doing now, Stormont? Have you anything big on hand?" asked Jasper Farrell as he sat on the little veranda outside his friend's studio puffing contentedly at a fragrant cigar—a cigar quite out of proportion to his means, by the way; but, then, Jasper's income was small, and his tastes were large, so he did not let one interfere with the other more than was absolutely necessary.

Adrian Stormont lived at Sunbury in a little house with a garden running down to the river, and he was leaning back in a deck chair idly watching the boats as they went past with their varied freight; the men in white flannels, who were taking things easily because there was a girl on the red cushioned seat to talk to, and the club men in "sweaters," who gave no thought to girls as they flew along under the stern eye of the cockswain, but only to the coming race.

"I beg your pardon," Adrian said, remembering that he had been asked a question. "What am I doing, did you say? Well, nothing much just at present, but I am contemplating something big, though I don't know whether I shall ever arrive at it. I have received a communication from the ancient borough of Stonehaven making me a proposal to paint a 'St. Margaret' for their town hall. St. Margaret, you must know, is the patron saint of Stonehaven, and they are very proud of her."

"Well, why do you hesitate? I don't see much difficulty about that. On the contrary, you are to be congratulated." "But that isn't quite all," said Adrian a little dryly. "St. Margaret is the type of all that is innocent and beautiful in woman. She is a pure, ethereal creature, bearing the martyr's palm and crown. As you know, my figure studies have been chiefly men. I have rarely employed a female model, and in any case no hired model would answer my idea of St. Margaret. So I am at a standstill."

"Oh, I know you have always fought shy of women and shut yourself up here like a Diogenes in his tub. You are almost as innocent of the world as a baby, but it is not quite the wicked place you fancy, and there are St. Margarets to be found in it yet."

"I don't know," rejoined Adrian, "that I have thought of it as very wicked, but the few women I have met have all seemed to me very much alike, not much better than we are. Now, I want a woman who is as different from man as light from darkness, whose innate goodness shines in her beautiful face, making it tender and pitiful to the sins she could not commit, but can understand—a saint to be worshipped and yet," his voice dropping, "a woman to be loved."

"I am afraid I cannot help you. You want so much. She must be a beauty and a pattern of all the virtues as well. The two so seldom go together, you see. Virtue is rightly considered as the privilege of the plain. And she mustn't be a model, you say, or I know a very nice little girl—"

"Oh, no, not a model," interrupted Adrian impatiently. "Fancy a creature who simps to you for so much an hour posing as St. Margaret!"

Jasper shrugged his shoulders. "As I said before, your notions are a little exaggerated," he remarked. "Why can't you idealize, like other men? Saints don't come and sit for their portraits unfortunately."

"I am not so unreasonable as to expect my ideal complete in the flesh," replied Adrian, "but I must have youth and innocence at least. I must paint my saint from one not altogether unworthy to stand in her place."

There was no reply. Jasper was smoking, and his thoughts seemed to have drifted away. But presently he roused himself. He blew a ring of smoke slowly into the air and watched it fade before he spoke. Then he said:

"I think perhaps I can help you after all." He spoke very deliberately, as though he were weighing each word.

Adrian turned to him eagerly. "Really? I shall be very much obliged to you if you can."

"I know a girl who should suit you well in every respect if she will consent to sit," he went on, still in the same deliberate way. "She is beautiful—with the beauty of a saint or an angel; there is something almost unearthly about it—and," very slowly, "I have never heard a word against her."

"But will she come? Do you think you can persuade her to sit for me? Is she a friend of yours?" Adrian poured out his questions, too eager and interested to notice the strangeness of Jasper's manner.

"I have known her some time, and I will make the proposal to her if you like. She has a widowed mother to support—it is astonishing how many widowed mothers there are in the world who need supporting—and that may influence her. It won't be such drudgery as teaching. I suppose I may offer liberal terms."

"Anything you like if she will suit. When can I see her? She is teaching, you say, so perhaps it would be convenient to her to come down some evening for an interview?"

"I think not—I mean it is rather a long way to come so late—she is living in London." Jasper replied, with odd embarrassment. "But if she will consent to sit for your sweet saint I will tell her to write and make an appointment to see you. I have not much fear but what you will find her all that you desire."

So it was settled, and Jasper shortly returned to town. He would not listen to a word of thanks from Adrian, interrupting him unceremoniously when he would have expressed his gratitude. Adrian waited in some anxiety for the result of his friend's negotiations and breathed a sigh of relief when he had a little note saying the writer, who signed herself "Bernice Kerr," would call on him that afternoon.

And when he saw her he was not disappointed. She was young and fair and full of grace. Tall and slender of limb, she stood before him, with her snow white skin, her red brown hair, her deep violet eyes—eyes that shone like stars in her pale face. As Jasper had said, there was something almost unearthly about her beauty, it was so pure and spiritual. The mind could harbor no evil that gave expression to such a face.

Adrian stood a moment, motionless, almost holding his breath. Was he dreaming? Had the St. Margaret of his visions come to life? He had seen so few women that she seemed to him a veritable miracle. He did not notice the shabby setting of the room, the too sharp outline of the delicate cheek and chin, the deep shadows under the violet eyes, for they but gave the touch of pathos which completed the picture. He wanted just that wistful expression, the knowledge of past sorrow and suffering deepening the starry eyes.

A slow smile came over her face as he looked.

"Shall I do?" she asked softly.

He awoke with a start. "I beg your pardon, I"—he stammered. Then he



"Shall I do?" she asked. "You will do perfectly," he said gravely. "If you will honor me by sitting for my St. Margaret I could ask for no better model."

She looked at him a little thoughtfully. "Very well," she replied. "I will come tomorrow if you like. I am free every afternoon."

The first time she sat to him Adrian saw that she knew how to pose herself; he had only to suggest and she seemed to fall into the right attitude at once. As she stood on the throne, crowned with palm, holding up a cross, her white robe falling back from her lovely arms, the light of glorified martyrdom shining in her face, his heart beat faster and his hand almost trembled. Could he do justice to such a picture? Was his hand strong enough to cope with a masterpiece of the great Creator?

As time went on Adrian discovered that she had claims of mind as well as body; when she began to talk—at first she was very silent and reserved—he found that she had many original thoughts and graceful fancies.

Perhaps the pleasantest half hour in the afternoon was when she came down from the throne for a rest and the housekeeper brought in tea. She was woman enough to appreciate the dainty arrangements of the tea tray, and Adrian liked to see her handling his old Worcester, pouring out his cream and eating his cakes; she seemed more woman than saint then. They would discuss the progress of the picture, for she could take an intelligent interest in his work, and he had more than once profited by her suggestions. It pleased him to see that, so far from her unusual occupation's tiring her, she seemed to enjoy it.

At last the day came when the picture was complete; the finishing touch had been given, and even Adrian, who was always his own severest critic, was fain to acknowledge that he was content. It was a worthy St. Margaret; from the sole of her foot to the crown of her head there was no blemish in her.

"I am not like that," Bernice said softly when they had stood a few minutes side by side in silence, absorbed in contemplation of the lovely figure, poised so lightly that it almost seemed to be soaring upward. "You have idealized me."

"Not very much, I think," Adrian answered gently, and when he turned toward her there was a look of worship in his eyes. "A little more saint, a little less woman, perhaps; that is all. She is a saint of you—and you of her."

"Don't say that!" she cried harshly, turning away from him. "You don't know me, and you can't tell I am a saint!" "I think enough for me," he said, then, holding out his hands to her, "I am St. Margaret."

Didn't you know, couldn't you feel that I loved you? I thought you understood me. At first it was all my St. Margaret—you were only the woman who could give me her face; then gradually it changed, and I forgot the saint in the woman. Do you wonder that this is so dear to me?—pointing to the picture. Do you wonder that I have painted it as I never painted anything before? You were my inspiration. There is the genius of love in every stroke. It is yours far more than mine. "And now," with a little happy laugh, "I want to come down out of the clouds; I want you, Bernice, nothing and no one else—not even St. Margaret. I want a wife just like any ordinary man who has not vowed that girl shall be his only mistress and spent half his days in dreams and visions. Won't you speak to me? I have thought you cared for me a little. Don't say I have been mistaken."

The happiness died out of his voice and face as she still held herself away from him and gave no sign.

Presently she looked up, and he uttered a cry of dismay when he saw her face. It was white and cold—frozen. It seemed, into a look of stony despair—all its beauty gone, the starry eyes dull and heavy with pain.

"What is it? What have I done?" he asked breathlessly. "You are ill—suffering. Bernice, for God's sake speak!" "I am going away," she said, and each word cost her an effort. "Have mercy and don't stop me. Go to Mr. Farrell; he will explain everything—I can't." And she turned to go.

Cold with undimmed fear, too bewildered to speak, he made no effort to detain her.

"Forgive me," she murmured, dropping at his feet and passionately kissing his hand. "I didn't know what I was doing. Try and forgive me—by and by." The next moment she was gone.

Some hours later he was still sitting in the same place, his arms thrown on the easel that bore the picture of his saint, his head buried in his hands, when the door opened and some one came in. It was quite dark in the room now, and he could not see who it was. The intruder struck a light, and, looking up mechanically when the gleam caught his eye, Adrian saw Jasper Farrell.

"Oh, there you are!" Jasper cried rather boisterously. "What! Worshipping at the shrine, eh? Let me have a look." And he stationed himself behind Adrian.

"Well, she's a beauty and no mistake. I congratulate you, old man. Don't you feel grateful to me? You could never have done that if I hadn't found you such a peerless model."

"Have you come to explain? Has she told you?" Adrian asked, speaking for the first time. "There has been some villainy at work. Make haste and explain if you don't want me to choke it out of you." His voice was scarcely raised above a whisper, but his hands were twitching, and Jasper moved a little farther off.

"What do you mean? I don't understand you. I give myself some trouble to help you out of a difficulty, and in return you abuse me. I think it is for me to demand an explanation."

"I am waiting," Adrian said hoarsely. "I shouldn't advise you to play with me too long. I asked Miss Kerr to be my wife, and she turned from me in horror and dismay—not because she does not love me; of that I am sure. She asked me to forgive her, but she would say no more. She said you would explain. Now do so."

"Her conscience is too tender," Jasper said, with a sneer, but he did not seem quite at his ease. "I suppose she was worrying over a little deception—a harmless little joke—we practiced on you, all for your own good."

He waited a moment; his lips were uncomfortably dry.

"You want the little mystery cleared up—the little mystery that has been of such benefit to you, which has produced this beautiful picture—far the best thing you have ever done, by the way. If I were not such a generous man I should be inclined to be jealous. Very well, by all means. Miss Bernice Kerr fills quite a distinguished role at night, almost as distinguished as the one she filled with you by day, and far more famous. To be brief, she is a 'living picture' at the Palace theater. Her 'Ariadne' has been much admired, also the 'Will-o'-the-Wisp.' Her strange beauty and admirable figure make her eminently suited for this form of entertainment."

Adrian gave a stifled cry; it was as though a knife had been plunged in his heart. His St. Margaret poised aloft in the eyes of the multitude; her grace and loveliness at the mercy of their brutal gaze—of their coarse lips! For the one that would see merely a beautiful picture and admire it as that there were a hundred who would see the woman behind it. He shivered as he thought of it. He looked upon his art as a sacred thing. He would have raised her high above the crowd, he would never have cheapened her in any way, however much it might have been to his advantage—and now he had done this thing! He had given to his St. Margaret the form and face of a woman who made a public show of her beauty night after night.

"You seem distressed. I was afraid you would be; your ideas are so ultra refined," Jasper continued in a more confident tone. "This is why I asked Miss Kerr to conceal her identity; if you had known who she was you would not have had her, and as she was so eminently suitable, that seemed a pity. I knew there was no danger of your recognizing her, as you never patronize music halls. She was very hard up some time ago, giving a few lessons at St. Margaret's, and I persuaded her to go in for the tableaux vivants, which are much better paid and not nearly such hard work. She didn't like it at first, but her mother

and I together induced her to go on. Where was the harm? It is a perfectly proper performance—even an elevating one, some people say—and she was treated with every respect."

Still Adrian did not speak. "She didn't like coming to you under false pretenses—it is only fair I should tell you that—but she thought she was under some obligation to me, and as I wished it she consented. I told her I was very anxious to find somebody to sit to you for St. Margaret and that she could look the part to perfection, but that as you were very particular I would be as well for her not to say anything about the palace. Perhaps she did not think the gulf between a saint and a living picture as broad as it seems to you. I do not see what there is to make such a fuss about. Miss Kerr is as good a girl as you could wish to find; I give you my word of honor for that."

"I do not need it. You understand me well enough to know what such a thing as you have done would mean to me, and you are only wasting your words. How I have offended you that you should seek such a revenge I do not know, but you may be content; it is all and more than you could have foreseen. Now go. I would not soil my hands by touching you."

And Jasper Farrell went, conscious that he cut but a sorry figure. He would have given a great deal to have made a dignified and imposing exit, but he felt like a whipped hound.

And Adrian sat on alone at the feet of St. Margaret.

Presently he looked up, and the slow color dyed his face as he gazed. He had done her a wrong, and she seemed to reproach him. She was no longer a saint, no longer a heavenly vision; he had dragged her down to the dust; he had exposed her to laughter and derision. The cross—the martyr's crown—he winced as he saw them; to his excited nerves it seemed as if he had been guilty of actual irreverence.

Send a St. Margaret to Stonehaven made in the likeness of a living picture—a picture known far and wide, no doubt! It was impossible. And he could not bear the silent reproach of her constant presence.

He took up a knife and made a step toward the canvas, but before he could strike his arm was seized. He looked round with wild eyes, scarcely conscious of where he was or what he was doing and saw Bernice at his side.

"Not that!" she cried. "Not that! Kill me rather. It is my fault, not hers. I didn't realize at first all the wrong I was doing, but when I learned to know you and saw how you revered her—that you would not have a coarse thought associated with her—then I began to understand. * * * And then I was afraid to speak. How could you bear to think that a girl who decked herself nightly for the crowd to admire should sit for your St. Margaret?"

"I have found it all out now, and it was a cruel thing to do—how cruel I did not know. You believe that, don't you? I couldn't keep away—I was obliged to come back. I felt I must hear you say you forgive me, though I knelt at your feet all night. You hate and despise me so much that you cannot bear to look at her. I understand that—but I—I cannot bear to see her destroyed. She is mine as well as yours, and she means all the happiness of my life."

She was kneeling at his feet now, and her tears were falling fast.

"You are shocked and horrified that I should have done such a thing. It was not the life I should have chosen, but we were starving, and what could I do? It is so hard for a woman to earn a living. I don't want to make excuses. I know all you must think



"Forgive me." "Of me—I deserve it all. But—but do you hate me so much that you cannot even say a word of forgiveness? I will never trouble you again, but before I go just say, 'I know you did not mean to hurt me, Bernice, and I forgive you.' Only that."

As she spoke a great cloud seemed to roll away from Adrian's soul. Those tender words had pierced through the darkness, and he knew that though he had lost much he had not lost all.

"I know you did not mean to hurt me, Bernice," he said slowly, "but I shall not forgive you, because I love you, and love has nothing to forgive. If I have lost my St. Margaret I have found you." And he raised her in his arms. "You don't want to go away now?"

The mayor and corporation of Stonehaven had to go elsewhere for a picture of their patron saint.

The Wedding at St. Ann's

By EDWARD MARSDEN COOKE

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AS Leonard Hopkins mounted the steps of the club he met old General Dodge coming down, and there was something very attractive about the way the younger man lent his assistance across the icy pavement to the veteran. Other men might have done the same thing, but not in just the same way, and the old man felt it and smiled to himself as he drove away, muttering something about "Hopkins' boy" being an uncommonly fine fellow. These young men all occupied places in his mind as somebody's boys.

Up in the hall above the man who took Hopkins' hat and coat felt warmed by the kindness of his manner. The servants always felt that way about him after they got accustomed to the sternness of his face. It did not matter that they had no business to note the difference in their treatment by those who commanded their services. The fact was that they did, and tonight the stolid looking servant noticed that Mr. Hopkins' face was even more austere than usual, and he felt, too, that the other thing, the thing that somehow or other would raise Mr. Hopkins up above the plane occupied by the other members of the club, was more marked than ordinarily.

As Hopkins passed on into the room a man stopped him and exchanged a few words with him about an engagement which, he said, circumstances forced him to break, and then went away thinking what a very disagreeable fellow Hopkins was, and it was some minutes later before his sense of justice added to the harsh verdict the saving word "sometimes."

The fact was that Leonard Hopkins was very much out of sorts, as he put it to himself. It was characteristic of him in a moody fit to be especially courteous to old General Dodge and particularly considerate of the servant, and in his quiet way, viciously disagreeable to the first man of his own age and degree whom he met. He felt that the man was fair prey, and he made the most of it and seemed pacified by it afterward and sorry the next day.

Hopkins walked back through the rooms to one in the rear and took a seat at a table where Russell Carroll and Philip Maltby were chatting and smoking, and they hailed him pleasantly and looked at their watches and went on with their talk. The three had met by agreement to go to the church together, where they were to perform the duties of ushers at the marriage of their old friend, Tom Borroughs. A young fellow with a noticeably good natured face and a bunch of violets on his coat sauntered up and, leaning over Hopkins' chair, made some light and some rather serious remarks about the wedding and joined with Carroll and Maltby in saying nice things about Miss Fielding and metaphorically patting Tom Borroughs on the back, very tenderly for men, and Hopkins sat silently flicking the ashes from his cigarette and carefully tilting a glass that stood on the table until the liquor ran down close to the edge and threatened to fall on the table and did not.

Finally the man with the good natured face turned to go and paused to say in parting:

"Well, for those who like weddings this is the kind of a wedding they ought to like. There is something about it that makes one feel comfortable all over. I really don't believe there is even an old aunt to come up from the country and wear queer clothes and spoil the artistic effect." And he laughed and went away, and Hopkins turned slightly in his chair and watched him go, smiling in a perfunctory sort of way until Maltby attracted his attention with an abrupt, "Well, what is the matter with you?" and Hopkins replied with an attempted laugh:

"Oh, nothing—that is, not much. I need something to drink—something like brandy, say." And he called a waiter, while Carroll mumbled something about being glad that he knew what he needed, and Maltby added a vicious thrust about the man who took weddings seriously, and they all laughed and emptied the glasses.

"I am not going to have anything but smiles about this thing tonight," continued Maltby. "I am in a measure responsible for its success and propose to see it go off with the flags flying and the band playing, and so on. It will be time enough tomorrow for you to think about the difference between Borroughs the bachelor and Borroughs married."

"Oh, it was not Tom I was thinking of," responded Hopkins thoughtfully; "it was another. Well, whatever it was, I'll think of something else. You see, I have been rubbed the wrong way today. I went down with the governor to see his patients in the slums, and if there was anything that was gruesome or pitiful or sorry, that we overlooked it must have been out for the day. Then I went to the Parkhills to dinner—just a plain dinner, as they are always telling you; no wine and not very much to eat and, by way of conversation, a good deal of wandering around among the skeletons and tombstones of the past and protests against the present, and so on. I know that they are awfully nice people, and I am sorry for their misfortunes, and sometimes I do not mind their dinners. But it all went against the grain today." And Hopkins pushed his chair back, im-

lowing his ex-
"St. Ann's church called to the co-
his two friends
when they were
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commenced a sto-
of it, when Hop-
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some one outside
"I forgot to say
tone, 'that betw-
Parkhills I saw a
cousin to a gen-
dead, and I wish
be and it is not."
And Carroll said
sense?" and Malt-
asked hastily, "w-
Hopkins studied
his cigarette with
fore replying and
have about decid-
and he looked on
as if he were hes-
else to talk to
them, he added
begin, and I
about it. Five y-
to New York



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business that tur-
us all I met Ag-
long before Tom
her. She was ev-
now, and she had
five enthusiastic
freshness of you
I fancy most men
ly wise Miss Field-
better than her. I
don't. The way
me made me like
to know of her in-
only strengthens
Now—but that is
ry. If Tom had
and fallen in love
not be going to his
least not with his
You see, she was
man then, and, right,
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who fell in love
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to go off at a tan-
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big pile. If I had
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"One day Good-
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ship—physically
ly and morally. I
can blame the
think of his hell
(Continued)