

Sercombe stalked out in a rage, and he didn't think of anything else until night, but by the time he got aboard the Madison train his mind had changed somewhat.

He had thought the matter all over. "It will be tough on both of us, but I will do it." He had resolved to make this his last visit until after his graduation. "If I go down occasionally it will be just as bad. I must cut right off short. If everything is all right I'll find it out as soon as I am safely out of here. At any rate, I know that Nell is all right." All the faculties of his reason united to strengthen his purpose, and by the time he reached Madison he knew what he should do.

A few minutes later he rang the bell. The door opened.

Was it an apparition? His resolve flew to the four winds. She had always seemed surpassingly beautiful to him, but tonight she was divine. She seemed to have all the clear, transcendent loveliness of an angel combined with the vivacity and brilliancy of the most coveted of earthly idols.

Sercombe had a strong will. He collected his wits and nerved himself to speak, feeling that after this moment his chance for liberty would forever be gone. His lips refused to move. "Oh, for one more hour of heaven," he thought. "I'll take a few minutes."

He saw that every minute was adding a thread to a cable already stronger than he could break, and finally, clenching his fist, he opened his mouth and forced out the words:

"Nell, I am having some pretty hard work in college. Our acquaintance has been— We met—"

"Wasn't it jolly on the train," said she, with a rippling, merry laugh that sent the hot feeling over his cheek and choked his words. That first neglected opportunity, those few minutes, the added threads had turned his cable to one of iron; he was lost.

"Nell, you know my heart. I love you passionately, madly," he faltered.

Her head dropped upon his shoulder. "Oh, Theodore; but we mustn't let—"

"Jack!" she gasped, turning deathly white, and springing away from him, but Sercombe held her wrist tightly.

The door opened, and in the hall he caught sight of a man, whose step had already been recognized.

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Though, of course, he was hurt by Sercombe's cutting words