

"Oh, I said," unconcernedly, "since you find you can do so well without me, I shall let you row back alone. I wish you *bon voyage*," I cried, over my shoulder, as I strode rapidly away, swinging the red parasol gaily.

"Jack!" The voice was a mixture of anger and amazement. I stopped.

"Well, what is it?" I inquired, without turning.

"You've my sunshade."

"Yes," I said. "I'll see no harm comes to it," and I moved on.

"But Jack!" The tone was quavering.

"What now?" I called out, stopping again.

"I can't row. You simply must come back."

"Oh, yes, you can, a little," I hastened to assure her, "for I have seen you at it. In fact you pull a very good oar."

That was the last straw. Something very like a sob came to my ears. I turned like a flash. Her lip was trembling and tears were in her eyes. Evidently she had believed me to be in earnest. The sight of her tears was too much for me. I rushed madly back to the boat.

"Don't, dear," I said tenderly. "I was but in jest. Come, I'll take you back." And I shoved the boat off and sprang in.

She lifted her head and smiled at me through her tear-dimmed eyes. The glance she gave me fairly made my head swim, so full was it of revelation.

"And you were jesting, too," I said, "weren't you?"

"Of course, you silly boy. Couldn't you see it? But you carried your part too far."

"Because you were so very severe," said I. "However, I will forgive you."

"I never would have left you go," she said, after a moment.

"Never is a long time," I repeated. "And why not?"

"Because you had my—my parasol," she explained, lamely.

"And your kerchief," I added.

"Yes," said Bess.

"And your heart," said I, boldly.

"Why of course, Jack," she whispered.

In a second I had sprung to her side.

"Do be sensible," she murmured. "Some one may see —"

"Not here, Bess."