

# The Impossible Boy

By NINA WILCOX PUTNAM

(Copyright by Bobbe-Merrill Co.)

## CHAPTER XV.

**Snow and Dogs and Things.**

As Pedro emerged into the street, that snowy white carpet which appears so magically soft and muffling over the pavements, deadening the sound of such little stir of life as was still abroad at this most silent hour.

A distant chime struck the quarter, and proclaimed that two o'clock of a new morning was at hand. The wind was biting and Pedro, plowing along enkle-deep in the shifting mass, shivered beneath the insufficient covering afforded by the old green coat.

With head bent and shoulders hunched, Pedro had gone past his corner by mistake, and suddenly realizing this, he glanced up to find himself confronting a building that had often attracted his passing attention. It was before the old First Presbyterian church, with its snow-laden trees, and white-mounded garden, that he paused and turned his back to the lashing gale. Just as he began to retrace his steps, allowing the wind to push him, he heard a low moan, as of some one in pain.

The sound seemed to come from the front portico of the church. Going up to the iron gate, he found it open, and peered inside. Apparently no one was there, and he was about to leave, when within the dark central doorway something moved, and a gleam of white flashed out of the gloom.

In an instant Pedro had bounded across the snow-filled space between gate and door, and was kneeling on the flagging of the vestibule, groping about. Then something warm and moist touched his hand, and he discovered the sufferer to be a large black dog with a white star on his face, who lay as though one of his hind legs had been crushed—perhaps by some passing automobile, earlier in the previous day. His coat was coarse and short,



Going Up to Leigh, the Boy Placed His Hands on the Giant's Shoulder.

and his tail, in direct contradiction, long and bushy, with white fringes. Like half-moons his eyes rolled at Pedro, and without hesitation the long muzzle was laid into his hand. At the touch Pedro's heart leaped.

"Good dog!" he said huskily. "What shall we do about it, old fellow, eh?"

The dog whined a little, and snuggled closer. Pedro put an arm about him.

"Come on, boy!" he said.

The dog made a pitiful effort to rise and follow him, but failing, sank back upon the steps with a whimper. Pedro looked about him despairingly, but no help was in sight. With a sigh he stooped and lifted him into his arms, a by no means easy accomplishment, for the dog was at least half his own size, and heavy at that.

It was a heavy task he had undertaken, and several times he was obliged to pause and seat himself in some doorway for a moment or two, and before he had arrived half-way to his destination it began to seem to him that he could get no farther. Then, as he arose for a final effort, he raised his eyes to the building before which he had last rested, and recognized it as Leigh's dwelling place. Furthermore, there was a light in the sculptor's window. With a breathless exclamation he clambered up the steps and pounded on the door.

It was several minutes before the janitor responded, and when he found that he had been summoned from his comfortable basement chamber for the sole purpose of admitting "that dago boy" a fierce old cur he flatly refused to help in the animal's removal to the upper regions. So Pedro did it alone, and reached Leigh's door breathless and exhausted. At his knock, the door flew wide, revealing Leigh, clad in an old brown dressing-gown and slippers, his pipe, as usual, hanging reversed from the corner of his mouth.

"What the devil—" began the sculptor.

"The dog—he's badly hurt!" exclaimed Pedro excitedly. "I couldn't carry him any farther, so I brought him in. Let us make him a bed by the stove, quickly!"

"All right, Doc!" replied Leigh, gathering up sofa cushions indiscriminately, "we'll fix him up."

For twenty minutes they fussed over the animal, and when they had done their best for it, and it had gone to sleep with its head upon Leigh's rolled-up overcoat, the two shook heads.

"When did you get back?" asked Pedro.

"Only tonight. I went around to

your place at dinner time, but it was locked. Where have you been?"

And then Pedro, keeping back nothing but his attitude toward himself, gave Leigh a full account of the week's adventures. When he had done, there was a long silence, during which Leigh sat staring into the fire, as though obsessed by some idea that he was unable to shake off. When at length he spoke, Pedro thought that the deep voice had never been so resonant and sympathetic.

"There's one thing I must get off my chest before I turn in tonight. I've been meaning to say it and, indeed, have started to several times, but always forgot, somehow."

"Well, what is it?" asked Pedro, smiling. "I'm old enough to hear it, I guess, eh?"

Leigh smiled up at him through a cloud of tobacco smoke. "It is the dream of the very young to be old and steeped in sin," said he, "even as it is the dream of the old to be young and innocent."

"A truism, not an epigram," commented Pedro. "But what is the solemn communication?"

"It's about Miss Vanderpool," replied Leigh, his smile fading. "You see her too often, and it won't do! Are you not aware that she is engaged, or as good as engaged, to the very man who has made it possible for you to know her. Don't do it, boy, it's not fair!"

"How would you have me act? I am painting her."

"Don't see her at other times, then."

"Eh? Not go near her? Polite, wouldn't that be?" exclaimed Pedro, just for the wickedness of leading Leigh on.

"You know what I mean," said Leigh, and he was watching Pedro very closely as he spoke. "When, for instance, do you expect to see her next?"

"Tomorrow night at the Milligans' masquerade," replied Pedro. "She will be there."

"Then don't go!" exclaimed Leigh. "I hate to flatter you, Pedro, but you are not without attractions."

Pedro lighted a cigarette.

"I think I shall go," he said, eying the smoke meditatively, his handsome head cocked to one side; his eyes half-closed, and a queer little smile playing about his lips.

Leigh swore an oath.

"Don't be a cad!" he said shortly, rising.

Pedro grew solemn at his tone, and yet a wicked spark lingered in the depths of his eyes. Going up to Leigh, the boy placed a hand on the giant's shoulder and stood looking up at him.

"I don't know quite what that cad you say is," he said; "but from the way you speak of it, I am sure it is not good to be one. Yet, I am going to that party, and simply in order to see the Madonna lady. And in telling you this, after what you have said about Hill, I must beg you to believe that no matter how often I should see her, there would be no disloyalty in it to my benefactor. Such treachery as I suggest would, in my case, be absolutely impossible, for more reasons than I can explain, or you could possibly guess. An affair with her is totally impossible for me. Will you not believe this, amigo mio?"

As he spoke his face had grown more and more grave, and at the end he seemed struggling to hide some deep emotion. Very seriously and intently Leigh watched his face until he had ceased to speak.

"Very well, I'll believe you," he said finally, "but it's a tricky dangerous matter, and mark my words, you'll be sorry if you run your head into her trap; she's a charming young woman!"

"Yes!" said Pedro. "And now I must go."

"Go!" cried Leigh in amazement. "In this storm? What nonsense, man! Sleep here on the couch."

For reply Pedro seized his hat, a panicky expression blanching his face.

"No, no!" he said. "I must go!"

"But it's nearly morning!" objected Leigh. "Why the devil shouldn't you stay?"

Pedro's fingers were on the latch. Hat in hand, he flung back his answer.

"Because!" he replied and rushed out, banging the door behind him.

For a long time Leigh sat looking at the closed door, thinking hard, all the lines in his face springing into prominence as he bent upon his subject with special concentration.

"Because!" he repeated aloud. "What a strange answer. Because! Why? Why? Why?" Taking a single impulsive step toward the door he flung his arms out before him.

Then, like a blind man who had been suddenly given sight, he staggered across the studio and flung himself upon the couch.

door without making any noise, and putting his ear to the panel, listened intently. No sound! Whoever they were, they were quiet enough! But who could it possibly be? Again he listened at the door, and at first heard nothing but the distant roar of the elevated cars, and the tense "audible" silence of the sleeping tenement. Then a faint stirring and—was it a sigh?—came to him from within the room. This was a sound not to be withstood, and, very gently, he turned the door-knob, at the same time fitting in his latch-key. Then, with a swift stealthy movement that was like a panther's maneuver, he opened the door a crack, slid through, and quickly closing it after him, stood motionless with his back against it. A curious scene met his gaze.

Two old Spanish lamps that hung from the ceiling had been lighted, and on the hearth glowed the embers of a dying fire. By the soft red light of these the room took shape, and gigantic shadows stirred in the corners.

At first the apartment seemed unoccupied, but a second glance showed this impression to be a mistaken one, for even as he turned toward the couch, there was a gentle stirring among the cushions and one of them, a stand full of long-stemmed roses near by, sent a shower of crimson petals fluttering over the sleeping form of Iris herself.

"Dios!" whispered Pedro.

For a breath or two he stood staring down at her, and then, being careful not to awaken her, he drew up a large armchair to the opposite side of the hearth, and dropping into it, sat regarding her intently, his hands clasped about his knees, his head bowed.

That Iris had been at a ball or festivity of some sort was plain from the gown she wore.

Her hair seemed washed with melted gold, after the manner of the ancients, and her carmine lips half parted over the little, even white teeth, might have been stained with henna, so red they were—so very red—like wounded poppy—and her skin was so very, very white, yet creamy, too.

"Princess of the past ages," he murmured softly, "your soul shines through the flesh of today!"

Pedro arose, and bending over her, brushed a new-fallen petal from her lips. And Iris awoke, looking at him with love in her eyes.

"I knew you would come tonight," she said smiling. "Something told me so!"

She held out her hands, and he assisted her to a sitting posture.

"What made you think I would be here tonight?" he asked, his voice still low and level. "I did not know it myself."

"I was not sure, of course!" she protested. "It was only that I felt you might be, and I—oh! I was mad to come, I suppose, and you will think me—oh, yes, I could not stay away. Something seemed calling and calling me! Are you not glad to see me?"

"—oh—say you are glad, for I am so ashamed!" She had arisen and stood before him with downcast head.

"Why?" said Pedro.

"Ah! If you need to ask that, then I am not ashamed!" she cried. "You always understand! I knew you would . . . that is, if you were here at all!"

"This time I do not quite understand, Madonna," said Pedro, "but you are very gracious. Will you not be seated?"

"I was frightened when I came in here," she confessed. "The studio is so vast at night, and so full of shadows, and then, coming up the stairs . . . that is, the unusualness of it all, you know! And I have been so worried about you!"

"But why?" he asked again.

"The paper that I signed!" she laughed nervously, her fingers straying to the taut locks of her hair. "The paper, and the mad way in which you seized upon it. Then this mysterious absence without warning. And yet I knew you would return; my presence here proves my faith in your ability to win out. Have you any news?"

"Not yet," he said, thinking it best to let Hill tell his own story in his own time. "But tell me, Madonna lady, is it conventional in America for young ladies in society to go about alone at such an hour as this?"

He was watching her intently as she spoke, and she, wondering how innocent the speech was, felt the hot blood mounting to her forehead.

"No—no!" she stammered, "but we . . . surely you understand! No one keeps account of my coming or going, and as far as my household is concerned, I might easily be at the dance until even later than this! Then we are such—we have been such good friends, surely we are different. The ordinary conventions do not concern us."

"Don't they?" he asked softly. "Not me, poor wail, perhaps—but you! The world is small and full of gossiping tongues."

"The world is idiotic!" she declared tremulously. "It never believes in friendship between men and women!"

There was a tense pause. Then he spoke, and the words fell sharp as knives upon the thick emotion that she had conjured up.

"Are we friends?"

The question held much more than the spoken query. It was a denial, and a challenge.

Her voice was low and vibrant as she made her reply, her words, like his, carrying a double meaning that was equally apparent to them both, under its pretense of being matter-of-fact.

"I don't feel very much like a 'friend' of yours," she said.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A Byzantine Princess.

Tired and disturbed in heart and mind, Pedro crept wearily up the long flights of stairs to his apartment, and as he paused upon the landing next to the top, the little clock on Caselle's mantel-shelf rang four clear silvery notes into the dark silence of the musty stairway. With a sigh he commanded his stiffened muscles for a final effort, and mounted the last remaining flight of creaking steps between him and bed. Ah, grateful thought! It made him hurry, and caused him to glance eagerly toward his goal before the top step was fairly reached. There he paused in surprise.

A light was shining out from beneath the door! Could there be a burglar in the room? It would scarcely be a visitor, at such an hour, and in any event, how could a guest have obtained admission? It was very puzzling! Cautiously he crept over to the

"How do you feel, then?" he asked gently.

"How do I feel?" she cried. "I feel like—like this!"

And slipping from the sofa before he could prevent her, she fell upon her knees in front of him, and clasping her hands as if in worship, gazed up at him adoringly, almost touching him as she knelt.

"That is how I feel," said Iris.

"Don't, don't!" said Pedro in a broken voice.

"I love you!" said Iris. "Why, you surely know it—you must have seen it!"

She spoke with the glad note of one who confesses what she believes to be the most desired of facts.

"Don't!" Pedro pleaded again.

"But why should I not?" she asked radiantly. "I love you! Do you not like to hear me say it? Does not my having come here in this manner prove it?"

"No!" he cried in agony, springing to his feet as though to defend himself from something. "No, it proves nothing of the kind. You do not, cannot love me! It is impossible, impossible. I have already told you so. Ah! I cannot endure to have you act so! And this is Hill's own room!"

"But I do love you!" she cried, following him. "Pedro, touch me—tell me that you care! Kiss me, Pedro!"

"Never!" he said fiercely. "You do not love me—you love Hill! Yes, yes, you do, although you do not realize it. I am really nothing to you but a reaction—a pastime!"

"That is not true!" she sobbed.

"It is!" he shrieked. "You have loved Hill all along! Me! Why, it is out of the question that you should care for me. It is against nature! The atmosphere of the studio is what you love here, the informality, the careless freedom; but, me—ah! no. You love love itself primarily, and tonight it has mastered you. But the man whom you love is Hill."

"Ah, so you care nothing for me, after all!" she moaned. "But I am past pride; kiss me, Pedro!"

"I will not!" he cried, retreating from her. "I love you in my own way—as much as I can love any woman—but I will not kiss you! You are mad tonight. It is the environment, the situation, not me, that has so aroused you. You must go home!"

"Kiss me, Pedro," said Iris with outstretched arms.

Roughly he flung her away.

"Listen!" he commanded, "you don't know what you are doing. You are nothing but an infatuated little animal tonight. You no more love me than you love that lamp—than the hovering moth loves it! There is a splendid man who does love you, and you return his affection, although you do not appear to be conscious of it; but take warning—and open your eyes to the fact. Do so before you succeed in singeing your wings at some such earth-fire as you have tried to light tonight! Love is a sacred, a wonderful thing, and it comes to us but once."

But she had not been listening.

"Kiss me!" said she.

"No!" cried Pedro.

"Touch me, then!" she cried wildly. "Take my hand—anything! I am mad for the touch of your hand!"

"Will you not listen to reason?" he implored. "I cannot endure that you should belittle yourself so! I cannot

"How do you feel, then?" he asked gently.

"How do I feel?" she cried. "I feel like—like this!"

And slipping from the sofa before he could prevent her, she fell upon her knees in front of him, and clasping her hands as if in worship, gazed up at him adoringly, almost touching him as she knelt.

"That is how I feel," said Iris.

"Don't, don't!" said Pedro in a broken voice.

"I love you!" said Iris. "Why, you surely know it—you must have seen it!"

She spoke with the glad note of one who confesses what she believes to be the most desired of facts.

"Don't!" Pedro pleaded again.

"But why should I not?" she asked radiantly. "I love you! Do you not like to hear me say it? Does not my having come here in this manner prove it?"

"No!" he cried in agony, springing to his feet as though to defend himself from something. "No, it proves nothing of the kind. You do not, cannot love me! It is impossible, impossible. I have already told you so. Ah! I cannot endure to have you act so! And this is Hill's own room!"

"But I do love you!" she cried, following him. "Pedro, touch me—tell me that you care! Kiss me, Pedro!"

"Never!" he said fiercely. "You do not love me—you love Hill! Yes, yes, you do, although you do not realize it. I am really nothing to you but a reaction—a pastime!"

"That is not true!" she sobbed.

"It is!" he shrieked. "You have loved Hill all along! Me! Why, it is out of the question that you should care for me. It is against nature! The atmosphere of the studio is what you love here, the informality, the careless freedom; but, me—ah! no. You love love itself primarily, and tonight it has mastered you. But the man whom you love is Hill."

"Ah, so you care nothing for me, after all!" she moaned. "But I am past pride; kiss me, Pedro!"

"I will not!" he cried, retreating from her. "I love you in my own way—as much as I can love any woman—but I will not kiss you! You are mad tonight. It is the environment, the situation, not me, that has so aroused you. You must go home!"

"Kiss me, Pedro," said Iris with outstretched arms.

Roughly he flung her away.

"Listen!" he commanded, "you don't know what you are doing. You are nothing but an infatuated little animal tonight. You no more love me than you love that lamp—than the hovering moth loves it! There is a splendid man who does love you, and you return his affection, although you do not appear to be conscious of it; but take warning—and open your eyes to the fact. Do so before you succeed in singeing your wings at some such earth-fire as you have tried to light tonight! Love is a sacred, a wonderful thing, and it comes to us but once."

But she had not been listening.

"Kiss me!" said she.

"No!" cried Pedro.

"Touch me, then!" she cried wildly. "Take my hand—anything! I am mad for the touch of your hand!"

"Will you not listen to reason?" he implored. "I cannot endure that you should belittle yourself so! I cannot

"How do you feel, then?" he asked gently.

"How do I feel?" she cried. "I feel like—like this!"

And slipping from the sofa before he could prevent her, she fell upon her knees in front of him, and clasping her hands as if in worship, gazed up at him adoringly, almost touching him as she knelt.

"That is how I feel," said Iris.

"Don't, don't!" said Pedro in a broken voice.

"I love you!" said Iris. "Why, you surely know it—you must have seen it!"

She spoke with the glad note of one who confesses what she believes to be the most desired of facts.

"Don't!" Pedro pleaded again.

"But why should I not?" she asked radiantly. "I love you! Do you not like to hear me say it? Does not my having come here in this manner prove it?"

"No!" he cried in agony, springing to his feet as though to defend himself from something. "No, it proves nothing of the kind. You do not, cannot love me! It is impossible, impossible. I have already told you so. Ah! I cannot endure to have you act so! And this is Hill's own room!"

"But I do love you!" she cried, following him. "Pedro, touch me—tell me that you care! Kiss me, Pedro!"

"Never!" he said fiercely. "You do not love me—you love Hill! Yes, yes, you do, although you do not realize it. I am really nothing to you but a reaction—a pastime!"

"That is not true!" she sobbed.

"It is!" he shrieked. "You have loved Hill all along! Me! Why, it is out of the question that you should care for me. It is against nature! The atmosphere of the studio is what you love here, the informality, the careless freedom; but, me—ah! no. You love love itself primarily, and tonight it has mastered you. But the man whom you love is Hill."

"Ah, so you care nothing for me, after all!" she moaned. "But I am past pride; kiss me, Pedro!"

"I will not!" he cried, retreating from her. "I love you in my own way—as much as I can love any woman—but I will not kiss you! You are mad tonight. It is the environment, the situation, not me, that has so aroused you. You must go home!"

"Kiss me, Pedro," said Iris with outstretched arms.

Roughly he flung her away.

"Listen!" he commanded, "you don't know what you are doing. You are nothing but an infatuated little animal tonight. You no more love me than you love that lamp—than the hovering moth loves it! There is a splendid man who does love you, and you return his affection, although you do not appear to be conscious of it; but take warning—and open your eyes to the fact. Do so before you succeed in singeing your wings at some such earth-fire as you have tried to light tonight! Love is a sacred, a wonderful thing, and it comes to us but once."

But she had not been listening.

"Kiss me!" said she.

"No!" cried Pedro.

"Touch me, then!" she cried wildly. "Take my hand—anything! I am mad for the touch of your hand!"

"Will you not listen to reason?" he implored. "I cannot endure that you should belittle yourself so! I cannot

"How do you feel, then?" he asked gently.

"How do I feel?" she cried. "I feel like—like this!"

And slipping from the sofa before he could prevent her, she fell upon her knees in front of him, and clasping her hands as if in worship, gazed up at him adoringly, almost touching him as she knelt.

"That is how I feel," said Iris.

"Don't, don't!" said Pedro in a broken voice.

"I love you!" said Iris. "Why, you surely know it—you must have seen it!"

She spoke with the glad note of one who confesses what she believes to be the most desired of facts.

"Don't!" Pedro pleaded again.

"But why should I not?" she asked radiantly. "I love you! Do you not like to hear me say it? Does not my having come here in this manner prove it?"

"No!" he cried in agony, springing to his feet as though to defend himself from something. "No, it proves nothing of the kind. You do not, cannot love me! It is impossible, impossible. I have already told you so. Ah! I cannot endure to have you act so! And this is Hill's own room!"

"But I do love you!" she cried, following him. "Pedro, touch me—tell me that you care! Kiss me, Pedro!"

"Never!" he said fiercely. "You do not love me—you love Hill! Yes, yes, you do, although you do not realize it. I am really nothing to you but a reaction—a pastime!"

"That is not true!" she sobbed.

"It is!" he shrieked. "You have loved Hill all along! Me! Why, it is out of the question that you should care for me. It is against nature! The atmosphere of the studio is what you love here, the informality, the careless freedom; but, me—ah! no. You love love itself primarily, and tonight it has mastered you. But the man whom you love is Hill."

"Ah, so you care nothing for me, after all!" she moaned. "But I am past pride; kiss me, Pedro!"

"I will not!" he cried, retreating from her. "I love you in my own way—as much as I can love any woman—but I will not kiss you! You are mad tonight. It is the environment, the situation, not me, that has so aroused you. You must go home!"

"Kiss me, Pedro," said Iris with outstretched arms.

Roughly he flung her away.

"Listen!" he commanded, "you don't know what you are doing. You are nothing but an infatuated little animal tonight. You no more love me than you love that lamp—than the hovering moth loves it! There is a splendid man who does love you, and you return his affection, although you do not appear to be conscious of it; but take warning—and open your eyes to the fact. Do so before you succeed in singeing your wings at some such earth-fire as you have tried to light tonight! Love is a sacred, a wonderful thing, and it comes to us but once."

But she had not been listening.

"Kiss me!" said she.

"No!" cried Pedro.

"Touch me, then!" she cried wildly. "Take my hand—anything! I am mad for the touch of your hand!"

"Will you not listen to reason?" he implored. "I cannot endure that you should belittle yourself so! I cannot

"How do you feel, then?" he asked gently.

"How do I feel?" she cried. "I feel like—like this!"

And slipping from the sofa before he could prevent her, she fell upon her knees in front of him, and clasping her hands as if in worship, gazed up at him adoringly, almost touching him as she knelt.

"That is how I feel," said Iris.

"Don't, don't!" said Pedro in a broken voice.

"I love you!" said Iris. "Why, you surely know it—you must have seen it!"

She spoke with the glad note of one who confesses what she believes to be the most desired of facts.

"Don't!" Pedro pleaded again.

"But why should I not?" she asked radiantly. "I love you! Do you not like to hear me say it? Does not my having come here in this manner prove it?"

"No!" he cried in agony, springing to his feet as though to defend himself from something. "No, it proves nothing of the kind. You do not, cannot love me! It is impossible, impossible. I have already told you so. Ah! I cannot endure to have you act so! And this is Hill's own room!"

"But I do love you!" she cried, following him. "Pedro, touch me—tell me that you care! Kiss me, Pedro!"

"Never!" he said fiercely. "You do not love me—you love Hill! Yes, yes, you do, although you do not realize it. I am really nothing to you but a reaction—a pastime!"

"That is not true!" she sobbed.

"It is!" he shrieked. "You have loved Hill all along! Me! Why, it is out of the question that you should care for me. It is against nature! The atmosphere of the studio is what you love here, the informality, the careless freedom; but, me—ah! no. You love love itself primarily, and tonight it has mastered you. But the man whom you love is Hill."

"Ah, so you care nothing for me, after all!" she moaned. "But I am past pride; kiss me, Pedro!"

"I will not!" he cried, retreating from her. "I love you in my own way—as much as I can love any woman—but I will not kiss you! You are mad tonight. It is the environment, the situation, not me, that has so aroused you. You must go home!"

"Kiss me, Pedro," said Iris with outstretched arms.

Roughly he flung her away.

"Listen!" he commanded, "you don't know what you are doing. You are nothing but an infatuated little animal tonight. You no more love me than you love that lamp—than the hovering moth loves it! There is a splendid man who does love you, and you return his affection, although you do not appear to be conscious of it; but take warning—and open your eyes to the fact. Do so before you succeed in singeing your wings at some such earth-fire as you have tried to light tonight! Love is a sacred, a wonderful thing, and it comes to us but once."

But she had not been listening.

"Kiss me!" said she.

"No!" cried Pedro.

"Touch me, then!" she cried wildly. "Take my hand—anything! I am mad for the touch of your hand!"

"Will you not listen to reason?" he implored. "I cannot endure that you should belittle yourself so! I cannot

"How do you feel, then?" he asked gently.

"How do I feel?" she cried. "I feel like—like this!"

And slipping from the sofa before he could prevent her, she fell upon her knees in front of him, and clasping her hands as if in worship, gazed up at him adoringly, almost touching him as she knelt.

"That is how I feel," said Iris.

"Don't, don't!" said Pedro in a broken voice.

"I love you!" said Iris. "Why, you surely know it—you must have seen it!"

She spoke with the glad note of one who confesses what she believes to be the most desired of facts.

"Don't!" Pedro pleaded again.

"But why should I not?" she asked radiantly. "I love you! Do you not like to hear me say it? Does not my having come here in this manner prove it?"

"No!" he cried in agony, springing to his feet as though to defend himself from something. "No, it proves nothing of the kind. You do not, cannot love me! It is impossible, impossible. I have already told you so. Ah! I cannot endure to have you act so! And this is Hill's own room!"

"But I do love you!" she cried, following him. "Pedro, touch me—tell me that you care! Kiss me, Pedro!"

"Never!" he said fiercely. "You do not love me—you love Hill! Yes, yes, you do, although you do not realize it. I am really nothing to you but a reaction—a pastime!"

"That is not true!" she sobbed.

"It is!" he shrieked. "You have loved Hill all along! Me! Why, it is out of the question that you should care for me. It is against nature! The atmosphere of the studio is what you love here, the informality, the careless freedom; but, me—ah! no. You love love itself primarily, and tonight it has mastered you. But the man whom you love is Hill."

"Ah, so you care nothing for me, after all!" she moaned. "But I am past pride; kiss me, Pedro!"

"I will not!" he cried, retreating from her. "I love you in my own way—as much as I can love any woman—but I will not kiss you! You are mad tonight. It is the environment, the situation, not me, that has so aroused you. You must go home!"

"Kiss me, Pedro," said Iris with outstretched arms.

Roughly he flung her away.

"Listen!" he commanded, "you don't know what you are doing. You are nothing but an infatuated little animal tonight. You no more love me than you love that lamp—than the hovering moth loves it! There is a splendid man who does love you, and you return his affection, although you do not appear to be conscious of it; but take warning—and open your eyes to the fact. Do so before you succeed in singeing your wings at some such earth-fire as you have tried to light tonight! Love is a sacred, a wonderful thing, and it comes to us but once."

But she had not been listening.

"Kiss me!" said she.

"No!" cried Pedro.

"Touch me, then!" she cried wildly. "Take my hand—anything! I am mad for the touch of your hand!"

"Will you not listen to reason?" he implored. "I cannot endure that you should belittle yourself so! I cannot

"How do you feel, then?" he asked gently.

"How do I feel?" she cried. "I feel like—like this!"

And slipping from the sofa before he could prevent her, she fell upon her knees in front of him, and clasping her hands as if in worship, gazed up at him adoringly, almost touching him as she knelt.

"That is how I feel," said Iris.

"Don't, don't!" said Pedro in a broken voice.

"I love you!" said Iris. "Why, you surely know it—you must have seen it!"

She spoke with the glad note of one who confesses what she believes to be the most desired of facts.

"Don't!" Pedro pleaded again.

"But why should I not?" she asked radiantly. "I love you! Do you not like to hear me say it? Does not my having come here in this manner prove it?"

"No!" he cried in agony, springing to his feet as though to defend himself from something. "No, it proves nothing of the kind. You do not, cannot love me! It is impossible, impossible. I have already told you so. Ah! I cannot endure to have you act so! And this is Hill's own room!"

"But I do love you!" she cried, following him. "Pedro, touch me—tell me that you care! Kiss me, Pedro!"

"Never!" he said fiercely. "You do not love me—you love Hill! Yes, yes, you do, although you do not realize it. I am really nothing to you but a reaction—a pastime!"

"That is not true!" she sobbed.

"It is!" he shrieked. "You have loved Hill all along! Me! Why, it is out of the question that you should care for me. It is against nature! The atmosphere of the studio is what you love here, the informality, the careless freedom; but, me—ah! no. You love love itself primarily, and tonight it has mastered you. But the man whom you love is Hill."

"Ah, so you care nothing for me, after all!" she moaned. "But I am past pride; kiss me, Pedro!"

"I will not!" he cried, retreating from her. "I love you in my own way—as much as I can love any woman—but I will not kiss you! You are mad tonight. It is the environment, the situation, not me, that has so aroused you. You must go home!"

"Kiss me, Pedro," said Iris with outstretched arms.

Roughly he flung her away.

"Listen!" he commanded, "you don't know what you are doing. You are nothing but an infatuated little animal tonight. You no more love me than you love that lamp—than the hovering moth loves it! There is a splendid man who does love you, and you return his affection, although you do not appear to be conscious of it; but take warning—and open your eyes to the fact. Do so before you succeed in singeing your wings at some such earth-fire as you have tried to light tonight! Love is a sacred, a wonderful thing, and it comes to us but once."

But she had not been listening.

"Kiss me!" said she.

"No!" cried Pedro.

"Touch me, then!" she cried wildly. "Take my hand—anything! I am mad for the touch of your hand!"

"Will you not listen to reason?" he implored. "I cannot endure that you should belittle yourself so! I cannot

"How do you feel, then?" he asked gently.

"How do I feel?" she cried. "I feel like—like this!"

And slipping from the sofa before he could prevent her, she fell upon her knees in front of him, and clasping her hands as if in worship, gazed up at him adoringly, almost touching him as she knelt.

"That is how I feel," said Iris.

"Don't, don't!" said Pedro in a broken voice.

"I love you!" said Iris. "Why, you surely know it—you must have seen it!"

She spoke with the glad note of one who confesses what she believes to be the most desired of facts.

"Don't!" Pedro pleaded again.

"But why should I not?" she asked radiantly. "I love you! Do you not like to hear me say it? Does not my having come here in this manner prove it?"

"No!" he cried in agony, springing to his feet as though to defend himself from something. "No, it proves nothing of the kind. You do not, cannot love me! It is impossible, impossible. I have already told you so. Ah! I cannot endure to have you act so! And this is Hill's own room!"

"But I do love you!" she cried, following him. "Pedro, touch me—tell me that you care! Kiss me, Pedro!"

"Never!" he said fiercely. "You do not love me—you love Hill! Yes, yes, you do, although you do not realize it. I am really nothing to you but a reaction—a pastime!"

"That is not true!" she sobbed.

"It is!" he shrieked. "You have loved Hill all along! Me! Why, it is out of the question that you should care for me. It is against nature! The atmosphere of the studio is what you love here, the informality, the careless freedom; but, me—ah! no. You love love itself primarily, and tonight it has mastered you. But the man whom you love is Hill."

"Ah, so you care nothing for me, after all!" she moaned. "But I am past pride; kiss me, Pedro!"

"I will not!" he cried, retreating from her. "I love you in my own way—as much as I can love any woman—but I will not kiss you! You are mad tonight. It is the environment, the situation, not me, that has so aroused you. You must go home!"

"Kiss me, Pedro," said Iris with outstretched arms.

Roughly he flung her away.

"Listen!" he commanded, "you don't know what you are doing. You are nothing but an infatuated little animal tonight. You no more love me than you love that lamp—than the hovering moth loves it! There is a splendid man who does love you, and you return his affection, although you do not appear to be conscious of it; but take warning—and open your eyes to the fact. Do so before you succeed in singeing your wings at some such earth-fire as you have tried to light tonight! Love is a sacred, a wonderful thing, and it comes to us but once."

But she had not been listening.

"Kiss me!" said she.

"No!" cried Pedro.

"Touch me, then!" she cried wildly. "Take my hand—anything! I am mad for the touch of your hand!"

"Will you not listen to reason?" he implored. "I cannot endure that you should belittle yourself so! I cannot

"How do you feel, then?" he asked gently.

"How do I feel?" she cried. "I feel like—like this!"

And slipping from the sofa before he could prevent her, she fell upon her knees in front of him, and clasping her hands as if in worship, gazed up at him adoringly, almost touching him as she knelt.

"That is how I feel," said Iris.

"Don't, don't!" said Pedro in a broken voice.

"I love you!" said Iris. "Why, you surely know it—you must have seen it!"

She spoke with the glad note of one who confesses what she believes to be the most desired of facts.

"Don't!" Pedro pleaded again.

"But why should I not?" she asked radiantly. "I love you! Do you not like to hear me say it? Does not my having come here in this manner prove it?"

"No!" he cried in agony, springing to his feet as though to defend himself from something. "No, it proves nothing of the kind. You do not, cannot love me! It is impossible, impossible. I have already told you so. Ah! I cannot endure to have you act so! And this is Hill's own room!"

"But I do love you!" she cried, following him. "Pedro, touch me—tell me that you care! Kiss me, Pedro!"

"Never!" he said fiercely. "You do not love me—you love Hill! Yes, yes, you do, although you do not realize it. I am really nothing to you but a reaction—a pastime!"

"That is not true!" she sobbed.

"It is!" he shrieked. "You have loved Hill all along! Me! Why, it is out of the question that you should care for me. It is against nature! The atmosphere of the studio is what you love here, the informality, the careless freedom; but, me—ah! no. You love love itself primarily, and tonight it has mastered you. But the man whom you love is Hill."

"Ah, so you care nothing for me, after all!" she moaned. "But I am past pride; kiss me, Pedro!"

"I will not!" he cried, retreating from her. "I love you in my own way—as much as I can love any woman—but I will not kiss you! You are mad tonight. It is the environment, the situation, not me, that has so aroused you. You must go home!"

"Kiss me, Pedro," said Iris with outstretched arms.

Roughly he flung her away.

"Listen!" he commanded, "you don't know what you are doing. You are nothing but an infatuated little animal tonight. You no more love me than you love that lamp—than the hovering moth loves it! There is a splendid man who does love you, and you return his affection, although you do not appear to be conscious of it; but take warning—and open your eyes to the fact. Do so before you succeed in singeing your wings at some such earth-fire as you have tried to light tonight! Love is a sacred, a wonderful thing, and it comes to us but once."

But she had not been listening.

"Kiss me!" said she.

"No!" cried Pedro.

"Touch me, then!" she cried wildly. "Take my hand—anything! I am mad for the touch of your hand!"

"Will you not listen to reason?" he implored. "I cannot endure that you should belittle yourself so! I cannot

"How do you feel, then?" he asked gently.

"How do I feel?" she cried. "I feel like—like this!"

And slipping from the sofa before he could prevent her, she fell upon her knees in front of him, and clasping her hands as if in worship, gazed up at him adoringly, almost touching him as she knelt.

"That is how I feel," said Iris.

"Don't, don't!" said Pedro in a broken voice.

"I love you!" said Iris. "Why, you surely