

'Gloriana's dun days must soon come to an end,' said Arthur to me upon the eve of the wedding. 'Why shouldn't she marry Uncle Jap? The old chap wants her. He informed me this afternoon that a double team travelled farther than a single horse. And he bangs about the kitchen door all the time.'

'Tell him to propose.'

'I'll have to do it for him,' replied the brother.

'Uncle Jap has not the gift of tongues.'

We accompanied Gloriana to San Lorenzo; as we feared to trust our friend—for so we had come to regard her—with the mule, a mischievous beast, spoiled by prosperity. Arthur drove a skittish pair of colts. Gloriana and I occupied the back seat of our big spring waggon.

'My brother is not Uncle Jap,' said Arthur, as soon as the colts had settled down to business, 'but he'll tell you all the pretty things the old man says about you.'

'Uncle Jap is puffedly ridiculous,' replied Gloriana gaily. 'His love is cupboard love.'

'He is set on matrimony. You are the one woman in the world for him. Take him, Gloriana; and then we'll all live together for ever and ever.'

She laughed.

'Mr. Arthur—you'd sooner joke than eat.'

'I'm not joking now. Uncle Jap is an honest man, with money laid by. He would make you comfortable for life, and such a marriage might pave the way to—a better understanding with Dr. Standish.'

Her face flushed at these last words, and fire flooded her eyes. Looking at her, I realised that long ago this worn woman must have been a beautiful girl.

'No,' she answered steadily, 'I wouldn't say Yes to an angel. Uncle Jap and I would make a balky team. He's obstinate as my old mule, an' so am I.'

My brother had tact enough to change the subject.

'Gloriana,' said Arthur, after a pause, 'Will you allow my brother, who is a grave and learned signor, to plead your cause with Dr. Standish? I know what lies nearest your heart.'

In this impudent fashion he laid a grievous burden on me; for I have no stomach for other folk's pastry, yet the hope that glistened upon Gloriana's face whetted a strange appetite.

'I'll speak to him—if you wish it,' said I.

'No,' she returned, her eyes giving the lie to her lips, 'It wouldn't be right.'

But a woman's brain is a sorry advocate against her heart. Arthur, as I expected, put her scruples to rout. It was agreed that I should carry, as credentials, Gloriana's present—the parcel she hugged to her bosom, weighty with love and linen; that the interview should take place after dinner; that the recognition of Gloriana as Miriam's blood-relative should not be demanded, but suggested with all deference. The Standishes boarded at the Hotel Buena Vista, where we always stayed; Gloriana was set down at a modest house, some three-quarters of a mile distant.

As the hour of meeting the doctor approached, my courage oozed out from every pore, distilling a malignant dew of distrust that not even the optimism of Arthur could dispel. As we sat at dinner I noticed with apprehension the stern features of Standish, who occupied the adjoining table. He ate sparingly, as became an old man. His granddaughter, a charming girl, with eyes that reminded me of Gloriana, chatted gaily to him, but he replied in monosyllables. Doubtless he was thinking of the parting on the morrow. Half an hour later he received me in his room, and asked courteously in what way he could serve me. I laid my credentials upon the table.

'This,' I began lamely, 'is a present from your housekeeper, Gloriana, to your granddaughter. She asked me to deliver it into your hands.'

'I thank you, sir,' he said stiffly. 'You say this—er—woman is your housekeeper?'

'Our housekeeper—and our friend.'

'Indeed. Well, sir, I am obliged to you. Good-night.'

'A present,' said I, 'demands an acknowledgment.'

'An acknowledgment? You look at me very strangely, young man.'

Upon this I spoke; explaining, in halting sentences, my mission. He listened attentively, a frown upon his somewhat narrow forehead.

'How dare you interfere in such matters!' he asked, in a voice that quivered with suppressed rage. 'What right have you to come between me and an ignorant woman; whose very presence is contamination?'

'Ignorant, illiterate—yes; but a braver, truer, more loving spirit never breathed, I count it a privilege to know her.'

'My life has been poisoned,' he muttered. 'It has been my one object to keep my granddaughter and this woman apart. I allowed her to work for the child, but the clothes she has been sending I have given to—others. Already, despite my efforts, she suspects that there is some unhappy mystery about her birth. Leave me this moment, sir.'

Arthur met me on the threshold of the hotel parlor, and listened confounded to my story. As we sat smoking and talking, the bell-boy ushered in Gloriana. When she caught sight of her precious parcel she gasped with satisfaction.

'I'm most choked,' she panted, 'in trying to get here in time. I reckon I run most o' the way. Ever since ye set me down I've bin studyin' and worryin'. I don't want ye,' she turned an anxious face to mine, 'fer it might unsettle Miriam. Good land o' Peter, how short my breath is! You see, there couldn't be room in the child's heart: jest now for me and the Professor. An' when that there idee took a holt it seemed as if I couldn't rest until I saw ye. I'm mighty glad I was in time.'

The words fell from her lips in sobs and hoarse gasps.

'It's all right,' said Arthur. 'Sit down, Gloriana. You deserve a scolding.'

As she spoke she sank upon the couch, and tugged convulsively at the white linen band round her throat.

'She is ill,' whispered Arthur. 'Run for assistance—quick!'

I chanced to meet the bell-boy, and despatched him in search of a physician, and the youth summoned Dr. Standish, in hot haste. His granddaughter, learning that a woman was in sore distress, accompanied him. They entered the room together. The doctor motioned back the girl, but she hastened forward, and looking with infinite compassion into the poor twisted face, took Gloriana's hands in hers. Some one administered brandy and spirits of ammonia.

'How did this happen?' said the doctor aside to me.

I spared him nothing in the recital, and his stern features softened as I emphasized Gloriana's anxiety to save Miriam from worry. As I finished the faithful creature opened her eyes, which rested naturally upon the face of Miriam.

'Why—it's my little girl!' she said faintly.

Dr. Standish bent forward.

'If she mistakes you for one of her own kin, don't deceive her. Play the part.'

Miriam nodded, and kissed the frail hands that fluttered round her head.

'Gimme my parcel,' she said presently, in a stronger voice. 'Mercy sakes! I'm awful weak; but I'd like to show my little girl the things I made for her.'

The parcel was brought and untied. Gloriana touched the garments tenderly.

'Nothin', she murmured, 'kin come closer to ye than these pretty things, excep' the love I stitched into 'em. When you wear 'em you'll think o' me, Miss Standish.'

At the sound of her name the girl started, and looked askance at her grandfather, who turned his head aside.

'Who is this woman?' she asked in a trembling voice.

The answer came from Gloriana, slowly and distinctly.

'I'm—nothin'—to—ye; but ye've bin the world an' all ter me. Well—I said I'd never go ter my little girl, because I wasn't fit, but I always thought that the Lord in His mercy would bring her ter me. Ye wore the clothes I sent, an' maybe ye wondered who made 'em. 'Twas the happiness o' my life sewin' on 'em, an' ter think you was wearin' 'em. I've worked awful hard, but I lin take it easy—now. I feel real sleepy, too. Good-night, my pretty, good-night!'

We were quite unprepared for what happened, believing that our poor friend was merely overwrought and weary. But as the words 'Good-night' fell softly upon our ears Gloriana sighed peacefully—and died.

'Who is this woman?' said Miriam for the second time, thinking that Gloriana had fallen asleep.

The doctor was not so deceived. He pressed forward and laid his trembling fingers upon the wrist of the dead, and then bent his head. When he confronted us the tears were rolling down his face.

'May God forgive me!' he cried, falling upon his knees. 'This woman, Miriam, was your mother.'—*Ben-ziger's Magazine.*

An important notice with reference to the value of Dr. Ensor's Tamer, Juice as a remedy for all 'de-rangements of the liver and kidneys, appears in this issue....