

ANITA.

BY C. C.

HE stood looking down at her in the moonlight. She was such a dainty, well-poised little girl, with such glorious coloring and eyes; just now so sad and dark with feeling. He laid one hand over hers as it rested on the piazza railing; it sent an odd thrill through his veins and made him pause a moment in his speech. She kept her gaze resolutely turned seaward, where ships were sailing directly across the broad path of silvery moonlight, and they seemed to possess a wonderful interest for her. Somehow it gave him a sorrowful sort of satisfaction that she should be so silent and distraught on this their last evening together. He had not known her so very long, but long enough for her to have colored his whole summer, and made the outside world—that world beyond this quiet watering-place that he knew apart from her—bleak and commonplace by comparison.

It was late August. To-morrow he was to depart for a few weeks' yachting cruise before he went back to college for his junior year, and after that? Well, it was not very clear to him just yet, but he knew in his heart that her image would be there for always. In the hazy future that stretched out before him, nothing was distinct except her face.

It was an exceedingly fair face; small, blond, patrician, a straight, pretty nose, and delicately marked brows over the blue eyes.

As for her, she did not tell herself that she was in love with this tall collegian. She was very young, just out of school, in fact, and had not rejoiced in any of those small romances that she had heard in endless variety from other girls. She was a little timid about rushing into love; she was not at all sure that she knew what it was. Their ways had fallen together since she had first arrived at the seashore one hot afternoon and found him lounging in tennis-flannels at the station. It had not been love at first sight; she scorned such nonsense, and Bert would have shrugged his broad shoulders and laughed heartily: that he, who hitherto had dealt only with boys at Andover and men at Har-

vard; whose mind had been filled solely with college events, athletics, and larks generally; that he, the idolized stroke of his crew, should be guilty of falling in love at first sight with a small girl in a tailor-made gown and a sailor hat, and a well-arched instep in her russet shoe, was an idea only worthy to be laughed at. But it had been a pleasant summer; they both admitted it, standing there by the railing in the shadows of the veranda. She would not have enjoyed her rows all over the picturesque old bay if his hand had not pulled the oar. It was he who drove her along the sands in the late afternoon in his tiny, red-wheeled trap; it was he who had always been delivered to her tender mercies on the innumerable pleasure excursions arranged by the young people at the hotel. The other girls never disputed her right, he seemed to fall to her lot quite naturally; nor did they ever question why they were always assigned to each other, or sigh for any other combination. And now he was going away. Long before her appearance in the morning he would be whirling across the country in a Pullman. There would be plenty of others to hurry forward for the honor of the vacant place, but they would not be the same; she did not believe she would care to row across the bay in the *Polly*, into the familiar old creeks and sand-bars, with any one else. No; those rows and drives were sacred to him—and now he was going away from it all.

"You won't forget me?" he said, hesitatingly, still with his eyes on her clear-cut profile. They were not original words, but he meant them and nothing else, and after all he was very boyish. "You won't forget me, Anita, because I—I shall think of you always and associate you with the happiest summer of my life. You and I are going to be very far apart after to-night. I do not know when I shall see you again—sooner, I hope, than seems probable now; but remember you have promised to come to the Junior ball. I shall expect you." They walked together to the foot of the staircase; it was growing late and the veranda was deserted. He held her hand a moment and their eyes met,

both betraying more pain than either knew; then she trailed slowly up the long flight, and stopped just once to look back at him as she turned at the landing.

* * * The Van Doerans went abroad in October. It was quite an unexpected departure, and it changed Anita's plans considerably. For one thing she had been heralded as a *débutante* of the coming winter—whole paragraphs had been devoted to her beauty, her accomplishments, her clothes, and the wealth of her father; and then, she could not go to the Junior ball at Cambridge. She had received the invitation from him and had written a kind little note of acknowledgment expressing her regret. They did not correspond; Anita's mother was a matron of the old school and refused to countenance any such impropriety. Correspond with a man not her *fiancé*, and withal, a "summer acquaintancel!" Mrs. Van Doeran had bestowed that title upon him, and Anita listened and obeyed.

They did not return to America until April. It was during the week that Harvard was amusing New York society with an operetta on an amateur stage. Society went *en masse*, and Anita accepted an invitation to a box-party and was given a corner seat, from which she viewed the performance in one of her prettiest Paris gowns and a fetching little toque on her golden hair.

She had not expected to see him there. Nothing had been further from her thoughts. When the curtain went up she saw him standing, the center of a group, in his ridiculous "make-up," and gave a little gasp of astonishment. He turned about before long and looked squarely at her. There was no surprise in his glance; it was a look of simple recognition, and she knew that he had seen her sitting there from behind the scenes before she had been aware of his presence in the house. She leaned forward and bowed smilingly, and he smiled at her in return across the green glare of the footlights. Then she drew back, breathing quickly, and stooped to pick up a programme that had fallen to the floor, the exertion sending a bright flush over her face.

When she was once more in the solitude of her own room, she thought it all over. Why had she not sent a penciled

card around to him, telling him of the hotel at which they were stopping since their return, and asking him to call. Would it have been proper, she wondered, standing before the long mirror and drawing off her gloves, or would her ever-careful mother have regarded it as a dreadful breach of etiquette?—and then, after all, he might not have come!

A few weeks later Anita's father died, and his widow immediately resolved to sail again for Europe and spend her period of mourning in foreign travel. It was useless for Anita to demur; her objections had always been frowned down and her mother's word was law. So on one June morning the *Servia*, outward bound, carried the Van Doerans, mother and daughter, to other scenes, where they might forget their loss. It was over three years before they returned. The climate of the Riviera agreed with the elder woman, and there they wintered; going for the summer months to Homberg or Aix; they did not regret, however, to turn their faces homeward at last. Mrs. Van Doeran had been a woman of fashion all her life, and had not shone as socially bright when transplanted as on her own native heath; besides, she felt it was time that Anita should take up her position at home.

Walking along on the deck in the sunlight, the first day out from Liverpool, Anita came quite suddenly upon a familiar face. She stopped for a moment, then held out her hand with a little friendly flutter of delight.

"You!" That was all he said, holding her hand and smiling down at the face grown even prettier since he had seen it four years ago—then, "You have been away from home some time, I think?"

"Since my father's death; it is three years now."

"Ah, yes; I heard of it. I felt very deeply for you. I——" He paused rather uncertainly. Some one came up to his side just then. She was a slender, striking-looking girl, not strictly pretty, but with a clever face and dark, brilliant eyes. "I have been looking for you everywhere, Bert; where——?"

He turned and laid his hand upon her arm. "Angela, this is a very old friend of mine—a very dear friend, if she will allow me to say so, of my college days: Miss Van Doeran—*my wife*."