SYNOPSIS—Here we have the story, told at first-hand, of Marion Ascough, sister of "Me." She was born in the queer little French-Canadian village of Hochelaga, a suburb of Montreal; her father was an English painter, her mother a Frenchwoman. Here Monsieur de St. Vidal proposed to her in the snow, and she ran home. Along came Mr. Reggie Bertie—call him Bertie, so English, you know—remittance-man, who is studying for the bar. It was a case of love at first sight between handsome Reggie and pretty Marion Ascough. He took her to the ice carnival and when she should have been working at her own picture he was looking down at her. Later, he refuses to take her into a flashy all-night restaurant because Marion is "too nice and too sweet." Very soon they become engaged, but while Bertie is an ardent lover he does not want the marriage to take place, he's afraid of "the governor" over in England, so poor Marion is in for a long wait, during which she must be self-supporting at painting and other art work, besides helping at home. Then she hires a little studio of her own—Reggie pays for it—in Montreal; Reggie still procrastinates. At last she tells him that he has no right to monopolize her time and her society unless he intends to fulfill his promise—particularly as he objects to her seeing any other men. She goes to Boston and there becomes a full-fledged model, with some wonderful experiences and cruel privations. Then she falls ill. Later she settles in New York and meets her fate.

It was helping Menna one day. He had been very busy, and I had been working for him both mornings and afternoons. He had told me, however, that soon he expected to "pick up and go West," and I was troubled about that. I depended upon Menna for most of my work, and we got along splendidly together. As I have said, Menna had always treated me just like a "fellow," as he would call it. There was a knock at the door, and in came Paul Bonnat. After nodding to Menna, he asked: "Yes, shedoes quite O. K."

"Sure, if Miss Ascough will go with me," he said. "I said that I would. I think I would have gone with him anywhere he had asked me to.

"Me at seven, then," said Menna, returning to his work.

"All right. Good-bye," Bonnat went out slamming the door noisily behind him. We could hear him singing the "Preludet" from "Die Meistersinger" as he went up the stairs. He had a big, wonderful baritone voice. We stopped painting to listen to him, but when I turned to resume my work, I found Menna watching me. He said:

"You and Bonnat are getting pretty friendly, eh?"

"I felt myself color warmly, but I tried to laugh, and said:

"Oh, no more than I am with any of the other boys."

Menna had his thumb through his palette, and he stared at me hard. Then he said quite suddenly:

"Gee! What a fool I was to let him get ahead of me.

He set down his palette, and came over to my stool:

"Say, Marion" (he had never called me Marion before), "you and I would make aorking good team. Suppose we pair off together to-night, and we'll put Miss Fleming on to Bonnat? What do you say?"

"Mr. Menna, you had better stick to your own girl," I said, feeling uneasy. Menna continued to stare down at me, and as he said nothing to that, I added:

"You know you and I are just partners in our work, and don't let's fool. It'll spoil everything."

"Oh, all right," said he. "I don't have to get down on my knees to you or any other girl."

He had never spoken to me like that before. Until this day, he had never asked me to go anywhere with him, nor tried to see me after work hours; I did not suppose he was the least bit interested in me, and I imagined he was quite settled with his own sweetheart. I was so glad when Miss Fleming knocked on the door.

That evening we all went to Stuttgart Hall. It was one of the oldest places in New York, and was interesting because of the class of people who patronized the place and its resemblance to the German gardens, which it was in fact itself. There were German ornaments, and steins all around the place on a high shelf. There was an excellent orchestra, which played good selections, and Bonnat hummed when they played some of his favorites. Menna and Bonnat seemed to differ on almost every subject, and Menna seemed in a savagely contrary mood that night. Bonnat would explain his point of view about something, and Menna would say irritably:

"Yes, yes, but what's the use?"

Bonnat said that a man should show in his work the human mood, and that a picture should mean something more than a pretty melody of colors. Menna interrupted him with:

"What's the use, so long as we get good Pilsener beer."

Paul laughed at that, and called to a waiter to bring some more Pilsener for Menna right away. After the dinner was over, Mr. Menna took Miss Fleming home, and Paul and I walked across Fourteenth Street, stopping to look in the windows, and to glance at the curious people in the throngs that passed us. Fourteenth Street was then a very gay and bedizened place at night.

When we reached my door, Paul, who had been very silent, took my hand and held it for some time.
time without saying a word. I could feel his eyes looking down on me in the darkness of the street, and somehow the very clasp of his hand seemed to be speaking to me, telling me things that made me feel warm, and oh! so happy. When he did speak at last, his big voice was curiously repressed, and he said huskily:

"I think I know now why some men give up Art for the sake of protecting their souls." He said "own" with such strange emphasis, and pressed my hand as he said it, that I felt too moved to answer him, and I had a great longing to put my arms around him and draw his head down to mine.

After that night Mr. Menna did not seem the same to me. All the little kindnesses I had been accustomed to receive from him, such as cleaning my palette, my brushes, and nailing my canvases on the stretchers, he now let me do myself, and once when I asked him to varnish a painting of mine, he answered:

"I'm feeling too moved to paint.

"Dear Marion:

"Mr. Henri is going to put on the living pictures in Providence for two weeks, and he says he would like to take the same girls that he had before, and told me to tell you that he will pay twenty dollars a week. Also that he will take us to Boston and some other places, if we do well in Providence.

"Won't you come with us to-night? and bring along the fellow Hatty said she saw you walking with on Fourteenth St. How are you, anyway? I'm leaving for Providence to-morrow. With love,

"Liz."

I had been thinking of Lil's letter all day, but I could not make up my mind how to answer it. The thought of making forty dollars in two weeks appealed to me very much, for we were not very busy now, and Menna expected to go West very soon. On account of my work with Menna I had not done much posing in New York, but I intended to call on some artists and see about engagements when Menna should go. Forty dollars was a lot of money to me, and it would take me many weeks to earn that much in posing. It did seem as if I simply could not refuse this chance. But my mind kept turning to Paul Bonnat. I could think of nobody else but him. He had made my life worthwhile. While I thought of all the happy times we had had together. He did not take me to expensive places as Reggio used to, but he lived as I did, and we enjoyed the same things—that Reggio would have called silly and cheap. We went to the exhibitions of the artists, long walks in the Park, to the Metropolitan Museum, and, best of all, to the Opera. That was the one thing Paul would be extravagant about, although our seats were in the top gallery of the family circle. I would be out of breath by the time I climbed up there, but I learned to appreciate and love only the best in music, just as Paul was teaching me to understand the best in art. These I listened with mingled feeling and enjoyment to the operas of Wagner. His "Tristan und Isolde" rang in my ears for days, and by the time I heard "Die Meistersinger" I was able thoroughly to enjoy what before had been an unknown land. We Canadians had never gone much beyond a little of Mendelssohn, which the teachers of music seemed to consider the height of classical music, and the people were still clinging to the old sentimental songs, not the rags of American love, but the deadly sweet melodies that clay and tears of youth gave, no doubt things have changed there now; but it was that way when I was a girl in Montreal.

I did not want to leave New York even for two weeks. I had begun to love my life here. There was something fine in that comradeship with the boys in the ramshackle studio building. I had been accepted as one of the crowd, and I knew it was Bonnat's influence that made them all treat me as a sister. Fisher once said that a "fellow would think twice before he said anything to me that wasn't straight goods," and he added, "Bonnat's so danged big, you know."

I had often cooked for all the boys in the building. We would have what they called a "spread" in Bonnat's or Fisher's studio, and they would all come flocking in, and fall completely upon the good things I had cooked. I felt a motherly impulse toward them all, and I wanted to care for and cook for—yes—and wash them too. Some of the artists in that building were pretty dirty.

Paul had never spoken of love to me, and I was afraid to analyze my feelings for him...
I went over especially to tell Paul about it.

"Mr. Bonnat, I'm going away from New York, to do some more of that—that living picture work," I waited a moment to see what he would say—he had not turned around—and then I added, as I wanted to see if he really cared—"Maybe I won't come back at all.

He stood up, and took me by the shoulders, making me look straight at him.

"How long are you to be gone?" he demanded, as if he had penetrated my rose.

"I don't know. I'm not going to New York, but if we succeed, we go on to Boston and—"

"Promise me you'll come back in two weeks. Promise me that," he said.

He was looking straight into my eyes, and I think I would have promised him anything to see the little weak voice:

"I promise."

"Good!" he replied. "I wouldn't let you go if it were in my power to stop you, but you need the rest. I have no right to deprive you of it. Good job! It's tough not to be able to."

He broke off, and gently took my hand in his.

"Dear, little mouse. There's a chance of my being able to make a big pot of money. I'll know in a few days, then, you shall not have to worry about anything. But as I am now free, why I can't stop you from anything. I haven't the right."

"Oh, I'll be back soon, and if you look for me on the train.

When we were at the Grand Central the following night I tried to appear cheerful, but I could not prevent the tears running down my face, and when he finally took my hand to say goodbye I said:

"I'll do as you say for me to say. But if I don't see you again soon, I'll think I shall go insane."

He bent down when I said that and kissed me right on my lips, and did not seem to care whether everyone in the station saw us or not. Then I knew that I did love him, and that condensation sent me flying blindly down the platform.

After I was aboard, I had taken the wrong train to Providence. I should have taken an earlier or a later one.

Lil was already there, and was waiting for me at the station, but the train I had taken would not get its tail fifteen minutes in the morning.

When I arrived in Providence I did not know where to go. I had Lil's address, but had written her she was living at a "very respectable house," where the people would look at me in the eye, and knock do not knock to know she was a model, and I felt I could not go there at six o'clock in the morning. The rain was coming down in torrents. A colored boy in Mink's restaurant in Boston, and the place looked quite familiar to me. I had a cup of hot coffee and a sandwich, and then I asked the waiter if there was some place where I could go and fresher or clean up a bit. She whispered to the man at the desk, and he nodded, and then she beckoned to me to follow her. We went upstairs to a sort of hotel. It was bare, save a few packing cases, but she showed me a little, rather crumpled looking box, where she said I could do in my room, and with a grunt of disgust, I told her I had been in the train all night, and she said sympathetically:

"Then, you look it.

I went over to Lil's boarding house about seven in the morning. We was expecting me right near Mink's, and I said foolish not to have come over first.

Well, we played every night in the theater in Providence, and we made what theatrical people call a "hit." The whole town turned out to see us. The girls were all as pleased as I could be, and so was Mr. Hersh, and they made all kinds of plans for the road next. I could think of nothing but going back to New York, and 1 was so lonely. In spite of the sunny company of the girls, that I used so go over and look at the railway trucks that I was lover than ever to New York. And I thought of Paul! I thought of Paul every single minute. The little maid would slip his letters every morning under my door, and I used to cry and laugh before I even opened them and held them to my lips and face, and kept them all in the bosom of my dress, right next to me.

We had finished our engagement. Lil and I were coming out of the dressing-room the next night when somebody slipped in the back. I turned around, and there was Mr. Tuvix. He was so glad to see me that he Nearly wrong my hand off, and he insisted on walking home with me. He told me he was now manager of a theatrical company, and that he had been looking around for me every since Lil told him I was not now in New York."

"Now, Marion," he said, "you are going to begin where you left off in Montreal, and it's up to you to make good. You've got it easier, and that is all that would give me an opportunity."

I asked him what he meant, and he said 1 was going to be engaged in the house, and he sent back a Boston that week, and that he had a part for me that would take me in.

I said faintly: "I was going to New York to-morrow."

Lil exclaimed: "What're you talking about? Aren't you going with Mr. Hersh?"

"Instead of going to New York," said Mr. Davis, "you come along with me to Boston. Cut out this living picture stuff. It's too worthy of you. I always said there was the right stuff in you, Marion, and now I'm going to give you the chance to prove it."

For a moment an old vision came back to me. I saw myself as Cissimile, the part I had so loved when 1 was a little child in Montreal, and I felt again to the story of old ambitions. I said to Mr. Davis:

"Oh, yes, I think I will visit you.

But when I got to my room I took Paul's letter. How could I let him know of my keeping my promise to return. He wrote of him the preparations he was making, and he said he had a stroke of bad luck, and that he should write it with him. We would have dinner at Mouquin's, and then we would see some show, or the opera. Whatever we did wherever we went, we would be together.

I put out my little writing-paper, and I wrote a letter hurriedly to Mr. Davis:

"Will you please excuse me, but I have to go to New York. I'll let you know later about going."

I sent the note to Mr. Davis by the little maid in the house, and he sent back a Boston with this laconic message upon it:

"Now or never—Give you till morning." Lil talked and talked and asked me not to go and to think about it, and she seemed to think I was crazy, and was going to prove this chance had been a mistake on my part come to me, and she said any one of the other girls would a hurry and take her. She said I was a little fool, and never knew when opportunity came in my way. She said, "how you turned down that story about you and that more show-girl, and all other girls weren't even asked, and I'll let our legs are as pretty as yours. It's just because you've got a sort of—oh, well, I heard a man call it sex-appeal about you, but I don't know what you are. You know me.

I said: "Oh, Lil, stop it. I guess I know my business better than you do."

"Well, then, answer me this," said Lil, "so you're going up?—Are you engaged to this fellow who sends you letters every day?"

I could not answer her.

"Well, what about Reggie Bertie?"

"For heaven's sake, go to sleep," I answered, but it was too late. I must not, on any account, fall him."

"Lil, wake up!" I cried, shuddering with rage by her arm. "I am going to take the first train back to New York."

Lil answered: "Marion, you always were crazy.

All of a sudden the room turned red as if all sides of us, and I realized that it was on fire. I little maid told me that a man was standing in the wall, and when I put a match to the kindling, the flames must have started on the thin wooden walls from the elbow, and Lil went on the bed and threw her dress out, and it seemed only to serve as fresh fuel. Lil was (thought of in a dream). The little maid, petrified with

MARIO

(Continued from page 330)
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