

# THE WORLD AND THE WOMAN\*

A STORY OF WASHINGTON TO-DAY

BY RUTH KIMBALL GARDINER

AUTHOR OF "THE HEART OF A GIRL"

XXVI

BEAUCHAMP went no farther than to Wendell's hotel, where he surprised his friend at breakfast. For a quarter of an hour he talked earnestly; at the end of that time he left the hotel and went to Mrs. Macross's house.

Beauchamp found himself in the drawing-room. For the first time he was conscious of a fear that Lindsley would not see him. Then, suddenly, he saw her standing at the door. The long lines of her white woolen house-gown gave her an effect of austere height. In the dim light she seemed as white as her dress.

"Good morning, Mr. Beauchamp," she said, smiling with her lips only. Beauchamp's eyes were on her, and for the moment he could not speak. "You—you wanted to see me?" she added painfully.

Beauchamp caught her hands.

"I want an answer to my letter. I love you! Tell me—"

"Why, surely you know—" she said.

"I know nothing—nothing but that I love you!"

The words were almost a cry, and he caught her in his arms.

Lindsley still stood passive. Beauchamp's arms dropped.

"I am engaged to Senator Denby," she said. "Isn't— isn't that an answer?"

"It's not an answer. You don't love Denby."

Lindsley held her head proudly.

"I love him very dearly," she said.

"You don't love him!" Beauchamp cried. "You don't love him. It's not an answer unless you tell me you don't love me. You can't tell me that!"

Lindsley began to twist her hands together. Beauchamp came nearer. She thrust out her hands to keep him away.

"Oh, how unfair you are!" she broke out. "To come here—when you know—and torture me with—you have no right—you—"

"I have a right!" Beauchamp interrupted.

"Oh, please go!" she cried, pitifully shaken. "Please go away. Can't you see it's—it's too late?"

The next instant Beauchamp was holding her close, his lips on hers. A sob burst from the girl.

"Oh, go away!" she said again. "You are unkind."

She stood looking at Beauchamp, with agony in her eyes.

"You can't marry Denby," he said. "They've forced you into it. They sha'n't sell you—"

A cry from Lindsley stopped him.

"Oh, shame!" she cried. "How dare you? Oh, I didn't think that of you. They're not—nobody's selling me!" Her face went scarlet. "Oh, it's shameful of you. Senator Denby is the kindest—I am very grateful to him—you don't know all he's done for me—I am glad I can repay—" She stopped suddenly, for the first time seeing the thing in the brutal light of a bargain, and hid her face with her hands. "Oh, how could you say that?" she sobbed.

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Her distress brought sanity to Beauchamp.

"Forgive me," he said. "I didn't mean that—God knows I didn't. I was beside myself. I was angry because you didn't turn to me in your trouble instead of to Denby."

"Turn to you!" Lindsley flashed. "Turn to you! What have you to do with us? I—oh, you think I've sold myself to the highest bidder—you want me to understand that you're willing to bid as high. You say you love me—and you—you—" She flung herself into a chair, hiding her face. "I never thought of it like that," she said brokenly. "He was so good—the world is such a dreadful place—he's so kind, so good! I was so afraid—I—" She sat up and looked at him from an infinite remoteness. "Will you please go away?" she said. "You have hurt me. I want you to go."

Beauchamp crouched beside her.

"I was half mad," he said. "Dear little girl, forgive me. I love you so! I know you love me. Everything's plain now. You can't marry Denby—"

A Lindsley he had never known looked out at him from Bob Macross's daughter.

"I have given my word to Senator Denby," she said. "That ends it, doesn't it?"

"No!" cried Beauchamp. "Think, Lindsley. A girl's word is nothing. She can always change her mind. She can always—nobody holds her."

Lindsley stood up, white with anger.

"You forget who I am," she said. "I am a Macross. I know you think a woman hasn't any sense of honor—all men think that; but I'm a Macross. I have given my word. Even—even if I'd sold myself, as you have said, do you think I wouldn't keep my word? What sort of women have you known that you think a woman hasn't any honor? Would you go back on your word?" She began to sob helplessly. "Don't touch me!" she said. "You don't understand. I've given my word to the kindest, the best—oh, if you care for me at all, go away!"

Something that was best in Beauchamp—better than his love, deeper than his pain—answered to her appeal. He sat beside her murmuring inarticu-

late words of comfort, soothing her as he would have soothed a child, feeling for her something infinitely more unselfish than his passion.

"My word is—" Lindsley murmured.

"I know," said Beauchamp. "But the happiness of our lives is at stake. We can't stop to think of little things."

"You shall not say that," she said. "I've told you—I've promised!"

Beauchamp's blind passion swept over him again.

"I don't care what you've promised," he said.

"Oh, Harry, don't—don't make me despise myself!"

She turned with a sudden smothered cry and ran from the room. Beauchamp followed deliberately up the stairs. With a frightened backward look at him, she entered the library and waited, breathless.

"I can't say any more!" she cried. "You know I can't. It's cruel of you to follow me. It's too late!"

"It's utter nonsense to tell me it's too late," he returned. "You're not married to Denby yet."

She ran suddenly toward the door. Beauchamp stood with his back to it.

"Let me go!" she demanded.

"I shall not let you go," he said. "I'm not going to let you go until you go with me."

"You don't dare—"

"Yes, I do," he answered.

"I'm going to ring for some one," she threatened, moving toward the bell.

Beauchamp turned the key in the lock.

"Ring if you want to," he said.

Lindsley stopped, her finger on the bell, helplessly frightened.

"What—what are you going to do?" she faltered.

"I've told you. I'm going to stay until you go with me."

Lindsley began to move her hands with the gesture of an impatient child.

"Oh, please, please go away!" she said. "You frighten me."

Beauchamp moved away from the door and sat down.

"I won't go," he said stubbornly.

Lindsley sank to the sofa and began to cry. Beauchamp waited for her to speak. A little of her high courage came back to her presently.

"You don't understand," she said, making an effort to reason with him. "I can't break my word to Senator Denby. I have promised to marry him. I couldn't do a dishonorable thing like that."

"Does it seem honorable to you to marry one man when you love another?" Beauchamp asked. "Dishonorable! Do you think it's honorable to sell yourself—yes, I mean sell yourself to a rich old man? It's a shameful bargain!"

She sprang up flaming.

"Oh, how dare you say that? It's not a—a bargain. Senator Denby came to our help when—"

"He bought you," said Beauchamp brutally. "I know. He offered to pay your debts if you—"

"Shame!" she cried. "It's shameful of you!"

"You're the one that ought to be ashamed. Any woman ought to be ashamed in your place. If you wanted money, why in God's name didn't you come to me? Haven't I—"

Lindsley gave a great sob. The look in her eyes stopped him. He felt as if he had struck her.

"Won't you go now?" she asked, hiding her face.

"No," said Beauchamp. "It's hideous. You promised to marry Denby because you and your mother—yes, you've got to hear me—you two, without the slightest knowledge of business, ran yourselves into debt—"

"You don't know—" she began.

"Yes, I do. That's all there was to it. You hadn't the courage to face it—you took the easiest way out. You were willing to marry Denby—and did you ever think for a moment what marriage means? There's more to it than a church wedding and a lot of new frocks. There's the living together for all the rest of your life. There's the being a man's wife—the mother of his children—it's no time now to shut your eyes to things. That's what it means, and you were going into it because you needed money."

"Oh, no, no! I like Senator Denby. He's good and kind. You—why, I wouldn't have promised if I hadn't thought—yes, I do love—I know any woman would learn to love him. You

don't need a great deal of love to begin with—afterward, everybody says—"

"That's the damnable thing they tell girls. It's a lie! You need all the love in the world to begin with if you don't want marriage to be hell. You need the love you have for me. You do love me. You don't dare marry any one else—you haven't the right—you belong to me—and I don't mean to let you go!"

"I can't marry you!"

"You can, and you will!"

Beauchamp leaned toward her to take her in his arms. She sprang up, and he followed. But for the unchanged determination of his face and the agonized bewilderment of hers, they might have been children disputing for the possession of a toy. Their words were childish, with a childishness that harked back to the infancy of the race. Beauchamp pursued as his remotest ancestor might have pursued his chosen mate.

"Yes, you will," he reiterated, the table between them. "I love you!"

The instinctive craft of her sex came to the girl's aid. She smiled.

"You've frightened me so," she said. "You must give me time to think. We can't settle things now."

Beauchamp's silence gave her courage. She came to him and laid a hand on his arm.

"I'm sure you'll be reasonable," she said coaxingly. "You wouldn't want to hurry me into anything we might regret afterward. I must have time to think. Won't you—won't you please go away and come back to-morrow?"

"No, I'm not going," he said. "We can settle it now. Say you'll marry me, Lindsley."

"I can't—" she began; but Beauchamp stopped her with a kiss.

The battle, for it was now but a struggle between their two wills, began again. Beauchamp retreated not a step from his stand. One weapon having been broken against the stone wall of his determination, Lindsley tried another and another. She flung at him that he was betraying his friend, he was cruel, he was brutal. When he advanced, she retreated, doubling and turning, coaxing, defying, pleading, obstinately resisting.

Little by little her strength failed her. She grew hysterical, gasping out her re-

fusals between a laugh and a sob. Beauchamp heard her to the end without protest; then he began his demand again, beating her down by sheer force of his obstinacy.

"We couldn't be married for a long time," she said, at the end of her resources; "so why—"

"We are going to be married to-day," he said.

She cried out at that, the absurdity of it, the insanity of it—Beauchamp must have lost his mind. He drew her to the window.

"Do you see that carriage?" he asked. "It is waiting for us. Everything is arranged. We're going to be married."

"Where?" she asked, fascinated for the moment.

"Wendell knows. He's in that other carriage with Mrs. Wilson."

Her protests broke out again. Beauchamp gave her scant time for them.

"We'd better go now," he said.

"I can't go—why, mother—let me go and speak to mother!"

"There's no need to disturb her," said Beauchamp. "This thing is between you and me."

Lindsley broke down utterly.

"I'm not dressed to go anywhere!" she sobbed.

Beauchamp smiled. It was the last argument she had to offer.

"That's a very pretty frock," he said, "and it's white. Put on your cloak and hat. You have a white hat, haven't you?"

The thought of clothes restored somewhat of Lindsley's equilibrium. Craft returned to her.

"If you'll wait here I'll go and get ready," she said.

Beauchamp unlocked the door. Suddenly he understood her unexpected calmness.

"I'll go with you," he said.

The last avenue of escape cut off, Lindsley hung back.

"Oh, how can you act so?" she sobbed. "It's the most dreadful thing I ever heard of! You—you—you can't come to my room!"

"Yes, I can," said Beauchamp. "Stop crying. You don't want your mother to hear you, do you?"

Lindsley was past speech, past thought, exhausted, utterly beaten. Beauchamp held her arm as they went to her room. She found speech, then, in incoherent, irrelevant words.

"I look like a fright!" she sobbed. "You've made me cry—I do think it's the—"

One little detail of the scene never afterward left Beauchamp's memory. He could have shouted for joy when he saw it. It was absurd, trivial to the verge of the grotesque. Lindsley, resentfully protesting still, took up her powder-puff and touched her face carefully with it. A great rush of tenderness filled Beauchamp at the sight. Nothing else could have been so utter a confession of her defeat.

"Where is your hat?" he asked.

"It's in the closet over there—but I don't see how you can—oh, I don't know what I'm going to do—it's the—"

"In the right-hand box?" he asked.

"No, the one in the middle," she answered, with a fresh burst of tears.

Beauchamp brought the hat and a white cloak. The sudden pallor of Lindsley's face smote him. He had tried her too far. She was scarcely capable of knowing what she was doing. Deliberately he had overpowered her.

"God forgive me!" he thought, and his heart leaped exultant at his victory.

"Mayn't I speak to mother—just for a minute?" she asked, as they turned toward the door.

"Not now," he said.

Lindsley gave a deep sigh of submission, and he led her down the stairs. Wendell opened the carriage-door for them.

"Is it all right?" he whispered.

Beauchamp nodded. Wendell had never before seen tears in his eyes.

## XXVII

MRS. MACROSS rose as Senator Denby entered her drawing-room, and came toward him deprecatingly, with outstretched hands.

"I don't know how to tell you what my daughter has done," she said, "but I felt I must send for you. Not even I was let into the secret." There was jealousy in her tone, and reproach. "I don't know whether she sent you any

word," she went on. "There was so little time."

"Yes," said Denby, "she wrote me a note. Has she gone yet?"

"They have just gone to the station," she answered. "Oh, how could she—how could she?"

Denby felt the note of blame in her voice.

"Why, isn't it clear?" he said. "She found out her mistake."

"Oh, but she—" Mrs. Macross began.

Denby raised his hand.

"I'd rather not have her blamed," he said. "I'd rather not discuss it at all. It can't be helped. She wrote me quite frankly. Overpersuaded, perhaps, or perhaps—well, youth belongs to youth. I didn't know there was anybody else. Perhaps I took advantage of her. She seemed afraid I wouldn't understand. Will you please tell her, when you write, that I do? There was a note from Beauchamp, too, but you needn't say anything to him."

"I am so sorry," she murmured. "If I had known—"

"Oh, if we were all omniscient, the Almighty would be out of a job," said Denby gruffly. "At least, you need not distress yourself, madam."

"Can you forgive her?" Mrs. Macross asked.

The Senator's face changed slowly.

"Why, I love the child," he said. "I don't believe, though, that it's going to make much difference to her whether anybody forgives her or not. She'll turn to her mother again, no doubt, by and by. Just now—" He dismissed the subject with a gesture. "We needn't discuss it, need we? How long are they to be gone?"

"Nearly a year," she said.

The Senator took some memoranda from his breast-pocket. There was a paper or two, also, for Mrs. Macross's signing. When he had explained, she understood what Beauchamp must have written. There seemed nothing to say to the Senator. Whatever he felt, he resented any blame of Lindsley, any pity of himself. He withdrew to an immense distance, friendly still, but definitely reserved, and his friendliness was for Lindsley, not for Mrs. Macross. It was unmistakably the end. When he

rose to leave her, she held out a trembling hand. There was a look of Lindsley in her face. The Senator raised the hand to his lips.

"Good-by," he said.

Mrs. Macross watched him go. He seemed older than she had known him, and he went slowly, like a man who faces old age, accepting it.

She looked about the room. Lindsley's music lay on the piano, a book of Lindsley's on the table. Lindsley was gone, and the room had the impersonal look that had struck her when she first entered it. It was the drawing-room of a house let furnished, ready for the next tenant, the drawing-room of an empty, haunted house.

She went slowly along the hall to the telephone. Mrs. Wilson occurred to her first, but she rejected the thought. Wendell answered her call, promising to be with her at once.

She went through the deserted house, pausing a moment before Franklyn Lindsley's portrait. "A great game," he had said, and she had played her game. She paused, too, to look up at Bob Macross's pictured face. There was so much of Lindsley in the eyes, the poise of the head.

Wendell found her in the drawing-room, cloaked and hatted.

"Do you know where Colonel Macross is at present?" she asked simply.

Wendell named the shabby street beyond the Capitol.

"Will you take me to him?" Mrs. Macross asked.

They drove out of the old street into older streets, lacking its retaining hold on the skirts of fashion. The stucco peeled, leprous, from this old mansion; the ironwork of the balcony sagged, rusted, on that. Here was a broken pane in a fanlight; there, a spindle missing from the curving railing bordering a white stone stoop. The smart newness of cheap apartment-houses mocked the dingy solidity of mid-century dwellings now sunk to boarding-houses, to the uses of pension and patent attorneys. Opened gates of walled gardens gave glimpses of forlorn rubbish-heaps where trim box-bordered walks had been. There was nothing in these streets of the world to the northwest. They were

out-at-elbows—sadly, with their air of having seen better days, or impudently, with their mock-stone cornices and colored glass door-panels.

The Capitol, its gray flushed to rose in the sunset, stood with its feet in the muck of groggeries, hoardings, squalid lodging-houses, bordered by the sordid ugliness of the squat Census Bureau. Spring had laid a teasing finger on the terraces and lawns. A swamp magnolia had decked its leafless branches in rosy bloom, mocking the sluggish sycamores. Crocuses lifted fragile heads from the somberly green ivy. The lilacs were swelling with buds.

Wendell looked back as they passed at the Capitol, black against the glow in the west, and the amethystine shadows of the city below the hill. Mrs. Macross did not stir nor speak. On the narrow doorstep he stood aside to let her pass in first. She turned to him and held out her hand.

"Good-by, Mr. Wendell," she said.

The dismissal was definite. Wendell stood with bared head till the door closed after her.

She stumbled a little in ascending the stairs, and groped her way slowly to Bob Macross's door. He was sitting by the window, his thin hands idle on his knees. It was no longer light enough to see the lines in the paper he had been reading. She caught his silhouette outlined against the panes before he turned. It was a shadow-picture of Bob Macross as she had first known him. So, too, it might be said that the man in the chair was the shadow of the Bob Macross whom she had loved.

"Robert!" she said.

Colonel Macross's thoughts had drifted back to the old days. He spoke at first without surprise.

"Marian!" he said. The effort of rising betrayed his weakness. "Why, Marian, is it you—come to see me?"

Through the dusk her face shone on him, white and luminous, smiling. She came toward him swiftly.

"Robert!" she said again. "Oh, Robert, I have been wrong—so wrong. You came back to me and I sent you away—I have come to you now."

The old man put out his hands to her uncertainly.

"But Lindsley?" he said.

A moment of trembling seized her.

"She has gone away from—us," she said. "She is happy with Henry Beauchamp. We have only each other now."

Her meaning pierced his bewilderment slowly.

"Each other?" he said. "Surely not after—why, you could not, Marian—I am not fit—you cannot mean—"

"Only each other," she repeated. "I have come to stay with you."

The old man made an uncertain step forward. A mighty sob shook him. The husk of twenty years fell away, and the face of Robert Macross the soldier, the hero, bent above hers.

"It cannot be true," he murmured brokenly. "It cannot be true! I have not deserved it. I am not worthy—but I have loved you always, Marian, even—"

"I know," she said—"I know. We can forget those years—together."

A sudden faintness came over her, and she sank into his chair. He knelt beside her, hiding his head against her knees, a prodigal, but sincerely repentant—a prodigal whom love had come to meet while he was yet a great way off. She bent above him as she might have bent above Lindsley, forgiving, comforting. Her eyes strayed about the comfortless room, its ugliness half hidden in the merciful dusk.

"I must help you to make everything better, Robert," she said. "See, I am going to light the lamp for you. We will begin with that!"

THE END

#### CONFIDENCE

COURAGE, my heart! Shall you and I fail now,  
After the battle's din and stain and heat?  
Shall we stop fighting once we have learned how,  
Or call one unrecovered fall defeat?

*Mary Eastwood Knevels*

# A MAN OF IDEAS

BY DOROTHY CANFIELD

AUTHOR OF "THE AWAKENING," "THE HOUSE WITH THE WOODBINE," ETC.

WHEN I turned into the old deserted road, after a scramble over high upland pastures that had tried my horse's temper, I was startled to see smoke rising from the chimney of the old Elten house, for nobody had lived in it since the death of my great-grandfather. I was startled, but not at all alarmed; for there are no tramps in our mountains, and I know all the valley people very well.

More than this, I was a little indignant. The Elten house belongs to my Grandaunt Abigail, and I thought it was a mean trick in anybody to use her house just because she is crippled with rheumatism and can't get around to look after her property. So, I rode up to the door, and, leaning from my saddle, knocked on it with my riding-whip.

I will confess that I was not only startled but a little alarmed when it was opened by a man I had never seen in my life before. He looked inquiringly at me; but in just a minute I saw that he wasn't anybody to be afraid of. You could tell that by one look at him. He was unshaven and haggard, but looked as though he was meant to be comfortable and middle-aged—the kind of a person that your aunts have married.

At first he had a hunted look in his eyes. I had never seen anybody with that look, though you often read about it, but I recognized it the instant I saw it. But when he discovered that I was just a girl, and alone, he seemed relieved, and asked what he could do for me. I thought he was pretty cool.

"My great-aunt, Miss Calkins, owns this house," I said. "Seeing smoke as I rode past, I—"

He interrupted me. "I'll be very glad to pay any rent she wishes for it."

"No," I said with dignity. "No, it's not that. My great-aunt has plenty of money. It's sentiment. She will never allow any one to live in the house since her father, my great-grandfather, died here."

"Isn't there any way?" he asked earnestly.

"None," I answered firmly. "You must go."

He hesitated for a moment, looking down the road that led to the valley and the village, and seeming so miserable that I was sorry for him. Then he said:

"Look here, Miss—Calkins, I presume?" My name is not Calkins, but I let it pass. "You look like a good-hearted girl who'd be kind to a man in distress. Let me tell you my unhappy story and see if you can make up your mind to turn me out of my haven of peace. I'll tie your horse to the tree, and you can sit on the steps. I have no furniture in the house, or I'd ask you in."

I wasn't going to get off my horse and sit down that way with a man I'd never laid eyes on, even if he did look as though he might be my uncle by marriage; but I was curious to hear what was the matter with him, so we compromised. I went on sitting on my saddle, and he carried two high old saw-horses from the barn, put a plank across them, and sat on that. This brought him up about on a level with me, and we talked quite comfortably; at least, he did, for I only listened.

"Three years ago," he began, "I was as peaceful and happy a man as you could well imagine. I was a teacher in one of the public high schools in New York, and I had worked up until my salary was eighteen hundred dollars a year. I was, and am, a bachelor of simple tastes, and this was amply suffi-