

WHOM SHE LOVED BEST

By JANE BELFIELD.

(Copyright.)
"It is easy to discover which man the woman loves best." The king of the



Scarabee Islands shifted his gaze from the blue sea shining above the broad coral reef, and sneeringly regarded his latest favorite. "Bring out the prisoners. Four—you said?" "Four were shipwrecked, oh, king—the woman, a child and two men."

"And the child is hers, but she will not tell which man is her husband!" "She will not tell."

The king yawned. Not much entertainment for a white man to be captured by these savages and forced to be their chief! Twice he had attempted to escape and twice been ignominiously retaken. According to their laws—their stupid, unchangeable laws—the third attempt meant death.

He glanced down the long rows of bamboo trees whence his half-naked negroes led forward the group of white prisoners.

A woman, young and beautiful, held fast the hand of a blue-eyed boy.

A tall, fair man followed between two stalwart blacks.

Then another guard and another man, slight of build, dark of countenance.

The king beckoned to the woman, saying:

"I'm sorry for all of you—but—do you know their law?"

The woman strained hopefully forward. "You are not—"

"One of them? No—but I am their prisoner as much as you are. Shipwrecked—saved because I practised a little easy magic to fool them! I'm still clothed in purple and fine linen, you see." The king of the Scarabee Islands spread out his skirt of woven grasses.

"Can you not save us?" she implored wildly.

The king shook his head. "Two of you. They do not kill women—unless by request. This is their ancient law. You may live, and the one you love best also may live. I will put you both on the first ship that passes this most detestable spot."

The woman knelt and clasped the boy. Over his head her eyes strained despairingly toward the two men who stood calmly regarding her.

For an instant the eyes of the taller left hers and lingered upon the boy's yellow curls.

Two natives with knotted clubs stepped forward. The king rose. His gaze swept the multitude of dark faces.

He hesitated—no—his interference would but change those stolid countenances to fury.

"She chooses the boy," he said.

The blacks seized the tall, fair prisoner.

"No!" the woman shrieked. "No—not him! You have another law—the king's counselor told me—you dare not refuse a life for a life! I choose the child, but I claim the right to die in place of this man." She stretched out her hand toward the captive whose hair was golden as the boy's. "No! no! Do not listen to him. Guard the prisoner! You who are chief here—you dare not refuse. It is your law—your unchangeable law!"

The woman whispered in the boy's ear, and thrust his hand into the hand of the tall, fair man, who struggled vainly with his captors in desperate protest.

"Take them away! Take them away!" the king commanded. "This man and the boy are free!"

The woman smiled and turned her face toward the other prisoner—slight of build, dark of countenance.

The executioners bound them together.

"I die," she murmured low, "with you!"

At even, the king of the Scarabee Islands listened moodily to the swish of the bamboo trees.

"Which man did the woman love best, oh, king?"

The king of the Scarabee Islands silently regarded his latest favorite in the glow of the moon.

NOT ALWAYS PERFECT

1 C. ST. 1915
By CORA WEEMS.

"As for that," said the girl with the box of chocolates, "there are simply lots of things about myself that I'd like to change if I had the chance. Now, I've never liked my nose. As a mere child I hated it and since I've grown up my feeling in regard to it is desperately unchristian. It's such a mean nose—it's too long and it is fat at the end, and there's no way of disguising it. It's a ruinous nose!"

"Oh, mercy!" said the girl who was helping the other girl dispose of the candy. "I wouldn't feel that way about it! Why, after one gets used to it one never notices it, really! Constance, if you are careful to keep your head turned so that people don't get a profile view—"

"Yes, that'll help a lot," broke in the girl in blue serge. "Looking straight at you one can't see how fat the tip of your nose really is, dear. And I've seen noses so much worse—all over a person's face! Of course, your head is small, and that makes your nose more prominent. But I shouldn't feel go bad about it—if we forget our afflictions so much easier—"

"Well, I think you have a lot of nerve to call my nose an affliction!" cried the girl with the chocolate. "You talk as though I were a side-show freak, at the very least! Of course, it has its faults, but it isn't such an impossible nose, I'd have you know! I suppose I notice it more than any one else does, and I must say, Kitty Phipps, that if I were you I wouldn't talk!"

"I suppose you are insinuating something about my complexion!" said the girl in blue serge. "You've heard me mourn over it often enough and say I'd give my head if I could change it. I'm not claiming to be a beauty and I know there are sometimes a few tiny spots on my face—"

"Tiny!" cried the girl with the chocolates. "My goodness! I never saw any one with more things the matter with her face! If it isn't broken out it is yellow-spotty or just a gray-brown color—"

"Yes, I've noticed that," eagerly broke in the girl in brown. "How funny Kitty's complexion acts sometimes! Did you ever notice that it gets just the color of her hair, so she looks all alike? I think it is most curious!"

"The hard part is," said the girl who was helping dispose of the candy, "that you can't get away from a bad complexion. There isn't a thing you can do to distract attention from it, because it is the most prominent thing—"

"I'm certainly much obliged to you!" interrupted the owner of the complexion that was under discussion. "I'm glad to find out that you regard me as a human monstrosity! My complexion may not be the finest on earth, but I guess I'd pass in a crowd! It isn't necessary to be an insipid pink and white to be good looking! Artists have been known to rave over the color symphony of a girl like me—all a faint golden-brown, they call it! They—"

"Anyhow," said the girl who was helping to dispose of the candy, "I'm glad I'm sensible enough to realize my weak points and not so foolish as to think I'm a regular Venus! What I'd like to change is my figure. I suppose you've noticed—"

"Oh, indeed, we have!" interrupted the girl in brown. "But I wouldn't worry over it so much. Of course, the fashions are bound to change some day and I suppose when it's no longer the style to look like a lath it'll be bad for you, but just now you're all right. You're just the thing! Why, everybody is simply trying to look shapeless and lank."

"I should think you would be glad," said the girl with the chocolate, "to know that you have absolutely no hips nor any shape at all."

"Thank you so much!" tartly said the young woman under discussion. "If you can't appreciate a figure that is svelte and willowy I suppose that's your misfortune! It takes a connoisseur to admire some types of beauty—types out of the ordinary! Since you are beefy and billowy I suppose in self-defense you have to run down everybody else! Thank goodness, I am what I am!"

"Well, anyhow," sighed the girl in brown, "barring my hair and eyes, my complexion and teeth and figure and ears and nose, I think I'm rather good looking! I'm really sorry for you unfortunates!"

Long Trip for Submarines.
When Jules Verne wrote "Forty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" few of his readers imagined that his weird idea would be accomplished within their lifetime, yet two submarines have started from Portsmouth, England, for Australia, a distance of 13,000 miles, which they will accomplish under their own power, created by oil-driven engines. They are scheduled to reach Australia about May 18, which allows for no loss of time from start to finish. Each boat has oil engines of 1,600-horsepower, calculated to develop 360 revolutions per minute, and will carry 11,000 gallons of paraffin as fuel and 1,500 gallons of lubricating oil. They have as armaments four torpedo tubes, and on arrival will be fitted with wireless telegraphy. They are to be known as AE1 and AE2, being of the E class. They will be escorted as far as Singapore by his majesty's ship Eclipse.

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