

Love in the Night, F. Scott Fitzgerald

I

The words thrilled Val. They had come into his mind sometime during the fresh gold April afternoon and he kept repeating them to himself over and over: "Love in the night; love in the night." He tried them in three languages—Russian, French and English—and decided that they were best in English. In each language they meant a different sort of love and a different sort of night—the English night seemed the warmest and softest with a thinnest and most crystalline sprinkling of stars. The English love seemed the most fragile and romantic—a white dress and a dim face above it and eyes that were pools of light. And when I add that it was a French night he was thinking about, after all, I see I must go back and begin over.

Val was half Russian and half American. His mother was the daughter of that Morris Hasyilton who helped finance the Chicago World's Fair in 1892, and his father was—see the Almanach de Gotha, issue of 1910—Prince Paul Serge Boris Rostoff, son of Prince Vladimir Rostoff, grandson of a grand duke—'Jimber-jawed Serge'—and third-cousin-once-removed to the czar. It was all very impressive, you see, on that side—house in St. Petersburg, shooting lodge near Riga, and swollen villa, more like a palace, overlooking the Mediterranean. It was at this villa in Cannes that the Rostoffs passed the winter—and it wasn't at all the thing to remind Princess Rostoff that this Riviera villa, from the marble fountain—after Bernini—to the gold cordial glasses—after dinner—was paid for with American gold.

The Russians, of course, were gay people on the Continent in the gala days before the war. Of the three races that used Southern France for a pleasure ground they were easily the most adept at the grand manner. The English were too practical, and the Americans, though they spent freely, had no tradition of romantic conduct. But the Russians—there was a people as gallant as the Latins, and rich besides! When the Rostoffs arrived at Cannes late in January the restaurateurs telegraphed north for the Prince's favorite labels to paste on their champagne, and the jewelers put incredibly gorgeous articles aside to show to him—but not to the princess—and the Russian Church was swept and garnished for the season that the Prince might beg orthodox forgiveness for his sins. Even the Mediterranean turned obligingly to a deep wine color in the spring evenings, and fishing boats with robin-breasted sails loitered exquisitely offshore.

In a vague way young Val realized that this was all for the benefit of him and his family. It was a privileged paradise, this white little city on the water, in which he was free to do what he liked because he was rich and young and the blood of Peter the Great ran indigo in his veins. He was only seventeen in 1914, when this history begins, but he had already fought a duel with a young man four years his senior, and he had a small hairless scar to show for it on top of his handsome head.

But the question of love in the night was the thing nearest his heart. It was a vague pleasant dream he had, something that was going to happen to

him some day that would be unique and incomparable. He could have told no more about it than that there was a lovely unknown girl concerned in it, and that it ought to take place beneath the Riviera moon.

The odd thing about all this was not that he had this excited and yet almost spiritual hope of romance, for all boys of any imagination have just such hopes, but that it actually came true. And when it happened, it happened so unexpectedly; it was such a jumble of impressions and emotions, of curious phrases that sprang to his lips, of sights and sounds and moments that were here, were lost, were past, that he scarcely understood it at all. Perhaps its very vagueness preserved it in his heart and made him forever unable to forget.

There was an atmosphere of love all about him that spring—his father's loves, for instance, which were many and indiscreet, and which Val became aware of gradually from overhearing the gossip of servants, and definitely from coming on his American mother unexpectedly one afternoon, to find her storming hysterically at his father's picture on the salon wall. In the picture his father wore a white uniform with a furred dolman and looked back impassively at his wife as if to say "Were you under the impression, my dear, that you were marrying into a family of clergymen?"

Val tiptoed away, surprised, confused—and excited. It didn't shock him as it would have shocked an American boy of his age. He had known for years what life was among the Continental rich, and he condemned his father only for making his mother cry.

Love went on around him—reproachless love and illicit love alike. As he strolled along the seaside promenade at nine o'clock, when the stars were bright enough to compete with the bright lamps, he was aware of love on every side. From the open-air cafés, vivid with dresses just down from Paris, came a sweet pungent odor of flowers and chartreuse and fresh black coffee and cigarettes—and mingled with them all he caught another scent, the mysterious thrilling scent of love. Hands touched jewel-sparkling hands upon the white tables. Gay dresses and white shirt fronts swayed together, and matches were held, trembling a little, for slow-lighting cigarettes. On the other side of the boulevard lovers less fashionable, young Frenchmen who worked in the stores of Cannes, sauntered with their fiancées under the dim trees, but Val's young eyes seldom turned that way. The luxury of music and bright colors and low voices—they were all part of his dream. They were the essential trappings of love in the night.

But assume as he might the rather fierce expression that was expected from a young Russian gentleman who walked the streets alone, Val was beginning to be unhappy. April twilight had succeeded March twilight, the season was almost over, and he had found no use to make of the warm spring evenings. The girls of sixteen and seventeen whom he knew, were chaperoned with care between dusk and bedtime—this, remember, was before the war—and the others who might gladly have walked beside him were an affront to his romantic desire. So April passed by—one week, two weeks, three weeks—

He had played tennis until seven and loitered at the courts for another hour, so it was half-past eight when a tired cab horse accomplished the hill on which gleamed the façade of the Rostoff villa. The lights of his mother's limousine were yellow in the drive, and the princess, buttoning her gloves, was just coming out the glowing door. Val tossed two francs to the cabman and went to kiss her on the cheek.

"Don't touch me," she said quickly. "You've been handling money."

"But not in my mouth, mother," he protested humorously.

The princess looked at him impatiently.

"I'm angry," she said. "Why must you be so late tonight? We're dining on a yacht and you were to have come along too."

"What yacht?"

"Americans." There was always a faint irony in her voice when she mentioned the land of her nativity. Her America was the Chicago of the nineties which she still thought of as the vast upstairs to a butcher shop. Even the irregularities of Prince Paul were not too high a price to have paid for her escape.

"Two yachts," she continued; "in fact we don't know which one. The note was very indefinite. Very careless indeed."

Americans. Val's mother had taught him to look down on Americans, but she hadn't succeeded in making him dislike them. American men noticed you, even if you were seventeen. He liked Americans. Although he was thoroughly Russian he wasn't immaculately so—the exact proportion, like that of a celebrated soap, was about ninety-nine and three-quarters per cent.

"I want to come," he said, "I'll hurry up, mother. I'll—"

"We're late now." The princess turned as her husband appeared in the door. "Now Val says he wants to come."

"He can't," said Prince Paul shortly. "He's too outrageously late."

Val nodded. Russian aristocrats, however indulgent about themselves, were always admirably Spartan with their children. There were no arguments.

"I'm sorry," he said.

Prince Paul grunted. The footman, in red and silver livery, opened the limousine door. But the grunt decided the matter for Val, because Princess Rostoff at that day and hour had certain grievances against her husband which gave her command of the domestic situation.

"On second thought you'd better come, Val," she announced coolly. "It's too late now, but come after dinner. The yacht is either the Minnehaha or

the Privateer." She got into the limousine. "The one to come to will be the gayer one, I suppose—the Jacksons' yacht—"

"Find got sense," muttered the Prince cryptically, conveying that Val would find it if he had any sense. "Have my man take a look at you 'fore you start. Wear tie of mine 'stead of that outrageous string you affected in Vienna. Grow up. High time."

As the limousine crawled crackling down the pebbled drive Val's face was burning.

## II

It was dark in Cannes harbor, rather it seemed dark after the brightness of the promenade that Val had just left behind. Three frail dock lights glittered dimly upon innumerable fishing boats heaped like shells along the beach. Farther out in the water there were other lights where a fleet of slender yachts rode the tide with slow dignity, and farther still a full ripe moon made the water bosom into a polished dancing floor. Occasionally there was a swish! creak! drip! as a rowboat moved about in the shallows, and its blurred shape threaded the labyrinth of hobbled fishing skiffs and launches. Val, descending the velvet slope of sand, stumbled over a sleeping boatman and caught the rank savor of garlic and plain wine. Taking the man by the shoulders he shook open his startled eyes.

"Do you know where the Minnehaha is anchored, and the Privateer?"

As they slid out into the bay he lay back in the stern and stared with vague discontent at the Riviera moon. That was the right moon, all right. Frequently, five nights out of seven, there was the right moon. And here was the soft air, aching with enchantment, and here was the music, many strains of music from many orchestras, drifting out from the shore. Eastward lay the dark Cape of Antibes, and then Nice, and beyond that Monte Carlo, where the night rang chinking full of gold. Some day he would enjoy all that, too, know its every pleasure and success—when he was too old and wise to care.

But tonight—tonight, that stream of silver that waved like a wide strand of curly hair toward the moon; those soft romantic lights of Cannes behind him, the irresistible ineffable love in this air—that was to be wasted forever.

"Which one?" asked the boatman suddenly.

"Which what?" demanded Val, sitting up.

"Which boat?"

He pointed. Val turned; above hovered the gray, sword-like prow of a yacht. During the sustained longing of his wish they had covered half a mile.

He read the brass letters over his head. It was the Privateer, but there were only dim lights on board, and no music and no voices, only a murmurous k-plash at intervals as the small waves leaped at the sides.

"The other one," said Val; "the Minnehaha."

"Don't go yet."

Val started. The voice, low and soft, had dropped down from the darkness overhead.

"What's the hurry?" said the soft voice. "Thought maybe somebody was coming to see me, and have suffered terrible disappointment."

The boatman lifted his oars and looked hesitatingly at Val. But Val was silent, so the man let the blades fall into the water and swept the boat out into the moonlight.

"Wait a minute!" cried Val sharply.

"Good-by," said the voice. "Come again when you can stay longer."

"But I am going to stay now," he answered breathlessly. He gave the necessary order and the rowboat swung back to the foot of the small companionway. Someone young, someone in a misty white dress, someone with a lovely low voice, had actually called to him out of the velvet dark. "If she has eyes!" Val murmured to himself. He liked the romantic sound of it and repeated it under his breath—"If she has eyes."

"What are you?" She was directly above him now; she was looking down and he was looking up as he climbed the ladder, and as their eyes met they both began to laugh.

She was very young, slim, almost frail, with a dress that accentuated her youth by its blanched simplicity. Two wan dark spots on her cheeks marked where the color was by day.

"What are you?" she repeated, moving back and laughing again as his head appeared on the level of the deck. "I'm frightened now and I want to know."

"I am a gentleman," said Val, bowing.

"What sort of a gentleman? There are all sorts of gentlemen. There was a—there was a colored gentleman at the table next to ours in Paris, and so—" She broke off. "You're not American, are you?"

"I'm Russian," he said, as he might have announced himself to be an archangel. He thought quickly and then added, "And I am the most fortunate of Russians. All this day, all this spring I have dreamed of falling in love on such a night, and now I see that heaven has sent me to you."

"Just one moment!" she said, with a little gasp. "I'm sure now that this visit is a mistake. I don't go in for anything like that. Please!"

"I beg your pardon." He looked at her in bewilderment, unaware that he had taken too much for granted. Then he drew himself up formally.

"I have made an error. If you will excuse me I will say good night."

He turned away. His hand was on the rail.

"Don't go," she said, pushing a strand of indefinite hair out of her eyes. "On second thoughts you can talk any nonsense you like if you'll only not go. I'm miserable and I don't want to be left alone."

Val hesitated; there was some element in this that he failed to understand. He had taken it for granted that a girl who called to a strange man at night, even from the deck of a yacht, was certainly in a mood for romance. And he wanted intensely to stay. Then he remembered that this was one of the two yachts he had been seeking.

"I imagine that the dinner's on the other boat," he said.

"The dinner? Oh, yes, it's on the Minnehaha. Were you going there?"

"I was going there—a long time ago."

"What's your name?"

He was on the point of telling her when something made him ask a question instead.

"And you? Why are you not at the party?"

"Because I preferred to stay here. Mrs. Jackson said there would be some Russians there—I suppose that's you." She looked at him with interest. "You're a very young man, aren't you?"

"I am much older than I look," said Val stiffly. "People always comment on it. It's considered rather a remarkable thing."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-one," he lied.

She laughed.

"What nonsense! You're not more than nineteen."

His annoyance was so perceptible that she hastened to reassure him. "Cheer up! I'm only seventeen myself. I might have gone to the party if I'd thought there'd be anyone under fifty there."

He welcomed the change of subject.

"You preferred to sit and dream here beneath the moon."

"I've been thinking of mistakes." They sat down side by side in two canvas deck chairs. "It's a most engrossing subject—the subject of mistakes. Women very seldom brood about mistakes—they're much more willing to forget than men are. But when they do brood—"

"You have made a mistake?" inquired Val.

She nodded.

"Is it something that cannot be repaired?"

"I think so," she answered. "I can't be sure. That's what I was considering when you came along."

"Perhaps I can help in some way," said Val. "Perhaps your mistake is not irreparable, after all."

"You can't," she said unhappily. "So let's not think about it. I'm very tired of my mistake and I'd much rather you'd tell me about all the gay, cheerful things that are going on in Cannes tonight."

They glanced shoreward at the line of mysterious and alluring lights, the big toy banks with candles inside that were really the great fashionable hotels, the lighted clock in the old town, the blurred glow of the Café de Paris, the pricked-out points of villa windows rising on slow hills toward the dark sky.

"What is everyone doing there?" she whispered. "It looks as though something gorgeous was going on, but what it is I can't quite tell."

"Everyone there is making love," said Val quietly.

"Is that it?" She looked for a long time, with a strange expression in her eyes. "Then I want to go home to America," she said. "There is too much love here. I want to go home tomorrow."

"You are afraid of being in love then?"

She shook her head.

"It isn't that. It's just because—there is no love here for me."

"Or for me either," added Val quietly. "It is sad that we two should be at such a lovely place on such a lovely night and have—nothing."

He was leaning toward her intently, with a sort of inspired and chaste romance in his eyes—and she drew back.

"Tell me more about yourself," she inquired quickly. "If you are Russian where did you learn to speak such excellent English?"

"My mother was American," he admitted. "My grandfather was American also, so she had no choice in the matter."

"Then you're American too!"

"I am Russian," said Val with dignity.

She looked at him closely, smiled and decided not to argue. "Well then," she said diplomatically, "I suppose you must have a Russian name."

But he had no intention now of telling her his name. A name, even the Rostoff name, would be a desecration of the night. They were their own low voices, their two white faces—and that was enough. He was sure, without any reason for being sure but with a sort of instinct that sang triumphantly through his mind, that in a little while, a minute or an hour, he was going to undergo an initiation into the life of romance. His name had no reality beside what was stirring in his heart.

"You are beautiful," he said suddenly.

"How do you know?"

"Because for women moonlight is the hardest light of all."

"Am I nice in the moonlight?"

"You are the loveliest thing that I have ever known."

"Oh." She thought this over. "Of course I had no business to let you come on board. I might have known what we'd talk about—in this moon. But I can't sit here and look at the shore—forever. I'm too young for that. Don't you think I'm too young for that?"

"Much too young," he agreed solemnly.

Suddenly they both became aware of new music that was close at hand, music that seemed to come out of the water not a hundred yards away.

"Listen!" she cried. "It's from the Minnehaha. They've finished dinner."

For a moment they listened in silence.

"Thank you," said Val suddenly.

"For what?"

He hardly knew he had spoken. He was thanking the deep low horns for singing in the breeze, the sea for its warm murmurous complaint against the bow, the milk of the stars for washing over them until he felt buoyed up in a substance more taut than air.

"So lovely," she whispered.

"What are we going to do about it?"



"Do we have to do something about it? I thought we could just sit and enjoy—"

"You didn't think that," he interrupted quietly. "You know that we must do something about it. I am going to make love to you—and you are going to be glad."

"I can't," she said very low. She wanted to laugh now, to make some light cool remark that would bring the situation back into the safe waters of a casual flirtation. But it was too late now. Val knew that the music had completed what the moon had begun.

"I will tell you the truth," he said. "You are my first love. I am seventeen—the same age as you, no more."

There was something utterly disarming about the fact that they were the same age. It made her helpless before the fate that had thrown them together. The deck chairs creaked and he was conscious of a faint illusive perfume as they swayed suddenly and childishly together.

III

Whether he kissed her once or several times he could not afterward remember, though it must have been an hour that they sat there close together and he held her hand. What surprised him most about making love was that it seemed to have no element of wild passion—regret, desire, despair—but a delirious promise of such happiness in the world, in living, as he had never known. First love—this was only first love! What must love itself in its fullness, its perfection be. He did not know that what he was experiencing then, that unreal, undesirous medley of ecstasy and peace, would be unrecapturable forever.

The music had ceased for some time when presently the murmurous silence was broken by the sound of a rowboat disturbing the quiet waves. She sprang suddenly to her feet and her eyes strained out over the bay.

"Listen!" she said quickly. "I want you to tell me your name."

"No."

"Please," she begged him. "I'm going away tomorrow."

He didn't answer.

"I don't want you to forget me," she said. "My name is—"

"I won't forget you. I will promise to remember you always. Whoever I may love I will always compare her to you, my first love. So long as I live you will always have that much freshness in my heart."

"I want you to remember," she murmured brokenly. "Oh, this has meant more to me than it has to you—much more."

She was standing so close to him that he felt her warm young breath on his face. Once again they swayed together. He pressed her hands and wrists between his as it seemed right to do, and kissed her lips. It was the right kiss, he thought, the romantic kiss—not too little or too much. Yet there was a sort of promise in it of other kisses he might have had, and it was with a slight sinking of his heart that he heard the rowboat close to the yacht and realized that her family had returned. The evening was over.

"And this is only the beginning," he told himself. "All my life will be like this night."

She was saying something in a low quick voice and he was listening tensely.

"You must know one thing—I am married. Three months ago. That was the mistake that I was thinking about when the moon brought you out here. In a moment you will understand."

She broke off as the boat swung against the companionway and a man's voice floated up out of the darkness.

"Is that you, my dear?"

"Yes."

"What is this other rowboat waiting?"

"One of Mrs. Jackson's guests came here by mistake and I made him stay and amuse me for an hour."

A moment later the thin white hair and weary face of a man of sixty appeared above the level of the deck. And then Val saw and realized too late how much he cared.

#### IV

When the Riviera season ended in May the Rostoffs and all the other Russians closed their villas and went north for the summer. The Russian Orthodox Church was locked up and so were the bins of rarer wine, and the fashionable spring moonlight was put away, so to speak, to wait for their return.

"We'll be back next season," they said as a matter of course. But this was premature, for they were never coming back any more. Those few who straggled south again after five tragic years were glad to get work as chambermaids or valets de chambre in the great hotels where they had once dined. Many of them, of course, were killed in the war or in the revolution; many of them faded out as spongers and small cheats in the big capitals, and not a few ended their lives in a sort of stupefied despair.

When the Kerensky government collapsed in 1917, Val was a lieutenant on the eastern front, trying desperately to enforce authority in his company

long after any vestige of it remained. He was still trying when Prince Paul Rostoff and his wife gave up their lives one rainy morning to atone for the blunders of the Romanoffs—and the enviable career of Morris Hasylton's daughter ended in a city that bore even more resemblance to a butcher shop than had Chicago in 1892.

After that Val fought with Denikin's army for a while until he realized that he was participating in a hollow farce and the glory of Imperial Russia was over. Then he went to France and was suddenly confronted with the astounding problem of keeping his body and soul together.

It was, of course, natural that he should think of going to America. Two vague aunts with whom his mother had quarreled many years ago still lived there in comparative affluence. But the idea was repugnant to the prejudices his mother had implanted in him, and besides he hadn't sufficient money left to pay for his passage over. Until a possible counter-revolution should restore to him the Rostoff properties in Russia he must somehow keep alive in France.

So he went to the little city he knew best of all. He went to Cannes. His last two hundred francs bought him a third-class ticket and when he arrived he gave his dress suit to an obliging party who dealt in such things and received in return money for food and bed. He was sorry afterward that he had sold the dress suit, because it might have helped him to a position as a waiter. But he obtained work as a taxi driver instead and was quite as happy, or rather quite as miserable, at that.

Sometimes he carried Americans to look at villas for rent, and when the front glass of the automobile was up, curious fragments of conversation drifted out to him from within.

"—heard this fellow was a Russian prince." ... "Sh!" ... "No, this one right here." ... "Be quiet, Esther!"—followed by subdued laughter.

When the car stopped, his passengers would edge around to have a look at him. At first he was desperately unhappy when girls did this; after a while he didn't mind any more. Once a cheerfully intoxicated American asked him if it were true and invited him to lunch, and another time an elderly woman seized his hand as she got out of the taxi, shook it violently and then pressed a hundred-franc note into his hand.

"Well, Florence, now I can tell 'em back home I shook hands with a Russian prince."

The inebriated American who had invited him to lunch thought at first that Val was a son of the czar, and it had to be explained to him that a prince in Russia was simply the equivalent of a British courtesy lord. But he was puzzled that a man of Val's personality didn't go out and make some real money.

"This is Europe," said Val gravely. "Here money is not made. It is inherited or else it is slowly saved over a period of many years and maybe in three generations a family moves up into a higher class."

"Think of something people want—like we do."

"That is because there is more money to want with in America. Everything that people want here has been thought of long ago."

But after a year and with the help of a young Englishman he had played tennis with before the war, Val managed to get into the Cannes branch of an English bank. He forwarded mail and bought railroad tickets and arranged tours for impatient sight-seers. Sometimes a familiar face came to his window; if Val was recognized he shook hands; if not he kept silence. After two years he was no longer pointed out as a former prince, for the Russians were an old story now—the splendor of the Rostoffs and their friends was forgotten.

He mixed with people very little. In the evenings he walked for a while on the promenade, took a slow glass of beer in a café, and went early to bed. He was seldom invited anywhere because people thought that his sad, intent face was depressing—and he never accepted anyhow. He wore cheap French clothes now instead of the rich tweeds and flannels that had been ordered with his father's from England. As for women, he knew none at all. Of the many things he had been certain about at seventeen, he had been most certain about this—that his life would be full of romance. Now after eight years he knew that it was not to be. Somehow he had never had time for love—the war, the revolution and now his poverty had conspired against his expectant heart. The springs of his emotion which had first poured forth one April night had dried up immediately and only a faint trickle remained.

His happy youth had ended almost before it began. He saw himself growing older and more shabby, and living always more and more in the memories of his gorgeous boyhood. Eventually he would become absurd, pulling out an old heirloom of a watch and showing it to amused young fellow clerks who would listen with winks to his tales of the Rostoff name.

He was thinking these gloomy thoughts one April evening in 1922 as he walked beside the sea and watched the never-changing magic of the awakening lights. It was no longer for his benefit, that magic, but it went on, and he was somehow glad. Tomorrow he was going away on his vacation, to a cheap hotel farther down the shore where he could bathe and rest and read; then he would come back and work some more. Every year for three years he had taken his vacation during the last two weeks in April, perhaps because it was then that he felt the most need for remembering. It was in April that what was destined to be the best part of his life had come to a culmination under a romantic moonlight. It was sacred to him—for what he had thought of as an initiation and a beginning had turned out to be the end.

He paused now in front of the Café des Étrangers and after a moment crossed the street on impulse and sauntered down to the shore. A dozen yachts, already turned to a beautiful silver color, rode at anchor in the bay. He had seen them that afternoon, and read the names painted on their bows—but only from habit. He had done it for three years now, and it was almost a natural function of his eye.

"Un beau soir," remarked a French voice at his elbow. It was a boatman who had often seen Val here before. "Monsieur finds the sea beautiful?"

"Very beautiful."

"I too. But a bad living except in the season. Next week, though, I earn something special. I am paid well for simply waiting here and doing nothing more from eight o'clock until midnight."

"That's very nice," said Val politely.

"A widowed lady, very beautiful, from America, whose yacht always anchors in the harbor for the last two weeks in April. If the Privateer comes tomorrow it will make three years."

V

All night Val didn't sleep—not because there was any question in his mind as to what he should do, but because his long stupefied emotions were suddenly awake and alive. Of course he must not see her—not he, a poor failure with a name that was now only a shadow—but it would make him a little happier always to know that she remembered. It gave his own memory another dimension, raised it like those stereopticon glasses that bring out a picture from the flat paper. It made him sure that he had not deceived himself—he had been charming once upon a time to a lovely woman, and she did not forget.

An hour before train time next day he was at the railway station with his grip, so as to avoid any chance encounter in the street. He found himself a place in a third-class carriage of the waiting train.

Somehow as he sat there he felt differently about life—a sort of hope, faint and illusory, that he hadn't felt twenty-four hours before. Perhaps there was some way in those next few years in which he could make it possible to meet her once again—if he worked hard, threw himself passionately into whatever was at hand. He knew of at least two Russians in Cannes who had started over again with nothing except good manners and ingenuity and were now doing surprisingly well. The blood of Morris Hasylton began to throb a little in Val's temples and made him remember something he had never before cared to remember—that Morris Hasylton, who had built his daughter a palace in St. Petersburg, had also started from nothing at all.

Simultaneously another emotion possessed him, less strange, less dynamic but equally American—the emotion of curiosity. In case he did—well, in case life should ever make it possible for him to seek her out, he should at least know her name.

He jumped to his feet, fumbled excitedly at the carriage handle and jumped from the train. Tossing his valise into the check room he started at a run for the American consulate.

"A yacht came in this morning," he said hurriedly to a clerk, "an American yacht—the Privateer. I want to know who owns it."

"Just a minute," said the clerk, looking at him oddly. "I'll try to find out."

After what seemed to Val an interminable time he returned.

"Why, just a minute," he repeated hesitantly. "We're—it seems we're finding out."

"Did the yacht come?"

"Oh, yes—it's here all right. At least I think so. If you'll just wait in that chair."

After another ten minutes Val looked impatiently at his watch. If they didn't hurry he'd probably miss his train. He made a nervous movement as if to get up from his chair.

"Please sit still," said the clerk, glancing at him quickly from his desk. "I ask you. Just sit down in that chair."

Val stared at him. How could it possibly matter to the clerk whether or not he waited?

"I'll miss my train," he said impatiently. "I'm sorry to have given you all this bother—"

"Please sit still! We're glad to get it off our hands. You see, we've been waiting for your inquiry for—ah—three years."

Val jumped to his feet and jammed his hat on his head.

"Why didn't you tell me that?" he demanded angrily.

"Because we had to get word to our—our client. Please don't go! It's—ah, it's too late."

Val turned. Someone slim and radiant with dark frightened eyes was standing behind him, framed against the sunshine of the doorway.

"Why—"

Val's lips parted, but no words came through. She took a step toward him.

"I—" She looked at him helplessly, her eyes filling with tears. "I just wanted to say hello," she murmured. "I've come back for three years just because I wanted to say hello."

Still Val was silent.

"You might answer," she said impatiently. "You might answer when I'd—when I'd just about begun to think you'd been killed in the war." She turned to the clerk. "Please introduce us!" she cried. "You see, I can't say hello to him when we don't even know each other's names."

It's the thing to distrust these international marriages, of course. It's an American tradition that they always turn out badly, and we are accustomed to such headlines as: "Would Trade Coronet for True American Love, Says Duchess," and "Claims Count Mendicant Tortured Toledo Wife." The other sort of headlines are never printed, for who would want to read: "Castle is Love Nest, Asserts Former Georgia Belle," or "Duke and Packer's Daughter Celebrate Golden Honeymoon."

So far there have been no headlines at all about the young Rostoffs. Prince Val is much too absorbed in that string of moonlight-blue taxicabs which he manipulates with such unusual efficiency, to give out interviews. He and his wife only leave New York once a year—but there is still a boatman who rejoices when the Privateer steams into Cannes harbor on a mid-April night.