

THREE LOVES.

BY WINNIFRED EATON.

I.

THE FIRST—"CARROTS."

HER real name was Carrie, but some smart schoolmate had dubbed her "Carrots," and as her hair was of that color children consider violently red, Carrots she had remained ever since. She was half French and half Irish, and her temper was as fiery as her hair. She attended the same school as I did in Montreal, Canada. I was of the smart set, however, for my father was a Q. C., an M. P., and a big man in Canada, and I was a dude and a beau among the girls, and spent all my pocket money on chocolate caramels and car rides for them.

Carrots, on the other hand, was a queer, isolated little girl, who refused to be on even civil terms with any one in the class. This was because they had laughed at her the first day she had come, and she had assumed an antagonistic attitude ever since. The first year there were fierce and bitter battles waged, in which Carrots generally came out the personal victor, though she was punished by the teacher, and afterwards beaten by her stepmother. Then a sort of silence fell on Carrots, and for a long time she went back and forth to the school, never so much as exchanging a word with anybody, save the teacher in the class.

Then the senior year passed a number of us, with scholarships or otherwise, into the High School, among them Carrots and myself. Up till then, I had never given her a thought, save to marvel at her red hair, fiery temper, and freckles. I was fifteen and Carrots twelve, the year we graduated.

One bright day, I, with my chum and a couple of girls, went down to Nun's Creek in Hochelaga. We hired a row-boat and went out on the river, ostensibly to fish, though the girls' chattering made that impossible. When we were out quite a little way from the shore, suddenly Marie gave a screech,

which was instantly echoed, with variations, by Ethel.

"What's the matter?" I inquired, starting.

"Look!" Marie pointed behind me.

I turned. In about the middle of the stream was a rock jutting out of the water, and on the top of this rock was a little figure. She was dressed in a short blue cotton gown, and she was bare-footed. Blowing in the wind all about her was the tawny mane of her hair. Her hands were on her hips, and she was steadily looking at us. I could almost see the reckless, daring smile which I knew lurked about her eyes.

"That awful girl," said Ethel.

"What a dress!" said poor little fashionable Marie.

The question uppermost in my mind was, how did Carrots get there? And the next thing that concerned me was the heroic one of saving her life. When I suggested this to the two young ladies (aged twelve and thirteen respectively) they looked resigned and refined. They did not relish Carrots' company. However, my chum and I pulled bravely to the rescue, when, just as we got within a few yards of the rock—horror of horrors!—Carrots pitched forward and went head first into the water.

I was stunned. My chum looked bewildered, and the girls began to cry. A few minutes afterwards, a little soaking wet and dripping head bobbed up right between our oars, and there was Carrots, looking out at us with such eyes—eyes that spoke immeasurable disdain and contempt, but no fear whatever.

"Catch on to the oar and I'll draw you in!" I shouted frantically. Instead of doing this, Carrots calmly ignored the oar, made a duck, and went under water again.

"She is trying to drown herself," said Marie in a dreadful voice.

"I know why *you* don't like the water," said a sarcastic little voice, and

Carrots was clinging lightly to the side of the boat, talking at Marie.

"Wh—wh—what—why?" gasped poor Marie, who was horribly afraid she would upset the boat.

"Because it'll take your ugly bangs out of curl," said Carrots spitefully, shaking her own brilliant locks till they splashed all over Marie's neatly laid artificial curls. It was Marie who had first called her "Carrots."

"Were you swimming?" I inquired eagerly.

She nodded.

"I wish I could. Can you teach me?"

She looked me up and down coldly; then she said with immense scorn, "No—dudes always sink;" and before I could essay an indignant retort, she had dipped once more, and was swimming for the shore.

To prove to Carrots that I was in earnest, I came down to the beach the next day, for I discovered that this was her favorite haunt. Vacation time had just commenced, and, by some miraculous chance, my people were staying in the city. Carrots and my acquaintance grew apace. At first she was rude and unfriendly. Then she grudgingly showed me a few little tricks in the water.

After a time she unbent a trifle more, and I learned something of her history. Of course you understand that after that first day I had haunted Nun's Creek and Carrots with a persistence possible only in a stubborn English boy. Carrots had a stepmother whom she hated cordially. Her father was a sea captain, and away most of the time. She came naturally by her love of the water. She said she loved it better than anything else on earth, and she hated Marie Grenier worse. We spent whole days together on the beach or out on the water. Sometimes she would sing to me, and I would fall fast asleep on the beach.

But one day when I awoke I found Carrots had deserted me, and a sense of terrible loneliness and impending disaster possessed me. Jumping to my feet, and not waiting to find my hat, I sped like the wind along the beach, shouting her name. She came to meet me, her hands full of water lilies, her dress and hair dripping. The latter hung about

her in damp curls, but the sun was on it, and it seemed to me the most adorable color on earth. Moreover, Carrots had big gray eyes, shaded by long dark lashes. I noticed them for the first time this day.

"Carrots," I said, "I was afraid."

"Of what?" she asked briefly.

"I don't know. When I awoke, you were gone, and I felt dreadfully lonely, Carrots."

"I'm here now," she responded drily.

"Yes," I said lamely; "but, Carrots, don't leave me when I go to sleep again. I am such a sleepyhead, and your singing and the water and the wind and air—I can't help myself."

"And I had something to tell you today," she said slowly. "I can't keep you awake to listen."

"What is it, Carrots?"

She told me quietly. She was going away to the United States. Some rich uncle had adopted her. She was glad of the opportunity of leaving her stepmother.

I think I must have been a very stupid boy in those days. I know I stood tongue tied, staring dizzily at Carrots. When any one laughs at the idea of a boy experiencing deep feeling and emotion, I always think of my fifteen year old self, and the agony that surged through me then. I threw myself down on the sand and hid my face in my arms. Then I heard Carrots' voice. It was very savage.

"If you cry, I'll prick you," she said. "I've got a pin."

I felt her kneel down on the sand beside me.

"What you want to *cry* for, you—you boy, you?"

I wasn't crying. I was past tears.

"Look at me," she commanded.

I raised up.

"Do you *care*?" said Carrots in a little shaking whisper.

"Carrots, I *love* you," I said. Carrots' great eyes flickered, and then of a sudden her arms were about my neck, and we were mingling our tears.

We exchanged tokens. I gave her a little ring of my mother's, which I felt no compunction in parting with, and Carrots swore to wear it forever. But poor Carrots had nothing to give, and

her hair was red! But I demanded a curl, and as we had only my jack knife, it took a long time to saw it off. We were generous, however, for I got a curl which when pulled out was two feet long!

The next day I saw a long C. P. R. train slowly pull out of the station, and at one of the windows of the car I saw a rosy, tear stained, freckle faced, red haired little girl throw me a kiss, and I ran madly along beside the train, shouting senselessly her name, "Carrots! Carrots! Carrots!"

II.

THE SECOND—THE QUEEN.

For a long time after Carrots left me, I was really inconsolable. Mother said I "moped," and I know my appetite fell off for a time. As I said before, I was a sentimental chap, and Carrots was my first really great impression.

Other girls had no charm for me, and the set I formerly belonged to, and of which Marie and Ethel were the leaders, I had acquired an aversion and dislike for, almost equal to that poor little Carrots had felt. I grew to manhood with as much indifference for the opposite sex as I had had liking.

Then I fell in love a second time.

I met her at a dance in New York, given by an aunt of mine, whom I was visiting. Aunt Beth was a born match-maker, and was determined at all hazards to lead me "like a sheep to the slaughter." She was chatting animatedly to me, pointing out different girls, and telling me who they were, how much they were worth, and a lot of other bosh, when suddenly my eye happened to fall on a mass of red gold hair. I could only see the back of a girl's head, but something in its poise, the exquisite purity and grace of her bare neck and shoulders, and, above all, that hair, fascinated me. Ever since Carrots, I had retained a love for red hair. This girl's hair had only a suggestion of red in it, but the suggestion glorified its gold.

"Who is that girl, Aunt Beth?"

"Which one, Ted?"—putting up her pince nez.

"The one with the red hair and white gown."

"Um—m, let me see. Ah, yes, that is a Miss—— Now, I really can't recollect the name. But look here, Teddy boy, I want you to meet Miss Seymour. I went to school with her mother, and——"

"I want to meet that girl," I said persistently.

"Oh, by all means," said Aunt Beth, laughing; but as we made our way across the room, she managed to overtake and make me acquainted with Miss Seymour, the tall blonde she was so dreadfully anxious for me to become enamored of. She was really a beautiful girl; and as I stood there making pretty speeches to her, I forgot the other girl, when, by some peculiar circumstance, we moved down the room together until we were directly in front of her. I was bending over Miss Seymour, murmuring some foolish inanity, when I heard a voice and laugh that had the effect of making the blood rush to my head in a torrent, thrilling me from head to foot. I stopped abruptly in the middle of my speech to Miss Seymour, and turned quickly. A girl's large eyes were looking straight at me.

It is neither flattery to myself nor imagination when I say that I believe my presence had a similar effect on her to hers on me, for I saw her grow visibly pale, and then of a sudden flush even to the tips of her little red ears.

"Miss Seymour," I said abruptly, "do you know that young lady with the red hair?"

"Why, yes, of course. She is my cousin."

"Will you introduce us?"

A few minutes afterwards, I was sitting blissfully beside my divinity, and my first day of servitude had begun.

"I am glad you have freckles on your nose, too," I said boldly.

She opened her eyes wide, with mock astonishment. They were the first words I had found to say.

"Once," I continued, with deep feeling, "I was madly in love with a little girl who—who had red hair and freckles."

"Oh, indeed!" She made a mocking little gesture with her hands. "I hope," said she, "'red hair and freckles' doesn't describe me."

"It does," I said, "exactly."

She flushed.

"And Carrots," I continued, "blushed furiously when she was angry. I certainly shall like you—if I may," I added humbly.

"What, like me by proxy, because of this Carrots—What did you say the name was?"

"Carrots."

"Carrots! My goodness! No, sir, I refuse to be Miss Carrots' proxy. Ah, there comes my aunt. What did you do to Kate Seymour? Desert her?"

"By George! I did forget her."

She laughed with infinite relish.

"And you have brought down on my head the family displeasure in consequence."

"It wasn't your fault."

"'Deed 'twas. I made eyes at you. You are a *parti*—a big one—and Kate had you a minute ago." She laughed again, wickedly.

For a long time after that night I was happy—at least, if there is such a thing as turbulent happiness. There is a certain happiness in being a slave sometimes. At least, one has the satisfaction of being near the Queen, and even her royal anger is to be preferred to cold indifference. So when I was not pleasing the Queen, I was angering her, so that she never got the chance to be indifferent to me. I wanted to call her "Carrots" for auld lang syne's sake, but she objected. I refused to call her "Miss Seymour," and so "The Queen" I titled her.

It took me only a few weeks to find out all about her. She made her home—"refuge," she called it—with the Seymours, but despite the fact that she had lived with them a number of years, she felt her dependence bitterly. It had all been different, she told me fiercely, when Mr. Seymour had been alive; but the rest of the family, who had always regarded her advent as an intrusion, disliked her, and after her uncle's death they had been careful to let her know in every way possible that her presence in their house was merely tolerated. All the independent and passionate soul of the Queen rose up in rebellion against this attitude, and she hated them with the same unreasoning fierceness that little

Carrots had hated her stepmother and Marie Grenier.

It was easy enough for me, an outsider, of course, to understand why the Seymour girls (there were five of them) did not like her. The Queen was supremely beautiful. Moreover, since her uncle's death, the Seymours had found themselves in somewhat straitened circumstances—straitened, that is, for a family which has never felt the necessity of curbing their wants and desires as far as money went. Old Seymour's affairs were found to be in a complicated condition after his death, and while still in independent circumstances, they were not in a flourishing financial condition.

A wise woman was Mrs. Seymour; one after my Aunt Beth's own heart. These two good ladies had put their heads together, and had conceived a scheme by which the family were to regain their fallen fortunes. The five beautiful girls were to marry five wealthy men. I was one of the elect—Kate's, I believe. But I had other plans.

While ostensibly (for the Queen's sake, though she did not know it) on the most cordial terms with Miss Kate Seymour and her family, all my daily pilgrimages to the Seymour house had but one end and purpose in view—to see the Queen. She must have known this, which may have accounted for her coming down from her stiff, stand off little perch and meeting me (accidentally, of course) always in the same place. Thus it was not always necessary to go to the Seymour house to see her.

Since the night of the dance, she had assumed a peculiar attitude to me, or, rather, attitudes, I should say, for she changed like April weather. Now she was haughty and remote and cold—this usually when I had been gallant and attentive (for her sake) to Miss Kate Seymour. At other times she was as confiding and sweet and jolly as a little girl I once knew years before in Canada. But whatever her mood, I was her abject devotee and slave.

In a few weeks' time, I had abjectly poured my soul at her feet, confessed all my real and imaginary sins, and told her my scarred and battered past. For my pains, the Queen rewarded me by intimating that I was a pre-

varicator of the worst sort. You see, she was a natural interrogation point, was the Queen, and she wanted to know every little detail of my life, since I had left Montreal, or, rather, since Carrots had (she was extraordinarily interested in Carrots); and since I was ashamed to admit that nothing at all had happened, save that I had managed to plug through the High, and had graduated as an M. A. from old McGill, I was forced to resort to my imagination for a series of thrilling experiences which I thought would appeal to her, and might possibly win her.

With what results I have told you. the Queen was mortally offended, and put a nasty and dangerous barrier between us—her sunshade. It reached just to my eyes, and there was peril in the way she handled it. I looked under the parasol. The Queen's great eyes were moist, her lips were quivering.

All my banter shriveled down in a moment. I forgot myself, and "Carrots" I called her, knocked the parasol down, and forcibly took her in my arms. A few minutes after, I was alone in the road, and my face was stinging where a sharp little hand had fiercely chastised me.

I did not see the Queen for three whole days after this. My feelings were in a turmoil. I had ardently hoped to meet her before that beautiful red mark had disappeared from my countenance; for I knew the Queen had a weakness, and I hoped to touch it, and at least win from her something akin to pity, which is akin to something else, you know. As it happened, however, every vestige of the mark was gone when I finally did see her again.

She was flirting outrageously with a certain George Manners, for whom I had conceived a violent and unconquerable hatred. The way that girl carried on with him was enough to drive a fellow to—well, flirt desperately with Kate Seymour, for instance, and this I proceeded forthwith to do. Kate aided and abetted me. So did the whole family. So I paid court to her when the Queen was about, and the Queen, with cheeks flaming red and great, glistening eyes, pretended not to see; but I knew better. Then a terrible thing happened.

One day when I called at the Seymour house I found everything in an uproar. The Queen had mysteriously disappeared. Her room was found in great disorder, and on the bed, which had not been slept in overnight, a short little note was discovered. Miss Seymour showed it to me, just as if I was one of the family, as I fancy she thought I was likely to become.

Good by. I am gone, you perceive. It doesn't matter to you where.

This was all there was to it.

I was so stunned and dazed, I became absolutely daffy, and at that moment an agony equivalent only to that I had suffered when Carrots had left me, only keener and more bitter and unavailing, surged through me. I had some queer things to say to Miss Kate Seymour—things she had never expected. She said she had never dreamed of my attachment for her cousin. She was very sorry. I wondered cynically to myself what she meant by that last sentence. Somehow, unreasonably perhaps, I was holding her responsible for the Queen's loss.

III.

THE THIRD—LA CARA.

The third time I fell in love it was with a French opera singer. At least, that is what they said she was. Her name was "La Cara." Paris had gone mad over a woman's voice and a woman's beauty. One night I joined a party of friends, and went with them to hear her. It was gala night, and only full dress was allowed to enter the doors of the great opera house. Our party, which was made up entirely of men, were discussing the new diva, and quite eagerly awaiting her appearance. All but myself had already heard her; hence my indifference. I sat back in my seat and quietly studied the house, musing over the extravagant amount of paint and powder used by the French women, the jewels of the Americans, and the large display of neck and shoulders of the English women.

I was tired of the opera, sick to death of Paris. The sea of faces, the surging murmur of voices, rang in my ears and roused in me a longing that was almost madness for the surging of the waters

of the St. Lawrence, for a savage little voice that had suddenly fluttered down to immeasurable tenderness. Strange how persistently this night my first little love came up to my vision in this great gorgeous opera house, and haunted me with the imagined touch of her little tanned hand in mine. I could almost feel its pressure.

And her voice! I thought I heard it. It sang about my ears gently, ripplingly, and then of a sudden burst into passionate melody. So vivid was the memory of her that with my eyes closed I almost joined in that old French Canadian boat song:

*"Row, brothers, row, the stream runs fast,
The rapids are near, and the daylight's past."*

One of my companions pushed my arm, and I awoke to my surroundings, and faced about to the stage. My new love was standing there, and it was she who was singing the old boat song. Ah, how beautiful she was! How divine! Her eyes, her form, that hair—they took my breath, and held me entranced. Unmindful of my horror stricken friends, and the angry expostulations and motions of the audience, I leaned over the side of the box and, frenzied, I called aloud to her.

I saw her start. She looked up, her eyes met mine, and then—then she sang to me, for me only.

I suppose the audience thought me drunk—Englishmen are pigs in Parisians' eyes, any way. I tried to go back of the stage and see her, but these mad Parisians had gone wild over her. They were calling and shrieking her name aloud.

*"Vive! Vive La Cara! Vive Cara!
Vive! Vive!"*

Outside of the theater they had taken the horses from her carriage, and were drawing her to her hotel, great crowds of men in evening dress, shouting her name aloud, and they had covered her carriage with flowers.

My brain whirling, my heart sick with its fullness, I followed in the wake of the crowd, though I could not shout and cheer her name to the echo, as they were doing. She was to me a sacred thing. I could see her proud little head bowing and smiling right and left as she went in through the door of the big hotel amid

the cheers of her audience. They followed, I with them.

I was desperate. I made a break through the crowd, forcing my way till I was close to her, and because she had not seen me, I called to her, my face bleached with desperation and passion.

"Carrots!" I said, and my voice startled my own ears.

She turned like a flash, and like a flash her face grew suddenly luminous.

"Ah," she said, "is it *you!*" and no words of mine can tell of the expression of that last little word of hers.

Before the curious gaping crowd we looked in each other's eyes.

"I have looked for you the world over. It is not possible for me to tell you how I love you. It is no place here and now to say this to you, but I may not find opportunity again." I was thinking of the great world, which now claimed her for its own. But her eyes, sympathetic and tender now, were smiling into mine.

"Monsieur," she said, "and I also have something to say to you—a little question. You will follow me? Or must I follow you? I do not fear the crowd."

She bowed to them a last final good night, and, dazzled and bewildered, I followed her. In her old wild fashion she had overcome all barriers, as she used to do when she would reach almost unattainable places on the St. Lawrence.

Now that I found myself alone with her, I could not find my voice. I could only look and look at her, with all my heart and soul in my eyes.

I waited for her to speak, leaning unsteadily against the fireplace.

"Is it La Cara or the Queen or—little Carrots you love?" she said.

"It is you," I said hoarsely; "you in all of them. I have loved you always, even when you flaunted me. Look here!" I slipped my hand into my breast pocket, and drew forth a long red curl.

Her eyes were brimming with tears and laughter.

"And here!" she said, pulling at a tiny chain about her neck. Then I saw what was at the end of it—my mother's little ring!

"I have worn it always, Ted," she breathed.