

TANGLED.
A NOVEL

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Tangled. A Novel by Rachel Carew

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RACHEL CAREW

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TO
SIDNEY DAYRE

THIS STORY IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.



TANGLED.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

A PAIR of shapely feet encased in embroidered velvet slippers rests on the window-sill. The greater part of the owner's conformation is obscured by a cloud of tobacco smoke, but a kindly breeze parting the veil reveals, many degrees lower than the feet, the figure of a very handsome, rather pale and altogether indolent-looking young gentleman, stretched comfortably in an easy-chair. Does the attitude explain sufficiently his nationality, or is it necessary to say that he is an American?

Although it is a July afternoon, Lawrence Conway wraps his comely members in a thick, soft dressing-gown and feels none too warm. Mr. Conway, having nothing to do, has come to the conclusion that he is an invalid. This decision was brought about in a

great measure by his anxious mother, who, hearing the family physician hint vaguely that young Conway's frequent headaches might develop into something serious if allowed to continue, took fright, and induced her beloved son to forego the gaieties and dissipations of Parisian life for a time, and try the effect of a highly recommended course of mineral baths in Switzerland.

Thus it came about that we find Lawrence ensconced in a handsome apartment in the *Grand Hôtel des Salines*, a mile from the picturesque little village of Bex. Presently the cigar stump goes flying out of the window, the feet come down with celerity, and our hero betakes himself to pacing the room in short, quick steps, angrily gnawing the ends of his tawny, drooping mustache.

"What a fool I was to let mother's fidgety notions banish me to this howling wilderness. I've been here three days, but three months could not have dragged themselves away any slower. Nothing to do but to take country walks, which is detestable when one has to go alone. No society but a ghastly array of old frights in various stages of decay, real and imaginary. These invalids everywhere are very depressing to one's spirits — a very Hercules would feel himself getting weak and ailing in their presence, from the force of

example. A fellow can't walk in the grounds without tripping up on crutches, or getting his legs run over by invalid chairs. I stretch myself on a bench for a smoke, when just as I am beginning to dream myself back into civilization again, up totters an old lady, with her maid bearing rugs and shawls. She looks wistfully at my bench, although there are a dozen vacant ones to be had, and I have to hop up, expressing my indifference to repose, and help arrange the old lady in her shawls and wraps in the place where I had been so comfortable.

"The stray dozen or so of people who seem to enjoy themselves don't speak English. My bad French would only annoy them, so here I am, one of the most desolate fellows on the face of the earth. I can't even whistle to lighten my solitude, it wakes a bilious baby next door.

"Doctor Bernard — confound him! — might as well have recommended me to my grave, as to this dolorous retreat. The place is a paradise in situation and surroundings, but, infested with a hundred or so invalids who talk of nothing but their symptoms, what place could help being dreary? And I am bound to stay six weeks longer at least. Ye Gods! can a fellow live through it?"

In this despondent current flow the meditations of