

# A Broken Vow;

—OR—

## BETTER THAN REVENGE.

### CHAPTER XIII.

Martin Blake—painter—something of a recluse—and with but few friends in the world, had had that little world upset. Every man in love must of necessity be selfish; in that he places the woman on whom his affections are set in a certain position, from which she is not to move until he calls her. In just such a fashion, with the best intentions in the world he had seen his small Princess in the little lodging-house in Greenways' Gardens—and in other places before that. He was to work, knowing fully well what was to happen in the time to come; and she was to grow up until the moment should arrive when he could tell her—(he had rehearsed it is often, and knew the exact words)—that he loved her, and wanted her to be his wife. There was this of unselfishness about it, that the man had hovered over her like a species of guardian angel ever since she had been a child, and had been a very real friend to her.

And now the castle had toppled down. He stood aside, to watch another story in which he was not to play the hero; and to watch that from the proper point of view needed some courage, much of resignation, and more of philosophy.

Quite suddenly, the man seemed to have grown old; began to wonder how, at his age, he could ever have thought that so bright a little fairy as Lucy Ewing could be brought to view him in anything but the light of a friend. He had been a young man—somewhat elderly for his years—when she had been a little child.

So he fought his battle steadily—going away for a few days into solitary places in the country, and working hard and gradually gaining something of a victory for himself. And so came back, not entirely heart-whole, but still in a mood to view the new changes with something of equanimity; indeed he came to look upon the matter as something so settled and done with, that he blamed himself a little for his desertion and determined to plunge at once into the life of the girl again, and to be simply what he had always been—her friend.

So generous, indeed, was the mind of the man, and so much did he want, now that that better mood was on him, to make her happy, that he determined he would do something to smooth away any difficulties in the path of the lovers; that, at least, should be his privilege. He had heard, of course, of the coming of Aunt Phipps, because Lucy had carried all her news first to him, as she had always done; he had heard, too, of the suggestion that the love-story might not end as it should do, by reason of this same Aunt Phipps. That was not to be thought of for a moment; the lovers must be taught their business better than that. And that was why Martin Blake determined to give a supper party.

Now, under ordinary circumstances, there should be nothing difficult about such an affair as that; you simply invite your guests, and provide what is necessary and proper for them to eat. At least, that is how all properly constituted supper parties should be arranged; but as there was nothing properly constituted about Martin Blake or his studio, difficulties arose.

In the first place, such a thing had never been done before in the place, which was the very best of reasons, according to his landlady, why it should not be done now. Difficulties were pointed out by that worthy soul, which appeared at first to be insurmountable. She was not to be expected to do more than cook the chop or steak or simple dish which satisfied Martin on ordinary occasions. Certain wild ideas in Martin's mind as to cold fowls and things of that sort were scouted as absurd; salads were out of date, and fowls not to be depended upon save in an egg-laying capacity; and even then they sometimes, to use her own expression—"ran to rusty."

Then it was that Martin Blake had a brilliant idea, for which he could never afterwards be sufficiently grateful. A subtle idea, too; one of those ideas that strike one suddenly, and cause pleasant tinglings of anticipation all over you. And the idea was so simple, that it is wonderful he had not thought of it before.

He went to Odley. Odley the wonderful, who had had experience of life from so many points of view, and must, in all probability, have been borne off forcibly to supper parties by the dozen. The very woman in a crisis—a woman with a heart. He told her, simply and truthfully, that he wished to give a little supper to three people—himself and two others—at his studio; was it such a formidable matter as it at first appeared?

"Depends on the parties, sir," said Odley, cautiously. "There's then I've met that would have sat down, sir, to a ham-bone with nothing left but the frill, and have thought it was soon; there's others might have had slaves to wait on 'em, and liver wings, and things in jelly, and the Lord knows what, and wouldn't have been satisfied."

"I see," said Martin thoughtfully. "It only shows what a lot you know, Odley. Now, I have no wish to be parsimonious—but mine are of the ham-bone and frill variety. They simply won't know what they're eating."

"Then I should off to the pou at once, sir, and ask him for a bird a bit stringy; it's be cheap, and it 'em something to toy with and get both into. Though who they that won't know what they're passes me."

"Guess, my dear Odley," he said. "They can't be young—because young are particular, in a certain about what they eat. I can't think who it can be," said Odley.

"Yet you, of all people, you know," said Martin, with a "Come, Odley; in all those amazing scales in your varied career, when and hearts were literally flung at feet—how was your appetite?"

"Pretty hearty, sir," replied Odley. "The other parties may have suffered but I never noticed it in the bills. To that, sir, they was pretty much same each week, no matter what state of the feelings. But I think gin to understand, sir; and if I make a guess—they are young—and are in love."

"Excellent Odley!—you have guessed at once," said Martin. "In a way want to have Lucy and—and some else to supper with me, so that we come to a regular understanding, know just where we are."

"And me talking about cheap stringy chickens!" exclaimed Odley in dismay. "The best you can give sir, and the finest. But why not her?" she added slyly.

"You mean—Lucy?" He looked at with a brightening face. "I thought of that, Odley. What a capital idea!"

"Appeal to her, sir; tell her that you got parties coming, just as you've me; and let her do it all. Then, at last moment, tell her who the are. See how she'll plan and and arrange it all; she's done it but plan and contrive all her life child."

"Odley—you're an angel," said quite seriously. "Not a word to this is going to be the real s my life."

Lucy Ewing entered into the with spirit. But for the fact joyful surprise was to come at Martin would have blamed her the enormous amount of work put upon her, for she understood, of course, that it must not be an matter, but that it must, above all, be something quite out of the ordinary. Although she wondered a little fortunate people were to be, she was not a matter which concerned self; she would hear all about it wards.

Martin, had, of course, sent a Mr. Christopher Dayne at as late moment as possible, asking him to round that night for a friendly chat to the girl Martin said nothing. Now, at the eleventh hour, he stood in his studio, watching her as she about, putting the last touches to the table she had decorated herself. The finest thing of all was to watch as she turned away, with a little at the thought of the happy people were to sit down there presently.

"Someone who's going to buy ture, Martin?" she ventured. "Someone who is going to buy ture, little girl, when he is rich and ous," he replied. "Someone who is to work hard because he's in. Though that's no reason—is it, Lucy?" "I think it is," she replied quietly. "won't you tell me, Martin dear, what is that's coming? I want to think it—and eat that I see them sitting and eating the good things—and he a good time. Who is it?"

She had taken hold of the lapels of coat and was looking up into his. Such a friendly face it was; it had sprung upon her through all her life. wondered, as he looked down at what she would have thought if he ever said words to her of which he had dreamed; wondered what expressions he would have called into hers. ever, that didn't matter now; with hands on her shoulders he answered calmly enough:

"My dear Lucy, there's a knock at door. Do me one last kindly office or on it, will you?"

Wondering a little, she went to door of the studio and opened it. It dark outside, and whoever had knocked was not in sight at the moment stepped out on to the landing. The delighted voice spoke her name, an arm encircled her, and she felt her drawn into the studio. It was Christopher Dayne.

"So you've got here first, have you?" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Not expected to find you, you know least, that is, not for certain. I guessed old Blake would ask you well. Where is he?"

That was another surprising thing. Martin had discretely disappeared. boy was rattling on again—admiring table and talking of his day, and hand and another, when Lucy put hand on his lips to stay the flow words.

"Stop—stop!" she cried, looking her in bewilderment. "I don't understand in the least. I am not coming here to supper; I have only been getting

M  
O  
S  
T  
  
O  
F  
  
T  
H  
I  
S  
  
P  
A  
G  
E  
  
M  
I  
S  
S  
I  
O  
N  
G