

## A Fatal Tug of War.

They were two young people with heads hot enough and hearts true enough to think the world well lost for love, and acting on that belief they had given up everything for its sweet sake. It is needless to make a long story of the sacrifices they had made, the troubles they had endured; but suffice it to say that love triumphed over every obstacle, and they were united at last.

Now, this will seem as if I had come to the end of my story; but that is not so. If I could have left them happy after the auspicious day which made them one, my story would then have been finished, but, alas, I did not. They cared not for the loss of friends; poverty had no terrors for them, for their hearts were young and hopeful; but there was something which tinged life with bitterness, which often estranged them, and which, sometimes, made all they had gone through for love's sake seem vain.

This can best be explained by saying plainly that they had both bad tempers, not bad in every way, irritable and vicious, but obstinate, proud and unyielding. Neither would give in, neither would own that they were in the wrong, and so it happened when any of the little inevitable disagreements which must occur in the course of life came about, and which, in most cases, soon blown over, with them, the general result was a period, sometimes short, sometimes long, of utter misery.

Yes, it was this unfortunate similarity of temper which caused nearly all their trouble, for if he thought he was in the right and she thought she was, it was a hard thing for either to speak the first word or yield in the slightest. Of course, love smoothed over many difficulties, but there came a day when even the Power of Love failed to steer them over the precipice down which they rushed.

### II.

They had had a slight quarrel over some trifling thing, just enough to cause them to part in the morning without the usual good bye, but their anger cooled as the day wore on; and although neither intended to beg forgiveness, or make up, as they say, yet both felt that there would be a tacit reconciliation when they met again in the evening.

He had promised some days before to take her to a grand concert that night, and as concerts and such pleasures had been few and far between since the day of their marriage, she was looking forward with glad eagerness to the event.

She had got ready his supper, dressed herself in a dress specially made for the occasion, done her hair up in the newest style, and after inspecting her *tout ensemble* in the glass for half an hour, turned away satisfied. All that was needed was some flowers, and these she was sure her husband would bring as he invariably did on such occasions.

He also was thinking of the concert, or rather he was thinking of the kind of flowers she would like to have, and on his way home he purchased a bunch of red and white carnations, her favourite flowers. The hour being late when he purchased them, and as it would take quite a little time to make up the bouquet, he instructed the girl who waited on him to have them sent to his house as soon as they were ready, as he had no time to wait for them.

He reached home expecting to find his wife in a pleasant humour, the little disagreement of the morning forgotten in anticipation of the promised pleasure; but no pleasant face greeted him. Instead, a gloomy visaged young woman who might have been dumb for all she had to say, opened the door. His wife's quick eyes had seen at the first glance that he had brought her no flowers, and as it was his wont to bring them on occasions like this, she had conceived the idea that he was still angry with her, and if he had a right to be angry, she thought, surely she had too. Therefore, it was no wonder that neither her face nor manner were as pleasant as her husband had expected, and he, noticing this, formed the same

conclusion about her as she had about him, namely, that she was harbouring bitter feelings on account of the morning's quarrel. Both were in the wrong and both were too proud to speak or make the first advance.

A ring at the bell disturbed the silence which had fallen around them. Charlie (these two people were named respectively Charlie and Helen) went to the door. A thought had struck him. It was this. Since his wife was making herself so unwarrantably disagreeable he would exercise the right of a husband to punish his wife, and not let her have the carnations. Any way, he thought, it would be humbling himself to offer them to her while she was in her present mood. So he deposited the bouquet in the hall and went back to the dining-room. Of course his wife was curious to know who had been or what it was, but as he volunteered no information she did not condescend to ask for any.

Well, they finished their supper, and when the time came started for the concert. Probably they would not have gone at all only their tickets were bought and they were not in a position which would allow of them throwing such things away.

As they passed through the hall, he took the flowers from where he had laid them, and she, seeing what it was he held in his hand, smiled to herself, thinking that after all he had only been teasing her by keeping them back and that he was surely going to give them to her now. In fact, she commenced to feel quite sorry for her own behaviour and would have spoken pleasantly to him had he not worn a very forbidding expression. She waited sometime, but as he did not offer to resign the coveted bouquet, her repentance first turned to surprise, and then silent indignation. So in this state these two silly miserable human creatures walked on side by side until they reached the concert hall.

The concert was very good, and had it not been for their unfortunate quarrel, they might have enjoyed it exceedingly. As it was, they hardly heard anything, but, for all that, when the chief singer's second song was finished, Charlie left no doubt in the minds of the audience that he had some appreciation of music, for he rose from his seat, deliberately, walked to the platform and before his wife's eyes handed the singer his bouquet of flowers.

What evil spirit tempted him to do this I do not know, but he thought he had not been treated fairly and was in a mood to do anything to provoke her who had treated him in that way.

What did Helen think of his act? The loss of the bouquet was really nothing much to her, but she felt that it had been given away on purpose to exasperate her, and as "Revenge is sweet, especially to a woman," the desire to pay him back in some way rose within her breast, so when he returned to her side, with defiant eyes she looked in his face and told him that the seat he had vacated a moment before was engaged. "Nonsense," said he, attempting to move the cloak which she had laid on the chair. "This seat is engaged" she repeated, and there was that in her voice which warned him to desist from trying to regain his seat. He felt uncomfortable, for he was attracting attention standing there, so with slow step and an ashamed sense of looking ridiculous, he was obliged to walk around the room in search of an unengaged seat. He found one after considerable trouble, just a little in front of his wife, and there they sat, almost in view of one another, both unhappier than they had ever been before in their lives.

It was a ridiculously pathetic situation which their tempers had placed them in. The bride and bridegroom of a few months sitting apart at a public concert with hearts full of angry and bitter feelings towards one another. And such a little thing had aroused these feelings. It was so trivial that I almost think they had forgotten how their quarrel commenced. Unbridled passions are sure to bring their own punishment, and these two from childhood up had never been known to yield or to forgive before they were forgiven, and thus it happened "When Greek met Greek then came the tug of war."

The way they were acting now was disgracefully childish, not befitting a man or woman, and the only excuse that can be given for them is, that they were little more than children both in years and experience. Perhaps, after they had lived together for years, Time might have changed things and they might have grown the most placid old couple that ever lived on the face of the earth. But fate had decided that was not to be.

### III.

The concert came to an end at last. One of them now would have to make some kind of advance. She waited a moment for him as she could not go home alone at that time of the night. Why did he not hurry and go to her then? If he had all would have been right; but he did not hasten himself, although he intended to go in the end. He kept her waiting, for had she not sent him away from her before the whole audience? This rankled in his mind.

But she was not in a mood to stand any trifling, and just as he was going to come to her she started for the door, and before he could get to her side, was out amidst the throng of people. Blaming himself for his folly, Charlie rushed after, but the crush was so great that there was no chance of him getting near her for some time. He could see his poor little wife struggling on before, and a deep sense of shame for the unmanly way he had acted took possession of him. Love triumphed now over every other feeling, and all his thought was to get near and speak to her.

There was no such sentiment in Helen's mind. She felt more sinned against than sinning. If her father and mother and all who had loved and petted her in the days gone by could see her now, she thought, could see the way her husband was treating her. She would never forgive him for this, never forgive him as long as she lived.

### IV.

They are out in the street, and having past the glare of the lamps which surround the concert hall, are quite in the dark. He strains his eyes to catch a glimpse of his wife's form. They are only about a hundred yards apart and the intervening space is a blank to him. He has reached a crossing. A carriage is returning home at a furious rate. The sound of wheels is muffled for a moment, during which moment an agonizing groan is heard. The crowd turns back, at least a part of the crowd, the other part presses forward. Helen turns back, turns back with the ever morbid crowd which must throng around the place where an accident happens. She catches a glimpse, by the flickering glare of a policeman's lantern, of a face turned to the sky, catches a glimpse of a manly form lying crushed and limp, and with a cry which rings sharp and clear above all the other noises of the night, she rushes forward. It is her husband that is lying there bespattered with blood. Her Charlie, her boy, her darling. He is dead, there is not a spark of life in that mutilated young body of his. They try to draw her back, but she heeds them not. She lays her head on his breast.

What is the use of trying further to describe that scene? What is the use of trying to express in words her terrible grief? Imagination may conceive the pitiful spectacle, and all who have hearts and have known what it is to lose a loved one, may perhaps, in a dim kind of way, understand the sorrow of this poor young wife; but only in a dim kind of way double their sorrow or treble it, and it would never reach the depth that hers had. Grief bordering on madness, that was what had taken possession of her. They tried to take her from him, but could not. She wound her arms tight around the neck of her husband and refused to move. But the body had to be taken away, and finding that no kind of persuasion had any effect, force was used to separate them. Thus, they were torn asunder, never to be united on this earth.

### V.

He was dead and they buried him. She, crazy with grief, was taken back to her girlhood's home, the home which she had left for his sake. Grief,