

loved her husband, and now, deprived of his ever-ready attention, she found, to her dismay, a growing distaste for the frivolities to which she had up till now devoted herself. And then she grew frightened, for she found herself thinking, "I cannot live without some one to love me. Suppose I have lost Edward's love for ever? Well, if I have, he is as much to blame as I am, and he must take the consequences."

Indeed, so terrified did she become at the reckless thoughts which came into her head, and the persistent way in which the impassioned tones of one of her most constant equires would recur again and again to her remembrance, that she sent a telegram there and then to Edward, who was at their golfing cottage in the country, announcing her intention of joining him the next day. A few hours brought back the following reply:—

Sorry. Cottage full of men. Come next week.

Had Edward Standard known what was in Ethel's mind, and what this rebuff meant to her, he would have given his guests summary notice to quit, but, as Nathaniel Hawthorne says in his tale of "David Swan," "we hear not the airy footsteps of things that almost happen." When he hesitated whether he should postpone Ethel's visit or not, he little guessed what, in his future and hers, hung in the balance.

That same evening Ethel addressed a letter to Captain Julian Carbine, care of E. Standard, Esq., Last Hole Cottage, Bulgam Common. It ran as follows:—

My Dear J.—You, of course, remember the proposal you made to me when we parted at Lady Fortune's dance last week. I felt that I could not then possibly fall in with your plans. Edward has, however, again treated me with the most absolute coldness. I shall go down to the place you mentioned, by the eleven o'clock train, the day after to-morrow (Wednesday) morning, unless you wire me that you cannot meet me there. Do not forget to telegraph for rooms.—Yours, over affectionately.—Ethel.

On Tuesday morning Julian Carbine, who had been Edward Standard's guest at Last Hole Cottage since the previous Saturday, and had come down for a stay of ten days, suddenly packed up his traps and departed, leaving a message for his host, who was out at the time, that he was called to London on the most urgent business.

On the Thursday morning Edward Standard received the following letter. It was from one of Carbine's brother officers, and an intimate friend of his own. It ran as follows:—

(Private.)

Dear Standard,—I hear that Julian Carbine is staying with you. It has come to my knowledge that he is in danger of being led into an exceedingly serious entanglement from which, as his friend and yours, I would give my right hand to save him. It is quite impossible for me to get away this week, and I beg you to keep a sharp look-out on him, and, if he goes off at

short notice, do you go with him and stick to him like a leech. If the worst comes to the worst, you may be able to head him off by showing him this letter.—I am, in great haste, yours ever,  
Bernal O'Malley.

The same morning Edward Standard found the letter written by his wife to Julian Carbine lying about, and read it. The meaning of the whole thing flashed upon him in an instant.

That afternoon he arrived at his house in Eaton-Square, and learnt from the servants that his wife had left town yesterday morning, saying she would be gone for a week, but leaving no address.

He thereupon took a hansom and drove off to Julian Carbine's club.

"Yes," the porter said, "of course he knew Mr. Standard, and would be happy to give him the address. There had been a letter only that very morning ordering everything to be sent on to the Captain at Cross-roads Cottage, Stow Plowden."

An hour later Edward Standard had taken train for the little Essex village.

In his heart murderous hate for a man who was false to him whilst yet eating his salt, and yearning, pitiful, reproachful love for a woman, hustled each other for place. Then there flooded back upon him the early love for Ethel that had been swamped by the all-engrossing pursuit which he followed. After all, she had not been so much to blame in preferring her youthful amusements to a stay-at-home life with an old stick-in-the-mud like himself. If only he had had patience with her she would soon have tired of these frivolities, and by natural process have come back to his companionship. At any rate, he had no right, once having made her his wife, to neglect her as he had done for the pursuit of the will-o'-the-wisp which engrossed his every thought. It was sheer insanity this outweighing of a woman's love with a golf-ball. Oh! how he cursed himself to think that now the mischief was done, and nothing remained but the conventional retaliation, the customary shameful repudiation.

Good God! how he prayed that if it were possible this thing might be as though it were not. But his experience told him that, though God may do all things, even He cannot undo the past, and despair settled down upon his soul.

"Yes," they answered to his inquiry at the little station, "yes, there was just such a couple as he described stopping at Mrs. Jones's at the cross-roads yonder, the white house on the brow of the hill."

And Edward Standard strode forward up the hill, blindly eager to get the thing over, but utterly oblivious of the fact that though he had rehearsed the scene to himself in a hundred different ways, he had not come to any definite conclusion as to how he proposed to comport himself.

"Captain Carbine at home?" he asked of the little maiden who opened the door,

and who stood with open mouth scared by the sight of this bloodless-faced, savage-looking stranger.

"No, sir, he's just gone out; but Mrs. Carbine's in, sir, if she'll do."

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Car—that is to say, the lady will do just as well," said Edward, with a grisly attempt at a smile, as he stumbled over his wife's new name.

"She's in there, in the parlour, sir," said the girl, intimating a closed door; "shall I tell her any name, sir?"

"No, thank you, she knows me; I'll announce myself."

With these words, Edward Standard seized the handle of the door and walked in.

There was a very smart and attractive-looking young lady sitting on the sofa. She rose as he entered.

"Oh, excuse me," said Edward, taken aback by the unexpected apparition. "I—er—the servant—er—said I should find Mrs. Carbine here. I beg your pardon; there must, I fear, be some mistake."

"Not in the least," was the exceedingly self-possessed answer. "I am Mrs. Carbine. To what am I indebted, may I ask, for this unexpected pleasure?"

"Oh, er—the fact is—I, er—by-the-bye—perhaps your husband will be in soon, and I had better say it to him."

Luckily for Edward Standard, at this moment the handle of the door turned and Julian Carbine stood in the room.

"By Jove, Standard," he said, holding out both hands to him. "this is, indeed, good of you. I should hardly have thought you could have got down so quickly from Gloucestershire in answer to my letter announcing my marriage and address. You have, I see, made the acquaintance of my wife already. I knew you would be great friends directly you met. Why, you must have started by the first train after receiving my letter. It is, indeed, good of you."

"Yes," said Edward somewhat mendaciously, "I could not bear the idea of appearing cold in a matter which so deeply concerned your happiness, old fellow."

That evening, as he was saying "good bye," Julian said to him,—

"By-the-bye, Standard, please apologise to Ethel for me for my not having answered a letter I received from her the day I left Laburnum Cottage, asking me to go down to Felixstowe with her to teach her golf. She wanted to surprise you by her play when next you met."

#### CUPID'S CLOTHING.

Love is blind, according to the proverb, and according to the pictures he dresses as if he thought other people were.

A Russian Joke—At a country ball: "My dear sir, you have just stepped on my partner's foot. I demand satisfaction." "Oh! certainly; yonder sits my wife, go and step on her foot."—Peterburgskaya Gazeta.