

away to keep from bein' smothered to death, but the affection of Mr. Persinamon appeared to be the gennywine thing, an' showed no sign of coolin' off, an' nuther did his breath, which was every bit an' grain as hot as if it was comin' from a busy smokestack.

"Mr. Dago seed mighty well that the boys was takin' the thing serious, an' jest at the nipin' minnit he gave a little yank to the rope, an' the show was over, wi' Mr. Persinamon a-bowin' an' a-pantin' jest as natchel as life. Jim Lazenby stood there like he was dazzled. He was white as a sheet, an' as wet about the head an' neck as ef he'd been souzed in the mill-pou. Mr. Persinamon was in for havin' another whirl, but Jim made a break for the hoss-rack whar his hoss was tied, wipin' his hands an' hair as he went.

"But the worst was still to come for Jim. When he got home his wife seed that some un had give him a whippin'. She tried to make him tell her who it was, but all the answer she got was that no man had done it. 'Oman-like, she took a notion that ef it wa'n't no man it must 'a' been a 'oman. This made her mad, an' she got the battlin'-stick an' give Jim a frailin' that la'd him up for mighty nigh a month."

One among those who had listened to the story declared that it was the first time he had ever heard a knitting mill compared to a bear. Mr. Sanders beamed upon him with a smile that was worth seeing. "Maybe you didn't hear me mention Jim Lazenby's wife," he said.

HANDSOME DICK.

By JEAN MIDDLEMAS.



THEY had been boy and girl together. Later on, the current of events had parted them, drifting him into a marching regiment ordered to India, and rushing her into society's vortex.

He had not dared to ask her to be true to him, since he had only his sword to offer her, but his eyes spoke the *au revoir* his lips refused to utter, while she turned away with a sob; and the first cloud of sorrow darkened the morning of her life.

"Marry, of course she would marry." Her mother, Lady Goodrick, was not the sort of woman to tolerate an unmarried daughter; thus the girl was forced to do her bidding, and all romance about handsome, dashing Dick Barlington was set on one side as foolish and unprofitable.

It was the old story of the *mariage de convenance*, and Virginia Goodrick, when she became Lady Mauleverer, was neither more nor less unhappy than others who have sacrificed their feelings for the glitter and show that gold and position bring. Of course, she often thought of Dick with affectionate interest, and when his name appeared in the newspapers she became excited, and read all reports about his advancement over and over again, but she never spoke of him. Almost as if he were dead she cherished and respected his memory in silence.

Her husband, Sir Thomas Mauleverer, was a very good sort of man, considerably her senior; he was exceedingly kind to her, but he died when her daughter was sixteen, and the boy, who was now the Baronet, was two years younger.

Lady Mauleverer mourned the good Sir Thomas with no little regret. How could she do otherwise, as he had been kindly to her, even as a father. At times, however, during the solitude she had forced on herself for a while, the thought of Dick Barlington would raise a sudden flush to her face.

He had remained unmarried during all these years, and perhaps—perhaps—No, she dared scarcely hope that it was on her account—but, oh how she longed to see Dick again now that there was no indiscretion in the meeting. Once or twice he had been in England since their youthful parting, but he had kept very carefully out of Lady Mauleverer's way!

Sir Thomas had been dead just a year when his widow, on reading the military paragraphs in the *World*, ascertained that General Barlington had retired from service, and was on his way home.

With what a heart-throb these tidings were received! Nor did she attempt to check the pleasant sensation that was so exquisite it almost amounted to pain.

No reason now to set up a barrier between her heart and Dick's. Oh,

the joy—the joy that it would be to see him again and talk over the dear old times when they rambled hand in hand along childhood's happy way!

She was alone at the pretty place Sir Thomas had left her for life, when this news reached her, so she had no occasion to suppress her emotions in order to hide them from the observant eyes of her children—she could revel in them with all the more enjoyment since they had been so long suppressed.

Tom was at Harrow, and Virgy had gone to stay for a week or two with her father's sister, who had a large house-party of young people, and had begged that Virgy might set aside some of her mourning habiliments and come and join them. It was the first time she had left her mother, and Lady Mauleverer missed her exceedingly, but she would not for worlds have selfishly interfered with her child's pleasure. She adored her children. Even the remembrance of Dick Barlington would, perhaps, be banished for the sake of either Virgy or young Tom.

But she saw no reason why this should be—a good, kind step-father would be an advantage to them both.

Nor was Lady Mauleverer altogether reckoning without the man, whom for more than eighteen long years she had not seen.

The day following that on which the paragraph in the *World* had re-lighted a dormant fire, she had received a letter from General Barlington. It could not be called a love-letter, but it was friendly, even affectionate. He was coming home for good, and he hoped their old relations might be renewed. He had so often, so very often, longed to see her again, and he signed himself, "Your old pal, 'Dick!'" When he would arrive in England or where he was going to stay, he did not tell her; but what mattered details, since the fact was there that Dick was coming home and had not forgotten her!

Many times during the day when she received that welcome letter she consulted her looking-glass—not from vanity, but simply to assure herself how time had dealt with her, and whether she looked so very, very different from the girl who had said good-bye to him all those years ago.

She was not an old woman, barely forty, slight and girlish in figure, altogether what is called "well preserved," but for all that there were wrinkles, and there was just the autumnal tinge of fading in the once lustrously golden hair.

Ah! if Dick should be disappointed when he saw her, what a heart-breaking sorrow it would be! Day after day she dwelt on this subject until the constant worry of it was beginning to tell.

If only something would happen to change the current of her thoughts, if only Virgy would come home. She was sitting in the garden under a tree, trying to amuse herself with some embroidery, when Virgy came



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