

SIMON'S WIDOW.

Who smiled as sweet as a summer day?
Who rolled her eyes in a killing way?
And when I'd leave would whisper, "Stay!"
That widow!

Who ran to meet me, sick or well,
And cast on me a magic spell,
And played on me that horrid sell!
That widow!

Who haunts my dreams at dead of night?
Who haunts my hours of waking light,
And gives me many a scare and fright?
That widow!

Who sues me for a marriage rite,
And tries to tie me up so tight,
And means to make a first-class fight?
That widow!

BENEATH THE WAVE.

A NOVEL

BY

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

RANK AND FILE.

While great doings went on at Massam, and all the people in the neighbourhood, who considered themselves in a position to do so, crowded round Isabel to do her homage, Hilda Marston was fighting her way amid the vast army of the toilers of the earth.

She was getting on pretty well. Besides her two grown-up pupils at Florentia Villa, she had got one or two young children in the same neighbourhood, and one or two humbler pupils in the immediate vicinity of where she lived.

So when Christmas dawned—Christmas, which came to Isabel in her splendid home, surrounded by everything that wealth could procure, it came also not quite unhappily to her late companion.

For one thing it brought little Ned. This new mouth to feed—this new care seemed to brighten Hilda's life. The boy had never been in London before, and it was therefore a region of delight to him. Hilda took him to the bazaars, and bought what she could for him out of her slender means, and tried all she could to make his young life pleasant to him.

The shop windows too were an unending source of delight to him. The pantomimes Hilda could not afford, though Ned frequently expatiated on his desire to behold one.

"We must wait until the ship comes in," Hilda used to say.

"Oh, bother the ship," Ned would answer, with the thoughtless selfishness of a boy. "Don't you think you could treat us just to one, Hil?"

But Hilda was forced to decline. One treat meant many shillings; shillings too rare and precious to be thus disposed of, and so Master Ned had to content himself with reading the bills of the various theatres, and speculating to Hilda on which entertainment would probably be the best.

But a great pleasure was in store for them both. Miss May arrived one morning during the Christmas holidays, and took them back to Brixton with her to spend a few days. Octavia Lodge proved a sort of earthly paradise to Master Ned. It happened to be a snowstorm while he was there, and the boy had the run of the grounds, and could make snow men and snow balls to his heart's content.

But this was not all. A day came when Miss May told him that she was going to take his sister and himself that evening to the pantomime at Drury-lane. Ned could not contain his joy. He was ready dressed in his outer coat and warm scarf and mittens long before the time to start, and when they did start in the tramway-car that went down the road, no boy in the best appointed carriage in London went that night to the theatre with a happier heart.

Humble people, after all, have their pleasures as well as great ones. Miss May was pleased to see the little lad's pleasure, and Hilda also enjoyed the prospect before them, and looked well and handsome—so handsome that she attracted the attention of a young gentleman of very meagre and unpleasant appearance, who edged up nearer to the party, and finally addressed Miss May, who had been sitting with her head determinedly turned to the window, since she had recognized him.

"I say, ain't you Miss May, who keeps the school?" at last asked the young gentleman, laying one of his ugly hands on Miss May's arm, who turned sharply round on being thus addressed.

"Yes, I am Miss May," she answered. "And how are you, Mr. Joseph Moxam?"

"Oh, pretty well," replied Mr. Joe. "I say," he added, putting his long nose and protruding teeth close to the old mistress's face, "is that one of your pupils?" and he indicated Hilda by a slight movement of his thumb.

"No," answered Miss May, briefly.

"Pretty girl, uncommon pretty girl," continued Mr. Joe, eyeing her approvingly. "I say, old lady, introduce me, won't you?"

"Don't see any occasion, Mr. Joe," replied Miss May.

"Oh, yes, do now," said Mr. Joe, and to her great annoyance Miss May was thus forced to do so.

"Miss Marston," she said, coldly, "Mr. Moxam."

"Miss Marston!" repeated Mr. Joe, "why you are not the girl who teaches music, are you?"

"Yes, I am," said Hilda, rather amused.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Mr. Joe, as if in the uttermost astonishment, and then he collapsed; sitting gazing at Hilda contemplatively during the rest of the journey.

"Where are you going?" he said at last, to the party generally.

"To the Pantomime," replied little Ned, grandly, before the ladies could speak.

"Which one?" asked Mr. Joe.

"To Drury-lane," again answered Ned. "They say it's the best."

"I wouldn't mind going with you," said Mr. Joe, looking at Miss May.

"Thank you," said Miss May, curtly, "but we don't want any gentleman. I'm an old woman, and can take care of Miss Marston—and mean to—" she added.

So she would have nothing to say to Mr. Joe, who, however, grew profuse in his offers, pressing the ladies to have supper with him, but Miss May was firm.

"Thank you, no," she said. "Good evening, Mr. Joe." And Mr. Joe was obliged to leave them, but this accidental encounter afterwards brought some very disagreeable consequences to Hilda.

But she forgot all about Mr. Joe Moxam when she got into the theatre. As for little Ned, his usual loquacious tongue grew silent with astonishment and awe. Once, however, he gave vent to his feelings. This was during one of the transformation scenes, when the fairies seemed to his dazzled eye most beautiful to behold.

"I say, Hil," he said, pulling at his sister's dress, "are these real women, now? They can't be the common sort, like you and Miss May?"

Hilda laughed merrily at the question.

"My dear," she said, "I've no doubt if I were dressed up and painted that I would look just as well."

"Don't believe it," replied Ned, seriously, shaking his curly head. "You're not bad looking, but oh, you could never look like them."

They had a nice little hot supper when they got home, and the day remained imprinted for some time on Ned's memory, as one of the red-letter days of his existence. He was never tired of talking about the treat to Hilda when they returned to their lodgings, and took a more intense interest in theatrical affairs than ever.

What distressed Hilda very much was being obliged so constantly to leave him. On these occasions Master Ned naturally resented being shut up in two small rooms, and therefore insisted upon roaming about the streets at his pleasure. Hilda was always afraid that he would get into some mischief or other, and may be sure, gave him many charges each day before she set out on her ordinary duties.

The next time that she went to Florentia Villa after meeting Mr. Joe Moxam in the tramway car, that young gentleman walked into the drawing-room, where she was giving his sisters their lesson.

"Well, Joe," said Ellen Moxam, looking round as he entered, "are you going to have a lesson?"

"All right," replied Mr. Joe, and without taking any notice of Hilda he went up to the piano, and joined in the duet that they were singing in one of the most discordant voices imaginable.

"Put me right when I'm out," he said to Hilda; but to put Mr. Joe right was beyond Hilda's capabilities.

However, he seemed quite satisfied with his own performances, though his elder half-sister, Miss Moxam, once or twice (after her usual fashion) said something unpleasant to him. But Mr. Joe, though it was not usual to him, kept his temper. He was facetious indeed after his manner, and grinned out his prominent teeth, and made jokes, and demeaned himself in what he believed to be a highly attractive way. When the lesson was over he bowed to Hilda, and left the room before she did, and Hilda felt certainly more comfortable after he was gone.

She walked down to the railway station, as she intended travelling to Victoria station by train, and having taken a second-class ticket stood waiting on the platform. Great, then, was her annoyance at seeing the mean little form of Mr. Joe Moxam emerge out of the darkness, and the next moment he had walked up to her side.

"Well, you see," he said, with his odiously familiar air, "I have not lost sight of you! Couldn't say much, you know, before those old sisters of mine, or they would have made a fine row, but I wanted to have a little talk with you, for all that."

Hilda felt so annoyed that she did not know what to say.

"Couldn't believe at first that a good-looking girl like you was a music teacher," continued Mr. Joe. "You ain't the style, somehow. Drab-coloured skins and ancient, that lot, mostly. But here's the train. I'm going to see you home, if you'll allow me?"

"Oh! please don't," said Hilda, but Mr. Joe was persistent. He sat close to Hilda in the railway carriage, and paid her coarse compliments, and altogether made her very uncomfortable. Luckily there was a respectable-looking man in the carriage, or Hilda would have been yet more annoyed. As it was, she felt greatly

relieved when they reached Victoria Station, but she found even then that Mr. Joe was not to be shaken off.

"I'll see you home. Don't be prudish. What nonsense," he said, when Hilda, politely, but coldly, bade him good evening.

"Thank you, but I would rather you would not," said Hilda.

"You're too pretty a girl to walk about alone," said Mr. Joe, with his grin, and so he followed Hilda, or rather walked by Hilda's side along the platform in front of Victoria Station.

But in the crowd suddenly Hilda came face to face with Philip Hayward. She knew him at once. He looked paler and thinner, but that was all.

"Mr. Hayward," she said, stopping, and she held out her hand.

Then Hayward looked down at the flushed, rather startled face before him, and he recognized Hilda.

"Miss Marston!" he said, kindly. "I never expected to see you here!"

"No," answered Hilda. "But," she added, timidly and quickly, "will you turn with me? I have something to tell you—about little Ned."

"Of course I will," said Hayward, and he turned as he spoke.

"Oh—" said Mr. Joe insolently to Hilda, "I was in the way, was I? Another young man, eh? Oh!" he exclaimed the next instant, looking up and remembering Hayward, "it's you, is it? Well, good evening to you both," he added, "I won't spoil sport." And with a nod to Hilda he turned away.

"What does that fellow mean?" asked Hayward quickly. "Do you know him?"

"I teach his sisters music, and he came into the room to-day," answered Hilda, "and he annoyed me very much in the train."

"Annoyed you!" repeated Hayward sharply. "He has not been rude to you I hope?"

"Only by forcing his company upon me," replied Hilda. "But do not let us talk of him any more. Do you know that I am living near here now, and who do you think is living with me?"

"I cannot guess," said Hayward.

"Your old pupil, little Ned," said Hilda, smiling. "Won't he be delighted to see you? He often speaks about you."

"And he has left Mr. Irvine?" asked Hayward.

"Yes—" and Hilda blushed. "You know—I offended Mr. Trevor somehow, and—he declined any longer to pay for poor little Ned's education, and as I could not afford to keep him at Sanda, I try to teach him myself."

"I must come and give him a lesson in Latin sometimes," said Hayward, smiling.

"Will you? I shall be so glad if you will." And Hilda blushed and looked very pleased as she spoke.

"Yes, indeed I will," answered Hayward, kindly; and then when they reached Hilda's modest home, he accepted her invitation to go in.

The street that she lodged in was a quiet little street, and the people of the house were humble but respectable. The husband was coachman to a nobleman in one of the adjoining squares, and the wife and landlady had been a cook. They had one son, who was a groom in the same stables, and they kept the dining-room of the house for themselves, and let the neat little drawing-room and bed-room above. This Hilda had taken, and she had no particular reason to regret having done so. Mrs. Bargate, the landlady, was a kind woman, with a warm heart and a warm temper. Mr. Bargate, the coachman, was ruled by Mrs. Bargate in all things, and smoked his pipe through all domestic storms, and the household, therefore, might be fairly considered a very quiet one.

Mrs. Bargate opened the house door for Hilda and Hayward, and she smiled as she did so.

"Well, Miss Marston," she said, "it's well you're back. Master Ned has been making a fine row with the cat next door."

"Naughty boy," said Hilda, and she ran upstairs, and as she opened the drawing-room door a great grey cat, with every hair on its tail erected, sprang past her, and fled down stairs, followed by Master Ned, all excitement at the chase.

But Hayward caught him by the arm after he had escaped past Hilda.

"Well, Master Ned," he said, "this is fine play. Whatever have you been doing to the cat?"

"Teaching her to walk in walnut shells," answered Ned. And then, recognizing Hayward, he exclaimed: "Oh! Mr. Hayward, is it you?"

"Yes, it's I," said Hayward, still holding the boy's arm; "come, old fellow, let the cat alone."

"She's only one on," confided Master Ned wistfully, alluding to the walnut shells. "If only Hil had come in a moment or two later she would have had four."

"Well, never mind," said Hayward, "come up now," and so holding Ned by the arm he followed Hilda into her sitting-room.

It was a neat little place. A tasteful woman's hand had evidently arranged the furniture, and added some small decorations to the original stiffness of its appearance.

"You will stay and have some tea with us?" said Hilda, turning to Hayward, who smiled, sat down, and threw Master Ned on his knee.

Master Ned became very jubilant over his old master's re-appearance.

"So you're living in London, too?" he said. "That's jolly. You'll take me out to see things

sometimes, won't you? Girls are all very well, you know, but Hil's frightened by crowds and that lot, and so she'll scarcely go anywhere. But we'll go together, won't we?"

While Ned was making these arrangements for his future amusement, "Hil" had gone out of the room to seek her landlady the ex-cook, and make arrangements for Hayward's refreshment. Mrs. Bargate was quite agreeable. She cooked a dish of chops to perfection, and some fish, and in half an hour the little party of young people in the drawing-room were sitting enjoying their humble repast.

Hilda had a bright fresh colour in her face, and a glad light in her eyes. She was so pleased to see Hayward; to see some one she had known before, and in whom she had always felt a strong interest.

"Of course you were at Lady Hamilton's wedding?" said Hayward, quietly, as the meal went on, but Hilda noticed the effort with which he said these simple words.

"Yes," answered Hilda, "I was at the breakfast, though not at the church. It was very quiet—only the two Miss Featherstones were there—and you've heard the news about Mr. Trevor, I suppose?"

"That he has married Miss Featherstone?" answered Hayward. "Yes, I have heard. I have heard lately once or twice from Sir George Hamilton, and he told me about it."

After his mother's death, Hayward had written to Sir George Hamilton. He had written courteously and gratefully; returning at the same time by far the larger portion of the money that Sir George had advanced him during his mother's illness. In this first letter Hayward made no allusion to Sir George's marriage. He merely told him the fact of his mother's death, and gratefully declined all further assistance.

"Mr. Newcome will take me back, I believe," he added, "and the salary he gives me will satisfy my modest wants."

Sir George was annoyed at this letter. He showed it to Isabel, expressing himself strongly on the subject.

"If he is so very independent, why not let him alone?" said Isabel, carelessly, who had almost forgotten Hayward by this time in the new pleasures and excitement of her life.

"You forget what I owe him," said Sir George, gravely.

"But if he won't take anything," answered Isabel, "you are not to blame."

"He is sensitive, proud, and refined," said Sir George, "and these qualities only make me respect him more. That foolish fancy he took for you, Isabel—"

Isabel shrugged her fine shoulders.

"But it was so, love," said Sir George, "and it hurts his pride, therefore, to accept anything from me. But I shall not allow this feeling to come between us; I mean always to be his friend."

So Sir George had written several times to Hayward since his mother's death, but Hayward had gratefully declined all Sir George's offers, but he had not quite declined his friendship. He had returned to his old employer, Mr. Newcome, and was agreeably surprised when, shortly after he had done so, Mr. Newcome voluntarily proposed to double his salary. This increase did not come out of Mr. Newcome's purse. Sir George, in fact, finding that Hayward declined help from him, determined indirectly to assist him. A correspondence, therefore, had taken place between Sir George and Mr. Newcome, and the immediate consequence of this was that Hayward's salary was doubled.

The printer regarded Hayward often now, through his small shrewd eyes, with positive astonishment. That a man would refuse such offers, was to Mr. Newcome almost incomprehensible. Yet he knew it was so. Sir George made no secret to the printer, of his wish to help Hayward, and his reasons for doing so. But Mr. Newcome kept Sir George's secret. It suited him to do so. He got a good man for a low salary (the part that came out of his pocket), and he got credit for being a generous man with Hayward, which he was not.

The first thing that Hayward did with the larger means at his command, was to return all the money he owed to Sir George. Sir George thus received his own money back, as it were, but he did not think less of the young man for his scrupulous honesty. Then Hayward sent back the parson's ten pounds. The Rev. Matthew's kind eyes grew moist as he read his old tutor's letter, and learned that he was alone in the world. He immediately wrote, pressing Hayward most cordially to pay a long visit to Sanda; but Hayward could not leave his work, and to have seen Sanda again would only have recalled most painful memories.

Thus when Hayward met Hilda Marston in London, he was once more the "reader" in Messrs. Salkeld & Newcome's establishment. He told Hilda this, and then gradually the conversation drifted to Hayward's mother. Ned perched himself on his old tutor's knee, and they sat round the fire and talked. Hilda's sweet, womanly sympathy, and her gentle questions about Mrs. Hayward's illness, touched Hayward, and he found himself telling Hilda of his mother's death; of Mr. Jervis's kindness to her; and how, when she had felt the end approaching, she had sent for the curate and asked him, with her last breath, to be a brother to her son.

"And he is a brother," said Hayward, his earnest face lighting up when he spoke of his friend. "Without him I could not have borne her loss; he has been everything to me, and he is—but why talk of him—you would think I am