

Firmness.

Well, let him go, and let him stay— I do not mean to die; I guess he'll find that I can live Without him, if I try; He thought to frighten me with frowns So terrible and black— He'll stay away a thousand years, Before I ask him back!

He said that I had acted wrong, And foolishly beside; I won't forget him after that— I wouldn't if I died. If I was wrong, what right had he To be so cross with me? I know I'm not an angel quite— I don't pretend to be.

He had another sweetheart once, And now when we fall out, He always says she was not cross, And that she didn't pout. It is enough to vex a saint— It's more than I can bear; I wish that girl of his was— Well, I don't care where.

He thinks that she was pretty, too— Was beautiful as good; I wonder if she'd get him back Again, now, if she could; I know she would, and there she is— She lives almost in sight; And now it's almost nine o'clock— Perhaps he's there to-night.

I'd almost write to him to come; But then I've said he won't, I do not care so much, but she Shan't have him if I don't. Besides, I know that I was wrong, And he was in the right; I guess, I'll tell him so—and then— I wish he'd come to-night.

SELECT STORY.

Invited by Mistake;

MRS. ESTCOURT'S EVENING SOIREE [CONCLUDED.]

"OST undoubtedly, said Mrs. Estcourt; it will be a most desirable connexion; her sister is engaged to a baronet. Then what a voice she has! No beauty possesses such a spell as a fine singer to draw a crowd around her. She will, of course, inherit her aunt's fortune, and probably a few thousands from her father; and although my nephew will soon take possession of a large property, yet you know Mr. Tyrold, as your favorite Burns says, it is always desirable to make muckie mair.

Tyrold was too sleepy to take the trouble of enlightening the lady's mind as to the real meaning of Burns's passage, but he told her that Miss Gerard was a delightful person, and wished her good-night and pleasant dreams.

Pleasant, indeed, were her dreams, and pleasanter still were her waking thoughts. She had a sincere regard for her nephew, and was anxious to see him married and rich (since he could not be the latter without the former), and was very well pleased to think that his bride, although younger, was not at all better-looking than herself.

And all happened as Mrs. Estcourt had predicted. Amherst was a visitor at the 'house of roses' the next day; and in a few words he spoke of love, and was listened to; and in a few more days he obtained permission to wait on Mr. Gerard in London; and Mr. Gerard (having previously looked at old Amherst's will in Doctor's Commons) received him most favorably, and said he was just the man he would have chosen from the whole world for a son-in-law; and Sir William Holbrook (to whom he had said the same thing when he proposed for Angelica), instead of being jealous of his brother-in-law elect, took a violent fancy to him, and, thinking that marrying would be much more cheerful if done in company, joined him in petitioning to the heads of the house of Gerard that the weddings should take place on the same day, which petition was graciously granted. Angelica was the loveliest of brides, but Amherst did not envy her bridegroom; the charm of his chosen one's talents, and the brilliant vivacity of her conversation, had developed themselves daily more and more, and Amherst not only felt resigned to her want of personal beauty, but actually began to think that his first impression had been erroneous, and that her appearance was exceedingly attractive!

His marriage caused some emotion in various quarters, and was the occasion of a severe nervous attack to the third cousin with thirteen children, who had begun to make herself quite secure of the speedy possession of poor, dear, old, eccentric Mr. Amherst's property. A year has now elapsed since Amherst's marriage, and, although he admires his wife at all times, he particularly admires her when she is in the act of inditing a note of invitation.

There is something, he said, in one of these delicate, rose-colored, perfumed 'billetts,' which conveys a delightful association to my mind; it always brings before me my aunt's Cheltenham beauty-party, and the moment when I first be-

came known to her who now constitutes all my earthly felicity, owing to the happy circumstance of having been 'Invited by mistake.'

The Chatterly Lovers.

OW hot it was! Not a breath of wind stirred the great beeches on the lawn, the croquet ground was deserted, stillness was on everything—the bright glowing stillness of the Summer noon.

The great gray, beautiful old house was at rest. It might have been the palace of the Sleeping Beauty but for one sound, a low, 'trainante' woman's voice, floating from the casement above the porch in wild snatches of song; not the simple airs of common life, but the harmonies of old masters—the deep and solemn strains the echoes of which seem to ring with the memories of ancient minstrels. There was something intensely mournful in the voice—a thrill of human pain that made the music live, as it were; an utterance of some hidden agony that was fast breaking a heart.

The shadow of the dial swept past the hour of noon, and, as the clock above the stables struck, the little iron gate in the fence which parted the croquet ground from the glebe meadows was pushed quickly open by the Rector's daughter.

She walked quickly over the meadows from the rectory, but there was scarcely a tinge of colour on her pure face. Cool and graceful as a flower she appeared, her simple gray dress falling around her in queenly folds, the Puritan simplicity of her white collar and cuffs and simply braided hair becoming something regal in the way in which they were worn by the clergyman's portionless daughter, Ada Leigh. Cold, unfeeling, icy, they called her who could not win a smile from the curved red lips, a look of interest from the dark eyes that had such depth of passion in them.

She crossed the smooth green sward with a little hasty glance around. All was deserted. Even the Chatterly girls could not brave the blazing sun. No relic was there of the merry party of the morning, except the scattered balls and mallets, and a gray glove lying forgotten on the grass.

Ada picked it up, a burning flush crossing her face as her fingers touched the gray kid, and with a passionate murmur she pressed it to her lips. She dropped it however in a moment, and walked swiftly on, the blush departing from her face and leaving it as calm as before.

At the porch she paused a moment. A man was coming over the lawn with two or three hounds dawdling at his heels. He was smoking, but he flung his cigar away and slightly quickened his walk when he saw the graceful gray-robed figure on the steps.

Awfully hot! was his greeting, and, throwing off his hat, he sat down in the shadow. I've been doing the polite to the future lady of Chatterly. A fellow ought to have ten thousand a year for marrying a woman who has given up all hope of her complexion, and doesn't care if the thermometer is at 90.

Well, you will have it, Ned. He ran his hand through his brown curly hair with a short, uncomfortable laugh.

I suppose so. I wish she wasn't so distressingly sentimental, or so fond of going home at noon-day. How's the parish, Ada?

In its usual state of health, I believe. Will you let me pass? I am going to see Blanche.

I beg your pardon. Why didn't you come over to play croquet this morning? It was awfully slow without you.

Business first, pleasure afterwards, she returned, with a grave smile, passing into the cool hall, fragrant with a wealth of flowers. She broke off a scarlet blossom and fastened it in her dress as she ran up the broad shallow oak stairs to a pleasant little nook of a room on the first floor.

Here by the open window, with a baby in her arms, seated in a low rocking-chair, was Blanche Chatterly. Scarcely more than a girl, one short twelvemonth had seen her a wife, a mother, and a widow. Her husband had been Edward's younger brother, a sailor whose ship had been lost in the Northern Seas.

Blanche and Mary Ashley were sisters, wards of an old bachelor uncle who owned a large estate close to Chatterly. When the girls were just marriageable and Blanche was engaged to John Chatterly, the uncle died, and his will was rather a strange one. The Forde estate was left to John and Blanche, but in the event of either dying without male children, it was to revert to Mary, on the condition that before the age of twenty-three she had married Edward Chatterly.

Of course, when John was drowned, leaving only a little girl to bear his name, Edward was fane to submit to fate, and propose to fat, good-tempered, stupid Mary Ashley, with the best grace he might, and at the present time they had

been engaged for six months. Mary lived with her aunt at Forde, mildly victimising every one within her reach by her quiet soft selfishness.

While this brief explanation has been rendered, Ada Leigh has taken the baby and begun to talk with Blanche in her cheery, bright way.

Why, she is actually trying to talk, the bonny wee thag! Don't you think a little sunshine would do her good, Blanche? Come out for a little while.

It is so hot. Hot! Nonsense. I'm a capital nurse. Here—where is her hood? Come down to the beech walk—it is shady there.

Are you developin' a taste for African exploration? inquired Ned, lazily rousing himself as they came down the stairs. Does grandamma permit of such dissipation?

Grandamma's a seep, returned Ada, laughing, and I have taken the reins of government.

In spite of his dislike of the heat, Ned walked on by Ada's side to the cool shady beechwalk. Presently Blanche grew weary, and went back with her precious charge; but the other twain walked up and down alone, Ned hardly knowing why it was so pleasant.

Mary told me some news this morning. Ada. I was so amused. She turned quietly towards him.

She told me you were engaged to Vincent Hugo.

Did she? said Ad, carelessly. Ned smoothed his tawny moustache in grave amusement.

Such an idea—you to marry Hugo! You are going to marry Mary Ashley, she returned, with quiet meaning.

A dark shadow fell over his handsome face. What can I do? I can't make the girl a begger. That old fool knew he had caught me tight enough, confound him! But for people to say that you are going to marry Vincent Hugo is too good.

I don't know why you should laugh so, returned Ada, calmly. You may as well hear it now as at any other time—I am engaged to Vincent—

Edward Chatterly stopped suddenly, a dull glow of pain covering his face. Eh? he questioned sharply. Ada, you are joking—you don't mean it.

Why, what's the matter? said Ada, laughing. Vincent has the orthodox six feet of height, moustache and whiskers 'en regle'; and if Dame Nature has furnished his brain rather after the Cheap Jack style, his heart is good.

Edward caught his breath with a half-muttered exclamation. Good Heaven, Ada! You don't know what you are about. Could you spend your life with a man like Hugo—a selfish, rough, unutilized animal?

He has ten thousand a year and the best house in the country, returned Ada, quietly. Ada, Ada, take care of what you are about! he exclaimed his words hot and trembling. Don't crush your heart. A man may marry without love, but a woman to do so! Is there no one else you care for, no one you love, that you can accept this dreary hulk of a Squire?

She turned her fair proud face toward him with a wary gesture. Nobody, Ned. I am sorry you dislike Vincent so very much.

Dislike him! Why, no, I don't; he is too great a fool, Ada, you shan't marry him—I'll run away with you myself rather, and leave Chatterly and Forde to the tender mercies of my relatives.

A look of utter scorn came from her face as she answered him. There is no need of such a sacrifice, I assure you, she said, adding, with a forced laugh, don't make yourself absurd Ned. Shake hands and be reasonable.

He caught her arm, Ada, break this engagement! Ada— She interrupted him lightly. Come, I shall tell Mary! She will declare your are flirting with me; I wish to speak to Mrs. Chatterly.

The Rector's daughter walked hastily away towards the brightness of the lawn. A scarlet blossom had fallen at Edward's feet from her dress. He picked it up with a low passionate cry, feeling as he did so the bitter rush of the conviction how dearly he loved this pale proud girl who was engaged to Vincent Hugo.

Where are you going, Ned? asked Mrs. Chatterly, coming out of the morning room next day, as her son strode across the hall, drawing on his gloves.

Over to Forde, he returned, grimly. I dropped one of my gloves yesterday; have you seen it wther?

No, my dear. Give my love to Mary. I am glad you are going. You ought to pay her a little attention.

A comical smile crossed Ned's face as he went across the lawn whistling to his dogs.

Precious little attention the young lady will get from me! he muttered. Mary Ashley's fat fair face wore a dull, pleased expression to greet her

lover as he entered the morning room at Forde, where she was engaged on some intricate wool-work. He shook hands gravely enough with her, and sat down by her little table and began to play with the brightly coloured wools, to the horror of his lady-love.

Oh, your horrid man, you are mixing the greens and blues! Do leave them alone.

He drew away his hands good humouredly. I envy women their needle-work. What an interminable pleasure you find in it Mary!

I don't think I could live without it; yet some people don't care for it—Ada Leigh never has a wool needle in her hand.

Thank Hea—I mean, how very funny! stammered Edward, flushing over his words.

Mary looked up at him gravely. How you flush, Edward! You can't be well; I should have some medical advice. Those sudden rushes of blood to the head are dangerous.

Edward bit his lips. I am very well, thank you. I am only a great deal worried. Come, Mary you and I have always been good friends. I think the best person I can ask for advice is you.

I shall be only too glad to help you, Edward, she returned, calmly. Ned got up and walked restlessly round the little table to the back of Mary's chair. He could speak better there than under the glance of those cold grey eyes.

A friend of mine, Mary, had plighted his faith to one whom he liked very much, who was a dear sister to him. They had been engaged some time, when he discovered a bitter secret. He found out that he loved some one else better—much better. I mean that he had given the whole strength of his manhood's love to another woman—not to her he was bound to, but to one he had known for years, who was all the world to him. Now, Mary, what in honour should my friend do?

The needle paused a moment in the fat white hand. I don't know who your friend is, Ned, she said, gravely; but, if he is a gentleman, he will keep his secret, and marry the person he is engaged to. A man who could suddenly change his mind will soon come back to his old feelings.

Nay, nay, my friend always loved this girl, Mary. But what would a woman think of a man who could marry her while he loved another?

A little malicious glance darted from the green-gray eyes. Edward dear, said their owner, softly we will come down to personalities. We can judge better then. Suppose, if such a thing could happen, that you fell in love with somebody beside myself—with Ada Leigh, say. It's utterly absurd, I know—I just suppose it. Do you think that it would be right, or manly, or honourable to come and tell me that, to break off your engagement?

I leave all money considerations out of the question. What is wealth in such a case as that? Would not your conduct be craven and cowardly, after making my life so bright, to shadow it for some foolish fancy for another woman? I know you too well, Edward, to think that you would do so, even if the misery were mine to lose your love. Tell your friend what I say—that you think with me. You do, don't you? And Mary Ashley quietly took up a thread of wool and began her work.

Yes, I will tell him, poor wretch! said Edward, with a dreary attempt at a smile.

Don't you think I am right? What would you do? persisted Mary, turning round to look at his pale face.

Yes, you are right—at least I suppose you are. Life is a dreary thing without love, though, Mary. How is his royal highness Prince Rollo to-day? he went on in forced lightness, crossing to the arm-chair, where a fat white pouffe reclined in lazy importance.

The darling is ill. I am thinking of sending over to Dr. Gill. I am really nervous about my pet.

Keep him on prisoner's fare for a month, returned Ned, shortly.

And, to his great relief, at this moment Mary's aunt entered the room, and his dreary "tete-a-tete" was over.

Baby's monthly birthday was kept at Chatterly, where she was looked upon as the link of the dear lost one. She was six months old on this, the first of July, and Ada Leigh came over to spend a long day with Blanche. Mary of course was there; and in the morning when they were gathered on the croquet ground, another visitor—Vincent Hugo—made his appearance—to the great disgust of one of the party at least.

They told me you were over here, Ada, he said, with a tone of ownership that made Ned Chatterly's blood boil. So I have followed, sure of a welcome. Of course, said Blanche, as no one else seemed inclined to speak. Do you play croquet, Mr. Hugo? Will you take

my mallet? I am tired, and will sit down under the tree and watch you. Yes, I understand it a little. You must help my deficiencies, Ada; I want to be a good player.

There is a beautiful ground at Hugo Park, isn't there? asked Mary, smiling. Ah, but there is nobody to play. I hope, however, to have some jolly parties there next summer.

He glanced at Ada Leigh, but she had turned to talk with Blanche, and no one heard his brilliant remark but Mary.

Edward Chatterly had thrown down his mallet and walked away, with a muttered remark about the gardener.

I thought we were going to play croquet? cried Vincent Hugo, looking round rather disconsolately.

You and Mary play; I'm tired, said Ada.

Oh, that won't do, returned Vincent. Chatterly will be jealous, and so will you. And he too threw down his mallet, and joined Ada and Blanche in their walk up and down the lawn.

Ada's face grew a deeper red during the conversation that ensued. Half wild with triumph and joy at winning the beautiful girl whom so many longed to call their own, Vincent Hugo launched into a style of pleasantry that to Ada was positive torture. She bore it for some time, biting her lips over each display of shallow witicism, but at last she stopped him short.

Now, Vincent, you must go home; I came here to see Blanche and baby, and you are only in the way. Take your horse and ride home—there's a good boy; and, cutting short his murmurs with a hurried good-bye, she hastened across the lawn.

She was as much at home at Chatterly as in her own house; and going through the library, she reached a little inner room hung with sombre velvet. There was a great old-fashioned chair in the apartment, with the arms of Chatterly carved upon it, and Ada sat down therein, and folded her hands over her face in a mute passion of tears. A step in the library, however, made her start up and walk to the window to hide her grief.

It was Mary Ashley who came softly in, and, with an impulse of affection that made Ada's flesh creep, put her hands round her neck.

I wish you joy, dear! Vincent Hugo is a very good fellow, even if he is not—but I mustn't compare him with Edward, must I? I am prejudiced, you will say. But won't it be nice to be mistress of Hugo Park! Your father is pleased, isn't he?

No, returned Ada, shortly. Oh, I should have thought that he would have been glad. Well, dear, and Mary blushed faintly, I have come to ask you—the fact is, Edward is getting impatient, and I have almost promised to be his in another month—will you be my bridesmaid?

Ada pressed her throbbing brow against the window. Death would be easier than this ordeal. But her nerve did not fail her.

I hope ye will be happy, Mary. I shall be very glad to do as you wish.

Thank you. We shall always be near friends—You at Hugo Park and I at Chatterly. Perhaps—who knows, Ada?—our children may be intimate friends.

A look of intense agony darkened Ada Leigh's face. She could bear no more; with a faint cry she sank to the ground senseless. It was not long, however, before she recovered, and staggered to her feet.

I am not well, she said, with a ghastly smile. Excuse me to them all, Mary; I am going back to the rectory.

Putting aside Mary's proffered assistance, she unfastened the long French window, and stepped out on the lawn. Mary looked after her with quiet triumphant dislike, rubbing her fat hands with ecstatic delight. This is the girl whom Edward would prefer to make his wife! she muttered. I think the improbability of that event is plain enough now.

[CONCLUDED IN OUR NEXT.]

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