

For Love of a Woman;

OR, New Romeo and Juliet.

CHAPTER X. FOR HIM ALONE.

The other box remained screened, and the occupant visible.

The play proceeded, and then came the showers of bouquets.

Now, Barton is not a doral town by any means, so that the bouquets which fell at the feet of the girlish Juliet must have been procured at some pains and trouble. The Romeo filled his arms with them, and one only remained lying on the stage.

It was a magnificent bouquet of white and purple violets; and as it fell, Doris, Doris, looking up, saw the handsome face of Lord Neville close to the stage in the orchestra stalls.

She stooped and raised the bouquet, and glanced at him, but this time she did not lift the flowers to her lips.

As she passed, off the manager touched her arm.

"I've found out who it is that's got the box on the prompt side," he said; "It's Lady Grace Peyton, the great London beauty. She's staying at Barton Towers—the Marquis of Stoyles's place, you know."

"At Barton Towers!" said Doris. Then she went to the side of the procession and looked at the box in which Lady Grace's face was just visible. "How beautiful she is!" she murmured.

"Yes, I should think so," said the manager. "Why, she's the professional beauty of the season. It's an honour to have her in the theatre. And who else do you think is here?" he added, exultingly.

"I don't know," said Doris, moving away.

"Why, Lord Cecil Neville, the marquis's nephew; and he was here last night. What do you think of that? It isn't only the pit and gallery that have gone mad over you, Miss Marlowe, but the gentry, too. Just as I said last night. Lord Cecil Neville! I daresay you have heard of him; but he's the best-known man in London. I wish I knew who was in the other box, but I can't find out."

"Perhaps it's the marquis himself," said Doris, with an absent smile.

"Oh, no!" said the manager; "he'd be with Lord Neville or Lady Grace No, it's not the marquis."

She went and dressed for the last and great scene, and when she came out found Jeffrey pacing up and down.

"Better than last night, Doris," he said, nodding, and glancing at her under his thick, frowning brows. "You have made all the points to-night; that's right. Keep cool. Don't let your head be turned by the applause and the bouquets! What! Violets again to-night? Very kind, very characteristic! Let me hold them for you," and he held out his hand for the bouquet, which, unthinkingly, she had brought out with her.

She extended them to him, when, her eyes dwelling on them, she saw a mark of white amongst the purple blossoms.

Then she gave them to him, saying, hurriedly, "Take care of them; they smell so sweet," and went and took her place at the wing, crushing the piece of paper into the bosom of her dress.

She had to wait some few minutes, and with a quickly throbbing heart she took out the paper and glanced at it.

A scribble in pencil ran across it: "Will you meet me in the fields to-morrow! I must speak to you."

CECIL NEVILLE.
That was all. She replaced the paper in her bosom, where it seemed to burn like a living thing, and went on the stage.

If her performance in this scene on the preceding night was good, to-night, was much in advance of it. Her voice seemed to thrill the vast audience, and, with her face, moved them to tears.

But Doris was conscious of only one spectator and auditor—the one who leant forward in the centre box, with the rapt attention of a devotee at a shrine.

The curtain fell amidst a thunder of applause, and, pale and quivering, she was led on by the Romeo to receive the enthusiastic expression of approbation and delight.

"Wonderful, Miss Marlowe!" said the Romeo. "Miles ahead of last night, and that was good enough."

She was about to acknowledge the frank and generous compliment, when she felt her arm seized, and saw Jeffrey standing beside her.

His face was white and brown, the sunken eyes blazing with passion. "Doris! Doris!" he gasped.

"Jeffrey!" she said, half-frightened. "What is the matter?"

Doris looked and saw a fair, pleasant-looking man standing in the front row of the box. He was watching the dispersing audience with a gentle smile, and his fat, white hand was softly smoothing his long, fair hair from his forehead. He looked benevolent enough to be a bishop, and Doris stared from him to the white, ashen face of Jeffrey.

"What is it, dear Jeffrey?" she asked.

"Look! look!" he repeated, hoarsely. "There, stands your greatest enemy—save one! Your greatest enemy in the world! Look at him, Doris! Look at him and remember him!"

She turned her eyes to the box.

"That fair gentleman with the long hair, do you mean, Jeffrey?"

"Yes, that is him! Curse him! Curse him!" he muttered. Then suddenly he seemed to recover himself. "Come away!" he said, brokenly. Don't pay any attention to what I have said. It—it is nothing!" and he let the edge of the curtain fall.

CHAPTER XI. LOVE'S SUBTLE SPELL.

At any other time Doris would have been alarmed at Jeffrey's sudden outburst of rage, occasioned by the sight of the amiable-looking stranger in the box; but she could think of nothing but the little white note lying hidden in the bunch of violets which Lord Cecil Neville had thrown to her.

It was the first note she had received in that way, and she felt giddy and unhappy.

If she had only told Jeffrey on the first of her acquaintance with Lord Neville! She would have taken the note to him, if she had done so; but she felt that to place it in his hands now would be to call forth one of his fierce outbursts of rage, in which it was quite possible he might seek

Lord Neville and force a quarrel on him.

What should she do? The question haunted her all the way home. Should she write and tell Lord Neville that she could not meet him, and request him not to write to her again! This seemed the easiest thing to do; but she shrank from it for two reasons: one, because Jeffrey had often warned her against writing to strangers, and the other, because it seemed so stern a rebuke for so slight an offence.

For, after all, his sin was not so great. He had asked permission to call upon her, asked it respectfully; and with all the deference of a gentleman addressing a lady his equal in position, and she had refused to grant him the permission. If he wanted to see her, what else could he do than write and ask her to meet him?

Once she nearly summoned up courage to tell Jeffrey everything; but, as she looked up at him as he leant back in the corner of the fly, with bent head and folded arms, she saw so stern and moody an expression on his face that her courage failed her; he was just in the humour to consider the note an insult, and seek to avenge it.

And somehow Doris could not regard it in this way. As she read the words, she seemed to hear Lord Neville's deep, musical voice pronouncing them, pleadingly, respectfully, with reverence rather than insult.

Doris was a great actress, but she was as ignorant of the world outside the theatre as a child; she had only her instinct to guide her, and that seemed to say that it was impossible Lord Neville could have meant to insult her.

But the result of all her thinking was this: that her acquaintance with him must cease. She must have no friends save those of the theatre; least of all, a young nobleman who tossed her bouquets of violets and begged her to meet him in the meadows.

Jeffrey's mood clung to him during the remainder of the night. As a rule, after their supper, which was an exceedingly simple one, he grew cheerful and talkative; but to-night he sat with bent head and frowning brows, apparently brooding over the past.

Once or twice she saw him look up at her with a half-troubled glance; then, as his eyes met hers, he com-

pressed his lips and sighed; and after awhile he said, suddenly:

"You are happy, Doris?"

She started slightly and the colour rushed to her face. It almost seemed as if he knew something was troubling her.

"Happy, Jeffrey? Yes," she said, and went and sat at his feet and folded her hands on his knee.

He looked down into her beautiful face—not into her eyes, for they were downcast.

"Yes," he said, moodily and absently, as if he were communing with his own thoughts rather than addressing her, "yes, you are happy. How could it be otherwise? All that I have wished for has come to pass. You are a great actress; you will be famous. The world will be at your feet—even as you are now at mine. It will hang upon your voice, watch with breathless interest your face, pour its gold into your lap. Great, famous; you are—you must be—happy."

"Yes, Jeffrey," she said, "and I owe it all to you."

"To me?" he said. "Yes. But if you do, it is a debt that I myself owed. To you—to her—"

"To her?" she murmured, wonderingly.

"To Lucy—to your mother," he said, still absently.

"To my mother?" said Doris, with bated breath.

He was silent for a moment, then he seemed as if awakening from a dream.

"Doris," he said, gravely, and with visible emotion, "there is something I must tell you. I ought to have told you before this; but I put it off. I would put it off now—his lips quivered—"for I hate the thought of it. But to-night my conscience has been roused. That man—" He stopped, and his teeth clicked. "Doris!" he exclaimed, with a catch in his breath. "Tell me, have I not been as a father to you? Could any father have loved you better, and lived for you more solely and entirely than I have done?"

"No, Jeffrey, none," he said, in a low voice, and laying her soft, white hand upon his rugged and gnarled one, soothingly.

"I call Heaven to witness that I have only one thought—your welfare. When you lay, a little child, in my arms, I devoted my life to you. Every hour of the day I have thought of you, and planned out your future. It was not my own happiness I sought, not my own ambition, but yours—yours! I have lived and striven for one end—your success and your happiness. And I have won. You are a great actress, Doris, and it is I—I who have taught and trained and made you what you are!"

"Yes, Jeffrey," she murmured, "I know it; and I am grateful—grateful!"

"But are you happy? Are you happy, child?" he demanded, and his voice sounded almost stern in its intensity.

The colour came and went in her face.

"How could I be, otherwise, Jeffrey?" she said. "Yes, I am happy!"

He drew a long breath, as of relief, but went on:

"Compare your lot with others. I don't mean the poor and common-place; but those others, the rich, the well-born, the titled. Would you have been happier, for instance, if you had been—let me say—the daughter of a nobleman—"

She smiled at the question, earnestly as it was put.

"I don't know any daughters of noblemen, Jeffrey," she said; "but I don't think I would exchange places with any of them."

He nodded, and laid his hand upon her head.

"No, no," he said, moodily.

"No," she said, with a faint laugh. "I would not exchange places with the highest lady in the land. To be able to move a theatre full of people to tears or laughter, that is better than being an earl's daughter, is it not, Jeffrey?"

He started.

"Yes, yes," he said, eagerly; "that is what I wanted you to feel. Anyone can be an earl's daughter; but few—how few!—the Doris Marlowes who wrought an audience to enthusiasm to-night."

She smiled up at him.

"And what is this you are going to tell me, Jeffrey?"

He started, and his hand fell from her head.

(To be Continued.)

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