

For Love of a Woman;

New Romeo and Juliet.

CHAPTER VI.

A BUNCH OF VIOLETS.
"I will send it," she said. "I think I know—the Towers, you said, did you not?"

A sudden inspiration seized him, and, bending forward, he said, in a low voice:

"If you should walk in the fields tomorrow morning, you may, you know—lay it on the bank where you sat yesterday. Will you do this, Miss Marlowe? I will fetch it in the afternoon."

The beautiful eyes dwelt upon his face with a deep gravity for a moment, as if she were wondering what his object could be in making the request; then she said, gently:

"Yes; why should I not?" as she held out her hand.

"Good-night."
"Thanks, thanks!" he said, in his deep, musical voice. "Good-night! You should be happy to-night, for you have made so many people miserably so. I shall dream of Juliet all night."

She let her hand rest in his for a moment, then drew it away and he was gone.

But at that moment it chanced that a handsomely-appointed carriage came round the bend of the road, and a lady, with softly-shimmering hair and darkly-brilliant eyes, who was leaning back in a corner of it, suddenly caught sight of the fly and the stately figure standing beside it.

She bent forward eagerly, and her eyes took in, as the carriage rolled past, not only the expression of Cecil Neville's face, but the face of the girl in the fly.

For an instant the warm blood rushed to Lady Grace's face; then, as she sank back again, into her corner, she laughed—a laugh of cold, insolent contempt.

"Some actress or shop-girl," she murmured. Then her expression changed, and she bit her lips thoughtfully. "And yet he looked terribly in earnest," she added. "Shall I take him up?" and her hand went out to the check-string; then she let it fall, and the carriage went on its way. "No; I think I'll keep my little discovery to myself—it may be useful—and let you walk home, Lord Cecil."

CHAPTER VII.

A RARE DIAMOND.

When Doris came down from her room the next morning, it did not seem as if the tremendous excitement of the preceding night had left any baleful effects. In her soft, white dress, she still looked more like a school-girl home for the holidays, than the tragedienne who had, a few hours ago, moved a vast audience to tears and wild enthusiasm.

She came into the room singing, just as the birds sang under the eaves by her window, and laughed lightly as she saw Jeffrey earnestly over a copy of a local daily paper.

"Well, have I got a tremendous slating, Jeffrey?" she said, almost carelessly.

"Slating!" he replied. "If anything, it is too laudatory. Read it!" and he held it out to her.

"After breakfast. I am so hungry," she said, contentedly. "Read it to me, Jeffrey; all the nicest paragraphs," and she laughed again.

He glanced at Doris under his heavy brows.

"At any rate, your success has not made you vain, Doris," he said, with grim approval.

"If it should make anyone vain it should be you—not me, dear," she said quietly. "It was you made last night's Juliet, good or bad."

"Very well," he said. "I'll be vain for both of us. Yes, it is a wonderfully good critique, and I think the news of your success will reach London, too. There were a couple of critics from London in the stalls. I didn't tell you last night, in case it should make you nervous."

She looked at him thoughtfully.

"I don't think it would have made much difference," she said. "I seemed to forget everybody and everything—"

"After the second act," he put in. She blushed to her temples.

"There was a distinct change then. I noticed it, and I have been puzzling my brain to account for it. Perhaps you can explain it."

She shook her head, and kept her eyes on her plate.

"No?" Strange. But such inspirations are not uncommon with genius; and yours is genius, Doris."

"Don't frighten me, Jeffrey," she said, with a faint smile.

"I have agreed with Brown, the manager," he went on, "that you should play Juliet for a week, and after that some other of the big characters for a month, and he is to pay you ten pounds a week."

Doris looked up, surprised. Ten pounds per week is a large sum for merely provincial actresses.

He smiled grimly.

"You think it a great deal? In a day or two you will get offers from London of twenty, thirty, forty pounds. But I am in no hurry. I have not been in a hurry all through. I want you to feel your feet, to feel secure in all the big parts here in the provinces before you appear in London. Then your success will be assured whatever you may undertake."

"You think of everything, Jeffrey," she said, gratefully.

"I have nothing else to think of, nothing else to tell you," he responded, quietly, almost pathetically. "I have set my heart upon you being a great actress, and"—he paused—"I think it would break, if you failed. But there is no need to speak of failure after last night." He got up as he spoke and folded the newspaper.

"I'm going down to the theatre," he said. He was never quite contented away from it. "You'd better look over your part this morning. Take it into the open air as you did the other day. It seems to succeed."

"Very well," she said, obediently.

He put on his hat and the thick in-veness he wore in all weathers, and went away, and Doris sat looking dreamily before her.

Then suddenly she got up. She would take his advice and go into the meadows—for the meadows meant the open air to her—and as she was going she would take Cecil Neville's handkerchief and place it on the ban as he had requested.

She put on her hat and jacket, and possibly for the convenience of carrying, thrust the handkerchief in the

bosom of her dress, where it lay hidden all the preceding day, and started.

It was a glorious morning, with only a feather of cloud here and there in the sky, and the birds sang as if winter were an unknown season in England.

With her stage copy of "Romeo and Juliet" under her arm, Doris Marlowe, the simple child of Nature, the famous actress, made her way to the meadows.

The Barton folks had something else to do than wander in their meadows, and Doris did not meet a soul; the great elms, which threw their shadows over the brook, were as solitary as if they had been planted in Eden. But lonely as the spot was, Doris peeped it with memories; and she stood by the brook and recalled the vision of the powerful figure on the great horse, as it appeared before her the moment prior to its being hurled at her feet.

"How strange that he should have been at the theatre last night!" she thought. "How curious it must have seemed to him, seeing me there as Juliet! I wonder whether he was sorry or glad?"

She could not answer the question to her satisfaction; but she stood motionless for a moment or two, recalling the words he had spoken as he stood beside the fly last night.

Then she took the handkerchief from her bosom, and folding it with careful neatness, placed it on the bank where she had sat.

"It is not likely that anyone will come here before he comes to fetch it this afternoon," she said.

Almost before the words were out of her lips, a stalwart form leapt the hedge and stood before her.

Doris started and her face flushed; then, pale and composed, she lifted her eyes to his.

"Well, now!" he said, in humble apology. "I seem faint to startle you, Miss Marlowe. I had no idea you were here—"

He stopped, awed to silence by her silence.

"You said you would come for it in the afternoon," she remarked, almost coldly.

He coloured.

"Yes I know; but I could not come this afternoon, and I thought—"

"You thought?" she said, very

gravely, her brows drawn together slightly.

"Well," he said, as if with an effort, "I will tell the truth. I thought that if I came this morning I might meet you. It was just a chance. Are you angry?"

She was silent a moment. Was she angry? She felt that she ought to be; and had a suspicion that he, so to speak, entrapped her into a meeting with him; and she honestly tried to be angry:

"It does not matter," she said, at last, very coldly. "There is your handkerchief."

He picked it up and thrust it into his pocket.

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" he said, gratefully. She turned to go, with a slight inclination of her head; but he went on, speaking hurriedly and so earnestly that she passed, her head half-turned over her shoulder, her eyes cast down; an attitude so full of grace that it almost drove what he was going to say out of his head.

"I don't deserve that you should have brought it."

"I don't think you do," she assented, a faint smile curving her lips at his ingenueness.

"I daresay you think it strange that I didn't ask you to send it to the Towers?" he went on. "You know you would not let me call at your place for it," he added, apologetically.

"Why did you not let me send it?" she asked, with faint curiosity.

"Well, I'll tell you," he said. "Won't you sit down and rest. It's warm this morning, and you have walked far, perhaps."

She hesitated a moment, then sat down, almost on the spot she had sat the preceding day, and Cecil Neville could not help a wild wish rushing to his heart that he was once again lying at her feet!

He sat down on the bank, as near to her as he dared, and leant on his elbow towards her.

"You see, I'm only a visitor at the Towers. The marquis—that's my uncle, you know—"

"I don't know," she said, with a faint smile, her eyes fixed dreamily on her book.

"Of course not," he assented. "Well, we don't get on together. He is not to put too fine a point on it—about as disagreeable a person as you'd find in two days' walk. We never have got on together. They say that a man always hates the fellow who is to come after him, unless it happens to be his own son; and I suppose that's the reason the marquis hates me—"

"Because you are to be the next marquis?" she said.

He nodded coolly, and tilted his hat so that it screened his eyes from the sun, and permitted him to feast upon her beautiful face more completely.

"Yes, that is about it; but I'll give the marquis the credit of hating everybody all round, himself into the bargain. I daresay; but I fancy he reserves a special line of detestation for his own relatives. Ah! you are smiling," he broke off, with a short laugh that sounded so good and frank. "You are wondering what this has to do with my disliking you to send the handkerchief."

Doris smiled again in assent.

"Well, you see, I thought it might come into the marquis's possession, or that he'd hear of it through Lady Grace—"

She turned her eyes upon his, not curiously, but with graceful questioning.

"That's a lady—Lord Pyton's daughter—who is stopping there," he explained, "and they might ask questions, and—bother me about it."

"Well?" she said, quietly.

He looked down half-hesitatingly, then met her eyes, which seemed in their fixed regard to reach to his soul.

"Well, I said that I'd tell you the whole truth, and I will; and the fact is I didn't want to be asked questions about—the accident yesterday. I—yes, I'll speak out, though I should offend you—I wanted to keep it to myself!"

"To keep it to yourself?" she repeated.

A flush came to his tanned face, and his eyes were raised for a moment.

"Yes. When a man gets a good thing. Suppose—he broke off—"A fellow found a big nugget or a rare diamond or anything of that sort, he would like to keep it to himself, you know."

She smiled again.

(To be continued.)

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