

The Story.

A Fight for a Wife.

CHAPTER III.
THE RIVAL SUITORS.

Was she conscious of the intermeddling war which was raging in this peaceful spot, and of which she was obviously the cause? We met the young lady next morning, just as she was going down stairs to breakfast. She looked the very impersonation of all gentleness and innocence and good-nature. If angry passions were raging elsewhere, she, at least, preserved a cheerful serenity of mind.

Doubtless these two gentlemen had both got up very early, on the chance of having a little quiet talk with her if she happened to be taking the morning air. Doubtless, too, they had enjoyed each other's society for an hour or two before breakfast; they were both looking rather impatient when we went down.

"Oh, Miss Newton, may I give you these flowers?" said Mr. Maurice, bringing forward a very pretty little nosegay of wild blossoms, which he had himself culled from the meadows and hedges.

"Thank you very much," said she, and he looked very pleased and proud. "And thank you, too, Mr. Humphreys, for the charming bouquet you sent me this morning. It was so kind of you."

Everybody stared; everybody except that stout and placid Machiavelli, on whose impassive face not even one smile of triumph appeared. But how had he contrived to get and send her a bouquet at such an hour? He must have got the flowers overnight. He must have lain in wait for the maid, taking up hot water to Miss Newton's room, and bribed her to carry the bouquet and a little message at the same time. Now, a man whose attentions to a young lady begin before breakfast—who sends her a bouquet along with her hot water—means something serious.

"And now, Miss Newton," said this bold person, already asserting a sort of guardianship over her, "what are we to do to-day? Shall we make up a party? The morning is beautiful—the chestnuts, the red hawthorn, the laburnum, all are most lovely—and as for the river, you will be delighted when you go outside."

Miss Amy made no answer, but looked to us, her proper guardians.

"I am quite sure, Miss Newton," said Mr. Maurice, in a sort of scornful way, "you'll soon get heartily sick of sitting in a fisherman's punt, doing nothing but watch some one else trying to catch fish that aren't there. I don't believe they've even got here that wooden fish that the landlords in some places moor deep down in the water so as to get people to come and fish for it. I suppose you've heard that fisherman after fisherman comes in and swears the fish made a rush at his fly—more likely in the case of a wooden fish than of a real one, I should say. You've heard what Dr. Johnson—"

"You needn't," said the elder lover, with a sudden fierceness—"you needn't take Miss Newton back to the time of Dr. Johnson for pendantry, stupidity and rudeness. There is plenty of all three going about in our own day."

Miss Newton looked alarmed, and said, gently, "I shouldn't at all mind looking at some one fishing. I don't know how it is done in English rivers."

"Oh, thank you," said Mr. Humphreys, getting quite cheerful again. "But don't you imagine we are going to victimize you. Oh, no; what you must see, first of all, is the beautiful scenery about here. We can drive from here to the Duke of Westminster's place at Clifden, then on to Maldenhead Bridge and Taplow, then on to Burnham Beeches, and back again another way. And I have a wagonette coming at eleven for you."

And at eleven o'clock, sure enough, there was a wagonette standing at the door, and the whole of us submissively went out as if we had been taken possession of by this indefatigable government official. But how were we to sit?

"I say, Maurice," Humphreys remarked, in a careless way, "I think you said you knew the country about here?"

"Oh, very well indeed," said the unsuspecting victim; "I know every inch of it."

"Then perhaps you wouldn't mind sitting beside the driver, and telling him where he ought to take us? Wouldn't that be the best way?" Miss Newton said something very timidly in reply, and the young man, with black rage in his heart, got up beside the driver. When the ladies were not looking Humphreys winked to me; but I could not encourage familiarity on the part of so unscrupulous a person.

Our young friend had certainly a favorable opportunity that morning for making the acquaintance of certain sorts of our English scenery in their most charming aspects. We drove through pleasant country lanes, the hedgebanks of which were brilliant with spring flowers; we passed through tiny villages, and the cottage-gardens were smothered in blossoms; we came upon glades of the blue river flowing smoothly through rich meadows which were white with daisies; and then, again, through an opening in the trees we could see the higher land beyond, with the Clifden woods, rich with the foliage of the early summer. Miss Amy was indeed delighted; and the driving through the fresh air had brought a color to her cheeks and a light to her eyes which rendered her more than usually pretty. Then she was most friendly with Mr. Humphreys; for somehow or other he had put the notion into her head that all this was his doing, and she was grateful to him for every beautiful thing she saw. You would have thought he had planted those red chestnut trees (three hundred years before) in anticipation of her coming.

"And really, Miss Newton, you mustn't go away from England without seeing far more of it. Why should you go with your parents to Paris? Your other two sisters are quite sufficient society for them. Paris! It is the most miserable city in the world to spend a holiday in. The white glare and heat of the streets will blind you. You will lose all the health you have acquired here, and begin to get headaches, and feel drowsy, and disgusted with the whole creation. Now, how long did you say your parents meant to stay in Paris before going back to America?"

"Three months," said she, promptly, "you stay with our good friends here for that time. They will be delighted to have you, I know; and by-and-bye they will be going down into Surrey, where you will see quite another sort of scenery; and see something of our English country life. You will, won't you?"

The audacity of this person was remarkable. Of course we had to press Miss Amy to stay; and although we did so honestly, one generally wishes to have one's offers of hospitality proceeded from one's self. However, Mr. Humphreys

seemed calmly to ignore all such little prejudices. He told Miss Newton what she could expect by giving up the trip to Paris and staying with us. He gave her a description of Box Hill and Mickleham Downs which would have been worthy of the poet Thompson or of George Robins, the Auctioneer. The girl, of course, could not promise; but she was apparently well inclined toward the proposal, and said she would see what her parents said when they came back from Edinburgh. All this, be it observed, was overheard by the young man sitting up in front; what he thought of it can only be imagined, for he maintained a morose and rigid silence.

"You see, my dear Miss Newton," remarked our gay friend, "you must do unto others as you would be done by. Now I mean to give America three full months."

"Oh, are you coming over?" the girl said, her whole face inadvertently lighting up.

"Oh, yes," he answered in his off-hand way. "I have long proposed it. Now I shall do it—in the autumn. When do you say your papa will probably be going back?"

"About the beginning of September," she said; and then she added, quite unguardedly, "and what a pleasant thing it would be if we happened to find you in the same steamer!"

"Well," said he, sagely, "I have generally found that a man should never leave such things to chance. It is better to play the good genius for yourself. Accordingly, I think that if you go over to America in the beginning of September, and if you would kindly let me know the name of the steamer, you may pretty confidently reckon on finding me—you may call it by chance if you like—among other passengers."

"Oh, and we could introduce you to so many nice people—mamma would be most delighted to do so. But do you really mean to go over?"

"I give my word of honor," said he, "that if you will tell me what steamer you go back to America by I shall go by that steamer too, and take a three months' holiday in the States. Is that explicit? or shall I put the terms of the contract in writing?"

Now, an extraordinary incident occurred at this moment. Humphreys with an amiable smile on his face, suddenly called out, "I say, Maurice, it must be uncommonly slow for you up there. Come on in here, and I'll change places with you."

Could a more courteous offer be made? The young man refused sulkily. Then he was pressed; and at last he consented. Mr. Humphreys got up beside the driver, and we heard him begin to chaff that serious person in a fashion which brought many a smile to Miss Amy's lips. She was evidently listening more to him than to us.

We drove up and through the beautiful woods of Clifden, the birds singing all around us, the white clouds sailing through the blue overhead. We drove on to Burnham Beeches, and there, in the midst of the forest, saw the great gnarled and twisted gray trunks, to which even the least imaginative of Londoners make pious pilgrimages. We drove back to Maldenhead Bridge, and had luncheon at the inn there, and went down to the river and wandered about for an hour; then we got into the wagonette again and set out for Marlow. All this time the most patient and winning efforts of Queen Titia were ineffectual in smoothing down the savage feelings of the young man who sat beside us.

"There is nothing," he said to Miss Amy, "which vexes me so much as a show of coarse joviality and plow-boy wit when one is in the midst of beautiful scenery. A day like when one is in the midst of many things you had half forgotten; and this reminds you of many things you had half forgotten; and when these associations are present to the mind, painful and sad as many of them may be, it is not pleasant to be shocked by an impertinent jocularity. 'Don't you think so?'"

"But why should a pretty piece of country make you so sad?" she said, quite naturally and cheerfully. "It ought to raise one's spirits."

He said no more after that; and indeed a silent person is apt to be overlooked if he have four companions all sufficiently talkative. That young man was losing ground.

CHAPTER IV.
THE CHALLENGE.

When we got back to Marlow the two ladies went indoors; we three strolled round to the meadows by the side of the river. I did not at all like the look of the young man's face; there was mischief in it, and I was not at all sure that he was not a dangerous person.

"I suppose," said he to me, in a loud and ostentatious fashion, "that Miss Newton is under your care?"

"She is for the present," he continued, in the same loud fashion, "her making an assignment to be accompanied to America by a gentleman who has only been casually introduced to her by her parents, and of whom neither she nor they know any thing."

"If you mean me, young gentleman," said Mr. Humphreys, ceasing to whistle "Love's Young Dream," "I'd advise you to be a little more respectful."

"Age commands respect, certainly," said the younger man, with an unmistakable sneer.

"Yes, and school-boys, when they don't show it, get whipped," remarked the other, beginning to whistle again.

"I'll tell you what it is, exclaimed Maurice, turning fiercely around. 'I'll tell you what my opinion is, that a man who tries to entrap a young girl into a clandestine appointment, and without the knowledge of her parents, and he old enough to be her father, is no better than a cad—I said cad, sir.'"

"Oh, did you? Did you, really?" said Mr. Humphreys. Now there is an operation which, in the vulgar tongue, is known as "ballooning," and which consists in seizing a person from behind by the collar of his coat and by another portion of his attire, and driving him on before you. A person who is thus "ballooned" is very helpless; he may squeal, or use bad language, or try to kick, but on he must go. Well, no sooner had Mr. Maurice uttered these last words than Mr. Humphreys immediately laid hold of him in the manner above described, and began to run him down the slope of the meadows to the side of the river. The younger man did squeal—with absolute rage—he did use bad language, and with a might and main struggled to get free. His enemy—with a shout of demoniacal laughter which rang through the place—held him firm, and drove him right down to the stream. The whole affair had taken place so quickly that there was no chance of interference, and it was all over in a second.

For, as it happened, there was a log of wood lying concealed among the grass by the river's side; Maurice, tripping over it, stumbled and fell headlong into the water; while Humphreys, stumbling also, but having proper warning, fell, but managed to save himself from going into the stream. The next minute Maurice had scrambled out again through the rushes, dripping from head to heel, and trying to get his wet hair out of his eyes. His hat was quietly floating down the Thames.

His rival stood firm. I fully expected to be the unwilling witness of a combat like that which the lover of Helen of

Kirkconnell describes when, by the river's side, he drew his sword and hacked his rival "in pieces sma'." But the young man was a wise young man; and who can fight with one's eyes blinded, and one's garments heavy with water?

"You shall hear from me within an hour," said he ominously, as he made for the garden of the inn, by which way he had hoped to get in, unperceived, to the house. Then ensued a strange and wild scene. The elderly gentleman tossed his wide-awake into the air. He caught it coming down, and kicked it a dozen yards out into the long grass. Then, with his hands in the air, he performed a savage dance of joy, snapping his fingers, and calling out:

"How hath the cheeky fellow! He hath been overcome and vanquished, utterly smote out and annihilated. My dear friend, shall we have a drink on the strength of this? 'Tis now the witching hour of half-past six, when he who loves his dinner might have a tiny glass of sherry and bitters—*nicht wahr?*"

His friend took a more sober view of the situation. "The best thing you can do, Humphreys, is to compose your nerves with something else than sherry. You'll have to fight that young man as soon as he gets dry clothes on—you may as well make up your mind to it."

"And who's afraid of that?" said he. "Who's afraid of that sand-colored bell-rope—that elongated pelican—that indefinite length of Sydenham trousers and shirt-collar? Bah! I will explode him into the primeval elements; I will twist him round the trunk of a tree, and people will mistake him in the morning for a snake that has died of a bilious attack."

CHAPTER V.
THE DUEL.

In a very short space of time young Maurice came out again, dressed in another suit of clothes. He went past us rapidly without speaking. We saw him cross the bridge and go into the town.

"Now what is he up to?" said Mr. Humphreys, a trifle more serious.

"He is either gone to get a policeman to give you in charge for assault, or to get a pair of pistols at an iron-monger's." "Pistols!" said Mr. Humphreys, contemptuously; "that would be like the lunatic."

And it was; for a few moments after, Mr. Maurice returned, and, coming up to his rival, firmly and courteously informed him that he meant to fight him; that he did not think he would have a fair chance in a vulgar boxing-match, but that he would have a fair chance in a duel, which they could settle their quarrel in the adjoining meadow. Mr. Humphreys listened with a laugh on his face; then he saw that it was no good in making a joke about it, and finally, stung by a chance remark of his opponent, he said, "All right; come along."

Now what was the third person, who was the spectator of all this folly, to do? The whole affair seemed so incredible that to call any one's attention to it might have been compromising; and yet, to all appearances, these two were really going down to the side of the river to load these pistols and fire them at each other.

"I thought," said I to them both, "that when gentlemen in France went out to fire half-loaded weapons at each other, they generally took with them a doctor to make believe the thing was serious. Don't you mean to have a doctor, or any seeing thing as serious, to do?"

"We shall do as we please by ourselves," said the younger man; and the two imbeciles walked off.

There remained but one thing for me to do. In a certain chamber in that old-fashioned inn there was a lady dressing for dinner; and when she is finally arranging the flowers in her hair she does not like to be disturbed. However, when I represented to her the deadly schemes of those two people whom we could see walking down to the meadow, she quite forgot the last yellow rose-bud and caught at a light shawl which she threw round her head and shoulders.

"Shall we tell them the truth?" said Titia.

"What truth?" said I; "only whatever truth you have to tell them, you'd better look sharp."

What a placid evening was shining all around when we hastened down to the river—the sweet-brier of the garden scenting the air, and the beautiful tints in the sky showing on the clear bosom of the Thames! We could see these two black figures down by the tall green rushes. They had apparently settled the preliminaries, and were now some dozen yards apart.

"They see us now—oh, the two gables!" said my companion. The notion of bringing a lady on the scene was obviously successful; one could see each of them smuggling something away into his coat-pocket. When we arrived on the spot away into his coat-pocket. When we arrived on the spot away into his coat-pocket. When we arrived on the spot away into his coat-pocket.

They were evidently waiting in the beauty of the scenery; they were evidently waiting in the beauty of the scenery; they were evidently waiting in the beauty of the scenery.

if we had seen the rush of young fish to the surface, obviously getting out of the way of a pike.

"No, I did not," said Queen Titia, with a gracious smile. "I have been too busy thinking how I should send you two gentlemen. What do you mean by going away by yourselves in this manner, instead of waiting in the garden until Miss Newton came down? You ought to pay her every attention while she is our guest; otherwise she will not think much of our English people, and she will have a bad account of us to give to Mr. St. Vincent."

"Mr. St. Vincent?" they both repeated mechanically. "Yes," was the innocent answer; "the gentleman whom she is to marry as soon as she returns home."

There was a strange pause. Mr. Humphreys began to stare about and whistle. The other gentleman looked uncomfortable, and blushed hotly.

"But I shall forgive you if you come back to the inn at once," said the gentle monstress; "and indeed dinner will be waiting for us in twenty minutes. You won't mind my running back by myself?"

When she had gone, the two men looked at each other for a moment, then young Maurice, with a contemptuous smile, tossed his pistol in among the reeds. Another splash told us that the second weapon had followed it. Then they stood and looked at each other again.

"Look here, old chap," the elder gentleman said, in a bland fashion, "there isn't much use in making a fuss about this. I beg your pardon for any awkward little thing that may have occurred. When a man is made a fool of by a woman he's not responsible for his actions—what do you think?"

"I quite think so," said the other; and they shook hands amicably.

Next morning our two friends discovered that urgent business called them away to London, and they left us with many expressions of regret. It was remarked, moreover, by a certain gentle-eyed young lady, that no reference had been made to that compact about a trip to the United States.

—THE END.

Is the doggerel this month's? So numerous to publish the three, keeping spoil—for an space.

I have much request and 1st—For the by the 18th. For the lar November a chromo. The the keen spi expect a liv of obtaining ADVOCATE m

Humboldt

DEAR UNCLE you requested neices to write encouragement lines from this aave long been in father's family here, and like your departure, amusing puzzle ever read; the nuer you seem but she tells me will not let me I laugh so much I do not study, nhaps I don't, b time afterwar and going to s vocate bound comes to see u I can turn u ment—for m nice puzzles to laughter and p evening. Som occasionally read, intend s volume in Ja the best pract culture they have been cousins drin you we Uncle, and so We would ma I guess I am I will tell you my next.

Caledonia

DEAR UNCLE has forgotten the last pap Uncle Tom, posing they when he go do then? 2 so good-nat city ill-nat times he ge men immen have had.

DEAR UNCLE has forgotten the last pap Uncle Tom, posing they when he go do then? 2 so good-nat city ill-nat times he ge men immen have had.