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For Love of a Woman;

New Romeo and Juliet.

CHAPTER VI
A BUNCH OF VIOLETS.

He had spent the greater part of the day looking for her, his disappointment growing hour by hour as he grew convinced that he should not find her; in, he lost her forever. If he had only known her name, he could have enquired in the town; but he could scarcely go about asking people if they had happened to see the loveliest girl on earth, with dark hair and wonderful, blue eyes, besides, there was to him, something almost sacred in this meeting with her, and she shrank from putting commonplace questions about her.

By luncheon-time he was, I am sorry to say, in anything but a good temper. Fortunately the marquis rarely put in an appearance at that meal, or, in all probability, there would have occurred an open quarrel between him and his nephew, and Lord Cecil would have fled the house. Lady Grace, too, did not appear; she had gone to pay a visit to a friend in the neighborhood, and Lord Cecil, therefore, ate his cutlet and drank his Chateau Margaux in solitude.

He was not at all sorry for this, for, to tell the truth, Lady Grace's candour, though extremely original, had very much embarrassed him, and Lord Cecil was too little used to embarrassment to find it agreeable. She was very beautiful, very charming, and he admired her very much; but still he felt her absence a relief; he was free to muse over the unknown, who had eluded his search in the morning.

Suddenly, as he finished his last glass of claret, he remembered the play-bill he had picked up on the terrace, and it occurred to him that here was the means of escaping dinner at the Towers; for since we parted yesterday, and to say anything less to her would seem to me to be saying nothing at all!

"I shall not be home to dinner," he said to the stately butler. "I think I'll go to the theatre."

"Yes my lord," responded the butler, displaying not a sign of the disgust which the announcement caused

him. To think that any one—a viscount especially—should prefer going to the play to dining!

"What sort of a theatre is it?" asked Lord Cecil, carelessly, and for the sake of talking.

"Very good, my lord, I believe," was the solemn reply. "I have heard that it's almost as good as a London theatre, and that there is an excellent company there. They play 'Romeo and Juliet' to-night. That is," he made haste to add, "I heard some of the servants talking about it. I never go to the theatre myself, my lord. I will send a small dinner, of three or four courses, at any early hour in the breakfast-room, for you, my lord."

"All right," said Lord Cecil, carelessly. "That will give you a lot of trouble, will it not. I can get a chop or something at the hotel in the town, can't I?"

"Oh, no, my lord; it will be no trouble," the butler made haste to reply; "the marquis would be much annoyed if your lordship were to be inconvenienced."

Lord Cecil nodded. He could scarcely suppress a smile at the butler's crediting the marquis with such hospitable sentiments.

"All right," he said, again: "I'll have it at half-past six."

"Yes, my lord," assented the butler, with a faint sigh; it seemed to him a dreadful sacrifice; and Lord Cecil soon afterwards took up his hat and went out.

He made his way to the meadows, and stood looking down on the brook and at the spot where Polly had landed him so nearly upon his head; and at the bank where the fair unknown, whose face and voice haunted him perpetually, had sat, and a vague hope dwelt in his breast that she might, perhaps, revisit the scene as he was doing.

But an hour passed and she did not come, and he strode off, moodily, full of disappointment and half-angry with himself.

"I am a fool!" he thought. "She has forgotten me by this time. Why should she come back here? If I were to meet her what could I say to her? She'd only likely think me an impertinent snob if I did more than lift my hat. I couldn't very well tell her that I have scarcely thought of anything but her since we parted yesterday; and to say anything less to her would seem to me to be saying nothing at all!"

Thus musing, he went into the town, his stalwart figure, with its military carriage, his handsome, patrician face, and his Poole-made clothes, which he wore as if they had grown on him.

causing no little sensation amongst the inhabitants.

But though he stared into the shop windows and looked at every girl who came in sight, he did not see the girl of whom he was thinking; and it was nearly seven before he came back to the "small dinner of three or four courses" which the considerate butler had served for him in the breakfast-room.

He was half-inclined to give up the idea of the theatre, and if it had not been for his dread of the marquis's society he would not have done so. As it was, he ate his dinner slowly, and enjoyed it, although he was in love; and then, and not till then, he fully made up his mind to go.

"I'll have a broughman round in ten minutes, my lord," said the butler; but Lord Cecil declined it.

"I'd rather walk," he said. "I like a stroll after dinner."

The butler—more in sorrow than in anger—asked what time he should send the carriage; but Lord Cecil declined a conveyance for any part of the evening.

"I'll walk back," he said. "I rather like a stroll after the theatre;" and the butler, with a sigh of resignation, gave him up a job.

As he walked along the lanes, fragrant with the breath of spring, a thought—a hope—flashed through his mind that he might, perhaps see the girl in the theatre. He never asked himself what his object in seeking her might be; men seldom ask themselves such questions. Lord Cecil was not altogether a bad character. He was a modern Lovelace in pursuit of his prey by any means. He was not, in fact, a Lovelace at all. He had lived in a fast set, had been the star and centre of the crack regiment in which he had held a commission, had gone through the ordeal of London life as completely as most young men of title; but he had come out of it—if he could be said to have come out of it—not altogether unscathed, but not very badly burnt or scorched.

The Nevilles had always been wild, and Lord Cecil had not been any tamer than his ancestors; but in all his wildness he had drawn the line. For women in general—for the sex as a whole—he possessed a respect which had sometimes amused his less scrupulous companions.

He had overpaid his allowance, lost large sums at baccarat and kindred games, turned night into day, risked his money and his neck at steep-chases, and generally, as his friends put it, played Old Harry; but no woman had, as yet, any indictment against him. He could truthfully declare, with too Frenchmen, on his deathbed: "No woman can come to my grave and say that, for want of heart, I broke hers."

To women he was always frank and gentle, and the women of his set admired him. If he had broken no hearts in the sterner sense of the word, he had, all unwittingly, caused many to ache, and many a belle of the London season had "given herself away" to Cissy Neville, as his intimate friends called him.

And now the marquis had intimated that he must marry Lady Grace. Lord Cecil thought of last night's after-dinner conversation as he strolled along, tried to think of it gravely and seriously, but somehow he could not; all his thoughts flew, whether he would or would not, to the dark-haired, blue-eyed girl he had so nearly ridden over in the meadows. After all, he was not obliged to marry Lady Grace; the marquis could not compel him; and as for the money—

He shrugged his shoulders, and having reached the theatre, put the subject from him.

It must be confessed that he followed the box-keeper to the private-box he had taken with rather doubtful anticipations.

"Romeo and Juliet" in a country theatre is not always an entrancing

spectacle, and Lord Cecil only wondered how long he should stand it. He was rather surprised at the air of elegance of the house, and he congratulated himself, as he looked round at the well-dressed and aristocratic audience, that he had come in evening-dress—for he had at one time thought of retaining his morning clothes.

He settled himself in his box—he had arrived during the entr'acte—and looked at the programme.

"Juliet—Doris Marlowe."

The name struck him at once as a pretty one, and he did not trouble to read the rest of the cast. Then the curtain drew up on the balcony scene, and, leaning forward carelessly, he looked at the stage and saw, there in the balcony, the girl for whom he had been seeking, the girl with the dark hair and blue eyes!

For a moment he thought he was dreaming, and the colour rushed to his face. Then he looked again, "all his soul in his eyes," and saw that he was not dreaming, but that it was, in solemn truth, she herself.

If he had had any doubts, her voice would have dispelled them. He would have remembered and recognized these musical tones if he had heard them fifty years hence instead of as many hours.

He was amazed, bewildered, engrossed, but not too engrossed to be aware that the Juliet he looked upon—Miss Doris Marlowe—was a great actress.

If she moved the rest of the vast audience, imagine how she moved him who had been thinking of her and longing to see her!

His heart beat wildly, the colour came and went in his face; he was lost to everything but that bright, celestial, and yet purely human being on the stage, then rendering the exquisite lines of her part; and it was not until he caught one or two curious glances directed at him that he drew back a little and tried to look simply interested like the rest.

The drop scene went down on the act, and he—to use his own phrase—"pulled himself together."

He got up and went out into the lobby, and mad his way to the refreshment bar; and when he had obtained his brandy-and-soda he lingered over it and got in conversation with the attendant.

"This Miss Doris Marlowe is a great success?" he said, trying to speak indifferently.

"Oh, yes, she is, indeed," said the girl, with a long sigh. She had dreamt of being an actress herself, poor thing! "I just stole out and looked in at the last act. A success? I should think so! I call it magnificent. I never saw anything like it. Did you, sir?"

"No, never," responded Lord Cecil.

"She is a London actress, I suppose? And yet I don't remember seeing her in London," he added.

"No, I don't think she's ever played in London, but always in the provinces. This is the first time she's ever done anything like this. She's played here in small parts. This is her first appearance in Shakespeare."

"Who is she?" he asked, endeavouring to make his question commonplace, yet feeling that he was hanging on her reply.

The girl paused in the wiping of a glass and looked puzzled.

"Who is she? I don't know sir. I question whether anybody knows rightly, excepting Mr. Jeffrey."

"Mr. Jeffrey? Who is he?" asked Lord Cecil with a sharp pang.

"Oh, the old gentleman who goes about with her. He ain't her father, but kind of guardian. He was an actor once. It was he, so they say, who taught her to act. Anyhow, she treats him like a father."

(To be Continued.)

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