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WHEN THE ICE WAS BROKEN

(Continued from page 6.)

The mutual laughter put them on quite a friendly footing. The ice was indeed broken, but it added danger to the situation; the depths beneath were now uncovered.

"You will stay and have tea, won't you?" he pleaded, the antimacassar at last relegated once again to the sofa.

"Lucy will be furious if I let you go away again before she has seen you. She is my only living relative in all this weary world, the only person I have to care for me and take an interest in me; you wouldn't be the cause of the little rift within the lute—would you?"

"Oh! never!" she said; "never in all the world! But tell me, why did you greet me in that unconventional way when I came in? I do not mean the antimacassar."

Their eyes met, and they smiled again in perfect good comradeship. "You—well, you called me by my Christian name; how did you know it?"

He picked up the sketch, and handed it to her in silence. As she took it wonderingly their hands met and as hastily parted, and the sketch dropped between them on to the floor. They both stooped in their embarrassment to pick it up, and as they did so his moustache brushed her cheek. Monica turned scarlet. Bobby turned white; she put her hand up to her throat and turned away in silence. He gazed at her long and passionately.

"You see," he said at last, breaking the silence that was making itself felt between them, "your name is written across the sketch—Monica"—he said it low and reverently—"the most beautiful name on earth!"

"My mother's name," she said, softly; "she died quite young, and father never recovered from the shock; from that day he was a broken-hearted man!"

"Oh, don't, please!" Bobby said, abruptly, then he flushed hotly at her look of surprise.

"Some men," he stammered, "are so terribly tender-hearted. I possess the most unfortunate gift of being able to put myself in another man's place and to feel all his sorrow and misery. Oh! I know so well how a man would feel if he lost his Monica—his all!"

His tone was low, and quivering with passion, his eyes rested on her, and burnt her with their ardent gaze.

Monica shivered, and turned away. "Oh, don't talk like that!" she cried, "you looked then just as father used to before he died—of a broken heart, they say!"

"Men have died and worms have eaten them,

But not for love,"

our friend Shakespeare says; but, then, even he didn't know everything. Next to living for love, the next best thing is to die for it."

"Let us talk about something more cheerful," she said, softly. "You look quite white and faint. Let me shake up your cushions for you, and then I will ring for tea; I am sure you want it."

She crossed the room slowly, and, stooping gently over him, shook up the cushions behind his back. He caught her small hands and pressed them ardently to his lips. His self-control had left him completely at her touch.

"Oh, if you only knew," he cried, hopelessly, "how I love you, and how I have loved you for months! Don't think I am mad. Monica, I've seen you to-day in the flesh for the first time, but I have communed with you in the spirit for the last six months. From the day Lucy sent me out that sketch to India I knew my fate was sealed. Don't think I am a cad to tell you this when we are alone together, like this. I am not taking advantage of your goodness; I cannot keep it in any longer. I ache for you night and day. I know I could make you happy. Dear, I am so lonely without you. You think I am mad; I'm not—I never was saner in my life.

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