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**The Romance of a Marriage.**

CHAPTER XXII

"And it is so, isn't it?"

He is silent. If he could but tell her all—if he could explain to her the nature of the net which enfolds him, and which he is going to cut and cast aside. But he cannot. She is too pure, too innocent, with all her girlish wit and clear intellect, to understand. He knows, full truly, that at the first word her unsophisticated nature, unstained by any knowledge of the world, would shrink and recoil from him. And he loves her too dearly to risk it. Ah, how often a strong man's love makes him weak!

"It is so," she goes on, her eyes fixed on the stream, not on his face, her voice harmonising subtly with the murmur of the water as it flows and breaks over the stones. "And I would not hold you back if I could. I would not be like the foolish maiden in the poem, who covered her lover's ears with her lily-white hands while the battle-cry sounded, and held him till he had lost fame, and honour, and all that made his love dear to her." She stops suddenly and laughs.

But Sir Herrick sees nothing absurd in it. Though she does not know it, the words are fearfully true, and cannot return until he comes forth from the struggle victorious.

And as he lies at her feet—at the feet of the first woman he has really loved—he curses his fate that it should be necessary to leave her.

"So," says Paula, "I bid you go with a light heart, as the poet says; and I promise you I will not weep while you are absent. You shall not come back and find me red-eyed and wan, like Lady Christabel. It always seemed to me such a risky thing for the lady Christabel to do."

"Risky, as how?" he says.

She laughs.

"Don't you see? When the knight came back and found her as red-eyed and pale-faced as the poet said, would there have been anything as-blingling in his jumping on his maid and riding off again?"

**And the Worst is Yet to Come**



He laughs softly. He knows that she was talking against time; that the gentle, loving, maiden heart was shrinking from the moment of parting.

"It is a very good proverb which says, 'Don't cry until you are married,'" says Paula, laughing, but with a strange liquid look in her dark eyes.

"You shall not cry then, I swear!" he says, with all a man's overweening confidence. "No, my darling, life shall be all sunshine and no shade. Why, see how brightly it promises. Even mine uncle, the dreaded major, goes down before you vanquished! Even the major!"

Paula looks from the stream to the handsome, exultant face with an expression of thoughtful amusement.

"Yes," she says, "and yet—"

"Well?" he says.

"And yet there were moments when I thought that the major 'went down,' as you call it, rather too suddenly."

"Oh, that's his way," responds Sir Herrick, carelessly. "You mean that he was a little too demonstrative, rather too ready with his blessing. That's all right. He likes to do things in a theatrical way, with a little flourish, you know. My darling, you have quite conquered him!"

"Have I?" says Paula. "I am very glad. I should not like him to be against me," and a faint shudder runs through her.

Sir Herrick laughs. Then suddenly, as the sound of the stable clock comes on the evening breeze chiming the hour, the laugh dies away. The time for parting has come, and although the parting is brief—only three days—he shrinks from it.

"That is the hour," he says, gently.

"And here is the man," says Paula, dropping her hand on his arm. "Must you go now?"

"I must, darling," he says, and he puts his arm round her. "Let us go back to the cottage."

"No," she says, "let us say good-bye here. It will be better—for me, I shall sit here until the sun has quite sunk, and then I shall go home; and Alice will talk and Bob will yawn, and I shall hear neither of them. Oh, if I could but sleep away the next three days!"

What can he do? A love whose passionate intensity fills his whole being holds him in thrall; a remorse and regret intersecting it. He could but take her in his arms and kiss her. Kiss her with a prayer in every kiss; a vow of penitence in every murmured word; and then he tears himself away, and leaves her sitting staring, not after him, but at the stream beside which she learnt to love him.

She sits there until the sun, the earth's sun, has disappeared as her sun has done, and then she picks up the rod and goes home.

She is very pale, pale even to the lips, as she stands upon the verandah and looks to the east where Sir Herrick has gone. It is love's first parting, and it has strained her young heart's chords to their extreme tension.

"Good-bye, sweetheart, good-bye," she murmurs, holding out her hands, and with a smile more pitiful than tears; "good-bye!"

Then she turns and enters the house, and goes towards her room with a suppressed sigh, but the door of the den is open, and Bob hears her.

**EE SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE EE**



THE DOCTOR: "Why, yes, indeed, and so, if you take a Spooning Powder and he will soon be all right."

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"Is that you, Paula?" he says from within, and she pauses and looks in at the open door.

Bob is hard at work at his accounts; his table is littered with books, his hair is all over his head, and the ink is all over his fingers as usual.

"Yes," says Paula, "I've just come in."

"Oh," says Bob, absently, "where is Sir Herrick?"

"He has gone to town," says Paula.

"To town! Has he? What for?" demands Bob in that indifferent tone which a brother uses when speaking of his sister's betrothed. "What's he gone to town for? The fish are well on, and London is full of dust."

"I don't know: business," says Paula.

"Business? Nonsense!" retorts Bob, emphatically. "He never had any business. He is a swell, and swells never have any business of any kind; they've no business to," with a grin at the epigram.

"Well, he's gone," says Paula, smiling ruefully.

"He's an idiot," says Bob, decisively, "to leave the country on such a day for smoky London. But as to business, that's all nonsense, isn't it, Alice?" For Alice has come to the door and stands looking at the pair with her cold contemptive smile.

"What is it?" she asks.

Bob wipes his pen on his coat-sleeve, and nods at Paula.

"Sir Herrick's gone to town on business," he says, "at least, so she says; and I tell her that swells like Sir Rick never have any business."

"Has Sir Herrick gone?" says Alice, with well-feigned surprise. "Really?"

"Really," replies Paula, with a faint smile, and half-inclined to be impatient.

"Dear me," says Alice, staring at the flushed face with that cold, fascinating stare which is so trying to bear, "what on earth has he gone for; not to see his uncle—the major is at Lord Hurstley's, you know?"

"Yes, I know," retorts Paula, un- easily, and impatient at her uneasiness. "I know he is, but I suppose Rick can have business in London apart from his uncle."

"Yes," assents Alice, reluctantly, and with marked hesitation. "But what business?"

A faint flush rises to the pale face.

"I didn't ask him. I suppose he knows, and if he knows, that is sufficient."

"Oh, quite sufficient," says Alice, with a cold smile. "But isn't it rather strange that he didn't tell you what the business is?"

"He didn't tell me," says poor Paula, driven to bay.

"And he is generally so frank," murmurs Alice. "I should have asked him if I had been you, Paula, dear."

"Asked him!" echoed Paula, indignantly, a crimson flush spreading over her face.

Alice nods and smiles.

"A man doesn't leave the girl he is in love with on the second or third day for such a journey without telling her what he leaves her for. But—a thousand pardons, as the major would say—perhaps he has told you!"

"No, he has not," says Paula, meeting the sarcastic, blue eyes with a steadfast gaze. "No, he has not, and I didn't ask him; I would scorn to do so. Do you think that I cannot trust him out of my sight?"

Alice shrugs her shoulders.

"Don't be furious, my dear," she says, "I only asked; and if you want to know my sentiments, I do think it strange that a man should go off like that—so soon, too!—and not tell the girl he is engaged to where and why he is going."

And with a smile and a shake of the head Alice glides upstairs, leaving Paula and Bob staring at each other speechless.

CHAPTER XXIII

One of those disagreeable persons who spend their time in inventing proverbs and wise laws which tend to demonstrate the weakness and folly of mankind once hit upon this one:

"The road to hell is paved with good resolutions."

It is one of the most hateful and odious of proverbs that ever saw the light, and it does more harm in the way of making faint hearts grow fainter than any known.

But oh! ye gods and little fishes! how perfectly true it is. Don't we all of us remember the good resolutions we have made by the thousand and broken; and how, after breaking the resolution to get rid of such and such a habit, we return to it and hug it more fondly than ever.

"I never resolve," said Stonewall Jackson; "I do." But unfortunately we are not all Stonewall Jackson; and we have to be content with resolving first, at any rate, and doing afterwards.

All the way up in the train that bore him swiftly to town, Sir Herrick resolved. There was something to be accomplished at the end of the journey, and before he could return, that he was determined to accomplish. There were certain chains that held him fast bound and fettered; he was firmly resolved to knock those chains off, and come back to kneel at the feet of his divinity, a free man. Now, no man can knock off chains, real or metaphorical, without some trouble and some clanking.

Sir Herrick felt that there would be a great deal of both; you see, everyone who was anybody in the great world knew of these chains and of the bondage into which he had sold himself, and there would, consequently, be some talk and chatter.

But Sir Herrick was resolved; and his face grew quite stern and severe in the firmness of his determination.

The old, past life should be done away with; he would sever it from the future and let it fly down the wind. He had discovered at last what love really was, and how precious it was; his eyes had been opened, a veil torn from before him and the reality of happiness.

There stood nothing between him and this happiness, now that the Honourable Francis had given his consent; but these aforesaid chains and their rivets must be knocked off, and he must be free.

It was rather a bitter journey; full of remorse, full of regret. He had gone into bondage with his eyes open; he had coiled these chains round him with his own hands, feeling them to be nothing but silken fetters, garlands of roses, full of sweet perfume and pleasant to the eye; but they had turned out harder than iron and more galling than thorns.

The gods make of our pleasant vices whips with which they scourge us. Exactly; and Sir Herrick was just beginning to realise the truth of it.

And yet—and yet—as he leaned back, with half-closed eyes and tightly set lips, the thought came to him: it must be done gently, with a tender hand, and with the greatest consideration. It was a great task, and as he drew nearer to London it seemed to grow greater and more formidable—so formidable that, as he jumped into a hansom, he told the man to drive to the chambers in the Inn instead of to Raglan Street, Chelsea.

(To be continued.)

**Fashion Plates.**



Pattern 3121 is here portrayed. It is cut in 4 Sizes: 4, 6, 8, and 10 years. Size 8 will require 3 1/4 yards of 36 inch material for the dress, and 1 1/4 yard for the bloomers. This style includes the bloomers illustrated. It is a practical, serviceable model, suitable for all wash fabrics, and also for serge, gabardine, plaid or checked suiting, velvet and taffeta.

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