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## For Love of a Woman;

## New Romeo and Juliet.

CHAPTER VI.  
A BUNCH OF VIOLETS.

Lord Cecil drew a breath of relief.

"They are always together; they go from theatre to theatre. He is a very extraordinary old gentleman, and very trying at rehearsals, so I've heard the actors say; but he knows all about it, quite as well as the stage-manager."

At this moment the two London critics came up for a drink, and one of them bowed to Lord Cecil.

"Quite an eventful evening, my lord," he said, with the easy respect of a fellow-Londoner.

"Yes," said Lord Cecil. "It is a great success, I suppose. Do you know who Miss Doris Marlowe is?"

The critic shrugged his shoulders. "Haven't the least idea. Quite a stella incognita, but she will not be so after to-night. We shall see her in Drury Lane before many months are passed."

"Who was that?" his friend, the other critic, asked.

"Lord Cecil Neville," was the reply. "The hier to the marquise of Stoyle. A splendid fellow, and, strange to say, not a bit spoilt, though all the women make a dead set at him."

"The Marquis of Stoyle," said the other, thoughtfully. "That old villain! And this is his nephew. He is immensely good-looking."

"Oh, a splendid fellow. Did you ever hear that story about him—"

And they moved away.

Lord Cecil drank half his soda-and-brandy, and then went back to his box.

Meanwhile, a thrill of excitement seemed to run through those engaged behind the scenes. A theatre is rendered famous by its actors, and it seemed that the Theatre Royal, Barton, was going to be made celebrated as the place of the first appearance of a great actress.

"If she can only carry us through to the end!" muttered Jeffrey, as he paced to and fro, his hands clasped behind his back, his eyes flashing fire.

"Oh, she'll do it," said the manager, who happened to hear him. "Don't you be afraid, Mr. Jeffrey; that young lady is a genius. I knew it from the first. She will carry it through to the very last. And about the engagement

now? You make your own terms, and I'll agree to them. You'll find me straight and honest."

But Jeffrey paced on. He was an old theatrical hand, and he knew full well that a Juliet may score in the balcony scene and let fall in the later and most important ones.

But there did not seem much fear of failure with Doris.

Off the stage, and in her dressing-room, she was quiet and subdued; but the moment she got on the boards her eyes flew to the centre box, and she seemed to draw inspiration from the handsome face that leant forward in rapt, almost devout, attention.

The play proceeded. The great scene, in which Romeo takes leave of Juliet, his newly-made wife, went with a rush. The audience cheered until it was hoarse. Thrice the young actress was called to the front, and everybody who had brought a bouquet flung it at her feet.

Jeffrey, pale and statuesque, implored Doris to be calm.

"It is not all over yet," he said, warningly. "There is the last scene. Remember what I taught you. It is the last scene in which a Juliet who is a Juliet declares herself. Do not let their applause make you forget what is due to your art. I would rather that they remained mute and silent, Doris."

And for the answer she simply smiled. She did not tell him that while she could see a certain face in the centre box all would be well.

The pause before the last scene arrived. The whole house was talking in excited whispers. To the Barton folk, ardent theatre-goers as they were, nothing like this had ever befallen them. A flutter of excitement ran through the house, and amongst the crowd thronged the lobbies Lord Cecil walked about, as excited as the rest.

Suddenly, as if he had been stricken by an idea, he turned up the collar of his coat and made his way through the press to the streets and looked about him eagerly.

Some women selling oranges came hurrying up to him, and amongst them a woman with a basket of violets.

He bought the whole contents of her basket, and bade her tie them together. Then, with the flowers in his hand, he went back to the theatre; but, instead of going to his box, he made his way to the stalls and stood close to the orchestra.

The last scene came on. Again it is unnecessary to describe it. The grim and solemn vault, the beautiful figure of the girl in the death-throes, the terrible agony of Romeo, were all here, rendered real and life-like by the genius of the actors.

Spellbound, the house watched and listened in profound silence; listened to the passionate, despairing plaint of Romeo, and the deeper agony of Juliet, who awakes to find her lover dead.

Never, perhaps, since the play was played, was actress more touching, more tear-compelling than Doris Marlowe that night at the Theatre Royal, Barton; and as her last words died away in solemn silence, a great sob seemed to rise from the crowded house.

Then the sob gave place to a thunder of applause. Once more the sober audience seemed possessed by a spirit of delirium; men sprang to their feet and waved their hats, women rose and waved their handkerchiefs with which they had wiped away their tears; and cries of "Juliet! Juliet!" resounded through the theatre.

A pause, and presently Romeo appeared, leading Juliet by the hand.

The audience stormed and cheered as on man, and those who had not already thrown their bouquets to her threw them now.

She was pale to the lips, and the blue eyes looked almost black as she bent them on the cheering crowd, and like a queen bowed beneath the tribute



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of their devotion, she bent her girlish head low.

She had nearly crossed the stage, had reached the spot exactly opposite that on which Lord Cecil stood. Then, and not till then, he raised his bunch of violets and tossed them at her feet.

She paused a moment in her triumphant progress—for it was nothing less—then stooped and picked up the rought-and-ready bouquet; Romeo's arms were quite full.

For an instant her eyes rested on Lord Cecil's face, then, as if with an involuntary movement, she raised the bunch of violets to her lips and passed off, the side wings engulfing her.

Three times more they called her, as if they could not let her go from their sight, and thrice she came before them, and, modestly, girlishly, bowed her acknowledgements.

Then—tired, hot, and thirsty—the crowd began to disperse.

Lord Cecil Neville alone remained on the spot from which he had thrown his bouquet. He could scarcely believe that it was over until the attendants began to cover up the seats with their calico wrappings, and, taking the hint, he made his way out.

The groups of people he passed through were talking about her triumph. He caught a word here and there, and, all unconsciously, found himself at the stage-door. At least, he thought, he should get a glimpse of her as she drove away from the theatre.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes the greatest excitement prevailed. There had never been a Juliet like her, they were declaring; and they prophesied a success in London which should even eclipse that of Barton.

And Doris, looking pale, stood, smiling dreamily through it all. Even while Jeffrey paced to and fro in her dressing-room, too excited for speech, she remained calm and serene, wrapped in a kind of spiritual veil.

Managers, actors, thronged round her with congratulations even the old dresser declared, with tears, that nothing had been seen like it.

At last, the porter announced that Miss Marlowe's fly was waiting, and Jeffrey took her away from the excited crowd.

"Draw your cloak well round your throat," he said, as anxiously as if she were so fragile that a breath of wind would sweep her away. "Give me those violets to hold for you," he said.

She drew her hand back, almost with a gesture of dread, and a dash of colour came flying into her pale face.

"No, no; I can manage, thanks," she said, quickly. "How sweet they smell, do they not?" and she held them up to him for a second.

"Yes," he said, absently. "Were they thrown with the rest?"

"Yes," she said, in a low voice. "Some one of the poor people in the pit, I daresay you don't agree with me?" and she smiled.

"But I do," she said, averting her face. "Yes, I think them worth all the rest!"

They had traversed the long passage by this time, and reached the fly. Jeffrey put her in carefully, and was himself following, when he stopped suddenly, frowning and biting his lips.

"Doris," he said, "you leave all to me? You leave all to my judgment, as hitherto? You are a famous woman now—or will be to-morrow—and may like to be independent. Would you rather wait till to-morrow and make your own arrangements with the manager, or shall I, as of old—"

"Jeffrey!" she broke in, with a reproachful look in her eyes. "Very well," he said. "Brown has made me a very large offer for a month. I put him off just now, but I think I will go back and accept for you. I shall not be many minutes."

Doris leant back, and, closing her eyes, pressed the violets against her

cheeks. She could see the handsome face all aglow with excitement and admiration as he raised his right arm and flung the flowers; she could see it at that moment, and the mental vision shut out all the rest of that eventful night.

Suddenly she heard her name spoken beside the carriage window, and leaning forward, she saw, in real earnest the face which had been her inspiration. It was Lord Cecil Neville's.

"Miss Marlowe," he said, leaning forward and speaking quietly, pleadingly. "Don't be angry. Pray forgive me. I could not pass on without saying a word—one word of thanks."

"Thanks!" she murmured.

Her eyes were lifted for a moment to his ardent face, then dropped to the violets and rested there.

"Yes. I was in the theatre," he said. "You did not see me, of course; but I was there, and—I can't tell you how we all felt, how we all feel. It was superb: any way— But there; I can only thank you."

"You have done that already," she said, with a smile, as she raised the violets.

Lord Cecil Neville blushed. I am afraid it would be rather difficult to get credit for this statement in certain quarters in London.

"I couldn't get any better ones," he said, apologetically.

"No," she said, "I think you could not. Yes, I saw you in the theatre," she added, as if she had been thinking of his first sentence. "Were—were you surprised, or did you know?" and she glanced at him with a half-curious smile.

"Surprised!" he said. "I could scarcely believe my senses. I had no idea, until I saw you on the stage, that you, who were so good to me yesterday, were a great actress."

"I am not," she said, in a low voice. "I am only a very little one. To-night I succeeded; another night I might fail." A faint shadow came on her face, as he looked puzzled; then she smiled, as she broke off, to add, "I have something of yours."

"Yes—my heart!" was his mental comment; but he said aloud, "Of mine?"

"Yes," she said. "A handkerchief. I haven't it here," and she smiled again. Then suddenly her face grew crimson, for she remembered that she had left it in the bosom of her dress. "I—I will send it to you if you tell me where."

"Let me call for it," he said, eagerly.

Doris's brows came together, and she shook her head gently. She knew that Jeffrey's welcome to a stranger would be a rough one.

(To be Continued.)

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