

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.

Hark! it is over! The organ peals,
The bishop has mumbled the final word:
Over the chancel the sunlight steals,
Mocking the sob the bridesmaids heard.
Here, in the sight of a God above,
The earl has taken a fair young bride;
Here they have sworn to honor and love,
And each of them knew that the other lied.

This is a market where slaves are sold;
Rare is the slave that they sell to day.
They barter her sweet, white flesh for gold,
To a nobler sheep who has gone astray.
For rank, and jewels, and vast estates
They forced his badge on her dainty hand,
Sealing her doom to the worst of fates—
Here in a church, in a Christian land.

My lord the bishop, he bowed his head,
And rolled his eyes with a mellowed grace,
As the beautiful words in the book he read,
And a sunbeam fell on his saintly face.
His lordship knew of the bridegroom's fame—
He knew of the woman, the cards, and wine;
But up from the altar he sat at his name,
To be specially blessed by the King divine.

OUR DERBY SWEEPSTAKES.

"Can't you see how it is, Sol?" said I, laughing through my tears at his woe-begone appearance. "Suppose you were brought up with two girls and had got to like them both very much, but had never preferred one to the other and never dreamed of marrying either, and then all of a sudden you are told you must choose one, and so make the other very unhappy, you wouldn't find it an easy thing to do, would you?"

"I suppose not," said the student.

"Then you can't blame me."

"I don't blame you, Nelly," he answered, attacking a great purple toadstool with his stick. "I think you are quite right to be sure of your own mind. It seems to me," he continued, speaking rather glibly, but saying his mind like the true English gentleman that he was, "it seems to me that Hawthorne is an excellent fellow. He has seen more of the world than I have, and always does and says the right thing in the right place, which certainly isn't one of my characteristics. Then he is well born and has good prospects. I think I should be very grateful to you for your hesitation, Nell, and look upon it as a sign of your good-heartedness."

"We won't talk about it any more," said I, thinking in my heart what a very much finer fellow he was than the man he was praising. "Look here, my jacket is all stained with horrid fungi and things. We'd better go after the rest of the party, hadn't we? I wonder where they are by this time?"

It didn't take very long to find that out. At first we heard shouting and laughing coming echoing through the long glades, and then, as we made our way in that direction, we were astonished to meet the usually phlegmatic Elsie careering through the wood at the very top of her speed, her hat off, and her hair streaming in the wind. My first idea was that some frightful catastrophe had occurred—brigands possibly, or a mad dog—and I saw my companion's big hand close round his stick; but on meeting the fugitive it proved to be nothing more tragic than a game of hide-and-seek which the indefatigable Mr. Cronin had organized. What fun we had, crouching and running and dodging among the Hatherley oaks! and how horrified the prim old abbot who planted them would have been, and the long series of black coated brethren who have muttered their orisons beneath the welcome shade! Jack refused to play on the excuse of his weak ankle, and lay smoking under a tree in high dudgeon, glaring in a baleful and gloomy fashion at Mr. Solomon Barker; while the latter gentleman entered enthusiastically into the game, and distinguished himself by always getting caught, and never by any possibility catching anybody else.

Poor Jack! He was certainly unfortunate that day. Even an accepted lover would have been rather put out, I think, by an incident which occurred during our return home. It was agreed that all of us should walk, as the trap had been already sent off with the empty basket, so we started down Thorny Lane and through the fields. We were just getting over a stile to cross old Brown's ten-acre lot, when Mr. Cronin pulled up, and remarked that he thought we had better get into the road.

"Road?" said Jack. "Nonsense! We save a quarter of a mile by the field."

"Yes, but it's rather dangerous. We'd better go round."

"Where's the danger?" said our military man, contemptuously twisting his moustache.

"O, nothing," said Cronin. "That quadruped in the middle of the field is a bull, and not a very good-tempered one either. That's all. I don't think that the ladies should be allowed to go."

"We won't go," said the ladies in chorus.

"Then come round by the hedge and get into the road," suggested Sol.

"You may go as you like," said Jack rather testily. "But I am going across the field."

"Don't be a fool, Jack," said my brother.

"You fellows may think it right to turn tail at an old cow, but I don't. It hurts my self-respect, you see, so I shall join you at the other side of the farm." With which speech Jack buttoned up his coat in a truculent manner, waved his cane jauntily, and swaggered off into the ten-acre lot.

We clustered about the stile and watched the proceedings with anxiety. Jack tried to look as

if he were entirely absorbed in the view and in the probable state of the weather, for he gazed about him and up into the clouds in an abstract manner. His gaze generally began and ended, however, somewhere in the direction of the bull. That animal, after regarding the intruder with a prolonged stare, had retreated into the shadow of the hedge at one side, while Jack was walking up the long axis of the field.

"It's all right," said I. "It's got out of his way."

"I think it's leading him on," said Mr. Nicholas Cronin. "It's a vicious cunning brute."

Mr. Cronin had hardly spoken before the bull emerged from the hedge, and began pawing the ground, and tossing its wicked black head in the air. Jack was in the middle of the field by this time, and affected to take no notice of his companion, though he quickened his pace slightly. The bull's next manoeuvre was to run rapidly round in two or three small circles; and then it suddenly stopped, bellowed, put down its head, elevated its tail, and made for Jack at the very top of its speed.

There was no use pretending to ignore its existence any longer. Jack faced round and gazed at it for a moment. He had only his little cane in his hand to oppose the half ton of irate beef which was charging towards him. He did the only thing that was possible, namely to make for the hedge at the other side of the field.

At first Jack hardly condescended to run, but went off with a languid contemptuous trot, a sort of compromise between his dignity and his fear, which was so ludicrous that, frightened as we were, we burst into a chorus of laughter. By degrees, however, as he heard the galloping of hoofs sounding nearer and nearer, he quickened his pace, until ultimately he was in full flight for shelter, with his hat gone and his coat-tails fluttering in the breeze, while his pursuer was not ten yards behind him. If all Ayoub Khan's cavalry had been in his rear, our Afghan hero could not have done the distance in a shorter time. Quickly as he went, the bull went quicker still, and the two seemed to gain the hedge almost at the same moment. We saw Jack spring boldly into it, and the next moment he came flying out at the other side as if he had been discharged from a cannon, while the bull indulged in a series of triumphant bellows through the hole which he had made. It was a relief to us all to see Jack gather himself up and start off for home without a glance in our direction. He had retired to his room by the time we arrived, and did not appear until breakfast next morning, when he limped in with a very crestfallen expression. None of us were hard-hearted enough to allude to the subject, however, and by judicious treatment we restored him before lunch-time to his usual state of equanimity.

It was a couple of days after the picnic that our great Derby sweepstakes were to come off. This was an annual ceremony never omitted at Hatherley House, where, between visitors and neighbors, there were generally quite as many candidates for tickets as there were horses entered.

"The sweepstakes, ladies and gentlemen, come off to-night," said Bob in his character of head of the house. "The subscription is ten shillings. Second gets quarter of the pool, and third has his money returned. No one is allowed to have more than one ticket, or to sell his ticket after drawing it. The drawing will be at seven thirty." All of which Bob delivered in a very pompous and official voice, though the effect was rather impaired by a sonorous "Amen!" from Mr. Nicholas Cronin.

I must now drop the personal style of narrative for a time. Hitherto my little story has consisted simply in a series of extracts from my own private journal; but now I have to tell of a scene which only came to my ears after many months.

Lieutenant Hawthorne, or Jack, as I cannot help calling him, had been very quiet since the day of the picnic, and given himself up to reverie. Now, as luck would have it, Mr. Solomon Barker sauntered into the smoking-room after luncheon on the day of the sweepstakes and found the Lieutenant puffing moodily in solitary grandeur upon one of the settees. It would have seemed cowardly to retreat, so the student sat down in silence, and began turning over the pages of the *Graphic*. Both the rivals felt the situation to be an awkward one. They had been in the habit of studiously avoiding each other's society, and now they found themselves thrown together suddenly, with no third person to act as a buffer. The silence began to be oppressive. The Lieutenant yawned and coughed with over-acted nonchalance, while honest Sol felt very hot and uncomfortable, and continued to stare gloomily at the paper in his hand. The ticking of the clock, and the click of the billiard balls across the passage, seemed to grow unendurably loud and monotonous. Sol glanced across once; but catching his companion's eye in an exactly similar action, the two young men seemed simultaneously to take a deep and all-absorbing interest in the pattern of the cornice.

"Why should I quarrel with him?" thought Sol to himself. "After all, I want nothing but fair play. Probably I shall be snubbed; but I may as well give him an opening."

Sol's cigar had gone out; the opportunity was too good to be neglected.

"Could you oblige me with a fusee, Lieutenant?" he asked.

"The Lieutenant was sorry—extremely sorry—but he was not in possession of a fusee."

This was a bad beginning. Chilly politeness was even more repulsing than absolute rude-

ness. But Mr. Solomon Barker, like many other shy men, was audacity itself when the ice had once been broken. He would have no more bickerings or misunderstandings. Now was the time to come to some definite arrangement. He pulled his arm-chair across the room, and planted himself in front of the astonished soldier.

"You're in love with Miss Nelly Montague," he remarked.

Jack sprang off the settee with as much rapidity as if Farmer Brown's bull were coming in through the window.

"And if I am, sir," he said, twisting his tawny moustache, "what the devil is that to you?"

"Don't lose your temper," said Sol. "Sit down again, and talk the matter over like a reasonable Christian. I am in love with her too."

"What the deuce is the fellow driving at?" thought Jack, as he resumed his seat, still simmering after his recent explosion.

"So the long and the short of it is that we are both in love with her," continued Sol, emphasizing his remarks with his bony forefinger.

"What then?" said the Lieutenant, showing some symptoms of a relapse. "I suppose that the best man will win, and that the young lady is quite able to choose for herself. You don't expect me to stand out of the race just because you happen to want the prize, do you?"

"That's just it," cried Sol. "One of us will have to stand out. You've hit the right idea there. You see, Nelly—Miss Montague, I mean—is, as far as I can see, rather fonder of you than of me, but still fond enough of me not to wish to grieve me by a positive refusal."

"Honestly compel me to state," said Jack, in a more conciliatory voice than he had made use of hitherto, "that Nelly—Miss Montague, I mean—is rather fonder of you than of me; but still, as you say, fond enough of me not to prefer my rival openly to my presence."

"I don't think you're right," said the student. "In fact I know you are not; for in fact she told me as much with her own lips. However, what you say makes it easier for us to come to an understanding. It is quite evident that as long as we show ourselves to be equally fond of her, neither of us can have the slightest hope of winning her."

"There's some sense in that," said the Lieutenant reflectively; "but what do you propose?"

"I propose that one of us stand out, to use your own expression. There is no alternative."

"But who is to stand out?" asked Jack.

"Ah, that is the question."

"I can claim to having known her longest."

"I can claim to having loved her first."

Matters seemed to have come to a deadlock. Neither of the young men was in the least inclined to abdicate in favor of his rival.

"Look here," said the student, "let us decide the matter by lot."

This seemed fair, and was agreed to by both. A new difficulty arose, however. Both of them felt sentimental objections towards risking their angel upon such a paltry chance as the turn of a coin or the length of a straw. It was at this crisis that an inspiration came upon Lieutenant Hawthorne.

"I'll tell you how we will decide it," he said.

"You and I are both entered for our Derby sweepstakes. If your horse beats mine, I give up my chance; if mine beats yours, you leave Miss Montague for ever. Is it a bargain?"

"I have only one stipulation to make," said Sol. "It is ten days yet before the race will be run. During that time neither of us must attempt to take an unfair advantage of the other. We shall both agree not to press our suit until the matter is decided."

"Done!" said the soldier.

"Done!" said Solomon.

And the two shook hands upon the agreement.

I had, as I have already observed, no knowledge of the conversation which had taken place between my suitors. I may mention incidentally that during the course of it I was in the library, listening to Tennyson, read aloud in the deep musical voice of Mr. Nicholas Cronin. I observed, however, in the evening that these two young men seemed remarkably excited about their horses, and that neither of them was in the least inclined to make himself agreeable to me, for which crime I am happy to say that they were both punished by drawing rank outsiders. "Eurydice," I think, was the name of Sol's; while Jack's was "Bicycle." Mr. Cronin drew an American horse named "Iroquois," and all the others seemed fairly well pleased. I peeped into the smoking-room before going to bed, and was amused to see Jack consulting the sporting prophet of the *Field*, while Sol was deeply immersed in the *Gazette*. This sudden mania for the Turf seemed all the more strange, since I knew that if my cousin could distinguish a horse from a cow, it was as much as any of his friends would give him credit for.

The ten succeeding days were voted very slow by various members of the household. I cannot say that I found them so. Perhaps that was because I discovered something very unexpected and pleasing in the course of that period. It was a relief to be free of any fear of wounding the susceptibilities of either of my former lovers. I could say what I chose and do what I liked now; for they had deserted me completely, and handed me over to the society of my brother Bob and Mr. Nicholas Cronin. The new excitement of horse-racing seemed to have driven their former passion completely out of their

minds. Never was a house so deluged with special tips and every vile print that could by any possibility have a world bearing upon the training of the horses or their antecedents. The very grooms in the stable were tired of recounting how "Bicycle" was descended from "Velo-cipede," or explaining to the anxious medical student how "Eurydice" was by "Orpheus" out of "Hades." One of them discovered that her maternal grandmother had come in third for the Ebor Handicap; but the curious way in which he stuck the half crown which he received into his left eye, while he winked at the coachman with his right, throws some doubt upon the veracity of his statement. As he remarked in a beery whisper that evening, "The bloke'll never know the differ, and it's worth 'arf a dollar for him to think as it's true."

As the day drew nearer the excitement increased. Mr. Cronin and I used to glance across at each other and smile as Jack and Sol precipitated themselves upon the papers at breakfast, and devoured the list of the betting. But matters culminated upon the evening immediately preceding the race. The Lieutenant had run down to the station to secure the latest intelligence, and now he came rushing in, waving a crushed paper frantically over his head.

"Eurydice is scratched!" he yelled. "Your horse is done for, Barker!"

"What!" roared Sol.

"Done for—utterly broken down in training—won't run at all!"

"Let me see," groaned my cousin, seizing the paper; and then, dropping it, he rushed out of the room, and banged down the stairs, taking four at a time. We saw no more of him until late at night, when he slunk in, looking very dishevelled, and crept quietly off to his room. Poor fellow, I should have condoled with him had it not been for his recent disloyal conduct towards myself.

Jack seemed a changed man from that moment. He began at once to pay me marked attention, very much to the annoyance of myself and of some one else in the room. He played and sang and proposed round games, and, in fact, quite usurped the rôle usually played by Mr. Nicholas Cronin.

I remember that it struck me as remarkable that on the morning of the Derby day the Lieutenant should have entirely lost his interest in the race. He was in the greatest spirits at breakfast, but did not even open the paper in front of him. It was Mr. Cronin who unfolded it at last and glanced over its columns.

"What's the news, Nick?" asked my brother Bob.

"Nothing much. O yes, here's something. Another railway accident. Collision apparently. Westinghouse brake gone wrong. Two killed, seven hurt, and—by Jove! listen to this: 'Among the victims was one of the competitors in the equine Olympiad of to-day. A sharp splinter had penetrated its side, and the valuable animal had to be sacrificed upon the shrine of humanity. The name of the horse is 'Bicycle.' Hullo, you've gone and spilt your coffee all over the cloth, Hawthorne! Ah, I forgot, 'Bicycle' was your horse, wasn't it? Your chance is gone, I am afraid. I see that 'Iroquois,' who started low, has come to be the first favorite now."

Ominous words, reader, as no doubt your nice discernment has taught you during, at the least, the last three columns. Don't call me a flirt and a coquette until you have weighed the facts. Consider my pique at the sudden desertion of my admirers, think of my delight at the confession from a man whom I had tried to conceal from myself even that I loved, think of the opportunities which he enjoyed during the time that Jack and Sol were systematically avoiding me, in accordance with their ridiculous agreement. Weigh all this, and then which among you will throw the first stone at the blushing little prize of the Derby Sweep?

Here it is as it appeared at the end of three short months in the *Morning Post*: "August 12th.—At Hatherley Church, Nicholas Cronin, Esq., eldest son of Nicholas Cronin, Esq., of the Woodlands, Croyshire, to Miss Eleanor Montague, daughter of the late James Montague, Esq., J.P., of Hatherley House."

Jack set off with the declared intention of volunteering for a ballooning expedition to the North Pole. He came back, however, in three days, and said that he had changed his mind, but intended to walk in Stanley's footsteps across Equatorial Africa. Since then he has dropped one or two gloomy allusions to forlorn hope and the unutterable joys of death; but on the whole he is coming round very nicely, and has been heard to grumble of late on such occasions as the under-doing of the mutton and the over-doing of the beef, which may be fairly put down as a very healthy symptom.

Sol took it more quietly, but I fear the iron went deeper into his soul. However, he pulled himself together like a dear brave fellow as he is, and actually had the hardihood to propose the bridesmaids, on which occasion he became inextricably mixed up in a labyrinth of words. He washed his hands of the mutinous sentence, however, and resumed his seat in the middle of it, overwhelmed with blushes and applause. I hear that he has confided his woes and disappointments to Grace Maberley's sister, and met with the sympathy which he expected. Bob and Grace are to be married in a few months, so possibly there may be another wedding about that time.