

nearly break her heart, and never say the word a man ought to say, and would say, if he wasn't what I know he is, an unmitigated scoundrel."

Bertha was fanning herself vigorously, and Mrs. Carlington was curling her lip in silent sarcasm.

"I presume Mr. Kent can manage his own affairs, however disposed your brother, Mr. Hugh Lyon, may be to assist him."

"I presume he won't have the chance, then, retorted Bertha, hotly. "When Hugh comes, he and Ada are agreed to get up a first-class flirtation, and goad Mr. Horace Kent into the offer he is bound to make—though goodness knows what Ada sees in him to admire, I don't."

Mrs. Carlington arched her pretty neck, as she languidly arose.

"What say you to a row, if old Sandy is aroused to take us?"

And then the quartette flitted away, utterly unconscious of the masculine element on the other side of the fence.

"So that's the way the wind blows, is it?"

He laughed outright at the good luck that had led them into a trap; he was utterly rejoiced at the prospect of more fun ahead for the fortnight he was to remain at M—.

"Little Ada will have her conquest all to herself," he lolloquized; "I'll let Mr. Hugh flirt with her, and I'll flirt with Mrs. Carlington, and if they think to make me jealous—well, let 'em try."

He got up, dusted his clothes, plucked a twig off the apple tree and stuck it in his button-hole and sauntered back.

"But I'll not let her slip, even to please them; after her play is over, and I've proved my 'unmitigated rascalism,' I'll tell little Ada I love her, and have loved her all along."

Then he went up to his room, past Ada Burton's door, and he heard her singing a song he had played the night before for her.

"You're sure you're entirely agreed, Miss Burton?—you are sure I may flirt with you to my heart's content?"

It was a wondrously thrilling voice that spoke in a confidential tone to Ada, and she looked up to see a pair of merry searching eyes bent in a very decided admiration on her crimson cheeks.

"Of course, that is a bargain," said Bertha, "only mind you, Hugh Lyon, you are not to fall in love with her—is he to, Aid?"

"I am afraid that I shall," Mr. Hugh Lyon laughed, then gave Ada his arm into the apartment where the music was sounding.

Horace Kent was inside the door—just where Ada had hoped he would be, when she came in, in her triumph—only, and she had not expected that—Mrs. Lillie Carlington was on his arm, laughing and chatting in the most familiar manner.

Ada felt her heart sicken for one second, and then she bowed to them, and went on with Hugh.

Ada's spirit would not stay out of her eyes; her cheeks would flush and pale alternately as she stole sly glances at the handsome fellow who had made such an impression on her.

Hugh Lyon saw her distress, and pitied her from the depths of his kindly heart, and wondered how on earth any fellow blessed with the affection of such a sweet girl as Ada Burton could help striving mightily to hold it.

"They don't seem to care," whispered Ada, piteously.

"We don't make it strong enough," he said, cheerily. "Let's get in front of them, and whisper, and be dreadfully confidential!"

And so Hugh cut across the room with Ada, and in front of Kent and the widow, whispered to perfection.

But "forewarned was forearmed," and Kent smiled serenely, and the beautiful widow thought Bertha Lyon's plan suited her remarkably.

Then came the supper, and a thinning out of guests, until only a few friends remained.

Mr. Lyon and Ada came up in time to catch Mrs. Carlington's last words.

"We cannot fail to enjoy it thoroughly. Our party will be so select—Miss Burton, you will go to the ruins to-morrow? Mr. Lyon, your sister has promised you to our impromptu picnic."

"With pleasure I shall go. Kent, you're booked, of course?"

"If Ada—if Miss Burton will allow me the pleasure of her company."

He bowed, smiled, and looked so handsome; and poor Ada flushed to radiance.

"I don't know about that," returned Hugh, magnificently; "I am disposed to fight, if needs be—for the honor of being Miss Ada's escort. You'll not refuse me?"

He gave her such a look; it thrilled her through and through, for all it was in jest.

No, she would not refuse him—to punish Horace Kent.

"I shall be happy to go with you, Mr. Lyon. You will excuse me, of course, Mr. Kent."

And Kent bowed perfectly at ease.

"Certainly—with pleasure. Mrs. Carlington can console me, I venture to say."

His eyes, his voice were so sarcastic, that Hugh wheeled Ada around, and took her out into the cool air.

"That fellow is an insufferable puppy—not worth even the anxious widow's regards. I am so glad you are going to-morrow with me, Ada. I may as well recite my lesson in private as in public, mayn't I?"

Somehow, her eyes went down before his, and her heart stirred strangely.

If Horace would only be so good.

And the morrow was a success.

Hugh was the life of the party, and Ada felt a pleasant sort of pride in him, because she and Bertha loved each other so, doubtless.

And Mr. Kent and the widow had it all their own way, even to Horace's lying on the grass at her feet, and reading Tennyson to her. Ada stumbled over them once.

Mr. Kent's first impulse had been to spring up; his second, to remain where he was, and show her she was not particularly essential to his enjoyment of the day.

So he nodded quite indifferently as she passed, while Mrs. Carlington, in a burst of triumphant malice, suddenly exclaimed, in Ada's hearing—

"Oh, Horace, do repeat that exquisite verse again."

She had the satisfaction of seeing a blush surge over the back of Ada's neck, and the next minute she managed to flush guiltily herself.

"Oh, Mr. Kent, I am so ashamed of myself! But I was completely carried away with that sweet verse you read from 'Eleanore.' Please forgive me, and I will promise never to call you so again."

She certainly was very pretty.

The scene was a favorable one, the time, the place, and so, thrilled by her honeyed voice, her floating hair that almost touched his own, Horace Kent leaned near her, and for answer repeated again the verse from "Eleanore,"—hardly meaning what he said, but feeling some delightful sensation that lent a passionate thrill to his words.

And the while, Ada Burton went back to Hugh Lyon, a sweet dream broken, a heart suddenly shorn of its idol.

And, Horace Kent, his infrequent bursts of enthusiasm evaporated by the time the passionate verse was repeated, thought what a precious pair of fools they were.

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"Going away! Oh Mr. Lyon."

For the life of her, Ada could not help it, that sharp, sudden wall of hers.

Then, in shame-facedness, she began repeating stale, stereotyped wishes for his safety and happiness.

He listened with a half savage smile.

"It will be delightful happiness, Ada, that I'm going to—the leaving Kent here to reap the reward of my labors."

"But he will not—I mean you have been very kind to me, very, Mr. Ly—"

He grasped her hands that lay idly on the piano keys.

"Kind? Only kind? Perhaps, but horribly cruel to myself. I've been playing with fire, and been hopelessly scorched."

Her heart was bounding with delirious bliss. She, too, had played with fire, and she stole a glance at his stern face; he caught the look, and his eyes grew radiant.

"Ada, Ada, tell me, is my love helpless?"

"Hugh, as if such a one as you could come but to conquer."

Wasn't that satisfactory enough for any lover?

And Hugh took his just deserts in the form of sundry kisses, and low murmurous vows, just as Mr. Horace Kent lounged in, easy, handsome, lazy.

"Oh! a thousand pardons. My congratulations, Miss Burton."

Then he lounged out with smothered curses on his lips, and a fiercer feeling than he had ever felt before that he was outmaneuvered after all.

Did he marry his widow friend?

Not at all, although after that selection from Eleanore, she chose to regard herself Mr. Horace Kent's special delight—until the morning when Ada announced her engagement, it was discovered Mr. Kent had left for regions unknown—a vanquished hero, who received, as did Hugh Lyon, "his just deserts for playing with fire."

THE DUEL AND ITS RESULTS.

The whole company suddenly ceased its mirth and looked at the two men glaring angrily at each other across the table—the practised duellist and the fiery lad whom he had provoked into insulting him. And Colonel Duquesne grimly wiped the wine from his eyes and his grizzled whiskers.

Then he said, as coolly as a judge pronouncing the death sentence—

"This night's work shall cost you your heart's blood, Mr. Delancey. You will fight of course?"

And Harry Delancey, though his look was no whit less fierce as he answered, proudly—

"That is what I meant, sir," yet in his heart he knew that his enemy was right.

The quarrel would probably cost him his life. Before he came to the supper that night, Harry Delancey had sworn again and again to himself that he would avoid a quarrel with Colonel Duquesne.

For both were suitors for the hand of beautiful Kate Granger, and Harry well knew that it was his rival's ardent desire to call him out and shoot him, that he might have the better opportunity to prosecute his suit with the wealthy heiress.

So when he went to Mr. Fletcher's that evening, Harry had promised himself that he would keep his temper.

And this was the end of it all.

The cunning colonel sat opposite to him, and flung sarcasm across the table until the young

man, heated with wine and stung beyond endurance, had dashed his glass in his enemy's face.

That was a company of men whose army experience had by no means lessened their devotion to the code of honor, and arrangements for a meeting were made at once.

Two hours after this little scene, Harry sat in his room, thinking over the events of the evening.

So he was to go out at sunrise, and be shot down like a dog by a man who never yet missed his mark—he, Harry Delancey, young, rich, and talented.

Life had never seemed so fair to him as to-night.

Bitterly did he curse himself for his folly.

Yet why should he thus play into the hands of his rival?

He would not fight him—it was unfair—it was monstrous for him, who hardly knew how to handle a pistol, to stand up against a skilled marksman who thirsted for his blood.

It should not be.

But what else was left him?

Flight?

Ab, no! better death a thousand times.

Apology?

Never!

No, nothing to do but to submit.

A letter to the girl he loved, another to his mother, who was even now fondly dreaming of her absent boy—then a few hours of feverish sleep, and then—well, he would think of it no longer lest he persuade himself to play the dastard.

Now for the letters.

First he wrote to his mother a tender, loving epistle; and his manly tears bedewed the paper as he begged her to forgive him the sorrow he must bring upon her.

His other letter was scarcely less difficult to write.

He had gone to Kate Granger that every evening, gone to her with the intention of avowing his passion.

But some coldness in her manner, real or fancied, had discouraged him, and when they parted, their adieux were as studied as those of mere acquaintances.

She evidently cared nothing for him; and yet he was to be shot at daylight to-morrow because he had loved her.

Well, well, there was a grim kind of consolation in writing and telling her the whole story, how madly he worshipped her, and how death was quite welcome to him since he was naught to her.

She would get the letter in the morning; and maybe her heart would smite her a little when she read the words penned by a hand that would then be rigid in death.

This was the substance of his letter to Kate; and having written it, he sealed them both and left them on the table, knowing that his servant would post them in the morning.

Then he threw himself, without undressing, upon the bed and sank into a feverish slumber.

Never was a more beautiful sunrise, never a bluer sky, never a fairer scene than the little open space of field and flower which was that morning to witness the encounter between two men, each eager for the other's blood.

Alfred Johnson, Harry's friend and second, had called him promptly at five, and the two had quickly mounted their horses and started for the spot.

Harry had managed to get a good hour of refreshing slumber towards morning, and now, though his brow was pale, there was no quiver of the lip nor trembling of the hand.

He had not the slightest doubt that he was going out to his execution, and this very feeling of certainty made him more careless and less nervous than he might otherwise have been.

He had made up his mind to die, and to die like a man.

Kate should at least know that of him.

But with this determination came a fierce hope that his adversary might not come off entirely unharmed.

He said to himself that he would be perfectly cool, and Duquesne, practised duellist as he was, should find that another ear was as swift as his own to catch the signal, and another finger as quick as his to pull the trigger.

Such were Harry Delancey's thoughts as he stood leaning upon the shoulder of his horse, while the distances were marked off and the preliminaries arranged.

And Colonel Duquesne? This was not the first or even the twentieth time he had found himself in a similar position.

There were many graves of his making.

He was known to have killed his man three times.

He stood there a short distance from his adversary, carelessly cutting at the daisies with his riding whip.

No one could doubt his courage, yet it was that sort of courage born of brutality and confidence in one's own success which really brave men little admire in their fellows.

The two parties now drew nearer together to learn the conditions.

Fate had given Delancey the most favorable position; he was to stand with his back to the sun.

But the colonel's grey eyes flashed contemptuously at the announcement.

The glare of the sun would hardly spoil his aim with the man he hated, with the hatred of jealousy, under his pistol.

"Very well," he said; "but, gentlemen, be as expeditious as possible. I breakfast at seven," and he nonchalantly took out his watch to note the time.

"Cannot the affair be settled peaceably? Must the fight go on?"

It was Gower, Duquesne's second, who spoke. He was an old soldier, who enjoyed nothing better than a duel; yet he pitied the inexperience of Delancey, and would fain have stopped the affair even now.

Harry still maintained a sullen indifference, and paid no heed to the question.

From him the two seconds looked eagerly at Duquesne for an answer to Gower's question.

But there was no show of relenting in the colonel's face.

He simply said—

"Mr. Delancey grossly insulted me last evening. I will wipe out his heart's blood as readily as I did the wine he threw in my face."

The cold-blooded cruelty of the man stung young Johnson to madness.

"By Heaven, sir!" he shouted, "but you cannot so easily wipe out the stain of murder from your soul; and hark ye, sir, if Harry Delancey goes down before you to-day, you shall answer to me for his life."

The sneer deepened upon Duquesne's lips, as he answered—

"As you will, sir; it is a matter of indifference to me. But we waste time."

So the pistols were drawn, and the two men took their stand face to face.

It would have been difficult to say which was the least affected by the situation.

For while Duquesne moved and acted with perfect coolness, Harry now appeared not only perfectly unconcerned for his own safety, but actually eager for the contest.

He seemed all at once to have gained confidence in himself and his cause.

"One!"

As Gower began to count, the men covered each other with their pistols; and there was a steadiness about the younger man's arm, that gave his opponent a feeling of vague uneasiness.

"Two!"

The men stood looking fiercely along their weapons, into each other's eyes.

Yet no one would have suspected from the demeanor of either, that life was at stake.

"Three! Fire!"

The words came in quick succession, and in a succession as rapid, one after the other, came the reports of the two pistols.

But Harry's ear had caught the hiss of the consonant in the last word, almost before it was uttered, and it was his ball that had first gone its way.

As the faint smoke cleared away, the colonel was seen to take one step forward, erect and firm.

Then his hand went confusedly to his head, and he fell forward on the grass, dead.

Harry, on the other hand, letting go the pistol from his nerveless fingers, dropped his arm, all shattered, at his side.

Otherwise he was uninjured.

He stood a moment, almost doubting the reality of the result; then, without a word, he turned and walked away to his horse, followed by his friend, and one of the surgeons.

They rode rapidly back to town, and at the house steps, the wounded man fainted from loss of blood.

He was carried up to his room, and the ball safely extracted.

Almost at the same moment that the surgeon finished dressing Harry Delancey's wound, Kate Granger sat idling over her breakfast.

She was evidently unhappy, for her food lay before her quite untouched, and she sighed repeatedly.

At length she pushed back her chair, and rang the bell impatiently.

"Ovid," she said to the old family servant, who entered, "have the letters come?"

"Yes, Miss Granger," was the answer.

"Very well, go out and see if there are any for me, and if so, bring them in at once."

The man vanished and presently returned with the letter Harry Delancey had written the night before.

Miss Granger recognised the handwriting at a glance, and eagerly tore open the envelope.

The first few lines she read with a half-pleased expression.

For in them Harry had told, in excited terms, what she scarcely dared to hope, that he loved her.

Then, as she read on, her brow grew anxious, and then all at once she threw down the letter and uttered a cry of anguish.

"Oh, my Harry, my Harry!" was all she said, as she rocked herself back and forth.

Then she eagerly snatched up the letter again as though she had found a hope; but once more she threw it aside with a disappointed cry.

"Oh, my God! at sunrise this morning, and I can do nothing. Long before this that fiend has killed him. But no, God would not permit such injustice. Something may have happened to prevent it. I will go to him dead or alive. Oh, my darling! Would that I had known."

She started up and rang the bell violently.

"Have the carriage at the door in five minutes," she almost screamed to the affrighted servant, and then hurried to her room, leaving him to execute her orders.

When she came down, however, the carriage was not to be seen, and unable longer to bear the suspense, calling a girl to attend her, she hurried away on foot.

Arrived at the house, she, with white lips, demanded of the astonished domestic the whereabouts of Mr. Delancey.

"He was carried up to his room in a lifeless condition an hour ago."