

"Ah! did she say that?" asked Jack.
"Well, not in so many words, but her father told me, half laughingly, that his pet would only marry the strongest man in Oxford; so, you see, here's a chance for you."

Jack dressed himself with scrupulous care, breakfasted, and, taking his hat and stick, said: "Wait for me here, Tom. I was a fool last night. I will go and try if I can't cut Vavasour out; here goes."

Tom looked after him, and smiled to himself. Having reached the Alderman's house, Lincoln was informed that Miss Hardbake was at home, and he found her alone in the drawing-room, though not before he had seen a silk skirt disappear through another door, which he had no doubt belonged to Laura Joyce.

"Good-morning, Miss Jessie," began Jack. "I hope you enjoyed yourself at the ball; in fact I know you did—you were so light-hearted."

"Light-hearted, Mr. Lincoln! What makes you think that?" asked Jessie, looking at him reproachfully.

"Were you not?" he asked.

"No," she replied at last.

"May I ask why?"

"Well, as I am truthfully inclined this morning, I will tell you. I was grieved at your cold behaviour to me last night. I don't think I deserved it," said Jessie.

"Oh, so you wish to take me to task! Do you not think it was unkind not to spare me a few more dances?"

"You should have engaged them beforehand," replied Jessie.

"Well, that is true; but I should like to engage something that is very precious to me beforehand," said Jack, tenderly.

"And what may that be?" queried Jessie, raising her eyes to his for an instant, and then demurely lowering them.

"Well, your heart."

"My heart, Mr. Lincoln! Oh, you are very exacting this morning."

"Jessie, is it given away already to a more favoured rival?"

"Sir, you are a laggard in love. Why did you not speak to me last night?"

"And it is indeed so? Oh, then, I am too late; Vavasour is accepted."

Lincoln covered his eyes with his hands.

"Jack!"

It was Jessie's voice, and she laid one little hand upon his own tenderly.

"Is it not true, then?" he asked, eagerly.

"Mr. Vavasour has gone to ask my papa, although I would not consent to be his wife. Do not fear the answer."

"Is that a reply in my favour?" asked Jack.

"As you list, sir."

"And may I ask papa?" he asked.

"Papa may be asked, but listen to this—I will never be your wife until you are champion of the river. Now, good-bye."

Jessie darted away and Jack sought an interview with Mr. Hardbake.

As he opened the door he came face to face with Vavasour.

"Hallo!" cried Jack; "is it you? I beg your pardon."

Vavasour drew himself up stiffly, saying:

"Sir, I did not know you were here."

Jack did not reply, but entered Mr. Hardbake's presence.

The plain and unassuming Alderman suddenly acquired a dignity and importance in his eyes, now that he might become his father-in-law.

"Good-morning, Mr. Lincoln; you are here early this morning. The young men of the present day are not generally so active unless there is something in the wind," said Hardbake.

"True, sir. May I speak with you on a subject that concerns me much?"

"Well!" replied the Alderman.

"Sir, I love your daughter—she is all the world to me—and I have reason to believe that she is not indifferent to me. Have I your consent to pay my attentions to her?"

"Hum!" muttered the Alderman, not without pride: "this is number two this morning. I wonder how many more there are in the background. Young man, do you know what you ask? My daughter is the heiress of my wealth."

This was coming to the point. Jack had forgotten that was a stumbling-block, and that his prospects looked anything but bright at the present moment.

"Oh, sir, I fear that is against me. Up to the present time I thought I should have been heir to my uncle's fortune, but he has married again, and I have therefore very little to offer in the way of worldly wealth in exchange for the priceless treasure, your daughter; but I am young and strong, full of energy, and hope to make my way in the world in due course."

"That is all very well," replied the Alderman, surveying the athletic proportions of the young man before him with a critical eye, "but that is for the future; how do you propose to maintain a wife for the present?"

This was a poser, and Jack could not answer it for the moment.

"Sir," he says, "give me but hope, and I will work, and never fear but I shall succeed."

"There let it rest. I have no dislike to your personality, Mr. Lincoln, but I have my daughter's welfare at heart, and therefore, I must decline the honour you offer me for the present."

Jack knew it was useless for him to urge his claims now, so he politely thanked the Alderman for the interview, bowed, and left the room.

He hesitated in the hall whether he should seek Jessie again, when he heard a side-door open and Laura Joyce beckoned him to her.

She closed the door after her, and then said: "Mr. Vavasour has been accepted by the Alderman; but Jessie has a will of her own, and if you win the race with Vavasour, I know she will fight hard for you; therefore, be of good cheer. All will yet be well."

Jack kissed the lady's hand, and departed with comparatively a light heart.

"Well, my dear boy, how goes it?" cried Parsons, as soon as he entered the room.

"All right so far. Jessie is willing, but the old man is reckoning up the money. He rather countenances Vavasour. I fancy that silent gentleman must have told him a good many falsehoods."

"Humph!" said Tom. "I should like to know the origin of that gentleman. Have you seen Jackson, of Trinity, since his return?"

"No," replied Jack.

"Well, I met him this morning, and, as we were walking up High street, whom should we meet but Master Vavasour. He bowed in his usual supercilious manner to me, and Charlie asked me who he was. I told him that his sister had married your uncle, and cut you out of a fortune, and that he was the new man of All Souls, sent there by the generosity of his sister's husband."

"Well, what did Charlie think of him?"

"Why, he looked hard at him, and did not say anything for a moment; then he whistled, and said: 'I fancy I have seen this man Vavasour, before.'"

"Where?" I asked.

"Why, last year I was at Hamburg, and there was a certain Mr. Reginald Trevor at the gaming-tables there. He was a mystery, and so was his young and pretty wife, who, I may say, was the mainstay of his fortune. I left shortly after Mr. Trevor was cleaned out of a very large sum of money, and if this Vavasour is not identical with Trevor, I'm not Charlie Jackson."

"Do you think this can be possible?" asked Lincoln.

"Well, you know Jackson well enough, and he is not likely to make a mistake; Vavasour's face is not one likely to be forgotten. It is a marked face. And this may be true."

These words made Lincoln reflective.

Should it be true that Vavasour was an imposter, his uncle might still relent, and take him again into his favour.

During the time preceding the boat-race Jack resolved to keep a keen watch upon the wily Vavasour.

* * * * *

The eventful morning at last arrived when the race was to take place.

Mr. Hardbake had a steam-yacht, and on this the champions were invited to proceed on the river, and accordingly a merry party assembled.

Vavasour was cool and collected.

He paid assiduous attentions to Jessie, and Jack felt a jealous pang every time he saw it, for he had refrained from seeing Jessie after the Alderman's decision regarding his suit.

The boat was moored high up the river, at Maidenhead.

The course had been cleared, and all the necessary arrangements made.

"Dear me!" said the Alderman, just before the men were preparing for the race; "have you heard of my great loss, ladies and gentlemen?"

"What is it?" chorussed a dozen voices.

"I have been robbed of a valuable brilliant necklace. Only yesterday I was showing it to a friend, and this morning it has gone. I intended it for my Jessie's marriage-present."

"Have you no clue to the thief?" asked Vavasour, coolly.

"None, although I could almost swear that I saw the necklace this morning. I have not yet had time to offer a reward for it."

The subject dropped.

The two competitors were now ready.

Each descended to their boats; and, at a given signal, were started by the umpire.

It was a pretty sight to see Jessie Hardbake standing at the prow of the vessel, with her friend Laura, eagerly straining to see which of the rowers was taking the lead.

Jack was several lengths behind at the start; Vavasour taking the lead with rapid strokes; but both men were pretty evenly matched.

The steamer followed in the wake of the boats, and all on board watched the result of the contest with great interest, and none more so than Jessie, who kept saying:

"If he wins, Laura, I will be his wife—he will win—he must win! Don't you think he will win? Papa likes him: and shall win! Oh, what a bore money is!"

Thus the little heart continued to busy itself with hope, and Laura encouraged her friend, for she, too, had an interest in the race.

The boats were now urged along with incredible swiftness.

The second mile was passed, and Vavasour was a length ahead.

Cries of "Vavasour wins!" "No, Lincoln!" echoed along the river, when suddenly, within half a mile of the goal, a pleasure-boat filled with people steered right across the track of Lincoln's boat.

He was compelled to ship his oars to prevent a foul, and allow the boat to pass, his friends calling loudly for the intruders to get out of the way.

During this pause Vavasour shot ahead three lengths.

Lincoln set his teeth together.

"I'm a match for him yet," he muttered. "I'm only playing with him, although the fellow pretends he has not been in training—so here goes for winning and a wife."

With that he made a terrific spurt, and soon gained his rival's side.

Jessie, when she beheld her hero in extremis, covered her face for a moment and clinched her little hands.

"He will lose! Oh, that is designedly done!"

"No, no!" cried Laura. "Look up, Jessie; he is going to the front again. His boat shoots the water—he will win. I am certain of it."

"Give me the odds, Miss Joyce," said Tom Parsons in her ear.

"I will stake my heart he will win," said Laura, laughing.

"I accept the bet."

"Done, then against the gloves."

Jack Lincoln was rowing splendidly now.

Every stroke told, and Vavasour had the chagrin to see his opponent come in a winner amidst the cheers of the latter's friends and the waving of handkerchiefs.

"I have won," said Jack; "and now, if the Alderman will only give his consent, I shall be happy."

He rowed to the side of the steamer, and his hand was nearly shaken off by a score of undergraduates, amid cries of—

"Well done, Lincoln of All Saints!"

But Jessie—her joy was excessive.

Jack went down to the cabin to rest himself for a time.

As he was descending the companion one of the men placed a letter in his hand.

He went down-stairs and read it.

Vavasour was close to him.

"Do you know anything of this, Mr. Vavasour?" cried Jack, with a flushed brow.

"Of what, sir?"

"Here, read; and listen, ladies and gentlemen."

And Jack read from the letter as follows:

"Sir—Mr. Lincoln—James Smith was bribed by the gent against whom you rowed, to make a foul of your race. I heard him consent to do it, and so did my mate Bob, which we is on board to testify."

"Yours respectful."

"MIKE DILLON."

Vavasour was very pale.

"Now, sir, is this true?" asked Lincoln, pointing to the letter.

"It is a got-up thing by you," said Vavasour, with a sneer.

"That is adding insult to injury; but we will have the men here."

The two rough boatmen swore that Vavasour had asked them to foul Jack's boat.

"It's false!" roared Vavasour. "A falsehood got up by you, Mr. Lincoln, to add to your own glory. You are a liar!"

"A what?" cried Jack his face becoming suddenly pale. "No man shall call me that with impunity. Defend yourself!"

The next moment Vavasour measured his length on the cabin-floor, lying without apparent life or motion.

"Oh Jack, you have killed him!" cried Jessie, rushing forward.

"No," cried Jack; "such men do not die easily. I believe he is an imposter, who has palmed himself off upon my stupid old uncle."

"Oh, what is that gleaming from his pocket?" cried Jessie.

And, before any one could prevent her, she knelt down by Vavasour's side, and took from it a packet of white paper, through which some brilliant gleamed.

"Why—why, that is my necklace," cried Alderman Hardbake.

At this moment Vavasour recovered consciousness, and when he caught sight of the Alderman with his necklet in his hand, he rose to his feet and gasped—

"The game is played out!"

"Yes, villain; but you shall suffer for it—you shall go to prison!" cried Jack.

"No, no; let him go!" pleaded Jessie. "He has been on terms of intimacy with us, and he may reform yet."

"His name is not Vavasour. It was Reginald Trevor at Hamburg, and it may be Smith or Jones for all I know," cried Jackson, coming forward.

Vavasour put on his coat, and then said, with a sneer—

"Are you going to send me to prison? Ha, ha! I have some pretty little letters belonging to some ladies here, and it would be so nice to hear them read in open court. Ha, ha!"

Jack's indignation was great. He seized him by the collar, and taking him up the cabin-stairs, said:

"You shall not pollute a respectable company any longer. Go!" And he thrust him into a boat.

Vavasour was soon ashore, and the last they saw of him was that he was caressing his moustache in a contemplative manner.

Perhaps he was soliloquizing on the vicissitudes of fate and fortune.

Jack and his friends spent a happy day together on the Alderman's yacht, and returned at night to Oxford.

Then he wrote to his uncle, informing him of all that had taken place, and the next morning he received a telegram, which contained this message:

"Come to me at once, dear Jack. She has gone, and I am alone."

Jack was soon with his uncle.

Mr. Lincoln looked at least ten years older as he sat doubled up in his chair, groaning and rocking himself.

His wife had received a telegram, and shortly after she disappeared from her home with all her jewelry, but leaving a letter behind her, in which she informed Mr. Lincoln that Vavasour was not her brother, but her husband, and that she had been induced to deceive him by Vavasour, who was pushed for money.

She hoped he would be happy and soon forget her, and concluded by apologizing for taking the jewels and money, but necessity alone compelled her to do so.

The shock had nearly killed Mr. Lincoln; but the kind attention his nephew paid him soon brought him round.

In due course Jack told his uncle he was in love.

The old man consented to allow his boy, as he called him, a liberal income, and formally wrote to the Alderman to ask the hand of his daughter for his nephew.

An answer of consent came, and Jack and his uncle were invited to come down to see the Alderman at Oxford.

They accepted the invitation.

"Hello! here we are again!" cried Tom Parsons. "Behold! Benedict is soon to be the married man. Jack, you have not only won a wife for yourself, but one for me."

"How is that, Tom?"

"Why, Laura Joyce wagered her heart that you would win, and she won my gloves, but generously returned the gift and the bet, seeing that I pleaded my *forma pauperis*, and we are going to be married the moment I leave college."

Jack congratulated his friend, and was only too eager to see his Jessie.

She awaited him in the conservatory.

"I have won you, Jessie," he said, "and I mean to keep you for ever and ever; so seal the vow with those rosy lips."

There was no objection, and Jack was supremely blest.

In due time there was a double marriage, and Jack and Jessie and Tom and Laura were as happy as mortals could be.

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC.

The Count Joannes has made \$10,000 on the stage.

GENERAL MITE, the dwarf, has earned \$20,000 for his parents in two years.

ANNA LOUISE ekes out a pre-Caay-ous living on \$2,400 per month and all expenses paid.

JANAUSCHEK has been on the stage 27 years and never missed an engagement.

EIGHTY thousand dollars have been subscribed for the monument to be erected at Naples to Bellini, the composer of "Norma."

GERMANY, England, Austria, Italy and the United States will have their respective bands of music at the Paris Exhibition.

AT Moscow there is no sympathy for Wagner because he is a modern German, and for that reason his "Tannhäuser" has been cold-shouldered.

THE experiment of cheap prices of theatre admission at Philadelphia was so successful that it has been tried with opera. The result has been immense houses, excellent music, the singers buoyant and hopeful and the treasury full.

SENATOR BLAINE has introduced a bill for the better protection of dramatic literature. The bill provides that the law of copyright shall cover and protect managers, actors, and other citizens of the United States who shall procure through purchase the right to play, from a foreign author for the purpose of playing or publishing the same in the United States.

THE proceeds of the 1,000th performance of the comedy of "Our Boys" at the Vaudeville Theatre amounted to \$308, and have been thus distributed, namely: The Royal General Theatrical Fund, \$100; the Metropolitan Free Hospital, \$50; the Charing Cross Hospital, \$50; the Great Northern Hospital, \$50; and the Boys' Home and Refuge, Great Queen Street, \$50.

M. SELLIER, the new tenor, was five years ago a waiter in a Paris wine shop; Gueymard was a ploughboy; Poulletier was a cooper; Villaret was a brewer's man at Tarascon; Renard a working blacksmith at Reims; Morère, a house-painter; Vergnet, a butcher; Dulacens, a trooper, whose Colonel "discovered" his voice; Gaillard was destined by his parents to be a shoemaker.

THE Theatre says it is not improbable that in the course of a few weeks the Queen will pay a visit to the Prince of Wales' Theatre. From the time the Princess Beatrice gave her account of "Diplomacy" the Theatre understands Her Majesty has more than once testified a lively desire to see that play, but has not yet finally decided to go. It need hardly be added that Her Majesty's re-appearance at a theatre would revive many agreeable recollections, and give satisfaction to all her subjects.

SARAH BERNHARDT, of the Francais, Paris, has no time for gossip or visiting. Every day is divided up for various studies she takes great delight in. In the morning she takes a long ride in the saddle; at noon she takes the sculptor's chisel and works on three or four busts for the Exhibition, and a group of "Medea"; at 2 o'clock she takes up the brush and works on a large painting; at nightfall she is writing her memoirs, or rehearsing her roles, or attending to her correspondence. In the evening she appears on the stage.

PATTI's recent singing tour of two months through the principal Italian cities yielded in gross receipts \$199,000. And Neilson, having taken the former's place as a favourite with the *élite* of St. Petersburg, received more pay and diamonds, jewellery and flowers during the recent Russian operatic season than she ever received before in her life, and has been even appointed Cantatrice to the Court of Rome. In the long rivalry between these two starring songstresses, it is now conceded that Neilson has carried the day, owing to her uninterrupted course of good behaviour both as wife and mother. Patti was enthusiastically appreciated in Italy, although she had her favourite Nicolini looked on to her; but she has decidedly lost out in all the great capitals, where her east-of-husband, Marquis de Caux, has organized some very effective rings against her.