

round her shoulders, and she seemed to lean against him confidently as they came forward together.

Guy watched them and thought what a handsome pair they were, and he wished he had a sister who cared about him as Madge did for Jack. He thought he would have been a better man perhaps if he had had someone else to think about besides himself—someone belonging to him.

As they drew near he sat up and put his feet to the ground, being just in time to ward off a small toad-stool Jack threw at him.

"All right," he cried, "wait till I get you in London, I'll be even with you! Don't leave your letters about, that's all."

"You touch my letters if you dare," was the laughing reply, and Jack threw himself down on the couch and rested his feet on his friend's knees.

Guy shook his head gravely and addressed himself to Madge, who had seated herself on a garden-chair and was tilting it as far back as it would safely go, in a dreamy, abstracted manner.

"Do you know, Miss Harcourt, your brother's a sad character," he said. "Do you ever make him confess to you? I think a good lecture from you occasionally would do him good."

"What does he do?" she asked, turning her dark eyes wonderingly to his face.

"What doesn't he do, you mean, and what doesn't he say, I wonder, to the poor little Misses Brown, Jones, and Robinson who have the misfortune to cross his path. Just because he's got a mistaken idea into his head that he's irresistible, he thinks he may do and say whatever he likes."

Jack laughed gaily.

"Chuck it, old man," he said. "You only talk like that because you're jealous."

"I expect it's six of one and half a dozen of the other between you," remarked Madge, adding, "If girls will be foolish, what more can they expect?"

"Go it, Madge, laughed Jack, "I should just like to hear you pitch into Guy, or at any rate argue with him."

"I should sue for terms of peace without striking a blow," said Guy at once. "I can't do many things, but I can argue least of all."

"You're about right there," put in Jack slyly; "you're really a terrible muff. You may be able to write, but you can't spell, and for the rest, why, you can't even flirt."

"Perhaps Mr. Fawcett considers it childish to flirt?" suggested Madge.

"I don't consider it at all, and I've never tried it, but I should say it was worthless," was the candid answer. "However, I should never be likely to excel, because in what little experience I've had with girls, I've generally managed to mortally offend them in about fifteen minutes."

Jack lay back and laughed heartily,

for Guy's remark had brought to his mind one or two very humorous situations resulting from his too plain-speaking.

"Can you imagine a fellow in his senses telling a smart girl he had only known about five minutes that she shouldn't wear such tight shoes?" he asked Madge. "Those are the sorts of things he does. Once when I persuaded him to come with two girls to the exhibition, he offended them both and placed me in the worst predicament I ever knew."

"Oh, ah!" laughed Guy, "but the joke was, he wanted to have the nice one to himself all the afternoon, but the other wouldn't be left alone with me. I was delighted, because I didn't want to go, and he doesn't ask me on these occasions now."

"Do you remember Lady Liscard's picnic?" asked Jack mischievously.

Guy coloured slightly.

"Yes," he replied, looking as if he didn't want Jack to say any more, and adding, "I wish people wouldn't bother me to go to those kinds of things; I'm always like a fish out of water with smart society girls. I couldn't string off a lot of empty compliments if I tried, and I can't for the life of me talk about the weather for three hours."

Madge looked at him with a dawning interest in her eyes, but she did not make any remark.

"When are you going to quarrel with Madge?" asked Jack wickedly. "Isn't it about time; I should like to be present."

Guy glanced towards her quickly, and then replied quietly, "I have too much respect for Miss Harcourt to say anything that might hurt her feelings."

For answer Jack gave him a hearty slap on the back, exclaiming, "Capital, Guy! I didn't think you'd got it in you; we shall make a man of you yet! I hope you feel honoured, Madge; you are the first of your sex I ever knew to succeed in wringing a compliment out of Guy."

Madge raised her eyes and again looked at him with a faint show of interest, but remained silent, while incorrigible Jack continued, "Now you've made a start you'd better go on, old man. Practise your hand on the mater a bit. I shouldn't wonder if I don't have you cutting me out right and left when we get back to town."

"You needn't be afraid," answered Guy, readily. "I've not the faintest intention of attempting anything of the kind, though," with a sly look, "I dare say I shouldn't find it so very difficult. Begging Miss Harcourt's pardon, I must confess the majority of girls bore me awfully."

"Consequently it's rather a misfortune to you to be an eligible bachelor," said Jack, with a merry twinkle in his eyes, for he loved to tease Guy about his eligibility.

"That's a matter of opinion," he replied. "Personally, I should question very much if I am eligible. I haven't the least doubt but that I should bore a girl as completely as she would me."

"Oh, you needn't take that into consideration at all in the present day," remarked Madge sarcastically. "Few people think of each other's happiness in marrying. Money and position are by far the weightiest considerations."

"You take a hard view," said Guy, looking thoughtful.

"I take the world's view and the most apparent," she said coldly.

"I doubt if you're right," remarked Jack, rising and stretching himself. "What's the good of running the poor old world down; I think it's a downright jolly place," and he tucked his hands in his pockets with an expression that clearly suggested that he spoke from long experience.

Suddenly he roused up.

"By the way, Guy!" he exclaimed, "Madge and I have been over to Haines' this evening. He wants me to play my round off with him to-morrow afternoon. He says we can have the links all to ourselves, and he has to go up to town on Tuesday. I promised to go if you didn't mind; what do you say?"

"Of course I don't mind. Just because I was stupid enough to jump clumsily and hurt my foot you're not to stay at home."

"Well, if you're sure you don't mind, I'll go in and send him a line," and on Guy's repeating his assurance with emphasis, he left them and went indoors.

When he had gone, Guy again leaned back idly and proceeded quietly to study Madge, who was now seated with her elbows on a table and her chin resting on her hands, abstractedly surveying the distant scenery.

For several minutes neither spoke; Madge, because she was busy with her own thoughts and scarcely conscious of his presence, and Guy, partly because he was still somewhat afraid of her and partly because he liked watching her in silence.

That his companion interested him more than anyone had ever done before was not surprising, for she interested everyone, and fascinated and repelled by turns all who knew her.

With Guy, the fascination did not go very deep, and had he returned to London that night he would probably have forgotten about it very soon. He was far too matter-of-fact and easy-going to be quickly or easily impressed. Besides, Madge was so distinctly distant to him that her manner effectually quenched any warmth of ardour he might have felt, and at present he was quite content to watch her when she happened to be in his company, and forget her when absent.

(To be continued.)