

Where is That Man?

I'm looking for that kind of man
That advertiser use
With cuts of "Canturion soap"

MISS HELEN'S LOVERS.

CHAPTER X.

The best laid schemes of mice and men
Gang aft a-glee;
And leave us nought but grief and pain
For promised joys.

Helen seemed reluctant to part with Mr. Flight. Her strenuous efforts to prolong their farewell at the garden gate met with no success.

It was no wonder that she looked pale as she retraced her steps to the house, for the blazing sun streamed down on her bare head.

Mr. Jones was standing by the window when she came in. She looked at him gravely. She had cause for gravity; the change in his mien frightened her.

Until this moment he had been in no hurry; he would not precipitate matters; on the contrary, he would prolong his wooing until her feelings fully reciprocated, if they did not exceed his own; that would be his revenge for her obduracy.

He had promised himself a delightful time; he had laid a capital plan, but "The best laid schemes of mice and men Gang aft a-glee."

The advent of this rival was unlooked for; it upset his calculations and his self-control; it maddened him.

He would not beat about the bush, he would go straight to the root of the matter. He would not have any nonsense, he told himself, angrily, before she returned.

granted. If Helen was ever to quarrel with him it would be easiest to do so when he plumed himself on his security and his rival's defeat.

"What would you have seen?" she inquired. "That the parson was to be pitied—not killed."

"Your insight might have misled you." "Your feminine weapons of warfare may serve their purpose in an Amazonian battle, but used against some men, and particularly against such a man as Mr. Jones, they are quite harmless; he was a frank opponent, he hit straight from the shoulder, or he did not hit at all."

"Now, look here," he said, going a step nearer, she was standing by the piano, back to the light, "do you think that if I had come in as I did—through no fault of mine—and seen that poor chap making love to you, and hadn't asked you what it meant but had taken it for granted that it was your 'usual custom of an afternoon,' that that would have pleased you?"

"It would have been less eccentric; but perhaps I ought to be grateful for the interest you take in my affairs."

"I'm awfully sorry, Helen," he said, gently. "I beg your pardon. I had no right to bother you, but upon my honor I couldn't help it, I was so angry."

He had hardly heard what she said, her changing color, her evident distress, he attributed to the scene through which she had lately passed. It seemed cruel to increase her agitation himself, but he had gone so far that he could not draw back.

"We are making a very great mountain out of nothing, Mr. Jones," she said, lightly, "in your agitation you even forget my name. Would you mind opening the door? The heat in here is horrible, and a draught will blow away the scent of the flowers; they are so overpowering they make one breathless."

He did not open the door, nor did he answer. She did not look at him but she was conscious of his steady gaze. She could bear anything just then rather than silence.

"We will go out," she went on, quickly, "it is cooler in the garden. I must fetch my hat and order tea. We will have tea under the trees."

"I'd heard it myself, and seen the parson's face just now."

Her face did not express much amusement certainly, but she tried to back away from him into the shadow of the curtains, and he let her go with an impatient sigh.

"Helen, I am going. I believe I was rude just now. I hardly knew what I said; I was cut up, don't you know. I suppose it isn't your fault that you don't fancy me; upon my word, I don't know what you should see in me after all. It is rough luck though, I shall never see your face, nor hear your voice again. I have been thinking we should spend our whole lives together. That thought had taken root deep; how am I to get rid of it?"

Those were his last words. Before Helen had time to think what they meant he had gone; she heard him talking to Miss Mitford in the garden, then she heard his quick step on the gravel, then the click of the gate and the rumble of wheels, loud at first, but soon lessening until they died into silence.

Yes, he had gone, but he would come back; he said he could not live without her. Surely, surely, surely he would try again. What had she said? Her wretched pride, her suicidal vanity had made her wound him. He must know, he must guess that she was only a woman after all, and therefore to be won. The remembrance of Lady Lucy Freemantle ran a leaden thought through her brain.

"My love, we shall miss Mr. Jones," said her aunt, they sat together under the tulip tree drinking their tea. "Men make a house lively, and he had such a pleasant, cheery way about him. I declare he reminded me more than once of my poor Thomas."

"Perhaps he will come to-morrow" Helen was sitting, or rather, lounging back in a deck chair, her large white hat was on the grass at her feet, her hands were clasped behind her head, her eyes, soft and dewy, were fixed on her companion's face.

"Nay, my love, he bade me a last goodbye, he is going to-night—on business to London I understood him to say, and then he goes to Paxford, I believe. Helen, your tea is getting cold. Dear I dear! there is a poor little fly in it."

Helen carefully extracted the fly with a leaf, and placed it on her knee to dry and recover itself, but it was past cure; the tea had been of fatal heat, and it was dead. She looked at it; how easily it had come to grief, a false flutter, a fall, and a painful death as punishment for one small mistake. To and fro in the sunshine, myriads of gnats and flies were darting—

"You are so thoughtful, love; what is it?" "It's too hot to talk, auntie. Just look at the bed of portulacacs, with the sun on it. I never saw such tints; they would drive a painter to despair."

bow beneath her chin, and threw back the ribbons upon her shoulders; she was overcome.

"Mrs. Majoribanks is a friend of mine, love," she said, with mild reproof. "Isn't that the very reason you would like to hear her abused? There, Auntie, don't look shocked, it was a joke—only it didn't amuse you."

"You are not yourself, love, the air is oppressive and that fly prevented you drinking your tea. Will you have some raspberry vinegar instead?" "Raspberry vinegar," with a laugh which was half a sob. "Vinegar already; no, thank you, I daren't touch it."

Helen's mind that evening was a weathercock; first she declared herself too tired to go to the beach, then she remembered that the children were expecting her and she must not disappoint them. At the gate she turned back, it was so hot she would stay in the garden; on reaching the bush of sweet brier she made a fresh decision, the sea breeze on the shore would be refreshing, she would go—nay, she wouldn't, it was so long a walk—she wouldn't—she wouldn't—finally she would and she went.

She returned late, very gentle and subdued, very careful of, and caressing toward, her aunt, with pensive eyes and a restless spirit.

This new mood seemed likely to be permanent, it lasted through the ensuing week and on to the final days of her visit.

The weather had broken up, a succession of thunderstorms had succeeded the heat, heavy showers fell continually, the Atlantic was troubled and stormy. Neither rough breezes nor rain kept Helen indoors, she haunted the cliffs and the seashore. Upon the sea-lashed rocks she would stand for hours, a tall, unbending figure against the dark background, the wind flapping her skirts and beating a warm color into her cheeks.

On the last day of her sojourn at Noelcombe she had gone for her usual evening ramble on the beach and she had walked for so long and for so far that she felt very tired as she toiled up the steep ascent homeward. Fatigue was a new sensation, but its

"Your merry heart goes all the day, Your sad onesies in a mile," as Shakespeare said several other people have hitherto observed.

When she reached Carnation Cottage, she saw Miss Elizabeth, with chintz skirt pinned up high, and Letsey's pattens protecting her feet from the damp grass, spudding up daisy roots on the lawn; on seeing Helen she left her work and hurried toward her.

as they said, she had grown older. Under such circumstances a girl of her calibre ages apace.

But before long Helen had good cause to be penitent—a justifiable excuse for growing more sober and less childish. A sad event took place, an event at which remorse, sorrow and some natural excitement were blent.

Mr. Flight, to whom she had been so unkind—Mr. Flight, on whom she had practiced her foolish wiles with such unlooked-for result—Mr. Flight, whose very name turned her sick and cold—Mr. Flight, of whom she never thought without a stab of sharp pain—Mr. Flight had atoned for all his offences by death. He was dead!

Poor Mr. Flight! At least there was no mention of broken heart as the cause of his death. He had, like many a heart-whole man, taken fever at Florence, and, after a long and severe illness, had succumbed to the disease. His last words had been of Helen; his last act had been to make his will, by which he left her everything that he possessed. She found herself the owner of fifteen thousand pounds, and forgot the satisfaction of her riches in her anger with herself. She had never so despised herself. She had been despicably, pitilessly remorseless. Even now she could not cast her warmest thoughts to him; she could not grieve for him, she could not wish him back again.

She did not want his money; all she wanted was to tell him how bitterly she repented, and how well she understood now that she had laughed where she had better have wept.

Regrets are vain emotions, as Helen knew to her cost—useless encumbrances of the soul. Regrets must be strangled, if life is not to be a waste tangle of retrospect; for regrets, like all weeds, grow apace.

Mrs. Mitford was very tender with the girl at this time, and would watch her, furtively and unobserved, from anxious eyes. She had drawn her own conclusion—a fresh and false one—from Helen's altered looks and ways.

"Henry," she said one day—impulsively disclosing (as women do) the secret which she had intended to keep inviolate forever—"Henry, Helen regrets that poor young man."

"To be sure she does," the rector answered, energetically. "I should think poorly of her if she did not. Why, we all regret him. His sermons were above the average, and his kindness of heart exceptional."

"But, Henry, you do not understand me. I mean more than I said. I mean that she mistook the nature of her feelings. She really and truly loved him."

CHAPTER XI.

We rise in glory as we sink in pride; Where boasting ends, there dignity begins.

—YOUNG.

For 'tis a question left us yet to prove, Whether love lead fortune, or else fortune love.

—SHAKESPEARE.

Summer was long past. The corn was all gathered in; the shivering trees were shedding their variegated leaves; the chilly breath of coming winter was to be felt at "rosy morn and dewy eve." Even to a genuine country lover, the last days of October, amid dying flowers, naked hedges, newly stripped woods and cloudy skies are depressing, and the thought of pavements, shop windows, dry crossings and fresh faces possesses a new and decided attraction.

But if Helen ever sighed as she trudged over sodden leaves and waded through the muddy Meriton lanes, no one heard her; if the universal decay and death of autumn saddened her, no one suspected that it was so. How should they? She was the life and soul of her home—an imprisoned sunbeam in which they all rejoiced. If she smiled less easily, her smile was sweeter and less swift; if her spirits were no longer rampant, they did not overpower—they sustained—the humor of her neighbors. If she was less ready of advice, less quick of decision, more diffident of the justice of her judgment, more lenient, more sympathetic, and more thoughtful, she "was older," they change thus.

One or two of Helen's girl-acquaintances, who belonged to the conventional, egotistical, man-hunting set—of whom the members, in converse, manner, appearance, and lamentable monotony of character resemble each other as closely as do primroses—declared "she had grown stupid and didn't care for things" ("things" meant their conversation—which, however, both in purport and intention, far exceeded their doing).

Because Helen had made a mistake, or because fortune had not been kind to her, was no reason that she should revenge herself upon fate by making her innocent family exceedingly uncomfortable, if not positively miserable, by repinings and moody preoccupation. She was not the sort of girl to visit her trouble upon her unfortunate parents, or make them pay for her caprice. If she suffered, she suffered alone; she showed her mettle, which was of the right quality. But,

she is prettier than ever, and as merry as a grig. You women are always raking and sifting and prying for a love-tale. If a girl is happy without a husband, you will believe it."

Mrs. Mitford smiled shyly. Her husband was no doubt right. "I shall send her away, Henry. Now that there is no difficulty about ways and means, I should like her to go and see my people. Change of air and scene is excellent for mind and body, besides which she will meet many—"

"So you won't be content till you have lost her, Honora. You foolish woman, why won't you keep her here as long as you can? You will break your heart when she marries—I know it."

"I should break my heart if she didn't marry," Mrs. Mitford said, smiling very sweetly at her rector; "for I want her to be happy—as happy as I am."

So it was arranged that Helen should pay a round of visits, with which arrangement she was nothing loth to comply. She wrote lively letters home, descriptive of lively and varied life. She made new friends and met pleasant people; she seemed to enjoy everything and find amusement everywhere. There was an even, a sustained content to be detected in her mode of writing which was foreign to her years, and particularly new to her former habits of mind. In each letter she inquired for her Aunt Elizabeth. "She never writes to me," was her complaint, repeated over and over again.