

him as their right hand when they gave garden parties. If the widow perceived his affection for Nelly, she had not in any way sought to check it.

But Nell's surmise respecting her elder sister was sadly near the mark. Leo was her own age, and her inclination had been instantly attracted to him, while—perhaps love is blind—she regarded his attention to Nelly—"a mere child"—in no serious light.

So stood matters when, the autumn arriving, Mrs. Wentworth selected Scarborough as the watering place for their summer outing. There they had met Captain Brooke, whose fashionable exterior and evident position in society made him of no little importance among the seaside visitors. His attentions to Nelly soon became marked, and Mrs. Wentworth thrilled with proud satisfaction at so excellent a match, while Janet had even expressed pleasure.

The only one dissatisfied and alarmed was Nell herself. Already was she secretly troth-plighted to Leo; and no sooner did they return to town than she acquainted him with the state of affairs.

"Well, darling," he remarked, cheerfully, "there's but one thing to be done. I must be before the captain. I know Mrs. Wentworth likes me and Janet is my friend."

Whereupon he had proposed and been rejected; and then persisting, he had sought a second interview, been forbidden the house, and to see or write to Nelly again—a prohibition neither had obeyed.

After that interview on the garden wall, Leo, despite his cheerfulness before Nelly, rowed away down the river very alarmed, wretched, and depressed.

In vain he told himself a hundred times that Nelly would never consent to wed any but himself. He owned it was an unfair fight she would be subjected to, a child like she was, and so devotedly fond of her mother, whom she held it almost a sacred duty to obey.

Leo got very little sleep that night. How could he, when he reflected upon the trial awaiting her he loved to-morrow?

"If she refuse the captain, she puts herself at variance with all her family," he reflected. "If she accept him, she ruins my happiness and her own. She'll never do that. If I could but help her—save her! It seems so mean letting her fight all alone!"

Having tossed himself almost into a fever, he rose early, and the first thing he saw on his breakfast table was a note from Nelly. The lines enclosed were few, and blotted by tears.

With difficulty and indignation, blended with compassion for the writer, he read as follows:

"DEAR DEAR LEO,

Forgive me—farewell for ever! Such a scene occurred last evening, and I have yielded. Captain Brooke comes to four-o'clock tea to-morrow, and I've promised to accept him. Mamma looked so pleased, and kissed me so fondly. Janet looked triumphant, I know I am right—jealousy. I can write no more. All is over. Pardon, dear—dear—dearest Leo. Your heart-broken

NELLY."

"It can't be—it shant be!" cried poor Leo, pacing the room in angry distress. "She shall not be sacrificed. Who's this Captain Brooke, that he should have her? Handsome—fashionable—a swell—so he may be, but Dick Henley says he backs horses no end, and plays cards like the deuce; and he knows he's over head and ears in debt, and—"

He stopped abruptly. His expression abruptly changed; his brows were knit with thought. A space there was silence, then he continued:

"By jove! After all I believe Nelly is right about Janet. That was why she told me about it. It was to test me. She most signally failed, but why should I not try it on Brooke? I will, anything to rescue Nell."

Seising his hat, rushing downstairs, calling a hansom, he drove to his friend Dick Henley's, who had rooms in Pump Court.

"Dick," he said, "I want you to do me a favor—to write a letter I shall dictate—anonymous."

"Leo, I don't hold with anonymous communications. An anonymous letter is—" began Dick sententiously.

"Oh, yes, I know," broke in Leo; "but sometimes, old fellow, it is justifiable, and I mean this to contain nothing but truth. There's not a moment to be lost. Hear what I have to tell; then, Dick, take your pen and write."

Leo won the day. Dick wrote the letter, and Leo saw it safely delivered at the Captain's rooms.

Then he returned to his own, and waited.

Would it prove a success or failure?

If he only knew! How he would have liked to have gone down the river to the neighborhood of the villa, but he was aware there would be no chance of seeing Nell.

Oh! the weary waiting! Five o'clock! Ah! there was the postman. Was he coming? Yes! A letter! A letter from Nell!

Tearing it open, his eyes danced as he read:

"DEAR, DEAR LEO,

Joy! joy! joy! All is off. The captain has just written—he cannot come this afternoon; he has been summoned unexpectedly abroad. It is doubtful when he will return. He doesn't say it, but he means it, that he's changed his mind about happy me. Meet me in the Willow Glen—no—the elder-tree to-night.

Your loving

NELLY."

"I've rescued her—I've rescued her!" cried Leo, performing a *pas seul* to work off some of his exuberant delight. "Not only is all fair in love, but I've exposed the worthlessness of the fellow."

That night a second interview took place on the wall among the elder-blossoms and the insects.

"Oh, Leo dear, I'm so glad—aren't you?" said Nell, nestling to his side. "Yes, darling. You see the fellow never really loved you, only your money."

"My money, Leo? Why, I haven't a penny-piece dowry."

"No; but he thought you had; he wasn't told otherwise, was he? Your mother kept that for a last communication. Now when he did know—"

"But he didn't know, Leo."

"But he did, darling."

"How, Leo?"

"I told him."

"You?"

"Yes, listen. I think you are right about Janet; she didn't like my caring for you, and so she one day told me how it was you hadn't a penny fortune, and she had, thinking that might alter my affection. As if it could, Nell."

"Dear Leo."

"Well, I'd heard the captain was in debt, and in my distraction this morning I wondered if he knew you were poor, or fancied you like Gertie, had four thousand pounds, and resolved to test him."

"I had a letter (anonymous) sent, telling him how Mrs. Wentworth's father had died, leaving his property between her children Gertie and Janet; and how you, not being born until after his death, had got nothing. I told him if he doubted he'd only to pay a shilling at Somerset House and make certain. Which I daresay he did, and then, instead of coming down to four-o'clock bohea, wrote, and went abroad. Don't you see?"

"Oh! dear Leo, how clever of you!" cried Nell, giving him a hug. "Now I've a shield against all lovers, dear, but you."

But Nell never required the shield. Leo was gradually received again by Mrs. Wentworth into favour, and a year later, getting an engagement of five hundred a-year, married Nell.

"Which, darling, I never should have done," he remarked on his wedding-day, "but for that 'happy thought' of your grandfather's will, which rescued you from the mercenary, fashionable, young sporting officer, Captain Brooke."

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