HER HUMBLE LOVER

"Stop," she said, thoughtfully. "You say I don't understand her. If she is to be my daughter—and mark me, Frederic, if it is as you say, that you cannot forget her, or be happy without her—she will be my daughter—"

"Mother!"

"Listen to me! If it is to be, then it is necessary that I should understand her. Frederic, she shall come here. I will ask her to come and stay."

His face flushed, then paled again, and he shook his head.

"She will not come while—while I am here."

"You must go away," she said, resolutely.

His face darkened with a look of disappointment.

"Why should I go away?" he said. "What good will that do? I shall go and leave her to—to——" he did not finish, but she understood him.

"If there is any one else," she said, "and I know whom you fear—that adventurer who is haunting the place—he will not have any opportunity of seeing her while she is here. She will come if you go away; and she shall stay and get accustomed to me and the Park. She will learn to value all that she has so foolishly refused, and grow to repent and wish that she had not done so."

His face brightened. Like all men of his type, he was sanguine, and ready to be hopeful.

"I see," he said. "If she would but come!"

Lady Blyte smiled scornfully.

"Do you think that her aunt will allow her to decline an invitation to the Park? She will come, be sure of that! I will go and ask her to-morrow. You must start by the first train, so that I can say that you have gone. She shall stay a week and then—ah, then we shall see whether she will refuse to be the mistress of the Park!"

Sir Frederic laid his hand on her shoulder gratefully.

"Mother, I know how much this costs you," he said in a low voice. "I am very grateful for your goodness to me. Yes, I will take your advice. I will go to-morrow by the first train to London, anywhere, and she will come here," with a sigh as he thought of the debt he would afford him to be near her.

"Leave it to me," she said, steadfastly, but coldly; for in spite of the sacrifice of her proud nature of her was great. "Leave it to me, my dear. I have always cared for you the desire of your heart, and I will succeed in this though—though I hate her!" and her eyes flashed as she looked up at him.

"Don't say that, mother," he said, wincing. "You won't say that when you know her. No one could hate—no one could help loving her. Let me go now, I am worn out;" and he stooped and kissed her, and left the room.

Lady Blyte rang the bell.

"Tell Lovel to pack his master's portmanteau," she said to the butler. "Sir Frederic is going to town by the first train."

Hector Warren, having no carriage, walked home from necessity rather than desire. The cottage in which he lived was situated in a lane leading to the beach. It was a modest looking lodging, quite in harmony with his appearance and position, and Mrs. Thompson, the landlady, declared that since she had taken in lodgers she had never known any gentleman give her less trouble than Hector Warren did.

He lived as frugally as the fishermen, and, declared Mrs. Thompson, only had one bad habit—that of sitting up late into the night, or the morning, smoking his pipe, and sometimes pacing his small room; but as Mrs. Thompson was never kept up or awake, it didn't much signify

He was a mystery to her, as he was to every one else who interested themselves in him. No one ever came to see him, and there were very few letters delivered for him by the rustic postman. But amongst these Mrs. Thompson had noticed, with feelings of awe, several inclosed in very thin envelopes, and bearing strange, foreign stamps. These the good woman always eyed almost fearfully, and stuck up on the mantel-shelf as if they were curiosities.

Hector Warren walked home from the dinner-party at Lady Rookwell's, wetting his thin boots, as Sir Frederic had done, and entering the humble cottage almost as disturbed in mind as Sir Frederic himself.

Usually so self-possessed and impassive, to-night he is thrilling with excitement and emotion.

His hand, as he laid it upon the modest latch of his parlor door, trembled almost as much as Sir Frederic's and his brow was knit as if with the result of a mental struggle.

For a moment he stood in the dark room, with the match box in his hand, recalling the beautiful eyes that Signa had uplifted to him when she said good-night; he could feel the

her voice was ringing in his ears. A flush of passionate love swept across his face, and transformed it, and his lips formed the words, "My darling!"

Then he lit the candle and looked round the room, and as he did so his glance fell upon one of the foreign-looking envelopes stuck upon the mantel-shelf, and his expression underwent a complete change. Setting down the candle, he sank into a chair, and sighed heavily, his eyes fixed upon the envelope stuck up above him as if it were a familiar demon.

He sat there for full five minutes, then he rose and reluctantly, slowly reached for the letter, and opened it.

As a man who reads unwelcome news, he read the letter through; then with a sigh he tore it into fragments and threw it into the grate, and began pacing the room.

"Too late!" he murmured. "Too late. I cannot throw aside the past! I cannot link her to such a life as mine! And yet—and yet—oh, my darling—my darling! how happy I could have made you but for this—but for this! Shall I venture even now? No, it would kill her. No, a thousand times, no! I must go. There is only one thing left me, and that is flight. And yet tonight I felt so safe—so secure! I felt that here was the one woman in the world who would brave all that it could say, for my sake! But I dare not! If this be true love, and I know that it is, I dare not risk it. One word of this would kill her! I must go!"

With a groan he flung the other letters aside, and took a Continental Bradshaw from the table, and turned over the leaves indifferently purposelessly.

"I am to be a wanderer on the face of the earth," he murmured, bitterly. "That is my fate! Well, let it be so; anything, rather than sorrow should dim her eyes or misery break her heart. Where shall I go?"

He could not decide, but he went upstairs and packed his one portmanteau, then he sat down and wrote a line or two to Mr. Podswell, saying that business had suddenly called him away, and went—not to bed, but to pace the room till dawn.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Dear me," says the rector, opening his letters with a table-knife, and looking across at Signa and her aunt with a surprised frown. "Dear me, this is very strange!"

"What is strange? what is it, Joseph?" demands Mrs. Podswell, irritably. "I do wish you wouldn't startle me so. What has happened? If there is anything more calculated to upset a person with my nerves, it is such uncalled-for exclamations. Is any one dead?"

"No, no, my dear," answers the rector. "Certainly not; it is only a letter from Mr. Warren."

"Oh!" says Aunt Podswell, with a contemptuous sniff. "And what is it?"

Signa feels the blood rush to her face, and she bends over the coffee service with downcast eyes. The rector smooths his chin and coughs.

"Ahem! just a few lines, really quite—er—curt, my dear, saying that business has suddenly called him away, and thanking us for our kindness and hospitality."

The flush dies from Signa's face, leaving her deadly pale, and a heavy weight seems to have fallen suddenly on her heart, but she lifts her eyes bravely.

"Has he gone for good?" asks Mrs. Podswell, in a tone that implies a hope that she may receive a reply in the affirmative.

"I suppose so," says the rector. "He incloses the keys, and he says nothing of coming back."

Aunt Podswell sniffs suspiciously.

"Well, Joseph, I hope no harm may come of the young man's visit."

"Harm, my dear!" says the rector, mildly. "I don't see——"

"Perhaps not; you are not overacute, Joseph, at the best of times. I don't accuse him of any harm, by no means; I only hope that nothing unpleasant may result from his visits to

the Grange. You will remember that I was opposed to his having the key from the first."

"Certainly, certainly," says the rector, "but seeing that he had brought the earl's written authority, I don't see how we could have refused him the key, my dear. At any rate, he has gone, and there's an end of it. I think we did right to be civil to him, Amelia; and if he should meet Lord Delamere he will admit that we have done our best for him."

"Yes," says Aunt Podswell, complainingly, "and, as usual, meet with the common gratitude. He does not think it worth while to walk in and say good-bye."

"Sudden business, my dear," remarks the rector, timidly.

Aunt Podswell turns to Signa suddenly.

"You saw him last, last night; did he say anything of the sudden business, Signa?" she asks.

Signa, to whose face something like color had returned, shakes her head.

"No, nothing."

"You see, he never said a word, and there was no post in last night. He could not have got a letter——"

"The foreign mails, my dear."

But Mrs. Podswell's suspicion will not be allayed. She had been ready to quarrel with Hector Warren for coming, and she is ready to quarrel with him now for going.

"There is something wrong about it, I am sure, and you will see, mark my words!" and with a shake of the head and a deep sigh, she retreats to her sofa.

Signa sits silent and patient, while the rector crumbles his toast and turns over his letters and papers; then, when he has declined a fourth cup of coffee, she rises, and makes her escape.

"Gone! And without a word! Why had he not said "Good-bye" last night—why had he left her without a sign? Was it possible that he had thought she had accepted Sir Frederic? No, that could not have been the reason, for he—Hector Warren—had said no word of love to her. After all, she had no cause for complaint; he had been kind to her, very kind, while he had been here; and now he was gone, and there was an end to the dream that had been so pleasant, and alas! so brief.

But there was an aching void in her heart as she stood over Archie and watched him at his writing, and once she sighed so deeply that he looked up suddenly with his shrewd face full of sympathy and wanted to know what was the mater.

Presently there came a knock at the door, and Mary, opening it, said that Lady Blyte was in the drawing-room, and would Miss Signa come down?

"Lady Blyte!" exclaimed Archie, with a prolonged whistle. "Why, she never visits anywhere! I wonder what she wants, Signa? Aren't you afraid?"

"Not in the least," said Signa, with rather a weary smile. "Go on with your geography lesson, dear, and try and learn it before I come back."

Then she went down with a little feeling of curiosity and embarrassment. But she need not have felt at all uncomfortable. Lady Blyte was a high-bred lady, and knew how to be gracious. She was very gracious, and as Signa came forward, the old lady held out her hands, and drawing the slim figure toward her, kissed Signa's forehead.

"My dear," she said, "I have come to ask a favor."

"Of me?" inquired Signa, with a little smile of wonder, and yet with that calm self-possession which never failed to arouse fresh surprise in Aunt Podswell's bosom.

"Yes, of you," said her ladyship, thinking as she scanned the girl from head to foot, how beautiful she looked, how full of youth and grace, and that nameless charm which, for want of a better word, we call prepossessing. "Yes, of you, my dear. I want you to take compassion upon a lonely old woman, and come and keep her company for a few days."

Signa, remembering all too vividly the scene in Lady Rookwell's conservatory, recalling Sir Frederic's hot vows and bitter disappointment, was appalled at the idea of going to stay at the house of the man she had refused, and a hot flush crossed her face; but Lady Blyte smiled calmly and even sweetly, for there were times when she could bury her pride out of sight, and this was one of them.

"I am quite alone, my dear," she said. "As I have been telling your aunt, my son left me this morning to pay a long visit to a friend in London, so that we shall be quite tete-a-tete. If you think the prospect too awfully dull, say so, and I will try and forgive you; but on the other hand I shall be really glad if you will come and keep me company for a few days."

"Signa will be only too delighted, dear Lady Blyte," commenced Mrs. Podswell, but her ladyship stopped her, with rather a dry and haughty smile.

"There cannot be much that is delightful in the prospect," she said, "but I will try and make the few days as pleasant as possible," and she bent her proud eyes on the beautiful face inquiringly.

Signa raised her eyes. She had been thinking. She had promised Sir Frederic that she would forget what had passed between them, and had agreed that they should remain friends; why should she not go? If he had been at home, it would have been impossible, of course, but he was away, and his proud mother, feeling lonely, had come almost humbly to beg for her company—yes, she would go.

"I shall be very glad to come," she said, simply, and Lady Blyte remarked the exquisite taste which prompted the simple reply. "When?"

"Now," said Lady Blyte, with a smile. "I shall be only too pleased to wait until your maid packs for you; your aunt and I will have a chat."

Signa laughed softly.

"I am my own maid," she said. "I shall be ready in a few minutes."

There was a scene with Archie, but at last he was brought to something like acquiescence by Signa promising to ride over in a day or two, and, perhaps, to ask Lady Blyte's permission for him to spend the day at the Park.

"Good-bye, then," he said, clinging round her. "And, oh, I say! what shall I tell Mr. Warren when I see him. He will be sure to ask after you."

"Mr. Warren has gone, Archie, dear," said Signa, and as she spoke she ran from him that he might not see the sudden quivering of her lips.

Lady Blyte cut her visit very short when Signa appeared. She didn't like Mrs. Podswell; indeed, one of her objections to Signa as a daughter-in-law was the fact of her being connected with the "people at the rectory," as she called them.

They got into the handsome landau, with its crested panels, and its belaced and powdered servants, and on the ride to the Park her ladyship was more gracious even than she had been at the Rectory.

"I don't want you to be more bored than you can help, my dear," she said, putting her hand on Signa's arm, and looking at her with a smile that was meant to be very kind. "You must not make this quite a duty visit. We shall be quite alone, and you will be able to amuse yourself in your own way. I shall not be any restraint on you, I hope."

"You speak as if Blyte Park were a prison, and I a first-class misdemeanant," said Signa, laughing softly. "I am sure I shall be very happy, and it was very good of you to ask me."

Lady Blyte nodded. Already her heart was warming toward the girl, and she began to understand the charm of the sweet, frank nature which had so captivated her son.

"It is best to understand each other, my dear," she said. "and I want you to feel that you may do just as you like while you are with me. Be happy, and I shall be satisfied."

Then she changed the subject, and talked about the trees in the avenue through which they were just then passing, and the view, and so on, but never a word of Sir Frederic; she was too discreet to alarm Signa by mentioning even his name.

When they reached the Park, Signa found that, short as had been the time, some preparations had been made for her visit. A maid had been allotted her, and a suit of apartments, which, compared with the modest little bedrom at the Rectory, were simply palatial. On the table in the boudoir was a box of novels from Mudie, and some choice exotics, and the maid respectfully called her attention to a planette which had been carried up from the drawing-room.

"Her ladyship wished me to say that she would be glad if you would play any time you liked, miss; it will not disturb her at all."

It was all very pleasant, and Signa, as the maid brushed her hair and arranged the simple evening dress, felt almost guilty of doing Sir Frederic a wrong, when she recalled her refusal of him

"Let her see what she has refused," Lady Blyte had said to Sir Frederic; and Signa could not help seeing it. The servants, taking their tone from their mistress, were respectful almost to obsequiousness, and a footman threw open the drawing-room door for her as if she were a duchess.

(To be continued.)

"Why do you keep that clumsy waiter? He breaks a tray of dishes nearly every day." "Yes, and it keeps our patrons amused, too. Beats cabaret features."—Louisville Courier-Journal

Punctil Punctuation.

Talking of supreme importance of the comm correspondent states that Thoma pbell once walked six mi es to ting office to have a comma in his poems changed into a semi There is a remarkable resemb between this and the story o William Hamilton, Astronomer Ireland, making a lengthy ex to Dublin to have a semi-colon tuted for a colon.—London Evening Standard.

Vampire.

This is there: Always inert, sitting still, sp five to seven hours a day looking window on the street. Nothing to and always giving it. Seeking amu entertainment, but never afford Taking, but never giving. Si tly and listening to others conven when her presence is unwelcom saying nothing but an uncassis or no. Primitive minded and, with nothing to give, she does or does without retaining te a sieve. Thought passes thro beyond her without stopping. uires nothing, gives nothing, anything. One person alone with omes exhausted while she is review York Globe.