Handsome Prizes Offered in this Number.

HORNER'S PENNY STORIES

IN GOD'S GOOD TIME

by Ernest Acheson

No. 1116.]

Read this delightful long complete story.

[February 6th, 1915.

Our Roll of Honour

Brave Defenders of King and Country

(*Continued on page 19.*)

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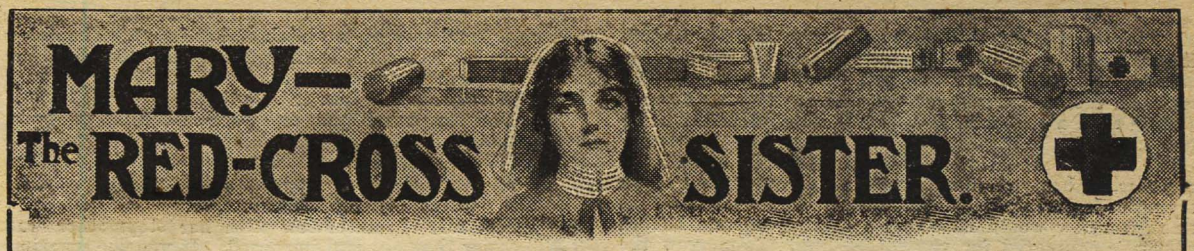


A Grand Complete Story of a Woman's Part in the Great War.

By BESSIE REYNOLDS.

THIS WEEK: HER MAIMED HERO.

ENGAGED—TO THE WRONG MAN.

"YOU don't mind waiting at the hospital; I'm going in to see a chap I know who is lying wounded there?"

The man who spoke turned the big car that he was driving into the wide-open gates of the East Coast Red Cross Hospital without waiting for a reply. The girl at his side only nodded her head in its little motor-cap of purple suede that brought out answering purple lights in her dark hair, and seemed to enhance the liquid beauty of a pair of dark eyes that were a little sad in repose.

Yet the lovely little mouth, with its gracious curves, seemed made for laughter, and the beauty of her face was enough to make a man lose his head.

Which perhaps explained why one man had tried to win her by guile. That he had succeeded he knew, since the ring he had given her, in which one emerald winked a wicked green eye, rested on the third finger of that small left hand.

That she did not love him seemed scarcely to matter since he held her word. Kenwood Brayle told himself that the love would come in time—at any rate, Kathleen would be his own.

"Will you come in?" he asked. "Interesting, you know, to see the poor chaps."

He was turning the car round beside the steps now, and his eyes held a strange little gleam as they rested upon her face. It might have warned her, only that she was not looking at him just then. As a matter of fact, Kathleen very seldom did look at the man she had promised to marry if she could help it, which was rather a bad beginning for a life partnership.

Now she hesitated a moment, and then a little flush crept over the lovely face as at some quick thought.

"Yes, I'll come," she said, and, springing up, threw aside the fur rug that had been wrapped about her.

"Just a moment, while I go and ask if he can see me." Her companion turned and ran up the steps swiftly. He was a big, coarse man just under thirty, but he was agile enough in spite of his bulk. He came back presently with the little smile that she hated upon his ruddy, coarse face.

"It's quite all right," he said. "We can go straight up to the ward and just ask for the sister."

He led the way, and the girl followed him. She hardly noticed his low-voiced inquiry of the sister. Through the open door she caught a glimpse of two rows of spotless beds, of faces turned eagerly towards the door. There were other visitors beside some of the beds, and the sound of voices and even sometimes a low laugh came to her.

The next moment she was following Sister Mary, the Red Cross nurse, down the ward to the corner where a screen was drawn half about the bed.

Kathleen drew back.

"He is very ill, then?" she said. She turned to the man beside her. "Perhaps you had better go alone."

"It will be all right if you don't stay long and you are very quiet," Mary said. She did not know the relationship between them—the man had only said that "two friends" wished to see this particular patient—but already she was weaving another romance.

This girl, with the flowerlike face and the dark, liquid eyes—was she the reason why this man had been so morose since they brought him to the hospital? And then she thought of what was threatened for the morrow, of a limb that must be sacrificed to save a life, and she sighed to herself as she went forward.

What tragedies this one hospital had held! It made her afraid to think of all the sum total of suffering that man's cruelty to man had wrought.

But for all her thought she was quick to notice the look of startled surprise, that amounted almost to horror, in the face of the girl as she came round the screen and caught sight of the man in the bed. It came to Mary then that there was something wrong somewhere. This was not the man she had expected to see, and yet she had recognised him instantly.

And he, after the first half start, he only set his face into grim lines of compression, and looked up in silence. Perhaps, indeed, the physical pain that racked him left him very little time even for mental suffering; perhaps the strange indifference that comes to the very sick when they have drifted near to the dark valley was upon him.

And the girl recovered herself a moment later, and went forward quietly.

"I did not expect to see you," she said. "I was not told——"

Her voice held a note of accusation, but she did not turn to look at the man by her side. Instead, her eyes searched eagerly the face upon the pillow.

It was a face that was more suggestive of rugged strength than good looks—an essentially manly face even now, when weakness and pain had thinned it and sharpened its outlines.

"Or you wouldn't have come," he said. "So you brought her?"

His eyes held a strange expression as they looked into the face of the other man; it was as though they read him and his motives. Brayle's heavy face flushed.

"Thought I'd give her a surprise," he said, more awkwardly than a moment before he would have thought possible. "What's the matter with you—arm, isn't it?"

"Yes," the injured man said; but he did not enlarge upon the fact. His eyes went to the girlish hands that held the big fur gauntlets that she had pulled from them on her way upstairs in the warmth of the hospital. He saw the emerald ring winking a significant eye at him and his lips tightened.

Sister Mary, hovering near, stepped forward quickly as she saw the pallor that seemed to steal over his face.

"I think you had better go now," she said, but the girl came forward and quite suddenly her lips began to quiver.

"Tony," she said, "I wouldn't have come if it was all a mistake."

Sister Mary caught her by the arm and turned her round quickly. There was something behind it all that she did not understand; but the wounded man had borne enough—more than enough, for he seemed to be slipping into the shadows.

Yet she left a younger nurse to look

after him and adminster the restorative that he needed. It seemed to Sister Mary that there was other work for her to do just then. She had read something like agony in the lovely, girlish face, and on the man's good-looking face a suspicion of a sneer that spoke but little sympathy.

"I think," she said, as they reached the end of the corridor, "that you should know that your friend has a trying ordeal before him. In fact, if I had dreamed that this interview would have any agitating effect I should not have consented for you to see him. To-morrow the left arm is to be amputated."

She heard the girl give a queer little gasp, and she did not look at her for a moment as she continued her explanation.

"We have tried our best to save the arm, of course, but unfortunately we have no choice."

"You mean that it is his life?"

Mary met the gaze of surely a pair of the saddest eyes that she had ever seen.

"Yes," she said.

The girl turned away without a word and went down the stairs. Once she stumbled a little, and the man caught at her arm, but she hardly seemed to notice the movement. And she did not ask that she might have news on the morrow as Mary had half expected.

Yet, watching her with kindly, sympathetic eyes, Mary understood that her silence did not mean that she didn't care.

If anything, it meant that she cared too much.

She would have been quite sure of that if she could have seen the girl a little later sitting in the big, luxurious car, and looking straight before her with eyes that saw nothing of the road that they were "eating up" so swiftly.

The man at her side was beginning to see that he had made a mistake. He had done this thing in a last instinct of petty spite towards a man he had already injured, and he was understanding dimly, as he now and again stole a glance at the still face by his side, that he had somehow over-reached himself.

Though how great had been his mistake he did not quite realise, when at length he followed the girl into a pretty house on the outskirts of a town not far from the East Coast town where the hospital was situated.

She walked straight through the hall where, in an open grate, a cosy fire of logs crackled a welcome, and opened the door of a small room on one side.

Then at last she turned and faced her companion, and he saw the light of a great resolve in her eyes.

Though he was hardly prepared for what was to follow when she pulled off her warm fur gauntlets. It was only when the ring, that she had drawn from her finger, lay winking its green eye up at him that he understood. His face flushed and then paled.

"What's the meaning of this?" he asked.

"I think you know." Her voice was low, but very steady. "You told me that he—Tony—never cared for me; that there was another girl who had a better right. You hinted many things. And I was too proud to see him again. If I had, before he went away——" Her lips quivered. "I saw his face to-day, and I wondered how I could ever have believed you."

"Your mother will have something to say about this," he said.

"My stepmother, you mean. I suppose she was in the plot?"

She smiled drearily as she read his face.

"You tried to make me believe that he only enlisted because he was afraid to face things! You hinted more than I suppose you quite dared say. And now—well, even if it was all quite true, I suppose I should only remember that he has fought and suffered, that he is ill—in danger. Nothing else seems to matter."

"You'll never be allowed to go to him."

"That remains to be proved," she said. "You see, I happen to be of age."

But she was a little afraid when she heard him go along the hall presently to the drawing-room, where she knew her stepmother would be sitting. Would those two once more be too strong for her?

Somehow she hardly thought they would. If Tony wanted her! He had hardly answered her to-day, but that was just because he was too ill. Afterwards she would see him and explain. Afterwards!

A chill hand seemed to clutch at her heart. The sister had said that it was his life for which they were fighting now. What if they were defeated? What if there should be no afterwards for him in this life?

Kathleen closed her eyes, and pressed her fingers upon her trembling lips.

"Ah, God—dear God—of Thy goodness and love!"

A HARSH STEPMOTHER.

AFTER all, the interview with her stepmother was easier than she had imagined. It was the sneering sarcasm that she had dreaded. With this woman's white anger, there was mingled something that was strangely like fear. Even Kathleen, almost absorbed in her own fear for the man whom she admitted now to herself that she loved, noticed it, though it was too puzzling to understand.

"Of course, you know that you are dependent upon me," the elder woman said. "You understand that, if you offend me, if you defy me, I can turn you out in the road to starve, if I choose."

"I suppose so, if you say so," Kathleen answered quietly.

The elder woman's autocratic ways since the death of the master of the Holt, the niggardly way in which she had doled out a dress allowance to her stepdaughter, had made her authority very plain to the girl.

"On the other hand, if you patch up your silly quarrel with Kenwood Brayle, I will come down handsomely in the matter of a trousseau. Anyhow, you surely have no intention of marrying this one-armed soldier?"

A flush like the heart of a rose swept over the lovely, girlish face. Kathleen lifted her head, and looked into the pale, haughty face of the elder woman with eyes that never faltered in their steadfast gaze.

"That is as he chooses," she said. "If he will take me—yes, I will marry him gladly."

"A poverty-stricken nobody?"

"A brave man who has done his duty, and whom I treated badly!" the girl retorted.

"And what, might I ask, are you intending to do now?" the angry woman demanded.

"Old Nanny's cottage is close to the hospital. She'll let me stay with her until I know whether——"

The other woman bent a furious glance upon her.

"Understand this," she said—"that if you go out of this house in such a fashion, you go for good! I'll not have you back. You can starve for all I care! I wash my hands of you, and you shall never have a penny of my money!"

"Of my father's money," Kathleen corrected coolly.

It was strange how her old dread of the bad-tempered, autocratic woman had vanished. She did not understand that perfect love can always cast out fear.

But she very quietly made her preparations, packing her clothes that they might be sent after her, and making all her arrangements with the complete understanding that she was not coming back again.

If Tony would not forgive her for the way that she had treated him in the past—well, something would turn up. She would, perhaps, go to London, and earn her own living, as other girls had done. She was well educated. There must be something that she could do! The daring of youth, like its hope, is limitless.

But, in the meantime, Nanny, having welcomed her with a mixture of joy and consternation that warred strangely in her dear, weather-beaten old face, she paid a daily visit to the hospital.

There was no talk of seeing Tony just at first. Always the sister with the sweet Madonna face, and the blue eyes that were so full of kindly sympathy, came down to see her, and gave her a daily bulletin.

He had borne the operation well, but there was a fight with the consequent weakness. Yet day by day he grew stronger, until there came a day when Sister Mary announced that Kathleen might see him if she liked, for "just a minute."

Kathleen hesitated, strongly tempted, and then she shook her head.

"I—I think I'll wait," she said. "You see, I want to make an explanation. Perhaps I had better wait until he is stronger."

She looked such a child, standing there, with the shy

colour coming and going in her face, that Mary on impulse bent and kissed her.

"My dear, things will come right," she said.

"You do not know."

"I understand enough to see that there is something wrong between you, and you are both miserable," she said. "And the man who came with you that first day had a hand in the trouble. And if you think I'm impertinent to pry into your affairs—why, you must just forgive a woman who has heard many life stories lately, until she begins to think that she has a sort of right to everybody's secrets. But when he is well enough to stand that explanation—well, you shall have him all to yourself!"

A promise which she kept so well that even Private Kershaw himself never dreamed of the identity of the visitor who had asked to see him in the waiting-room.

Sister Mary had kept the secret well. He did not dream that the girl who was never often out of his thoughts had called every day to inquire for him.

But when he opened the door of the little waiting-room, and saw her standing there, he looked for a moment as though he intended to back out of the room. A moment later he drew himself up, with a little squaring of his shoulders, and, closing the door after him, came forward.

Something seemed to come up in the girl's throat and make speech difficult as she saw the empty sleeve, pinned so pathetically to his khaki jacket. But the indomitable pride in the man's face somehow forbade even a word of pity. It was as though he dared her to show sympathy.

"I wanted to see you," she faltered awkwardly, "to tell you. Tony, I came every day to inquire, but I wouldn't see you until you were well enough for me to explain how the mistake arose."

"Well?"

The little question came coldly.

"Yes. I had heard things about you. They were put very plausibly.

"Pity you didn't come to me at the time, and give me a chance to clear myself! You seem to have been pretty ready to believe these things!" he said.

"I know." She bent herself humbly beneath the lash of his stinging words.

Did she not blame herself far more than he could ever blame her, as is the way of a loving woman?

"It is very kind of you to come and see me, though you haven't explained what led you to doubt these stories about me."

"I knew that time when we stood looking down upon you, and I met your eyes."

"Rather a pity, then, that you didn't meet me before!" The words came from between lips that were set into hard, stern lines. "Is that all you have to say?"

"No; it isn't all." There was no flush on her face now; instead, it was very white, and stamped with a great resolve, and her eyes met his in a steady, unfaltering gaze.

"Tony, I sent you away once, but now I've come to you, to tell you that I'll marry you when you like."

"Out of pity!" He laughed bitterly. "You take me for a sorry, pitiful sort of specimen, I should think, to want to be married out of pity. There's no other reason that could make a woman marry me now. I've not even got enough money to make it worth anyone's while. The war has ruined me in more ways than one. I think you'll find Brayle the better match. At least, he would not earn the imputation of fortune-hunter!"

He turned away with the last words—brutal because of his own pain—and never looking back at the girl, who stood staring straight before her with a set, stony gaze before she buried her face in her hands.

"KATH, I'M A POOR MAIMED OBJECT, AND I'VE NOTHING TO OFFER ANY WOMAN BUT POVERTY," SAID TONY. "AND LOVE, TONY. SURELY YOU WOULD OFFER HER LOVE?" SAID THE GIRL, WITH TREMBLING LIPS.

AN ANSWERED PRAYER.

FOR once Mary found no way of setting right the romance that had gone awry. The other girl came no more to the hospital, and she did not know her address even if she could have found an excuse for going after her.

And Private Kershaw was getting well so rapidly that he was soon to leave the hospital. The man's magnificent health stood him in good stead. Even inward brooding had no more effect than to make his face grim and hard and unapproachable.

Mary watched him off on his departure with rather wistful eyes, and turned to her own lover for consolation.

"There must have been some way of putting things right if I could only have found it," she said. "Somehow I feel sure that he cared as much as she did. I suppose it was pride, or something equally silly."

Captain Wenderby, her lover, tucked her hand through his khaki sleeve as they took their walk. It had been snowing, but a hard frost had supervened in the night, and the white footpath was hard and dry. The strange stillness that the frost brings like a sudden arresting force, hung over the countryside, from the once dripping trees that now held icicles to the arrested stream in the gutters.

Only when they turned the corner and fronted the sea, the grey rollers were tossing as restlessly as ever.

"At least it is good to know that restless sea and restless human heart are alike, controlled by a hand that is as wise as it is powerful," John Wenderby said. "You'll have to leave your broken romance to our Heavenly Father Who holds all hearts in His hands."

"Yes," Mary smiled, "one is apt to forget that when other things fail, there is always prayer. You always shame me, John. Of course I can pray for those two poor silly things."

But she certainly did not dream that her prayer for them was to be answered so soon, any more than Private Kershaw dreamed how much was to follow from the fact that he was very early for the train, and that he bought a newspaper, and, spreading it out, buried himself behind it in a corner of a third-class carriage.

But a voice that, against his will, set his heart thrilling with the old mad pain, made him peep round his paper, to see Kathleen herself standing at the other end of the compartment, leaning out to kiss the old woman who had lifted a kindly, weather-beaten face for the purpose.

"And you'll be sure and write, Miss Kathy, my dear?" the old woman said. "I'll be that anxious till I know."

"Of course I shall write," Kathleen said. "And you needn't be anxious at all. I shall be a second sort of Dick Whittington, won't I?"

She laughed with determined gaiety. She had hardly noticed that figure in the distant corner hidden behind the paper that he held awkwardly enough with his one

hand. It was only when the train had gathered speed, and pulled well away from the little town and the sea, that in an awkward movement to turn the paper that he was trying to read, Kathleen caught sight of his face.

She gave a momentary gasp, and then turned her own face away and looked steadily out of the window.

But just for a moment he had met the gaze of those wonderful dark eyes, and his own heart was beating madly. In the awkwardness of the moment he dropped the paper, and tried with his one hand to gather it up and fold it.

Somehow it had spread itself out on the floor of the compartment as it fell, and he fumbled angrily with it, conscious of his own awkwardness.

And then, suddenly, Kathleen, too, was bending over the paper; it was gathered up, and:

"If you will tell me which side you are reading, I'll fold it for you," she said.

When he would have thanked her, she turned away and resumed with quiet dignity her gaze upon the receding landscape.

The short winter afternoon was drawing in; the landscape grew grey and dim, until it was nothing but a pretence to look at it. But still the girl did not move from her strained position, though the light went up in the carriage now.

She was conscious that her eyes were full of tears, blurring the outer world still more to her gaze. That was one reason why she dared not look round, in case she should find Tony Kershaw's eyes fixed upon her.

And then came a sudden jarring shock that seemed to run through the train; and what followed for the next few moments was a strange confusion to the girl. She only knew that somehow Tony had flung himself in front of her, had flung her to the ground, where she lay in comparative safety beneath the seat.

But the lamp had gone out, and it was out of black darkness that cries and screams came to her, mingled with more jarring shocks.

And through the darkness a groping arm sought her.

"Kath—Kath, where are you? Are you hurt?" Tony called, his voice hoarse with fear.

"No, I don't think I'm hurt at all," she said. "If I could only see to scramble out, or see where you are!"

"What a fool I am," he said. And a moment later the yellow eye of a little pocket torch was shining in her face, showing its strained pallor.

With the light to guide her, she scrambled up, and the man set his teeth as he watched her.

"I am sorry that I can't contrive to hold the torch and help you up at the same time," he said. "That is one of the little inconveniences that I must grow accustomed to."

"Oh!" Even in that tense moment, the pathos, the pity of it, seemed to smite her, and she controlled herself with an effort. "What are we going to do now?" she asked. "There must be people who are hurt."

"I'll go and see," he answered; and something in his voice made her catch at the little pocket torch with an unexpected movement that placed it in her possession. The next moment she had turned the light upon him, and as she saw his face she gave a little exclamation.

"You are in pain! You are hurt! I guessed it by your voice. It was in shielding me." Her own voice broke a little.

"It's nothing; a bit of a knock on the old wound that is tender still. Shall we get out, and see what is happening?"

He helped her down with his own sound hand, and Kathleen accepted the help in silence. And a man, running by swinging a light, called to Tony sharply.

"Play the man and give a hand!" he said. And then, as he swung his lantern, it caught the pathos of that empty sleeve pinned against the khaki jacket, and he muttered an apology as he turned away. Tony staggered a little. It seemed to the girl that he was more hurt than he would admit.

The man who had spoken, turning back for a brief moment, announced that the best thing to do would be to walk along the line to the station, which was not very far off. There would probably be another train later to take on those who were not hurt.

It was a rough road, and the frozen snow crackled beneath their feet as they walked. Tony pulled himself together with an effort, and talked in matter-of-fact tones.

"I'm going to London to stay for a time with an old aunt of mine," he said. "You were bound for London, too, I suppose?"

"Yes." In the moonlight that was beginning to bathe the snowy world in a silver radiance, Kathleen turned her face deliberately to his, and spoke very slowly: "I am going to London to try and earn my own living."

"You! But surely you haven't quarrelled with your stepmother?"

"I'm afraid I have," she smiled. "I've finally refused to marry her favourite. The man I love doesn't want me; but—well, I happen to prefer poverty and hard work to marrying Kenwood Brayle. He and my stepmother almost talked me into it once, or perhaps it was my pride when they made me believe that the other man wasn't true."

"Do you mean it?" he asked hoarsely. That one hand of his came clutching at her arm as they walked slowly over the snowy ground. "Kath, I'm a poor, maimed object, and I've nothing to offer any woman but poverty."

"And love, Tony. Surely you would offer her love?" the girl said, with trembling lips.

"Ay; the love that has never faltered," he said; and they walked on in the moonlight hand in hand.

. . . . . .

But after all they had not to face poverty, though the truth when it came was a great surprise. It explained, however, why Kathleen's stepmother had been so anxious to further Kenwood Brayle's suit.

After all, her father's will had left his second wife only in the position of guardian to Kathleen. When she was twenty-five—or earlier if she married—the money passed to her, save for an income that would keep the elder woman in quiet comfort, though certainly not in the style to which she had been accustomed.

And Kenwood Brayle, with whom money was no object—to do him justice it was Kathleen herself for whom he had cared—had promised to return to the elder woman a substantial slice of his wife's fortune on his wedding day.

As it was—well, if Tony had any scruples about accepting wealth at the hands of his wife, he smothered them. She knew that he had had no idea of the money when he told his love; they had both been ready to face poverty together.

And Sister Mary, receiving a notice of the quiet wedding, told herself with her serene smile that it was one more prayer answered.

THE END.

BROKEN PRIDE, a charming complete story of MARY—THE RED CROSS SISTER, will appear next week. Look out for it.

RESULT OF OUR PUZZLE LETTER NO. 14.

A thorough examination of the papers sent in for this competition shows that no reader has sent in a correct solution of the puzzle letter. Seven readers, however, have sent solutions of equal merit, and we have, therefore, added together the first and second prizes, making a sum of £3, and divided it amongst these readers, who will each, therefore, receive 8s. 7d. The names and addresses of these successful readers are as follows:

S. Walters, Upper Lodge, Presdales, Ware, Herts; E. Allen, St. Mary's Road, Mortimer, Berks; T. Delmage, 263, Elephant Lane, Thatto Heath, nr. St. Helens, Lancs.; Miss H. Connor, 1, Ashton Grove, South Shore, Blackpool; J. A. Dunn, 5, Viewforth Square, Edinburgh; J. Freeman, 32, Siddalls Street, Winshill, Burton-on-Trent; Miss E. Varley, 45, High Street, Gloucester.

Ten competitors have each qualified for the ten third prizes of 5s. each. Their names and addresses are as follows:

Mrs. E. Thompson, 22, Burrows Road, Willesden, N.W.; Mrs. S. Tucker, 3, Beacon Road, Marazion, Cornwall; T. Buckley, 30, Manley Street, Oldham; Ada Clarke, 62, Highfield Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy; H. Gillett, 7, Acfold Road, Wandsworth Bridge Road, Fulham, S.W.; E. Beecroft, 83, Commercial Road, Ipswich, Suffolk; L. H. Evill, 21, Churchways Crescent, Horfield, Bristol; Annie M. Grimmette, 197, Prince of Wales's Road, Haverstock Hill, N.W.; Miss G. L. Coleby, 30, Market Place, E. Dereham, Norfolk; L. Smerdon, Broadway House, 240, Branstone Road, Burton-on-Trent.

The correct solution of the puzzle letter, No. 14, is as follows:

My darling Hilda,

One night I was sent on outpost duty and somehow I completely lost my bearings, and, quite overcome by fatigue, I fell asleep. Next morning I awoke to find myself but a short distance from the enemy's trenches. I started to run for safety, but they soon saw me and opened fire. Bullets were raining hard, and I tripped over barbed wire, but just released myself in time, and, at last, quite done up, regained our lines.—Your faithful

PERCY.

IN GOD'S GOOD TIME.

The Story of How a Young Man Suffered for Another's Sin, and How, at Last, He Won Love and Honour

By ERNEST ACHESON.

CHAPTER I.

THE DREARY HOUSE IN THE NORTH.

"THIS is an awful dreary place, miss!" said Martin to her young mistress, with a sniff. "I do hope we needn't stay longer than the six weeks!"

The train was rushing on into the wild North country, and nothing but dales and hills could be seen from it.

Vivien Lane smiled at her maid kindly, with amusement in her lovely eyes.

"We won't stay any longer than we need, Martin," she said cheerfully. "I couldn't do anything but accept Lady West's kind invitation, you know, while auntie is in the nursing home. I had to make her mind easy about me."

"You'd another invitation, miss," said Martin, "to a yachting trip in the Mediterranean. It will be warm there, and sunshiny." And Martin pulled her fur about her, with a shiver. "It's all grey here, and winter is the worst time of all."

"I should have preferred the Mediterranean, certainly," said Vivien, "but, you see, auntie didn't like the idea of my going off like that. I believe Lady West is very good and kind, and the family know auntie—Mrs. Carr. It won't be pleasant, I dare say. And if we find it quite unbearable, Martin, we'll go off to my other guardian—Sir Charles, you know—Sir Charles Wentmore. I've always an invitation to his house."

She laughed at her sombre-faced maid; and Martin smiled weakly.

As Vivien said, she had very little choice about this visit. Her aunt and guardian, Mrs. Carr, was obliged to undergo an operation, and she had been very anxious about Vivien while she was away, and had wished her to accept the kindly invitation from her old friend Lady West.

She knew that there was a son of the house, and if she thought that some motive lay behind this invitation, Mrs. Carr did not object.

But even Vivien's courage failed a little as the train ran through the hills, and drew up at last at a little wind-swept platform.

A young man came forward to meet her—a young man with a very handsome face, and bright blue eyes, and a gay air.

"You are Miss Lane?" he said. "I'm Charlton West. We are delighted to welcome you to our North country!"

There was a gig waiting, and Mr. West, telling the porter to look after the luggage, and commending Martin to the care of a groom, who had another gig, helped Vivien into his and drove her off smartly.

West Holt, the Wests' home, was a long grey house, a beautiful, sombre pile.

Vivien looked at it with interest, as they drove up to it, and wondered what sort of a visit she was to have here. She did not guess what was to happen to her here!

Charlton helped her down, and led her into the hall, where Lady West—a sweet-faced, sorrowful woman—waited for her, and greeted her warmly. A pretty girl who was introduced as "my daughter Kitty" was in the background, and she took Vivien up to her room.

"I hope you won't be bored stiff here," said Kitty, as she ushered Vivien into her room. "I am. It's bad enough in summer, but in winter—ugh! We are the dullest family in the world, I should imagine. Father's years behind the times. I expect you'll hate it all, and go flying off in about three days."

"Well, we'll see!" laughed Vivien. "If I stay out my visit, you must promise to come and see me in town."

Kitty gave a scream of delight.

"But father wouldn't let me," she said, her face dropping. "He won't let me go anywhere, or have any fun."

Vivien privately supposed that the girl was exaggerating, but later, when she went down to dinner, she did not feel so sure of that.

Sir Lionel was in the hall—a grey-haired man, with very blue eyes, and a cold, stern manner. He looked at his guest, and Vivien read disapprobation in his eyes. As a beauty and an heiress, Vivien was not used to such a look, and she wondered why it was there. Then she realised that her simple dinner dress was not pleasing to Sir Lionel. Lady West wore a high-necked, black, stiff gown, and Kitty's dull blue was old-fashioned and unbecoming.

"But really I've got to have decent frocks, and this is a simple one," said Vivien to herself.

Vivien was quick to observe; and before they rose from the table she had discovered several things. First of all, that Sir Lionel was devoted to his son Charlton, and that the young man could do no wrong in the father's eyes. Secondly, she was sure that some heavy trouble lay like a cloud over the family.

Vivien wondered what it was, and then some little remark made by Lady West—something she began to say about "When the boys were little——" and instantly stopped, gave Vivien, as she supposed, the clue. They had lost a son, and perhaps recently. Lady West was in black, and Kitty was not, but, of course, the grief for the mother and father would be worse than that of the sister, who was young and heedless.

Family prayers were read in the hall, and Vivien, looking beyond the group of servants, saw a young man seated at the back—a young man who wore riding-clothes, and looked tired, but was evidently a gentleman.

He was as tall and well-made as Sir Lionel, and his eyes were darkly blue. His hair was a little darker than either Charlton's or Kitty's, but he had a strong family likeness to the Wests.

Sir Lionel read prayers and a lesson, and then the servants moved away, and Lady West drew Vivien to the drawing-room again.

But as she went she saw the young man, who was so like the Wests, move forward, and heard Sir Lionel speak to him sharply, curtly.

"Have you done what I told you to do?"

"Yes, sir. I've just got back."

"I dare say you are tired, dear," Lady West said to Vivien. "If you'd like to go to bed say so, won't you? We all go early here. Breakfast is at nine. Father likes us to be punctual."

This was indeed a strict household, Vivien thought.

"I'll say good-night, then," she said, kissing her hostess, and Kitty, and shaking hands with Charlton. "Sir Lionel?" she added, looking round.

"He's busy with——" began Kitty, and her brother struck in sharply:

"With the agent. Never mind him, Miss Lane. We'll make your excuses."

So the young man who was so like the family was the agent of the estate!

Vivien, as she lay down in her old-fashioned bed, wondered if he were some poor relation that they were ashamed of owning. He was certainly very like them all, and certainly like Sir Lionel!

After breakfast the next day she saw him again behind the servants at prayers. It struck Vivien that it was an odd place to assign to the agent of the estate. Surely he could have been put on a level with the butler!

"There's an At-home at Mrs. Mallerby's soon," said Kitty rather crossly, after breakfast. "I'm invited, and I can go, but I've no frock."

"Oh, we'll fix that!" said Vivien. "I'll lend you one. I've got a sweet velvet thing that you'll look ever so nice in, and I've not worn it."

"Father wouldn't let you," said Kitty dolefully.

"I'll go and ask him," said Vivien. "I'll go now!"

Kitty gasped as she prepared to go, but Vivien was not accustomed to be afraid of anyone.

She ran down the stairs to Sir Lionel's study, and tapped at the door, and Sir Lionel's cold voice bade her enter. She went in, to find he was not alone. The agent stood before him, with a bitten lip, and a flushed face.

Evidently he had been treated to a lecture, for there was a thunderstorm on Sir Lionel's brow.

"I see I've come at a wrong time," said Vivien. "I wanted to ask a favour."

"Not a wrong time at all," said Sir Lionel, who wanted this charming girl for his son Charlton, and did not wish to offend her. "Can't you put a seat, sir?" he added angrily to the young man. "Have you no manners?"

The young man bit his lip again, as he pushed forward a chair.

"Thank you," said Vivien sweetly to him. Then she looked at Sir Lionel. "I want to lend Kitty a frock for Mrs. Mallerby's At-home," she said, "and she's afraid you won't let me. I said I'd ask."

"Kitty has sufficient clothes," said Sir Lionel coldly. "Women's minds are so light. They set their minds on baubles."

"Being above such weaknesses," said Vivien, with a twinkle in her eyes, "you should be merciful, Sir Lionel! It's natural for a girl not to want to look a freak, isn't it?"

"A freak?" said Sir Lionel, in grave displeasure, while Vivien had a strong suspicion that the agent repressed a smile with difficulty.

"Well, clothes that look as if they'd come out of the Ark, you know, do make a girl look a freak, don't they?" said Vivien. "And I've got a sweet little simple velvet frock——"

"You're sure it's simple?" said Sir Lionel suspiciously.

"Certain. Velvet doesn't need much trimming," said Vivien. "I'll make her look very nice, but not too smart."

Sir Lionel coldly gave permission for Kitty to be rescued from being a "freak," and Vivien flew back flushed with victory.

But on the day of the At-home, she herself had a headache, and could not move for it.

"I'll be all right resting," she said. "But I simply couldn't go."

So they left her, and she slept, and woke to find the headache gone.

She decided to go out for a breath of air, and started on a brisk walk. Coming back she missed her way, and started across a field, and then, to her horror, she saw there was what she called in her town-bred fashion a "cow" in the field. She did not like the cow, and hesitated a second, and in that second she saw the cow—which was, in fact, a very savage bull—put his head down as if to charge, and then someone took her by the arm, and spoke firmly.

"Run as quickly as you can—run for your life!"

It was the agent, and Vivien, meeting his eyes, did as she was told, and ran swiftly back again.

The agent faced the bull for a second, flinging at its head his coat. Then he, too, turned and ran, and vaulting the fence came down in a heap at the girl's feet.

CHAPTER II.

THE SCENE IN THE GARDEN.

THE young man picked himself up.

"Took off badly, didn't I?" he said. "Oh, Miss Lane, I must apologise to you for speaking as I did! I had to frighten you and make you go back. That fellow's dangerous. I keep asking my—Sir Lionel, to get rid of him, but so far he won't. I'm so sorry you had a fright."

"I'm always afraid of cows, but I was just calling myself a coward to be afraid when you sent me back. I must thank you very much. I suppose if you hadn't come——"

She paused with a little shiver. He looked at her with the laughter gone out of his eyes.

"I thought you were at the party," he said. "The others are, aren't they?"

"Yes; I had a wretched headache, and couldn't go. I'm better, and came out for a walk, but I'm afraid I'm lost."

"I'll show you the way," he said, and added, flushing, "if I may?"

She still thought he must be a poor relation who was earning his bread by serving Sir Lionel as his agent.

"It will be very kind of you," she said. "I'm afraid I couldn't find it myself; I'm stupid about finding my way. I'm not used to the country, you see."

They were soon chatting away easily.

Presently he stopped and looked at her with some of the laughter and colour going out of his face.

"I think you can find your way from here quite well," he said.

"Oh, yes! I know where I am, thank you!" Vivien said, looking about her. "Thank you so much, Mr—— I don't know your name," she added, smiling at him.

"My name is Cedric," he said.

"Then good-bye, Mr. Cedric; and thank you again," said Vivien, holding out her hand to him. He took it in his and looked into her lovely face, and felt a passion of rebellion surge up in him that his fate was what it was—that he was not free to woo and win this girl, whose face, when he had first seen it, had stirred some sweet new longings in him.

He wanted to tell her his story—he wanted her to know the worst—from himself, and then courage failed him, and he was silent.

He watched her go away, and when she was out of sight, he put his head down on his folded arms on top of a mossy wall and stood very still.

"Oh, God! It's too hard!" he said in his aching heart. "God help me! It's too hard!"

And it seemed to him then that God did not hear him, neither was there any that answered, for he had come to that pass where the bitter cup must be drunk alone.

Vivien told her adventure to the family at dinner, and she was struck by the odd silence that answered her. Charlton was flushed, Sir Lionel cold and stern, Kitty looked confused, and only Lady West held her head up and looked proudly out with shining eyes as if she were pleased to hear of the agent's prowess.

"That's what comes of asking a cockney person to come and stay in your lovely country," Vivien ran on lightly, seeing that for some reason or other she had upset them all. "I'm sorry, but really—it was very startling."

"You'll have to get rid of the bull, father," said Charlton. "He is dangerous."

"I'll get rid of him if you think so, my boy," said Sir Lionel. And Lady West spoke with sudden bitterness:

"You've been asked to get rid of the bull before, Lionel! You've been told he's dangerous over and over again!"

Sir Lionel looked at her coldly.

"If Charlton wishes it, the bull goes," he said, and Vivien wondered what lay beneath those simple-sounding words. That something did, she was sure!

She went off to bed early with the rest of the household, but she was not in the least sleepy after her long hours of sleep during the day, and the night was glorious.

"There's no one about here," said Vivien to herself,

"I will slip out and walk in the grounds a bit before I settle down. I can't sleep, and that moon is enough to draw one out of bed! It's lovely!"

She slipped a heavy coat on and stole down and went out by a side door.

She had a charming walk all alone, and she enjoyed it immensely. She was just drawing near to the house and was about to step out on the lawn from among the trees, when she started and stood still. Something was happening at the house. The ivy on the side of the house was curiously agitated for so still a night. There was a curious rustling noise.

"A burglar with a ladder!" said Vivien to herself. "I'll just catch him!"

But the next moment she realised that the person was not going up but was coming down, and then, with a little shock, she saw that it was Lady West!

She had come down by a tiny outside stairway concealed in the ivy, a stair that led, so Vivien discovered later, from her sitting-room.

She touched the ground, and then there came from among the trees a figure, a man's figure, and Lady West ran to him, and clasped her arms about the neck. He stooped as he bent to kiss her.

Vivien saw that it was the agent, Mr. Cedric! And Lady West was kissing him; and he was holding her in his arms and saying soothing things to her. There was no further doubt in Vivien's mind that this was Lady West's son, her son just as much as Charlton was—the son whose name was not spoken; the son who was set lower than the servants, and dropped out of the family circle.

"I don't care what he's done," said Vivien to herself. "It's cruel—wickedly cruel!"

And she drew back so that she should see no more of that meeting between mother and the outcast son.

She reminded herself that she did not know everything—that she had no right to judge without knowing the facts, but she could not help feeling angry with Sir Lionel for all that. He was so hard, so very hard!

She got back to her room presently, when Lady West had stolen back to hers, and Cedric West had gone away, too. But the girl lay wide awake for a long time wondering what she ought to do; whether she ought to tell Lady West that she had seen her; whether she had any right to probe into this family mystery which they had not chosen to speak about. She fell asleep at last without solving the problem.

She hardly dared to look at Cedric when prayers were said. She was afraid of showing in her face that she knew his secret; but someone else was ready to speak to the young man, and Sir Lionel had a frown on his face as he looked at Cedric waiting for orders.

"You're to go to Brackenstall to-day," he told him curtly. "And please, for the rest of her stay, keep out of the way of my guest—Miss Lane. Haven't you disgraced us enough? Do you need to push yourself into her way?"

"I could hardly let the bull gore her," said Cedric bitterly.

"You know what I mean," said Sir Lionel. "I am not blind! You have forfeited all right to mix in decent society. You will please not again put yourself in Miss Lane's way. She does not know what you are——"

"Hadn't you better tell her?" said the young man wearily.

"Don't be insolent, sir! I have no wish to talk of the shame you have brought on us, and unless what I hope comes to pass—that is that Charlton can win Miss Lane for his wife—there will be no need for her to know. Mrs. Carr must have known what had happened when she let her come here, so I hope your disgrace won't be allowed to stand in your brother's way. Don't let me have to speak again!"

"Are you never going to forgive me, father?" the young man broke out passionately. "Am I always to be spoken to like a dog? Am I never to win back my place in the household?"

"Never while I live!" flashed in Sir Lionel. "I have not forgiven you!"

"And yet every day—twice a day—you say the Lord's Prayer," said the young man slowly. "And you pray to be forgiven—as you forgive! Does that mean nothing to you, father?"

"I have told you," said Sir Lionel, turning an inexorable look upon him, "not to call me 'father!' I am your employer—your guardian—no more!"

Without another word the young man turned away. His father looked after him with anger and pain in his eyes. No, he would not forgive him! He would not. He hardened his heart as he thought of the past. To forgive—that! Never! But his son's words echoed in his heart during the day for all that. "You pray to be forgiven—as you forgive! Does that mean nothing to you, father?" Sir Lionel called himself a religious man. He was a strictly upright one. He had lived an honourable life, and had nothing in his past on which he could look back with shame. His family was an honourable and respected one, and he believed that he lived a good Christian life. But his was a hard creed; an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!

THERE CAME FROM AMONG THE TREES A FIGURE, A MAN'S FIGURE, AND LADY WEST RAN TO HIM, AND CLASPED HER ARMS ABOUT HIS NECK. VIVIEN SAW THAT IT WAS THE AGENT, MR. CEDRIC! AND LADY WEST WAS KISSING HIM.

The boy had done wrong, bitter wrong, and he must be punished. It was against all law and order that the thing should be overlooked and forgiven. It was not fair to Charlton, who had always been such a good son. Charlton was his darling, and had always come before his young brother with the father, but Sir Lionel was a just man, and would not have set aside Cedric but for the grave fault that had ended in such dire disgrace.

"No," said Sir Lionel, standing very upright, and answering as if someone spoke. "I've never done anything like that! I've not got to be forgiven; and as to the lad—no, I won't forgive him! He had no right to ask it, or to think of such a thing! I won't and I can't forgive him! I never will!"

CHAPTER III.

HIS SHAME.

WHETHER Vivien would have spoken to Lady West or not about what she had seen she was never to know. Lady West spoke to her, and it came about in this way. Lady West was not strong, and anyone could see that the sorrow laid upon her was wearing her life away.

Sir Lionel loved his wife dearly; but he was a cold, proud man, and never showed much of what was in his heart.

He came down to announce one morning that Lady West was not well, and he told Kitty to go at once to her mother and to remain with her during the day.

Kitty was almost in tears. It was a day when she was to have one of her rare pleasures. She was to play hockey with some friends, and now—she would have to stay at home.

Vivien understood what the girl was feeling, and determined to settle the matter for her. Lady West knew of her daughter's engagement to play, and was anxious that Kitty should not stay with her, so Vivien slipped down to talk to Sir Lionel. She offered herself as nurse, and told him she had done a good deal of nursing and liked it. Sir Lionel was gratified that she should wish to stop with Lady West; but when he realised that she meant to take Kitty's place and send her off to her play, he was very angry.

"I told Kitty to stay, and stay she must!" he said.

"Well, then, of course, Lady West won't get a minute's rest," said Vivien. "She'll be fretting that Kitty is losing her pleasure. You don't understand invalids, Sir Lionel!"

And Sir Lionel was vanquished again, and let Kitty go, so Vivien sat with Lady West.

Kitty went off in high spirits, her tears forgotten, and Lady West yielded herself to the ministrations of Vivien.

After a while the girl, looking at her, saw the tears running down the poor lady's face. Vivien drew the grey head to her shoulder and kissed the sad, worn face.

"Don't cry," she said—"don't cry! It will all come right in God's good time!"

"Oh, my dear, you don't know how dreadful it is! It isn't anything I can talk of; I mustn't. But I'm so unhappy!"

"I know," the girl murmured—"I know. It's about Mr. Cedric."

"What do you know?" asked Lady West, in a startled tone. "You don't know who he—he——"

"He is your son," said Vivien gently. "I don't know what he has done, but I know that your husband has disgraced him; that he treats him worse than a servant."

There was indignation in her voice, and Lady West spoke quickly.

"You must not blame my husband too much. The poor boy did wrong—oh, very wrong! His father felt he must be punished, but I think—I think he is too hard! My poor boy—oh, my poor boy!

"I tried to bear it for a time. I felt Lionel was right when he said he could not take him back right away, but it's so long, and Lionel will not forgive him. Oh, I feel it will kill me!"

She was weeping passionately.

"I wonder Mr. Cedric stands it. I wonder he doesn't go away somewhere else."

"He has no money," said Lady West, in a low, stifled voice. "His father makes him work hard, and gives him nothing, and he—oh, surely, he has paid!"

"I should think he has paid for whatever he did," said Vivien, her young voice full of indignation. "No one ought to be punished for ever!"

"And the law had punished him already," said Lady West. "Oh, it's all so cruel and it is breaking my heart! I can't bear it to see him every day set away from me."

"Will you tell me," Vivien said very gently, "what he did? I think it would be a relief to speak to me about him, wouldn't it? I want to know all so that I can help you."

"I thought you knew," said Lady West in a startled tone.

"I don't know anything," said Vivien; "but don't tell me if you'd rather not."

"Oh, you'll have to know; Lionel said so," said Lady West, referring to that hoped-for engagement between Vivien and Charlton. "You must know; but it's terrible to say it. Bend down, and let me whisper to you. Oh, Vivien"—as the girl bent to her—"my boy, my son Cedric, has been in prison!"

Vivien had not expected to hear anything so dreadful as this. She had supposed Cedric West had been guilty of some scrape, run up debts, perhaps, and earned his father's anger. She realised that Sir Lionel was a proud man and would be hard on anyone who over-stepped the narrow way, but she had not supposed that he had had anything so bad as this to pass sentence upon.

The disgraced son had been in prison! She tried not to show any dismay in her face, and luckily the room was darkened, so Lady West saw nothing.

"It's such a relief to tell you," she said, holding fast to the girl's hand. "You don't mind if I talk about it?"

"I wish you would," Vivien said gently. "It will do you good."

"He was always such a dear boy," said Lady West. "I love all my children, they are all dear, but Cedric was specially dear, for he was such a loving little fellow, and so sensitive. His father never understood him. You know, dear, that it is only a few years since we came into this place. Lionel never expected to do that, and he was in the Army. We were never well off. It was a bit of a struggle to bring the boys up and give them good educations. Charlton was to go into the Army, and Cedric was to be educated to act as steward to an estate. Our cousin, Sir Amory, promised him the post here when he had learnt what there was to learn about the duties. Cedric was always interested in land, and he took kindly enough to the idea.

"Then came the—the horrible thing. He was only twenty, and we think he must have got into a bad set. He was at his tutor's, at a place where they taught the agricultural duties. One day Mr. Murthwayte discovered that a cheque for forty pounds had been torn out of his cheque-book, and that it had been cashed at the bank. The signature was like his, but it was not his, and the other signature was Cedric's! Mr. Murthwayte remembered then that Cedric had been alone in the room where the cheque-book was for some hours one day when he was working over some books. He prosecuted. He said he must for Cedric's own sake."

"But what did Mr. Cedric say?"

"He said nothing. That was the worst of it. He kept a sullen silence, and refused to say why he had wanted the money or what he had used it for. Before he came out of prison—it was just under two years—my husband had come in for this place, and when Cedric came out Sir Lionel brought him here and set him to work on the estate; but he treats him as you see. He will never forgive him."

"There must have been some explanation," said Vivien slowly.

"He never made any. My husband has never recovered from the awful shock. I shall never forget that day. Charlton came up from Sandhurst, and did his best to plead for his brother, but Lionel was inexorable. Unhappily, there was a terrible thing behind it all. At that time we had staying with us a niece of my husband—his sister's girl, Clytie March. She was a very sweet girl, and she had lost her heart to Cedric. I don't think anyone guessed it but myself, but Lionel knew, too. She could not hide it, poor child, and when the news came—she was already very ill—when the terrible news came that he had been convicted and was in prison, it killed her. She was the sweetest girl, and my husband was devoted to her. I think he loved her next best to Charlton. She came before Kitty," she added.

"Did Mr. Cedric care for this girl?" asked Vivien slowly.

"I don't think so; but, my dear, I've never asked him. I've never had the chance. If I could have one good talk to him, if he could tell me what really happened, so that I could understand what his temptation was and why he did the thing, I feel as if I could bear it so much better. But Lionel stands between us and—oh, my heart is breaking for my boy!"

"You meet him sometimes, don't you?" Vivien asked gently. "I saw you in the garden the other night——"

Lady West turned so white that Vivien was afraid for a moment. Then the elder woman rallied again.

"If you could see us," she murmured, "someone else——"

Vivien explained how it was that she came to be out, and Lady West looked reassured; but her colour did not come back.

"We so seldom meet, and I never dare to stay more than a few minutes," she said. "If I could talk to him—oh, if only I could talk to him! If I could only know that he has repented, and that he is bearing his punishment manfully and not bearing malice against his father. Oh, if I could talk to him!"

"Yes, you ought to be allowed to," said Vivien. "I wonder if I put it to Sir Lionel, would he let you?"

"I'm afraid not," said Lady West faintly. "He's so very set on punishing Cedric, and he doesn't realise that he is punishing me, too."

"But he shall," said Vivien to herself. She let Lady West talk till she was tired, and then the poor lady dropped peacefully asleep, this time into a really profound slumber. Vivien softly left the room, and rang for Lady West's maid to stay in the sitting-room and let her know if her mistress woke. Then she went down to Sir Lionel's room. He bade her come in, and she went in steadily. He was sitting by the fire, and for one moment as she came in she had a glimpse of a proud man's desolation, for his attitude was one of abject misery. But he buckled on his armour as the girl came in, and turned to meet her with cold, steady eyes.

"Lady West is much better, and has fallen into a refreshing sleep," said Vivien. "May I come and talk to you, Sir Lionel? You can guess what it's about—your son Cedric." Sir Lionel had pushed a chair forward for her, and he looked now very pale as he sat down again in his own.

"Lady West has been talking to you?" he said.

"I had guessed part of it, and it was a relief to her to talk," said Vivien. "Sir Lionel, you are killing your wife by keeping her from her son."

"You use strong language, Miss Lane," said Sir Lionel grimly. "Do you happen to know what my son did? Are you aware that he has brought everlasting disgrace on the family—that he has blackened our name? There was never a West before to go to prison! Do you wonder that I am angry—that I am punishing him?"

"It isn't for me to make any criticism on what you are doing, Sir Lionel," said the girl gently. "I don't know well enough what he is like—this unhappy son of yours. All I do know is that his mother is breaking her heart for a talk to him. Without relaxing in the least your rules for him, you might allow him to see his mother to talk to her. I feel sure that if you don't, this thing will kill her."

"As it is killing me," whispered the man. "The shame of it—the disgrace!"

"Yes, it's very dreadful," said Vivien, tears in her eyes. "But don't you think you're going just the right way to drive him wrong again? He has nothing to live for, and it is so easy for a young man to go wrong."

"He has no money, and I keep a watch on him," said Sir Lionel grimly; "but I hadn't realised what you say, Miss Lane, about his mother. If she wishes so much to see the boy, she shall."

"Oh, thank you so much," Vivien said. "I'm sure if she knows that she'll be better at once! You see, she can't understand it; it's such a puzzle to her——"

"It will continue to be a puzzle," said Sir Lionel grimly. "He won't speak."

"But it will comfort her to speak to him," said Vivien. "And I do thank you for allowing it. Would you let him see her once a week?"

"Trust a woman for taking an ell if you give her an inch," said Sir Lionel, with a grim smile. "Well, well. I'll consider it, and she shall see him as soon as she's able."

Vivien thanked him again, putting her hand on his shoulder as she did so, and Sir Lionel, as she went away, said to himself that at any rate his elder son would be a happy man if he won this sweet girl for his wife.

He had not been alone long when the door opened and Cedric came in. He spoke on a few matters of business, and then his father looked at him grimly.

"Miss Lane has been here begging that you shall be allowed to see your mother," he said. The young man turned white as he looked back at him with wistful anxiety in those blue eyes that looked so dark. "I have consented; not for your sake—you deserve nothing," said Sir Lionel—"but for your mother's. She is ill, and you are breaking her heart. Perhaps," he added bitterly, "you'll remember all her love for you, and confess to her what you have refused to confess to me."

The young man flung his head up proudly and faced the blue eyes that were so like his own.

"No, sir," he said, "my duty is to you, and had I been able to speak I should have spoken long ago. But my mother still loves me——"

"You are hinting that I don't? Do you expect it? Do you complain of the treatment I have meted out to you?" flashed Sir Lionel.

"I have never complained, sir," said the young man quietly. "I have submitted to your will in the hope of winning back my place here. I don't know that I can do it much longer. There is a limit to one's endurance."

Sir Lionel looked into the young, worn face with the patient lines about the mouth; there was something in the steady eyes that he did not understand, and he felt strangely moved.

"You've brought down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave," he said, and covered his face.

For a moment the young man stood looking at him as if he would have gone to him, and flung himself at his feet. Then he restrained himself, and stood very still. After a moment Sir Lionel took his hand away from his face, and spoke coldly:

"You may go to your mother when she awakes and sends for you. After that you may go to her once a week for an hour."

"Thank you, sir," said the young man quietly.

"But don't suppose," added Sir Lionel, "that I am going to restore you to your place here! I am not. I cannot forgive a forger—a gaol-bird!

"Luckily for your brother, Miss Lane does not seem inclined to resent it. You can go. You will be sent for when you are wanted."

Without a word, the young man went out in silence, and once more Sir Lionel covered his face.

CHAPTER IV.

"THIS MAN IS INNOCENT."

THE shadows were beginning to fall on the quiet garden, and the dressing-gong was sounding through the house when Lady West woke. Vivien was sitting by her, and had some tea ready, after which Lady West declared herself much refreshed.

"And now I've got some good news for you," Vivien told her, smiling. "You are to have a visitor when you feel ready to receive him. Yes—Mr. Cedric. Now, isn't that good? You'll feel better for that—won't you?"

"Oh, my dear—my dear! You've done this for me!" said poor Lady West.

"You know a stranger can see things more clearly often," said Vivien. "Sir Lionel didn't understand how you were fretting for your boy. He sees it now."

"Oh, can I see him now?" said Lady West breathlessly. "I'll get up, dear, and slip something loose on. Send my maid, will you?"

She was trembling like a leaf, but Vivien knew that it would be good for her to see her son, so she did not attempt to stay her from rising.

"I'll send your maid," she said, smiling, "and then you'll send down for Mr. Cedric."

She herself went to join Kitty, who had just arrived

home, and was madly tearing off her things to get ready for dinner in time, after a delightful day.

She told Vivien about it all incoherently as she dressed. Vivien had already changed to the simple gown that was suitable for the family dinner, and was now helping Kitty.

"Harry Meynell was there," Kitty told her, flushing a little. "He's so nice, but—oh, Vivien! There's a reason why—well, of course he couldn't possibly—I mean——"

She stopped, and Vivien understood her. There was a dawning love coming to her life, and the disgrace brought on the family by Cedric was casting a shadow over it, and Kitty feared she would lose her lover.

"Do you mean Mr. Cedric?" she said; and Kitty started.

"Your mother has been talking to me," said Vivien gently, "and I'm so sorry, Kitty—so very sorry!"

"I hate him!" said Kitty fiercely. "I hate him for bringing such disgrace on me—on Charlton and me! Father isn't half hard enough on him! I wish he'd send him right away across the sea, and give people a chance to forget!"

"People are far more likely to remember when they see him treated as he is," said Vivien. "That's certain! But, Kitty dear, no one who cared about you would visit your brother's sin on you!"

"People are so horrid!" said Kitty, sniffing as she twisted up her hair.

Just then the dinner-bell rang, and they went down. As the girls rose from the table, Sir Lionel turned to Vivien.

"Will you go and see if Lady West is alone?" he said. "I'd like to come and speak to her now."

Vivien understood that she was sent to dismiss Cedric, and went up slowly to Lady West's room. She did not need to knock, for the door stood open. The maid had just come out with a tray, and stood aside for the girl to pass in.

Mother and son sat together on a low couch near the window. Cedric's hand was clasped in his mother's, and on both faces there was a look of peace and quiet endurance that struck Vivien strangely.

They had evidently dined together, but what had passed between them the girl could not know. She only knew that Lady West looked serene, and happier than she had looked for many a day, and the young man's face, sorrowful as it was, had a look of beauty in it that made Vivien start, and in her heart she said sharply, passionately, "This man is innocent!" For, somehow, she knew that no man could look at her with those steady eyes, no man could have that look about his patient mouth, if he were the guilty creature he was declared to be in his father's home.

"Am I to go?" he said, smiling, as the girl came in. "Then good-bye, mother."

"Only for a week!" Lady West whispered, clinging to him. "Only a week, my darling!"

"Yes, only for a week," he said gently.

And he kissed her again before he stood up, and turned to the door. At the door he paused, and spoke to Vivien.

"May I thank you for what you have done?" he said. "I'm most grateful."

She held out her hand to him, with a smile.

"I'm so glad to have been of use, Mr. Cedric," she said. "Won't you shake hands?"—for he hesitated.

He looked her right in the face, and those blue eyes of his were very troubled.

"You've heard my story?" he said. "Do you wish to shake hands with me?"

There were tears in her eyes, though she still smiled as she held her hand out.

"Can't we be friends?" she said sweetly.

And he took the hand in his, and bent over it with a look that hurt her somehow. It was a grateful look—a charming look, but it was not the look of a guilty man. And again, when he had gone, his head held well up, the girl said to herself: "This man is innocent!"

Having told Lady West that her husband was coming to see her, Vivien went down again. Kitty had gone off to practise some music, and Charlton was waiting for her in the hall. He came forward, his gay blue eyes very pleasant as he looked at her.

"You've been in the house all day," he said. "Won't you come out for a stiff walk? It is delightful now."

Vivien was willing enough, and they strolled out together. They had always got on very well, and now that the end of her stay was in sight, Vivien did not feel half so pleased to think of going as she had thought she would on the night when Charlton drove her here. Mrs. Carr was doing well, she was told, and she would soon be able to join her beloved guardian again.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Charlton, smiling, as they stood by the old sundial, and Vivien raised her smiling eyes to his.

"I don't mind telling you now," she said, "because I've altered my opinion; but when I came here, I thought I should find my six weeks very long. I've been here nearly a month, and I haven't found it long at all!"

"I'm glad of that," said the young man, and he put his hand over that of the girl, which lay on the sundial, speaking earnestly. "Vivien, could you stay here altogether? You know how I love you—you must know that. Will you marry me, darling?"

The girl drew her hand away, without hurry but very firmly.

"I never thought of such a thing," she said. "I hadn't any idea of this. I'm so sorry!"

"Don't say 'no' to me now!" urged Charlton eagerly. "Think it over! Take time! I've been in too much of a hurry. I've tried to rush you. But the old place has been so different since you came! You're so good to all of us. You've made my mother love you, and Kitty, too. And the dad—he's different to you. Oh, do say you'll think of it!"

"You must give me time—let me think," the girl said hurriedly. "I never thought of you like that. Let us forget it now, shall we?"

"I can't promise to forget it," said he, "but I won't speak of it, if that will do. Will it?"

"Yes, because I want to talk of something else—about your brother Cedric," said Vivien slowly.

Charlton's fair face turned white as he looked at her.

"Who told you?" he said. And she saw that she had given him a shock.

"Your mother. And then—I guessed, too. He's so like you all. Do you know, Mr. Charlton, I can't believe he's guilty. Is it possible that he was shielding someone?"

"Would he keep silent all this time?" Charlton said, raising his eyebrows.

"Where were you at the time?" Vivien asked.

"I?" he stammered. "I? What have I to do——"

"Still, he's your brother," said Vivien, looking at him in surprise. "I thought it was quite likely that, if you were anywhere at hand, you might know if he got into any trouble, or if he had some friend who was no good."

"I wasn't there," said Charlton. "I was at Sandhurst at the time, just passing out. I didn't like some of the fellows at Mr. Murthwaytes, but Cedric said nothing, and my father wouldn't hear a word from me."

"Have you pleaded for him lately?" asked Vivien slowly. "Don't you think he's being very harshly treated?"

"Well, of course, you couldn't expect the dad to take the thing lying down, could you?" said Charlton. "He's very strict, you know—brought us up strictly. Never spared the rod, I assure you! He's awfully down on anything that isn't quite straight."

"Have you ever asked him to relax his strict rules with your brother?" said Vivien. "Have you?"

"No; I knew it wouldn't be of any use," said Charlton slowly.

"It makes me very unhappy," said Vivien slowly. "I hate to see him set away like that! There's the bell for prayers, Charlton, and he'll be right away from us all, as if he were not worthy to join us. Won't you speak to your father about it, and beg him to forgive him, and give him back his own place?"

"I'll think about it," said Charlton. "You see, you don't know my father."

"I got him to let Mr. Cedric see his mother to-day," said Vivien slowly. "He's to see her once a week. If he'll do that for me, he'd do more for you. He thinks so very much of you! Anyone can see that."

Charlton laughed a little ruefully.

"I've been brought up under my father's wing," he said. "I stand in some awe of him, I assure you. You're different."

Then they turned, and went in to prayers; and the

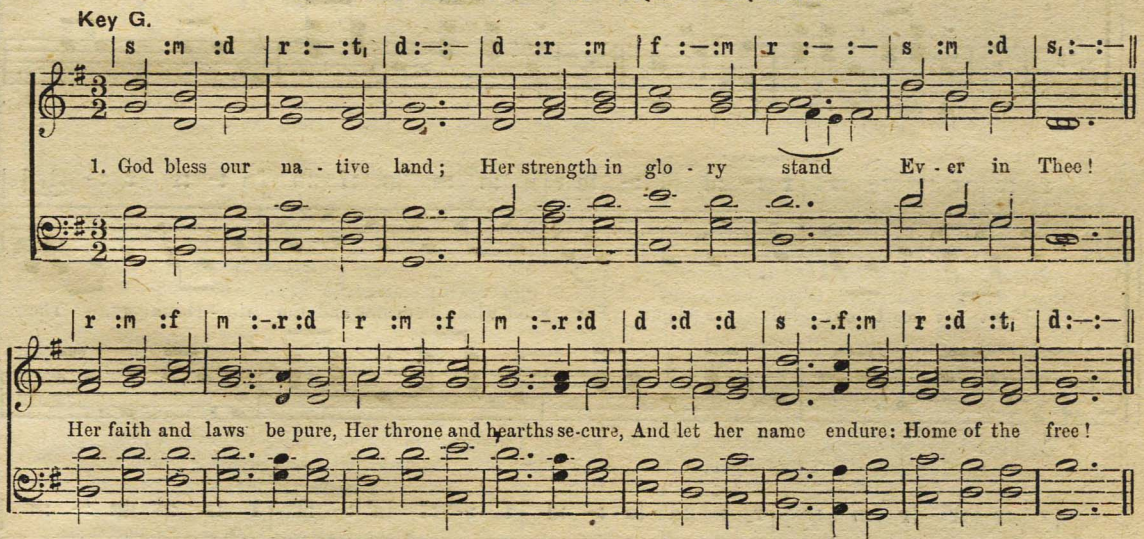
(*Continued on page 15.*)

NATIONAL MELODIES for the HOME

GOD BLESS OUR NATIVE LAND.

A NATIONAL HYMN OF GREAT BRITAIN.

Key G.



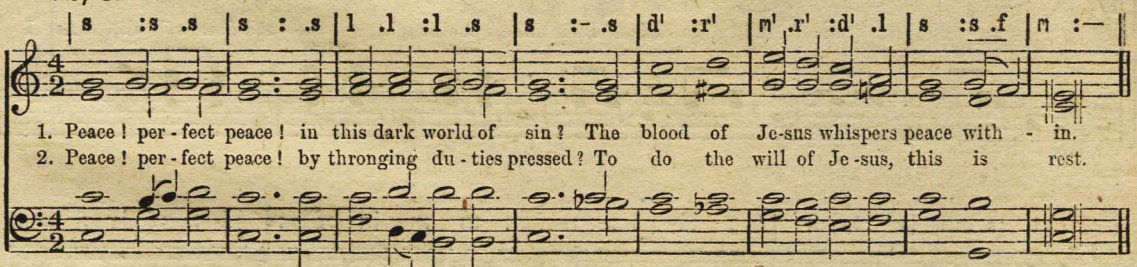
2. God guard our sea-girt land,
And save by Thy right hand
From all her foes;
Thy Kingdom's sway prolong,
Till freedom's rising song
Loud tells the end of wrong
And nature's throes!

3. God smile upon our land,
And countless as the sand
Her blessings be!
Arise, O Lord Most High,
And call her children nigh,
Till heart and voice reply:
Glory to Thee!

PEACE! PERFECT PEACE!

"MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU."

Key C.



3. Peace! perfect peace! with sorrows surging round?
On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found.

4. Peace! perfect peace! with loved ones far away?
In Jesus' keeping we are safe, and they.

5. Peace! perfect peace! our future all unknown?
Jesus we know; and He is on the throne.

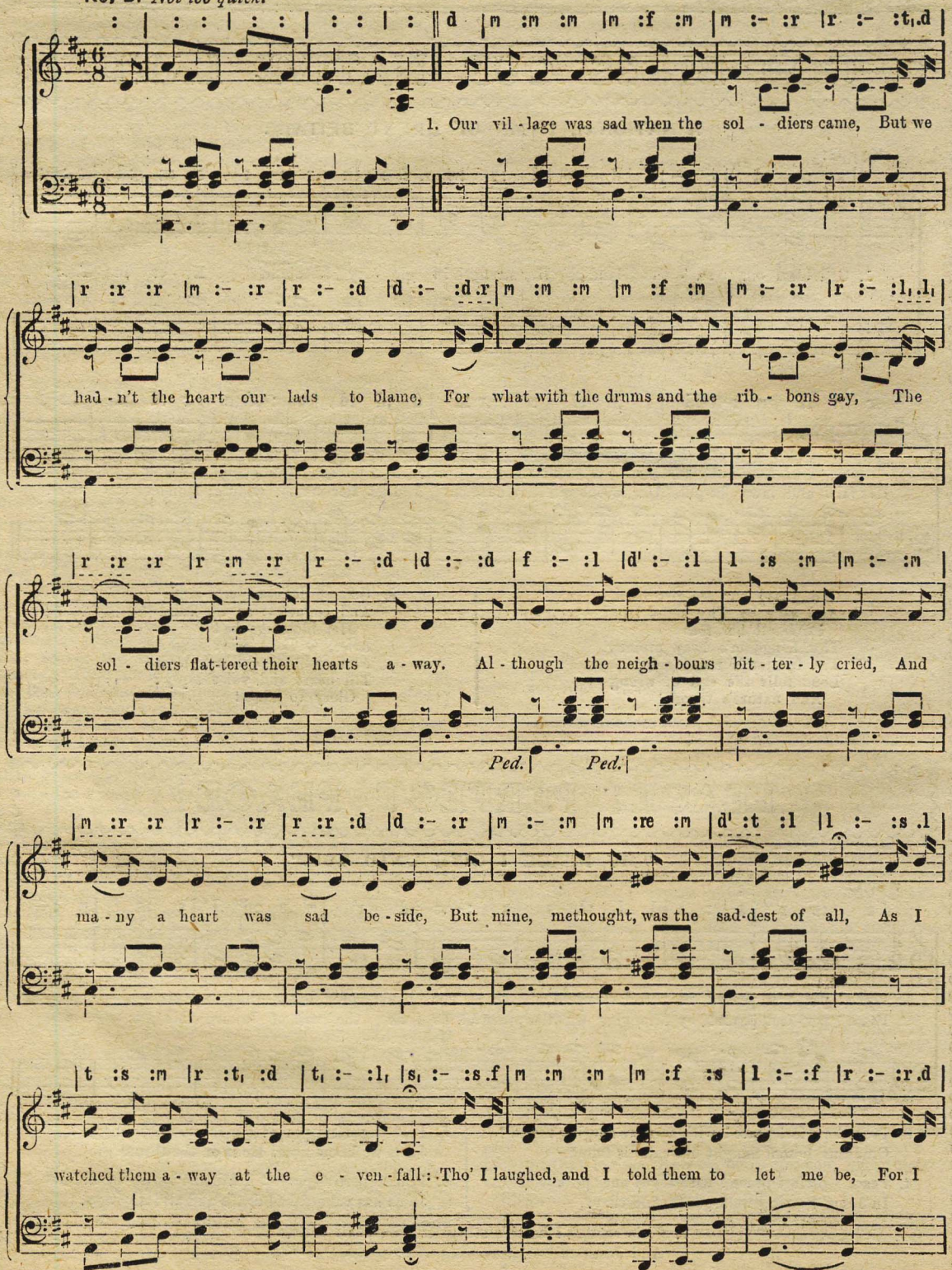
6. Peace! perfect peace! death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.

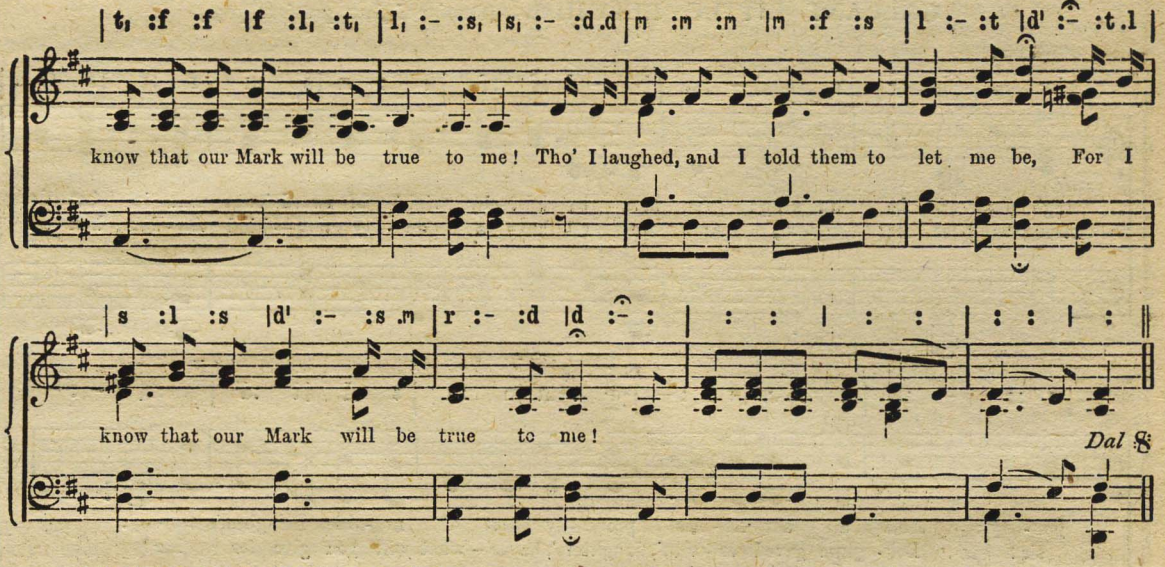
7. It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus call to heaven's perfect peace.

MILLY'S FAITH.

A CHARMING SONG.

Key D. *Not too quick.*



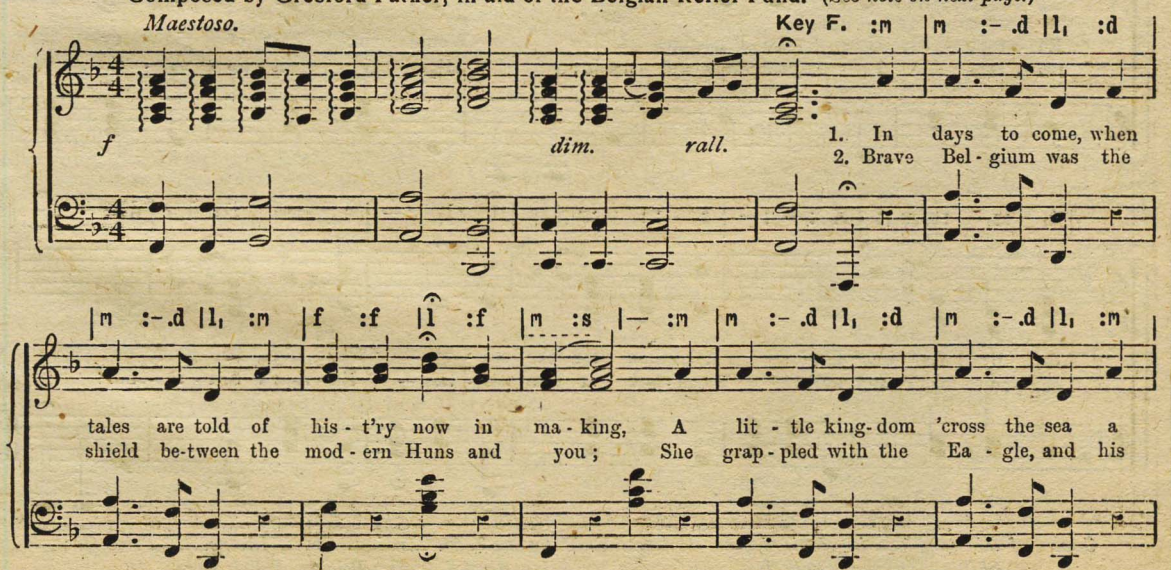


2. To fight in the battles, it was too bad
They should come for a harmless village lad,
To take him away from his friends and home,
And carry him o'er the salt sea foam.
Oh! would those drums had never come near,
For Mark was happy and peaceful here;
Content to follow his father's plough,
Oh, I wish in my heart he was after it now!
Though I laugh, and I tell them to let me be,
For I know that our Mark will be true to me!
Though I laugh, and I tell them to let me be,
For I know that our Mark will be true to me!

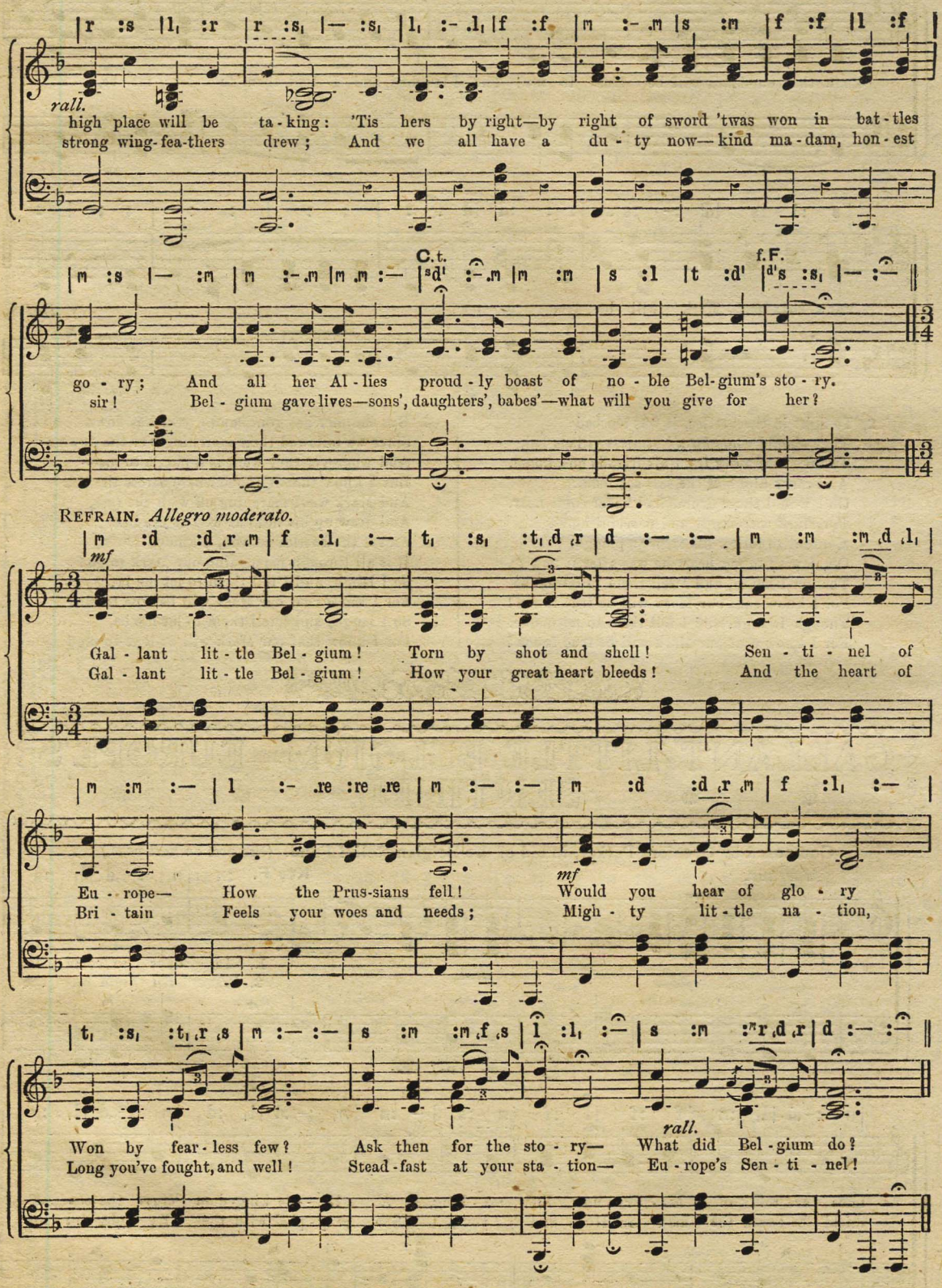
3. But summer has gone, and a year has flown
Since we followed their marching o'er the down;
And wherever they went is a puzzle to me—
But I know that it's somewhere across the sea.
And Mark went marching off with the rest,
And drew up his head as well as the best;
And if the battles be won, I know,
It is all through persuading our Mark to go!
So I laugh, and I tell them to let me be,
For I know that our Mark will be true to me!
So I laugh, and I tell them to let me be,
For I know that our Mark will be true to me!

GALLANT LITTLE BELGIUM—EUROPE'S SENTINEL.

Composed by Gresford Parker, in aid of the Belgian Relief Fund. (*See note on next page.*)



GALLANT LITTLE BELGIUM.—(*Continued from previous page*).



Copies of this song can be obtained from HESTER E. PARKER, 3, *St. Domingo Grove, Liverpool. Price One Shilling per doz., post free. All profits are being devoted to the Belgian Relief Fund.*

IN GOD'S GOOD TIME.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10.)

eyes of the young man at the back, coming in then, rested on them with a troubled glance.

Was Vivien going to marry Charlton.

Charlton had a pleasant sitting-room of his own in a wing that was not used by anyone else. His brother had once occupied rooms in the same wing, but had been turned from them by his inexorable father when he disgraced himself. Cedric's rooms were down below, in the back parts of the house, where he took his solitary meals and lived his lonely life. Therefore, Charlton was surprised when he heard a step in the corridor, and when his door was opened and he saw his brother, he rose to his feet in sheer surprise.

"You!" he said, his colour changing. "What is it, old man?"

His tone had no coldness in it. It almost sounded conciliatory.

"I've come to ask you a question," said Cedric. He was very pale and his eyes looked very dark in his colourless, worn young face.

"What is it? Sit down and have a smoke, won't you?" said Charlton.

"I'd better not," said Cedric, looking away from his brother's eyes. "The dad might catch me and then——"

"He's not a bit likely to come, but don't stay if you'd rather not," said Charlton hurriedly. "It's as well to please him."

"I came to ask you if you're going to marry Miss Lane?" said Cedric.

"I don't know," said Charlton, looking away.

"You know if you wish to," said Cedric steadily. "Have you spoken to her?"

"Yes, but she's—she's not sure of herself."

"Then it must go no farther," said Cedric firmly. "I will not allow it."

"Come, old boy! You're taking rather a strong tone, aren't you?" said Charlton rather feebly.

"You have heard what I said," Cedric repeated. "I will not allow this marriage. I have borne much, but this I will not bear! It must stop!"

CHAPTER V.

"IN THE HOUR OF DEATH."

VIVIEN'S beautiful room, the old-fashioned room, oak-panelled, was in a corner of the house, and was some distance from the rest of the rooms.

Sir Lionel had lately had the electric light put into the house, keeping the holders candle-like and old-fashioned to match the house. It was supposed afterwards that a wire had fused, but no one ever knew quite what did happen. Vivien only knew that she woke with a sense of suffocation, and found her room full of smoke, and that there was a fire somewhere.

She jumped out of bed and opened her door, only to be driven back by a cloud of acrid smoke. She shut her door again hastily, and ran to the window. She knew before she looked out that unless help came she could not be saved.

Meanwhile, Sir Lionel had been wakened by the old man who acted as night-watchman, and had got his wife and daughter to a safe part of the house, while he sent someone to wake Charlton. The servants got out quickly, for their rooms were at the back in out-buildings, and with them came Cedric.

He spoke to his father in a sharp voice, which Sir Lionel hardly recognised.

"Miss Lane—is she safe?"

Sir Lionel looked at him, and almost groaned. The unhappy boy must add this to his troubles—that he had lost his heart! Sir Lionel, for all his hardness, was yet a father, and he read the haggard young face unerringly.

"I think she's all right!" he said. "Oh, here's Charlton. Charlton, what about Miss Lane?"

Charlton ran round to look at Vivien's window, and came back looking ghastly.

"She's not out!" he said. "A ladder, quickly!"

"I've sent for the fire-engine," said Cedric. "Till it comes the men must play on the house with what water they can get. We ought to stop it. Charlton, take command of them, will you? They have got buckets going."

Somehow, in this hour, it was the outcast son who took charge of the affair and showed himself a man with a head on his shoulders, but Charlton did not immediately respond. He turned and caught Cedric by the shoulders.

"She's in there, man!" he said, shaking him. "We must get a ladder!"

"There's no ladder in the place long enough to reach up there," said Cedric. "I'll do what I can, but we must hope for the fire-engine."

He dashed off, and they saw him disappear into the house.

"What is he going to do?" said Sir Lionel; and Charlton shook his head.

"There must be a ladder!" he said wretchedly. "There must!"

And he left the job his brother had set him with the buckets and went in search of a ladder, only to find, as Cedric, with his wider experience of the place, had told him, that there was nothing which would be of the least use.

Sir Lionel bit his lip as he listened to what Charlton said. How often had Cedric begged him to instal some fire apparatus, and Sir Lionel, in his dogged obstinacy, would not! And now that sweet girl was in danger!

But someone had got to her; someone who dashed through the flames, a wet towel wrapped about his head, his heart set on one thing only—to get to her.

Vivien was beginning to be afraid. She stood by the window looking out, and she wondered why they did not come to her help. No one seemed to be doing anything and her heart sank as she looked round and realised that soon the flames would burst in on her, and she would have to die!

She had read in the papers about fires, and the escapes of people, but it had never occurred to her that such a fate might be hers to die in one.

And then, with a gust of fresh smoke, her door opened and Cedric came in. He shut the door and came to her, speaking steadily.

"I hope you're not very alarmed, Miss Lane! This is very unpleasant, isn't it? But we'll get you down all right!"

He smiled at her reassuringly, though he was deathly pale.

"You've come—up the staircase?" she said, looking at him.

"Yes; but I'm afraid we can't get back that way," he returned. "It's getting worse there. I picked up some rope, and I think I could lower you down. I'll fasten the end to the bedstead, and you'll be quite safe. The men will wait for you below."

He put his head out of the window and whistled, and instantly men came running towards him, dropping buckets or anything they had to do Mr. Cedric's bidding.

Sir Lionel had not realised till that night how much his degraded son was loved on the estate, and how much his father's behaviour to him was resented.

There was not a servant in the house or a labourer on the estate who would not cheerfully have risked all he had to serve Mr. Cedric!

"Why do you leave those buckets?" Sir Lionel cried angrily to a man who passed him.

"Mr. Cedric wants us, sir!" said the man, dashing off.

Sir Lionel followed, and saw that Cedric was standing by Vivien, and he had a rope slipped about her waist, and was about to lower her to the men who stood ready to receive her.

"But how will you get down?" the girl said anxiously. "You can't tie it about yourself and drop! Oh, Mr. Cedric! you're going to save me at the expense of your own life!"

"Oh, I don't think so!" he said cheerfully, making fast the knots. "I'll manage to get down——"

"And your hands are burnt!" said Vivien, the tears in her eyes. "You're hurting yourself all the time! Oh, please don't! Let me try!"

She put her hands on his to take the rope from him, and he looked at her quickly, and what she saw in his face made her give a little cry.

"Ah, don't you know," he said quickly, "that I would gladly lay my life down at your feet? I would think it well spent if it gave you one lovely year!"

"Oh—don't!" she said faintly.

"You think I'm not—playing the game to say this to

you now?" he said, his head bent, his hands busy with the knots. "Well, perhaps not! But you see, when it's ordinary life, I don't count, and this is my hour. I'm a disgraced man—I daren't speak to you of the love that is in my heart for you. You would be angry, and rightly so, but now—now before the end comes, I may tell you that I love you—so dearly! Oh, so very dearly!"

He lifted his head and looked into her eyes.

"I sha'n't trouble you again," he said proudly; "but I'd like you to know that death to me will be sweet—now!"

She understood that he had no hope of saving his own life—that he had come to lay his down for her dear sake, and she trembled very much.

He lifted her to the window, and let her slip down, down, down. She shut her eyes, for the rope twirled unpleasantly, but strong hands were waiting to grasp her as soon as possible, and she slipped at last into Charlton's arms. She was almost unconscious, but she opened her eyes and spoke sharply.

"Cedric—he's up there—you must help him——"

But the rope was not a strong one, and was already frayed, Cedric could never get down on that! He drew it up and looked at it, and knew that he could not use it.

"Jump, my boy!" Sir Lionel called, agitation in his voice. "Jump! The men will catch you!"

Cedric looked down, and felt that it had been worth while. He had saved her, and his father spoke kindly to him! This was what he had set himself to win by submission and obedience and quiet endurance, this return of affection, and till now he had thought he had failed, but with the coming of Vivien things had changed, and hope rose in his heart again.

The men got a big tarpaulin off a haystack and held it out for him, and Cedric, knowing it was his only chance, for by now the flames were licking under the door of the room, jumped. He was unhurt by the fall, but they carried him into the house, and, by Sir Lionel's orders, to his own room—his old room.

And not long after, the old bit of the house which had burst into flames was a smouldering heap under the onslaughts of the buckets, the fire-engine arrived to do what was left for it to do, which was not much.

But Vivien lay in bed thinking of the events of the night, and of that strange declaration of love which she had received. Cedric loved her, and she faced her own heart in the silence, and knew that she loved him too.

. . . . . .

For the first time for many weeks the breakfast-table was not attended by all the family the next day punctually. Sir Lionel was down as usual, and his eldest son, but Lady West breakfasted in bed, and so did Vivien; and Kitty, who had only had a pleasant excitement all the time, took advantage of the general disorganisation to order her own meal upstairs, and immensely enjoyed doing so.

Vivien was ready to go down, when a message was brought to her from Sir Lionel to ask her to go to him in his study. She went down at once, wondering what he wanted. Sir Lionel was seated there with Charlton, and as she came in the girl saw at once that Charlton had not expected to see her—that he did not know she was coming.

"Ah, my dear!" said Sir Lionel, rising and greeting Vivien kindly, "I wanted you to come and speak to us. Charlton tells me he's going away. Now I can guess what that means, and, my dear, I do want you to reconsider your decision. We all want you here as Charlton's wife. He's my dear son, and though, unhappily, as you are aware, there is disgrace in the family, it will not touch you. Will you think things over again, and say "yes" to my boy, and please us all? You have been a sunbeam in our dreary house, my dear; we can't let you go—we can't spare you! You'll stay with us?"

Before she could reply the door opened, and Cedric came in. His right hand was bound, and he looked pale, but he was quite composed. Charlton's eyes met his guiltily, and Sir Lionel frowned. He did not wish to speak harshly to Cedric after his last night's performance, but he felt his presence was inopportune. However, he made the best of it, and spoke cheerfully.

"We are having a private confab, Cedric my boy; but I'm sure you will agree with me that we shall all be pleased if Vivien here will consent to make Charlton a happy man?"

Cedric was very white, but he did not speak. It was Vivien who spoke quietly.

"Sir Lionel, I can't marry Mr. Charlton. I don't love him, and I love—another man."

"Oh, you're going to be married?" said Sir Lionel blankly.

"I—I don't know," said Vivien, tears in her eyes. "That will depend on God's good pleasure—when he makes the innocence of a just man clear as the noon-tide."

She looked at Cedric, and Sir Lionel spoke sharply.

"You don't mean—you can't mean——" he began in dismay.

Vivien moved over to Cedric and slipped her hand under his arm.

"We love one another," she said, "and some day, in God's good time, we shall be married."

"Cedric, have you dared to offer love to Miss Lane?" Sir Lionel said. "You?"

"No, sir," said Cedric quietly. "She knows I love her; but she also knows that I can never marry her."

"Then," said Vivien, smiling up at him, "I shall marry no man!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAN WHO KNEW.

THERE was no other word for it. Sir Lionel was horrified. He felt he had done a terrible thing to bring this girl here, and to let her grow to care for the son who had disgraced them all. He spoke hoarsely.

"My dear young lady, you can't know what you are saying! You can't marry Cedric. He has been in prison——"

"So have other innocent men," said Vivien. "It is no disgrace when it is not earned. I don't believe Cedric did what he is accused of doing."

As she spoke she caught sight of Charlton's ashen face, and suddenly—she knew. What had been dark to her before became light. Cedric was shielding his brother. It was Charlton who had done the wrong. She remembered his start when she had asked him where he was when Cedric was accused of the wrong. She remembered other little things. She knew now what had brought that patient look to Cedric's face. He was suffering unjustly. Then Cedric spoke.

"Darling," he said very gently, "it is beautiful to me to have your trust and love." His voice broke a little, but he went on bravely: "But it can't be. I could not ask you to join your life to mine—mine is disgraced, shamed, and I shall never be cleared—never!"

With the memory of Charlton's stricken look before her eyes, Vivien understood that, too.

"Never mind," she said. "If it isn't, I shall know, and—God knows. You must not send me away, Cedric. We need one another."

"God knows I need you, sweetheart," he said brokenly; "but I can't keep you! Your love mustn't make a coward of me, beloved, but a better man. I've nothing to bring you—nothing at all. I can't take your lovely youth and sweetness, and ask you to give them to a disgraced man like me, for, believe me"—his eyes looked into hers steadily—"any dream of my being cleared can never come true—never!"

"Don't say that. It's like limiting the power of God," said Vivien, looking back at him.

Then she smiled across the room into the eyes of Charlton West, and in that moment he knew that she guessed the truth. He did not suspect Cedric of breaking his solemn vow never to speak out. Even then he knew Cedric incapable of that, but he knew that Vivien guessed, and he would not give way. He looked back stonily, and hardened his heart.

"I'm afraid, my dear little girl," said Sir Lionel gently, "that you're making a romance out of a young man's folly and sin. Cedric was very young, and he fell, and he has been severely punished for that fall. I think, my boy"—he held out his hand to his son—"that you've suffered enough. I will let you go away now to any colony you choose, and find you the money to make a fresh start. You've been under my own eye for the last two years, and you've done well. I feel sure I can trust you. You shall sail next week, and till you go you may join the family as before."

"Thank you, sir," said Cedric quietly; but he did not

speak with any exuberance of gratitude. Vivien turned to him with a little cry.

"Oh, Cedric, if you go, take me with you!"

"No, he mustn't do that, and he knows it," said Sir Lionel rather sternly. "If you are in the same mind two years hence, and he has been steady and kept honest all along, your guardian might think of it. Till then you must be parted."

"My father is right, dearest," said Cedric quietly. "You must prove me and your love before you take such a big step as marriage with me would be."

"Let us go out and talk about it," said Vivien; and she drew him away before the eyes of his father and brother. Sir Lionel looked at his elder son when they were left alone with an expression of dismay.

"I don't know what Mrs. Carr will say, or her guardian Sir Charles Wentmore," he said. "They will be very angry, but who would have thought of such a thing as this? I hoped that you and she, Charlton——"

"You've made a martyr of him, you see," Charlton said, with a little sneer. "And she's found him interesting. I was too ordinary."

His father thought he was hurt by the girl's refusal of him; but Charlton was wincing in his heart under her silent scorn, for he was sure she knew!

When they got outside, Vivien slipped her hand through her lover's arm, and spoke quietly.

"Are you going to tell me about—that thing, Cedric? I'm sure you are shielding someone."

He laughed down at her very tenderly, but quite easily. How much better he acted than his brother, she thought; but then, he had no sin to hide!

"You're determined to make a hero of me, darling," he said, "and I'm not, you know. And as to that affair, I can't tell you anything about it. I've never said a word about it, and I never shall."

"Except to the man who is letting you bear this burden," said Vivien passionately. "The man who has stood by and seen you disgraced and imprisoned, and treated you with cruelty and harshness when you were innocent and he guilty."

"We won't speak about it, please," he said firmly.

Kitty came running out to them carrying a telegram, and casting a surprised look at her brother.

"It's for you," she said to Vivien. "Mother thinks Mrs. Carr must be worse."

Kitty was not, at this time of her life, famous for her tact! Vivien began to tremble, and broke open the missive, with a face growing white. Then she gave a little tremulous laugh.

"It's from my other guardian, Sir Charles Wentmore. He's coming here to fetch me to his house," she said. "I suppose I shall have to go."

She saw a look of relief in Cedric's face, and as Kitty fled back to the house to relieve her mother's mind. Vivien spoke shakily:

"I believe you're glad for me to go."

"Yes," he said slowly. "I don't think I can bear much more. You see, it's all so hopeless!" And, for the first time, she saw the light die out of his face, leaving him with a look of chill despair, that sat sadly on so young a man.

They turned back to the house, and separated there.

Sir Charles arrived very soon, and very angry was the good man. He had only just learnt that his ward, Vivien Lane, was staying with the Wests—the Wests who had a son who had disgraced them, and had been in prison! He had come to see what was happening, and, if necessary, to take Vivien away. Vivien obeyed calmly. She did not mind what Sir Charles said, and she did not mean to give up her lover, and, before them all, when she was going away, she flung her arms round his neck and kissed him.

"Wait for me, dear, as I shall wait for you," she said. "We are going to be together some day—in God's good time!"

Sir Charles grunted, but he did not say anything, for something in the girl's lovely face, with its tearful eyes, something in the white despair of the handsome, haggard young man to whom she clung, touched him. He let Cedric put her into the car, but as he followed he spoke gruffly:

"You know your duty, my boy. Leave the country, and don't come back."

Cedric did not reply, and he stood still till the car had gone, taking with it the girl who had so altered his grey life.

Sir Charles's place was not very far away—a little shooting-box that he had. His sister was keeping house for him, and was an ineffective, timid, twittering little person. She received Vivien kindly enough, but the girl found time hang heavy on her hands when the men were out shooting.

She was strolling along one day, after she had finished

CEDRIC WAS STANDING BY VIVIEN, AND HE HAD A ROPE SLIPPED ABOUT HER WAIST. "BUT HOW WILL YOU GET DOWN?" VIVIEN SAID. "OH, MR. CEDRIC! YOU'RE GOING TO SAVE ME AT THE EXPENSE OF YOUR LIFE!"

a brisk walk, when she heard someone speak her name. For a moment she thought it was Cedric, and she wheeled round with a radiant, sparkling face to see Charlton looking at her.

"Oh—you!" she said, so plainly disappointed that he changed colour.

"Are you so sorry to see me, then?" he said in a hurt tone.

"Oh, no," Vivien said gently. "I only thought it was—someone else."

"Cedric, of course," said Charlton bitterly. "Oh, Vivien, don't you know that I love you, and that I can give you a home, a place, a name in the world; while he—he's done for, broken, ruined——"

"Do you believe he's guilty, Charlton?" said Vivien, slowly looking at him with steady, searching eyes.

"What can one think?" he said, avoiding those eyes.

"You might think—as I do," she said—"that he is shielding someone."

"Shielding someone!" said Charlton sharply, real fear in his tone. "What do you mean? He wouldn't shield anyone!"

"I should think it is just the thing he would do," said Vivien.

"I don't understand you," said Charlton haughtily. "Have you information that we don't possess?"

"No, I have only my instinct and my woman's wits," she said. "I feel sure that there is one man who knows the truth—the man who committed that forgery, and that man was not my Cedric."

"My Cedric!" The tone of proud possession stiffened Charlton.

"If he hadn't done the thing, do you suppose he'd have put up with his position at home?" he said. "The governor's been jolly hard on him——"

"Hard on him!" cried Vivien, in flaming indignation. "It's the cruellest thing I ever saw. And you stood by day after day, and never pleaded for him, never interceded—you, the son who can do no wrong—you, to whom your father would have listened!"

"You don't know what the governor is," said Charlton sullenly. "You've not been brought up under his iron rule as we were."

"I think you're wrong," said Vivien quietly. "Sir Lionel would have been glad if you'd pleaded with him, I'm sure he would—glad! He's been ashamed for a long time of the way he's treated his son. Why, even if he'd done the thing, it would have been horribly cruel, but to treat an innocent man like that!"

"You see, the trouble is that he can't prove his innocence," said Charlton.

"He can't so long as he holds his tongue," said Vivien passionately. "He's too noble to speak out. When does he sail?" she added, after a pause.

"In three days," said Charlton; and he added uneasily: "The governor has practically forgiven him now. He's allowed to be with us, and——"

"Nothing can make up to him," said Vivien, "except the proving of his innocence, his name being cleared in the eyes of the world! Oh, Charlton, I'm praying, night and day I'm praying that God will soften the hard heart of the man who has done him this cruel wrong, who has let an innocent man suffer all these long years—four long years out of a young man's life!—and that he will speak out before it's too late, before Cedric has gone to the other side of the world! Do you think he will speak out, Charlton?"

"How should I know?" said Charlton sharply.

He had come to make an appeal to Vivien, to take him, and not his brother, but he saw it was useless. Cedric had won her, and he had no chance.

"I can't do it," muttered Charlton to himself, as he went away. "I can't!"

But Vivien's eyes haunted him as he went away, and her words that she was praying night and day for God to soften a man's hard heart.

And that hard heart was his own!

CHAPTER VII.

JOINED HANDS.

"I DON'T think I know you," said Sir Lionel, in his courteous, cold way, as he looked at his visitor.

"Don't suppose you do, sir," said the man, with a feeble smile. "My name's Henway—James Henway. I used to be clerk in the Mancaster Bank—Mancaster, near Ludsome. It's a country place——"

"I know it," said Sir Lionel grimly. It was the place where Cedric had been studying for his profession.

"Well," said the man insolently, "I've a little secret of yours to keep. I would have preferred to see the young gentleman, but they told me he was away, and I expect you'll be willing to shut my mouth same as he was. I went to Australia with what he gave me, but I've done no good there, and I've come home ill, and I want help!" he ended defiantly.

"I haven't the least idea what you're talking about," said Sir Lionel, with a dim presentiment of evil stealing over him.

"Oh, I think you have, sir—I think you must have," said the clerk, with a shrug. "It was your son, Cedric West, that went to prison, wasn't it, for forging a cheque, and I suppose you know well enough that it wasn't him that did it, but his elder brother, your heir—Mr. Charlton West? Oh, I was in the bank when he came in and cashed that cheque! I could swear to him anywhere! He made it right with me, but, as I told you——"

Sir Lionel got up and rang the bell, and sent the man who answered it for Mr. Cedric. Cedric was with his mother, but he came at once.

"Cedric," said Sir Lionel, "have you been lying to me all these years? Wasn't it you that forged that cheque?"

"I have paid for that forgery, sir," said Cedric. "Surely we can let it drop?"

But he had recognised the clerk, and his face was white.

"You paid for it right enough, sir," said the man; "but it was your brother that did the thing, and well you know it!"

A very few curt questions were enough to prove to Sir Lionel that the man was speaking the truth. He sent him away, and dismissed Cedric too, and for long he sat alone, the proud, unhappy, broken old man!

He had set himself up as justice. He had dealt out punishment with no unsparing hand, and now he had to face the fact that the son with whom he had dealt so harshly was an innocent man—a man, moreover, who was shielding another.

Dawn was breaking when there was a soft tap at the door, and Cedric came in again.

"You will be worn out, sir," he said. "Won't you rest?"

"Cedric, my boy, why did you do it?" Sir Lionel burst out. "Why didn't you speak out?"

"He was so upset, sir, and—and at first I didn't understand. I thought my innocence would be so easily proved. Then he came to see me, and I knew. He begged me to shield him for fear of his position, and I—well, I thought there was just one thing worse for you, sir, than my disgrace, and that would have been to see Charlton in prison," he said simply.

Sir Lionel made a little moan. So Cedric had always known that Charlton was loved better than he!

"I hope, sir," said Cedric, his voice shaking a little, "that you won't feel it necessary to be hard on him. He's suffered a good deal, and I think I've paid for that thing. You'll admit that?"

"Oh, yes, you've paid," said Sir Lionel drearily—"you've paid! I've wronged you cruelly—cruelly, and he—my eldest son, my Charlton—he is a liar, a forger, a coward!"

"I've always hoped he would speak out!" said Cedric, in a low, troubled voice. "Perhaps he will yet."

But Sir Lionel shook his head, while he allowed Cedric to help him to his bed and look after him as if he had been a child again.

Cedric sat by him till he slept, and then stole away to write to Vivien. He had not intended to write to her, but he must now.

Sir Lionel was up as usual in the morning, and went through his business as he always did. It was about the middle of the morning when he got the bad news. There had been a railway accident, and Mr. Charlton West was among the hurt. Would Sir Lionel go at once? Sir Lionel ordered out his car, and he and Cedric set off to the scene without delay.

Charlton West was coming home, determined to brazen the thing out. Why should he speak out and risk his father's anger, so terrible a thing as that anger was?

Half-way home there was the accident—a terrible one. Charlton lost consciousness for a time, and when he realised where he was, he found he could not move. He was pinned under a carriage, and was helpless, and he knew that he was in imminent danger, and as he lay there he looked himself in the face. He saw his own wretched soul, and knew that he was a coward, a liar!

The rain came down upon him, and he moaned faintly. A cheery voice spoke to him, bidding him be of good cheer, and asking for his friends' names and his own. And so the message was got to Sir Lionel. When Sir Lionel and Cedric arrived on the scene, Charlton was still a prisoner under the debris, and his strength was failing.

Sir Lionel's face paled as he saw his son's face white and strained, and he knelt down by him as near as he could get, and spoke affectionately.

"Don't be alarmed, Charley my boy! They will get

you out. You're not seriously hurt, I hope, and we'll soon have you home!"

"You won't want me at home when you know all, father," said the young man through white lips. "I've been a thief, a liar, a forger. It was I, not Cedric, who forged that cheque. I went to see him. I was in a mess, and I saw the cheque-book. I could always imitate writing, you know, and I took my chance. I let the burden fall on Cedric. I was a coward——"

"Hush, my boy! I know all about it," Sir Lionel said. "Don't talk!"

"I was afraid of you," said Charlton slowly, looking up as if he did not see his father. "I was always afraid. I was always a coward. The worst thing was, I let him think Cyltie and I cared. He did it for her. I told him she would die if I—I was sent to prison. I've been a shame to you. You must turn me out, send me adrift."

"No, no, my boy—no, no!" Sir Lionel said, kneeling by him with tears in his eyes. "You are my own dear boy always! I've been hard—too hard. Only live, my boy—only come back to me, and you shall be forgiven!"

But the blue eyes had closed, and Sir Lionel fell silent.

. . . . . .

"Where are you going, Vivien?" said Sir Charles Wentmore angrily.

Vivien looked up with a smile as she stood by the motor.

"I'm going to Cedric," she said happily. "His innocence has been proved, and he won't have to go away now! I'm going to him, and then I shall go to auntie. She's better, and wants me, and soon I shall marry Cedric!"

"Indeed! Am I not to be asked, then?" said Sir Charles grimly.

Vivien laughed, and kissed his withered, tanned cheek.

"You'll say 'Yes,' I know," she said.

And Sir Charles found no answer as she stepped into the car and was driven away. She got to the Holt, to find a curious stillness about it, and as she entered the hall, Kitty came out from a room near by, followed by Harry Mynell. Kitty had evidently been crying, but she looked happy, too. Vivien smiled at the two, and just then Cedric came downstairs.

He was looking white and troubled, but at the sight of Vivien his face lit up with a sudden radiance, and Vivien ran to him with both hands out.

"There's bad news," said Cedric briefly. "Charlton's badly hurt. He was in an accident, and they are afraid——" He stopped, biting his lip. It was hard to think of his handsome brother, such a fine rider, so good at all sorts of sports, lying lamed for life. "But he spoke out!" he added proudly.

He broke down, and Vivien drew him into a room near by, and comforted him in her own tender way.

And presently he drew her into his arms.

"Oh, love!" he said. "Isn't it strange to think how things have come about? A little while ago I was so unhappy, so desperately unhappy, and then you came. You changed everything!"

Sir Lionel pushed the door open and came in just then, walking like an old man. Vivien ran to him, and he took her into his arms as if she had then been his daughter.

"He's my eldest lad, my first child!" he said brokenly. "And I was so proud of him!"

"And aren't you proud of him now," said Vivien, her eyes shining, "when he's done the bravest act of his life? You—you won't be hard on him when he's well, Sir Lionel, will you?"

"I promised Cedric I wouldn't, my dear," said he, simply; "but even if I hadn't, I think I've learnt a lesson since I knew. For the future I'll not be as hard as I have been. I must begin again—yes, God helping me, I'll begin again!"

Vivien carried out her programme as sketched to Sir Charles, but not so quickly as she had intended, for Charlton lay for weeks very ill, and Vivien stayed on at the Holt till he was out of danger, for everyone seemed to cling to her.

Then Charlton began to mend, and slowly got well—as well as he would ever be. There was to be no more hunting or riding for Charlton, and though he would in time get back a semblance of health and even walk, the doctors hoped, he would never marry.

It was understood by the world at large that evidence had turned up to exonerate Mr. Cedric West from the charge brought against him, and as he had lived down the affair with most people, it failed to trouble him.

. . . . . .

At the Holt a white-haired man and woman sit often in the summer on the lawn, and by them is a low invalid chair, in which reclines "Uncle Charley," the loved companion of the little ones who run about on the lawn, so happy there, and so fond of dear grandpa.

And Cedric and Vivien, moving together down the lawn, and watching their children group themselves round Uncle Charley for a last fairy tale, smile at one another in perfect accord and union.

"I never saw my father so happy," says Cedric. And, as he turns to his wife and draws her hand through his arm: "We owe it all to you, my wife!"

"Ah, no!" she says softly. "God brought it all about in His own good time."

Next week "An Angel Unawares," a splendid long complete story by Mrs. Wellesley Smith. Order your copy to-day.

Our Roll of Honour

Brave Defenders of King and Country.

(Continued from page ii. of cover.)

H. Teagus (Clanfield), H.M.S. Agincourt.

Pte. F. Childs (Chadwell Heath), Royal Fusiliers.

W. Cundall (Chadwell Heath), A.B. on H.M.S. Hibernia.

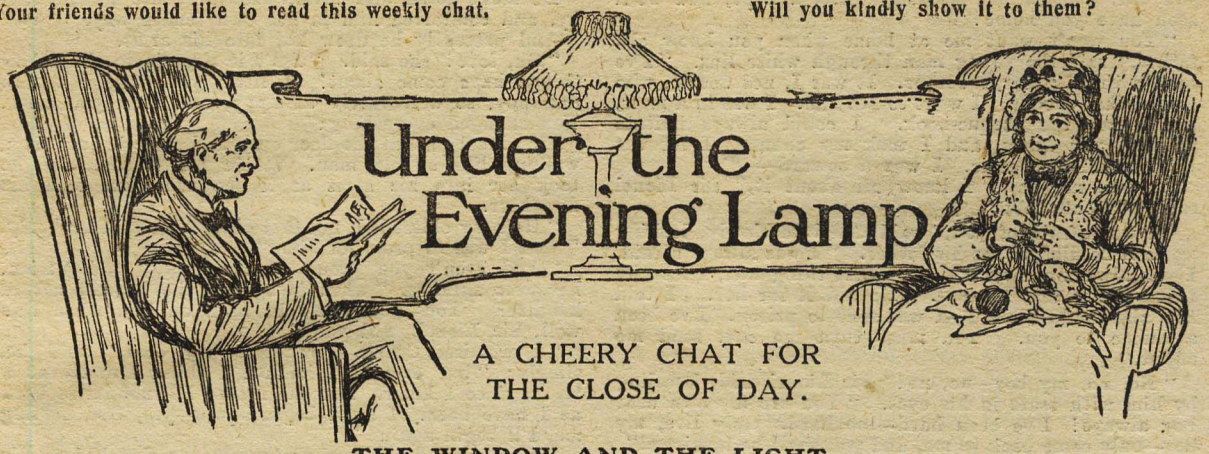
T. B. Watts (Sunderland), Stoker on H.M.S. Harpy.

Cyclist Teagus (Clanfield), 9th Hants Regt.

Pte. W. R. Neave (King's Lynn), R.N.R.

Chief Stoker F. Sharman (Walsham), Lost on H.M.S. Aboukir.

Your friends would like to read this weekly chat. Will you kindly show it to them?



Under the Evening Lamp

A CHEERY CHAT FOR THE CLOSE OF DAY.

THE WINDOW AND THE LIGHT.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—It is told that on one occasion, the mother of Whittier, the well-known poet, took her son when he was but seven years of age to see a poor girl who had lost the priceless heritage of her good name.

She was dangerously ill, but the people of the village would have nothing to do with her. Metaphorically speaking, they drew aside their skirts in order to avoid the contaminating touch of one such as she.

But the poet's mother, who was a Quakeress with a very kind heart, would not allow her actions to be influenced by the common prejudice of the place.

Whittier never forgot how his mother addressed the poor sufferer as "my dear girl," gave her food, and attended to her comfort.

"After a while," says Whittier, "I went out of doors, and looking up to the blue sky, I thought that the God Who lived up there must be as good as my mother. If she was so helpful to wicked people, He could not be less kind. Since that time," he added, "I have never doubted the ultimate goodness of God and His loving purpose for the world."

* * *

AT this time of anxiety, it will do us all good if we can adopt the faith which was Whittier's. There are, I am fully aware, amongst my friends some whose faith has been put to the severest test during the weeks that have passed since our nation was plunged into the horrors of war. Perhaps some have been awed by the mystery of it all; have been amazed at the perversion of human character which has made such a state possible.

At such time it has been almost an impossibility for some upon whom the burden has pressed with crushing weight to drive out the thought that perhaps, after all, *God does not care.*

The thought comes to them that had the guiding been in the hands of a dear friend, and they think of one whom they know and love and trust, that the heat of the day would have been less scorching for them.

But God has permitted hardship and loss to be their portion; perhaps there has been added the abiding grief of bereavement. *Does God car ? Can God care ?*

"After a while," says Whittier, "I went out . . . looking up to the blue sky." After a while, when the smoke from the guns has been dispersed, when the sword has been replaced in its sheath, will come the faith which will compel us to the conclusion of the ultimate goodness of God, and His loving purpose for all the people of the world.

The passion of the moment has formed a cloud s that we cannot look up into the blue vault of the heaven of God's love for us and see His mercy. Surely that mist is none of His making. It is an earth-born cloud that has hid from us the loving kindness of our Father.

But that mist is one which will surely be dispelled, and our faith will be able to see the guiding even in the sorrowful days. We shall know that His purpose has been love.

* * *

NOT long ago I heard a minister say something which made a deep impression upon me at the time. "You can measure the window," he said, "but you can never measure the light." I would like this truth to burn itself into the minds of all my readers, for it is one which has the power, when fully grasped, of boundless good.

It is this way:

A young doctor was working steadily, methodically, in the very poorest quarter of a big town. He lived poorly and sparely himself, because he was making practically no money. The work that he did had nearly all to be done for love of the very poor people who were his patients.

One day, in a moment of weakness, despondency got hold of him, and in response to an inquiry from his father as to how he was getting on, he wrote: "No good. I'm hardly doing anything at all."

The father was surprised, and decided to visit his son and see for himself the cause of his despondency. He was taken round, and many visits to very poor houses were made. And everywhere he went it was the same story. "Thank God for your son, sir," were the words that met him. And many an old eye grew bright with tears as they all told of the help they had received. "And it is not as though we can pay him much, sir," they said. "We are very poor, and it's only a few pence that we can afford at all. But it makes no difference to the doctor"

* * *

THEN the father was shown into the dispensary where there were a number of people waiting. On a door he saw his son's name written, and within that door sat his son, attending as fast as he could to case after case. Sometimes they could pay him a few pence, sometimes they could not.

Greatly affected by all that he had seen, the father went back and awaited his son's return.

"My son," he said, when at length the young doctor arrived home, "you told me you were doing no good, and I came to see for myself. I have been round to your patients; I have talked with the people who were waiting in your dispensary. They have given me the answer I wanted.

"Go on with your work, my boy. I'm a rich man, and I will put at your disposal a sum to free you from the necessity of taking even the few pence that these poor people can pay. Nothing! Why, it is the greatest work, this that you have been doing these years. Take heart, and go forward with it."

* * *

POSSIBLY many of my readers feel something like that man. They are in despondency because they think they are doing "no good." But God can measure the light passing through even the smallest window. Our duty is not to attempt to measure the light, but to keep the window bright and clean so that the light is not impeded in us.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

"Could I with ink the ocean fill,
Were earth of parchment made.
Were every blade of grass a quill,
Each man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky."

I am always glad to hear from my readers. Please write to me, addressing your letters, "Under the Evening Lamp," HORNER'S PENNY STORIES Office, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

Your sincere friend, JOHN EARNEST.

The pathetic story of a rector's daughter, who married against her father's wish. Told by herself.

HOW I MET MY HUSBAND.

MY father, who was the rector of Great Burgrave, gave most of his meagre salary to his parishioners, so we led a very quiet life.

My dislike for my humdrum existence was lessened when I met Sir Howard Burgrave, and fell in love with him. My father forbade me to see him, on account of some foolish act which Howard was said to have committed about seven years before, when he was living at Burgrave Hall. Sir Howard proposed, and then one night we stole away to London, where we were married. My father and sisters soon forgave me.

One day I came home from a reception to find my husband raving like a madman. He had had a slight accident, and my sister Peggy, who was staying with us, had given him brandy, which, the doctor said, had brought about this state; but I knew he was not telling the whole truth.

Howard was almost well again when a loud, vulgar man came to see him. I overheard them talking.

"You've got to come. She's been asking for you."

I was passionately jealous, and this widened the breach which had been growing between us. Then I met Hartley Rashwell, and Howard disapproved of my friendship with him. We had a violent quarrel and I decided I could not go on living like this, and to run away. Just as I had packed a few belongings, an urgent message came from Rashwell begging me to see him. He was in desperate need, having forged a cheque and been found out. He had been given a few hours to fly the country. He wanted my help. I wrote out a cheque for £300 and gave it to him, the whole of the amount Howard had placed to my credit at the bank. The next morning early, I did what I had resolved to do, ran away from the home and husband I loved so well. Assuming my maiden name, Joyce Hallington, I managed to find a respectable lodging, and obtained a situation as a model in Holland's drapery establishment. One day I was recognised by a customer, Bess Smithson, the daughter of the vulgar little man who had bought Burgrave Hall from Howard. "Why, it's Lady Burgrave!" she said. "Father, you know her?"

"Yes, I know 'er," said Mr. Smithson; "but you don't, and ain't going to!"

It was a deliberate insult. What had I done that Mr. Smithson's daughter might not be allowed to speak to me?

I FIND A FRIEND.

I DON'T think anyone moved or spoke for some moments after Mr. Smithson and his daughter had gone. Fortunately there had been no other customers in the show-room to overhear the little scene.

I hardly knew, hardly seemed to realise what had happened. I had been recognised. My name had been shouted in Miss Smithson's piercing tones. Her father had stared at me, ignored me, and cut me. Yet the last time we had met he had almost fawned on me, had been overbearingly polite and attentive. Why? I wondered. Why should this change have taken place in him? Had he heard that I had run away and left Howard, and did he disapprove of my action to such an extent that he could put such an insult on me as he had?

"So you are Lady Burgrave—eh? The—the notorious Lady Burgrave!"

I started. I turned and looked at Mr. Holland. He was smiling before me. There was no anger in his face, though he must have realised, as I did, that through me he had lost a customer.

What was the use of denying the truth? I could not lie—I could not deny what did not bear denying. I was Lady Burgrave—not Joyce Hallington.

Fate had surely been against me, that the truth had leaked out so soon!

Miss Wilkinson stood staring at me, with a frozen look on her face. I wondered why the mere mention of my real name could create such a scene? The only person here who did not seem to be against me was Mr. Holland himself, and he was looking at me, with a smile—a smile that seemed almost of triumph—on his face.

And what had he meant by "notorious"? He had said it—"The notorious Lady Burgrave!" Notorious!—I wondered and puzzled at the word.

I suppose, to all the rest, I must have seemed the coolest person there. As a matter of fact, I was far from being cool and collected. My head seemed dazed, my brain was in a whirl. I went on mechanically with the arranging of the model that had been the cause of Bess Smithson's recognition of me.

Mr. Holland turned away. He was going out, when Miss Wilkinson stopped him. I did not hear what she said, but I heard his angry answer:

"You will allow me to conduct my business as I see fit. If you have any complaint to make, you know your remedy. I shall keep anyone I please, and dismiss anyone I please."

He went out; and then silence fell. The two girls had left off talking. They moved about the room; and, though I refrained from looking at them, I knew that they were covertly watching me all the time.

Other customers came in, and the day's work went on. But I knew that life here would never be the same again. Something had happened that was bound to have its effect on me and my position here. I would have to leave, and the sooner the better.

I must leave at once, while my little capital remained to me. I could afford to wait another few weeks before I got another place. Yes, I would leave to-day. I was wrong to have taken a position here in a West End shop, where it could only have been a matter of a little while before I was recognised. Well, that event had taken place. They knew me to be Lady Burgrave. Perhaps they knew my husband's name in connection with politics. That must be it. That was why Mr. Holland had said "the notorious." It was an ill-advised word. My husband was, of course, a notoriety—a prominent man; but I, there was nothing notorious about me. I smiled at the thought.

The morning passed. Customers came in and went out, keeping us all busy. The dinner-hour came, and I went down with the rest to my dinner, in the large basement hall, where it was served to us every day.

Miss Palmer went down with me usually. She and I never exchanged a word. She had never made any overtures of friendship towards me, and I had been too proud to risk a repulse. To-day she looked at me curiously—stared almost into my face.

"So—so you are Lady Burgrave?" she said. "What are you doing here?"

"Does it matter what I am doing here?" I asked.

"No, not to me. I suppose you mean I ought to mind my own business. You're right. Your doings are nothing to me, of course. Only I don't quite understand." She paused.

"What do you not understand?"

"Why you should be here at all," she burst out.

"I have to earn my own living now," I said.

"But——"

She hesitated, then shrugged her shoulders.

"I have no right to question you, Lady Burgrave," she said. "I quite understand. It is nothing to me. I suppose you would think me insolent if I told you I was very sorry for you?"

"I should not think you insolent," I said. "If—if I thought you really meant it, I should think it kind of you to feel pity for me."

"I do," she said suddenly—"I do!" She turned to me suddenly and caught my hand. "I am sorry for you. I'd like to help you. I know there are temptations. They never came in my way. I am only a poor girl. I've never had your money, your position, or your looks!" She spoke rapidly. She said a great deal more, but I could hardly understand what she meant. All I know was, that she meant it all so kindly.

She did not speak again during the dinner-hour. Dinner was a pretence to me; I ate nothing. I felt ill, worried; my head and my heart ached.

"I'd like to help you awfully, if only I could," Miss Palmer whispered, as we went back to the show-room. "I know it sounds impudent on my part—like the—the mouse helping the lion, doesn't it?" She laughed a little. "Only it seems to me that there are times when one woman can help another—when position, rank, and money, and all the rest of it, doesn't count for much; when a woman can be just—just a sort of sister to another. I wonder if you know what I mean?"

"I do know," I said. "I understand, and I am grateful to you."

I looked at her. She was prettier than I had thought. Perhaps it was the soft, kindly light I saw in her eyes to-day, for the first time, that made me take so suddenly to her. We had met every day for a week, and had held aloof from one another, seeming to have nothing in common. Now, suddenly, we were drawn to one another. She wanted to help me, and in my loneliness and anxiety I was only too thankful for her help and companionship.

"I've got diggings—two scraps of rooms—not far from here. I wish you'd come to-night," she muttered. "We could have a long talk. You could stay the night with me. My friend, the girl who shares the rooms with me, is away on a holiday. Will you come?"

I did not hesitate for a moment.

"Yes," I said, "I will come."

"That's right." She nodded; then she paused, we were on the threshold of the show-room. "Be careful—beware of—of Mr. Richard," she muttered. "He is hateful, horrible! Be careful of that man!"

Her warning seemed to chime in with my own thoughts; seemed to confirm my own dislike and distrust of him.

Miss Wilkinson stared at me with stony eyes as I came in. The other girl, Miss Everett, was talking to her. She shrugged her shoulders and laughed sharply and unpleasantly. She looked me up and down from head to foot in an insolent way; then, with another laugh, went out to get her dinner, leaving me with my face burning with shame, I could not understand, nor account for.

"I presume," Miss Wilkinson said, in a harsh, strident voice, "you still wish to be addressed while you remain here as Miss Hallington?"

"If you please," I said.

"Quite so, naturally," she said, with a sneer.

I saw her looking at me as though she could not take her eyes off me.

I wondered why the fact that I was Lady Burgrave should have created such excitement. Of course, Howard was a prominent man; his name had been much before the public. People naturally wondered, I supposed, why his wife should be earning her living as an assistant in a shop. But that would not account for the sneers, the evil looks, I had seen—the scorn and contempt for me on Miss Wilkinson's face; the disdain I had seen on Miss Everett's.

But there was yet worse in store for me. Presently a boy came with a message that Mr. Richard wished to see Miss Hallington in his office.

I went down. He was alone. The boy closed the door on me, and then Mr. Richard Holland addressed me with an offensive familiarity that brought the blood into my cheeks.

"Sit down, my dear; we'll talk this over," he said. "I don't blame you—not me. I'm not one of the strait-laced sort. He was an oldish man, too; older than I am, I should say, and you with your looks—why, it was only natural you wanted to see a bit of life and have a bit of fun—eh?"

"I don't understand you, Mr. Holland," I said.

"Of course you don't!" He laughed coarsely. "There, there, don't worry your pretty little head. Why, from the first moment I saw you I knew you were different to the usual run of 'em." He came across to me and put his hand on my shoulder.

I moved quickly, so that his hand fell.

"A bit touchy—eh? Think I'm going to look down on you and despise you and that sort of rot?" he said. "But don't worry your pretty little head, my dear. Not me! Dick Holland isn't that sort. Beauty in distress always attracts me—eh?"

"I do not understand you at all, Mr. Holland," I said again.

"Oh, don't you, Lady Burgrave?" he said with a sneer. "Of course you don't, my lady! Only a shopkeeper; that's what I am—eh? Don't think you can come the high and mighty over me, because you can't. Come to that, I dare say I could buy Burgrave up five times over, only I ain't bragging—not me. There, don't be foolish, my dear; I'm your friend, I am." Again he tried to put his hand on my shoulder.

"Will you please not—not touch me," I said.

"Will I please what?" He stared into my face; his own was very red. Suddenly he gripped me by both shoulders. "I see your game," he said. "Trying to lead me on, ain't you? Well, I don't care if you do. I was taken by your looks the first moment I saw you. You're different to the rest. And now I'm going——" He thrust his face nearer to mine. For a moment I did not understand: it was not till I felt his breath on my cheeks that I realised. Then I sprang to my feet with horror.

He laughed, but he did not let me go.

"I'll stand by you," he said. "I'll be your friend. Where's he—where's he gone?"

"He!" I repeated. "I don't understand!"

"You mean you don't want to tell—eh?"

"I have nothing to tell."

"Oh, haven't you. I should have thought you had a good deal." He laughed. "Well, I suppose you know your own business best. He's gone—eh?"

I did not answer. He stood between me and the door.

"He wasn't of much account from what others say—nothing to look at, and hardly the sort to attract a girl like you. But women are curious things."

"I do not wish to listen to you," I said. "I will go now, with your permission. I shall, of course, leave here!"

"Why," he cried—"why leave here? Leave the shop, you mean? Whatever for? Why, my dear, I count on your staying!"

"I should have thought you would have wished me to go," I said.

"Go! Certainly not! I'm not a born fool! When people get to know you're here—why, they'll come in dozens just to have a look at you. It'll mean business. I'm not a fool; I——"

"I shall leave," I said. "I shall leave to-day!"

"You won't," he said. "If you do, I'll take action against you. You're engaged for a month. If you leave, you'll pay me for it!"

"But——"

"I mean it," he said. "I'm not going to let you go—not if I know it!" He laughed; he rubbed his hands. "Now, don't be foolish! Let's see the thing out. It'll pay me for you to stay, and it'll pay you. I'll raise your money to thirty shillings. That's good enough, isn't it?"

"I shall leave," I said. I understood. He wished me to remain so that people should know that Howard Burgrave's wife was serving in his shop, and they would come out of curiosity to see me. I remembered what Howard had said to me once—that he was entrusting me with his good name. And this man wished to make capital out of Howard's name—wanted to make me an attraction to draw customers to his shop. My cheeks burned with anger.

"I shall not return here after to-day, Mr. Holland," I said.

"You won't! You mean that?"

"I do mean that."

"You'll alter your mind," he said. "I'll make it a couple of pounds a week."

"If you make it two hundred pounds a week I would not stay," I said.

"Then—then I'll make you sorry for it!" He stood

before me and stared insolently into my face. "You—you're a nice one——" he began, in tones of coarse abuse. "You, to give yourself airs!"

I hardly know what he said; I did not hear the words he used. I only knew that he was abusing me shamefully, spitefully—that he said things that only a cur, such as he was, would dare to say to a woman.

"Let—let me go from here!" I said. "Stand out of my way!"

"No, I'm bothered if I do!" His face was red and inflamed-looking. He caught me suddenly in his arms and held me tightly. But a strength that I had never dreamed I possessed came to me. I had never been a poor weakling. Country bred, I had been almost as strong as a boy. I was possessed of a strength for which I am sure he never bargained. I was mad with anger at his insults.

He was trying to kiss me—kiss me! My soul shuddered at the very thought that any man should kiss me except Howard. This man, this horrible, loathsome creature—it seemed to me he was trying to put himself in Howard's place.

I flung him off. I saw him go stumbling across the room. His foot caught in something, and he tripped and fell. As I opened the door I saw the clerks in the outer office lift their heads and crane their necks, and knew that they could see their master lying on his back on the floor. They stared at him and at me, as, with erect head and flushed cheeks and fierce anger in my eyes, I walked across the office and out through the door.

I went back to the show-room. It was growing late now. But I had resolved that I would not stay. I saw Miss Palmer look at me as I came in. Perhaps there was something in my face that told its story. She came to me eagerly.

"Something's happened!" she said. "I knew it would. That wretch has been rude to you. I saw that coming when he knew"—she paused—"who—who you were."

"I should have thought that he would have respected me more," I said.

She looked at me wonderingly.

"I don't think you understand men like him." She paused again. "Are—are you going?"

"Yes, now," I said—"at once!"

"But you promised to come to me to-night. I wish you would. I might help you. I want to help you if I can."

"I know you do. You seem to be about the only friend I have," I said. "I will come. I will go to Mrs. Martin's first, and then, if you will tell me——"

She wrote down her address.

"I shall be home at seven," she said. "Why not leave Mrs. Martin's and come to me? Ethel will be away for six weeks. You could have her room—her bed, I mean—all that time, and it needn't cost you anything. Why not come?"

I considered for a moment. I felt desperately lonely, deeply in need of companionship and help, neither of which I could get at Mrs. Martin's.

"I will come if—if you want me," I said.

"That's right—do," she said—"do. Come to-night. Bring your things there at seven."

"I don't allow this talking," Miss Wilkinson said. "Miss Palmer, kindly attend to your duties. Miss—er—Miss Hallington, since you so desire to be called——"

"You may call me what you like," I said. "I am going."

"I am extremely glad to hear it," she said unpleasantly. "I am only too pleased to think that Mr. Holland decides to dismiss you!"

I shrugged my shoulders. It was not worth while telling her everything.

"We do not want women like you," Miss Wilkinson said—"creatures of your kind!"

"How—how dare you!" I cried. My cheeks burned.

"Dare!" she sneered. "Dare! I could speak a great deal stronger, and still be well within my rights, Miss—Miss—er—Hallington. I will content myself by simply saying you are not fit—not fit to associate with decent, honest, respectable girls, and I am more delighted than I can say to hear that you have been dismissed. The sooner you go, the better pleased I shall be."

I held my anger in check. I knew that it would not avail me anything to have a vulgar quarrel with this woman here. I was going, and that would be the end of it.

(*Continued on the next page.*)

(*Continued from previous page.*)

"The sooner the better!" she said.

"I am going now," I said.

I turned away, and then it seemed that fate had yet still one more hard knock for me. Two ladies were entering the showroom. One was talking to the other in a high-pitched, shrill voice—a voice that struck a familiar chord on my memory.

I turned away quickly—as quickly as I could; but yet not quickly enough. She saw me.

"Good gracious!" I heard her cry.

"Why, what is the matter, Essie?"

"Look! Look! Do you see who that is? It's that little fool, Joyce Burgrave!"

"Nonsense!"

I was at bay; I could not escape. This woman, the woman who once, a short time ago, had called herself my friend—Essie Robertshaw and the other woman, her friend—stood directly in my path. If I had hesitated now, it would seem that I was afraid to face them. And I was not afraid. I had done nothing to cause me any feeling of shame. I went towards them boldly.

Essie Robertshaw stood staring at me.

"Well, this is funny—really funny!" she said, in her high-pitched voice. "Our dear little Joyce masquerading as shop-girl. Really almost too amusing to be true! My dear, what have you done with him? What have you done with that poor, stupid fellow—eh?"

I passed her by. I did not answer her. I just looked straight into her face. I was on my dignity. I had suffered so much that day that I felt incapable of suffering anything now. I had always disliked her. Her shrill laughter now was meant to annoy me. I knew it, so I looked her in the face and passed her by. It was I who cut her dead—not she who cut me—and I felt the better for realising it afterwards.

I could hear her loud voice even after I had gone out of the room.

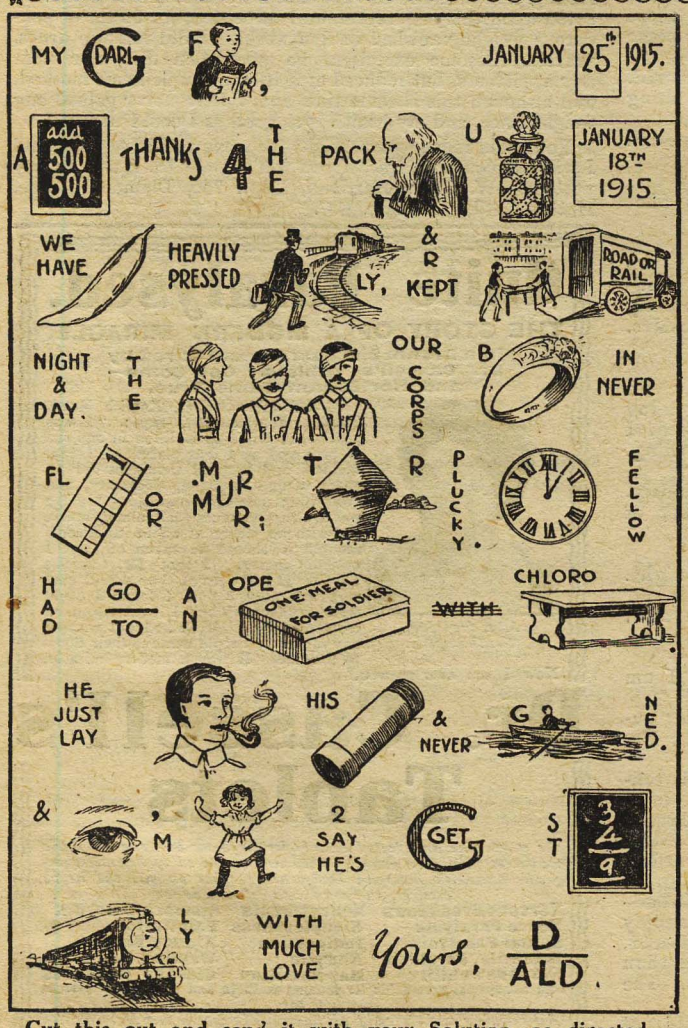
"Of course, he got into no end of bothers. Spent all his money on her, of course! And now——"

That was all I heard, but the words had no meaning for me, no significance. I was wondering, as I took off my silk shop-dress for the last time, why Howard, who was so sensitive on the question of honour, should have spread the story of my flight as he had. I had always an idea that he would have said nothing—that he would have kept the knowledge of it quietly to himself; but now it seemed that everyone knew of it—even Mr. Richard Holland!

He had offered me two pounds a week to stay on here, to attract curious customers! Curious! Why should anyone in the world be curious to see me? I had done nothing, either good or bad. I knew that people were just as curious to see a notoriously bad character as they were to see one celebrated for goodness or bravery. But I was neither the one nor the other. I was just a foolish, lonely, heart-sick girl, who had run away from the home of a man who had forgotten to love.

Why should people wish to see me? Why should Mr. Smithson have dragged his daughter away from me as though the touch of me would contaminate her? Why

(*Continued on page iii. of cover.*)



Cut this out and send it with your Solution, as directed. Competitors should keep a copy of their solutions for reference.

CAN YOU READ THIS SOLDIER'S PUZZLE LETTER?

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Thousands of our readers are enjoying these entertaining weekly contests. Are you? If not, enter this week.

All you have to do is to solve the soldier's puzzle letter, write your solution out clearly on a piece of paper, then cut out the puzzle picture, pin it to your solution, and forward it to the Editor.

You should keep by you, for reference, an exact copy of your solution.

Show your friends the puzzle, and ask them to help you. They will be very much interested in it. Remember, a picture may represent a phrase of one, two, or three words, but not more than three.

Our handsome prizes will be awarded as follows

The First Prize of £2 will be awarded to the reader whose solution is correct, or most nearly correct, in accordance with the original in the possession of the Editor. The Second Prize of £1 will be awarded to the reader who comes next in order of merit, and the same rule will apply in the case of the Ten Third Prizes of 5s. each. The Editor's decision is final.

The Editor reserves the right to add any or all of the prizes together should the number of readers qualifying render this course advisable. No reader can receive more than one prize.

This contest is being conducted by HORNER'S PENNY STORIES, "Horner's Weekly," "Sunday Circle," and "Golden Hours," and all readers of these journals may take part. All members of families may compete, but each must send in a separate solution. Readers can send in as many complete solutions as they like, but each solution must be accompanied by a puzzle picture taken from either of the journals named above.

Remember each week's contest is complete in itself. When you have solved this week's picture puzzle, do not wait until next week, but send your solution at once to: Puzzle Letter No. 20, HORNER'S PENNY STORIES Office, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. All solutions for this week's contest must reach us not later than Friday, February 12th. The result of this contest cannot appear in this journal for five weeks.

You will find the result of our 14th Contest on page 4.

should Miss Wilkinson have spoken in the bitter strain she had? What had I done? Was my offence so terrible, so unforgivable?

I had stolen away from my husband's home because my heart was sore, because I had believed—and still believed—that he had ceased to love me, because I could not bear to keep up the pretence of happiness any longer. Was that so desperate a crime, so vile an offence? I wondered. I wondered if my father and Ruth and Peggy thought of it in that light. I wondered if they, too, would turn from me in horror and disgust.

I felt low and miserable—utterly wretched. It had only needed the sneers and shrieking laughter of Essie Robertshaw to complete the misery of this one day. I went back to Mrs. Martin's in the omnibus. I told her that I was going to stay with a friend for to-night, at any rate—that I had left Holland's, and might have to leave her, too.

She took it in better part than I had thought she would.

"Of course, if it means your saving money," she said, "you go. I sha'n't stand out for no notice—only, if you want a place later on, you'll know where to come."

. . . . . .

Miss Palmer's rooms were very small—a tiny flat, high up in a large building near Victoria Station.

A lift carried me up part of the way, but not to the very top floor of all, where her little flat was. She was there by the time I arrived, and welcomed me warmly. She seemed to soothe me with her air of protection.

"Come in! You look white and tired, you poor thing!" she said. "I suppose I ought to call you my lady now. But I'm not going to!" She laughed softly. "I am so sorry for you—so sorry—so sorry! I can't understand a girl like you—so beautiful and so—so good-looking! I don't mean it in the way it is usually meant! I mean you are good to look at. You look good—not like a girl who would do a wicked, foolish, mad, unforgivable thing."

"Was it—it so unforgivable—the thing I did?" I said. "I wonder, if people knew, whether they would think so?"

"I am afraid nothing on earth would ever make any difference. A woman is always condemned unheard. You have done the one thing the world will never, never forgive you for," she said. "Because that is so, because I know you are down, down and out, I am sorry for you, and want to help you."

She held out her arms to me suddenly, and took me home to her breast. She held me tightly, and cried over me a little. She might have been my mother—my own mother, who was dead. Yet she was a girl scarcely a year older than I was. But the mother instinct was there in her heart, as it is in the heart of every good woman.

"You—you must have parted from him very soon," she said softly presently.

"We—we had been married six months," I said. "But then——"

"No; I don't mean that. I don't mean your husband. I mean the—the other. Hartley Rashwell, wasn't it? The man you—— Oh, you understand!"

"I—I don't understand!" I gripped at the edge of the table beside which I stood. I felt a sudden cold rush of horror pass through me. "I do not understand!" I cried, in a strangled voice. "Tell—tell me what you mean—tell me! You—you must—you must!"

She turned away. She looked down at the tiny fire, and then she spoke, and every word that she uttered struck at my heart like blows from a keen-edged knife.

And now—now, at last, I understood! I saw it all plainly—understood why Mr. Smithson had dragged his girl away from me; understood the contempt in Miss Wilkinson's eyes; the rude familiarity of Mr. Richard Holland; Essie Robertshaw's shrill, screaming, contemptuous laughter. Oh, I understood it all at last, and I stood there like one frozen into a block of ice.

He, my husband, thought that of me! My father thought that of me! Ruth, Peggy—all—all my dear ones thought this of me—thought I—I had sunk to the lowest depths, that I was a thing at which people would for ever point the finger of scorn! I, Joyce Burgrave!

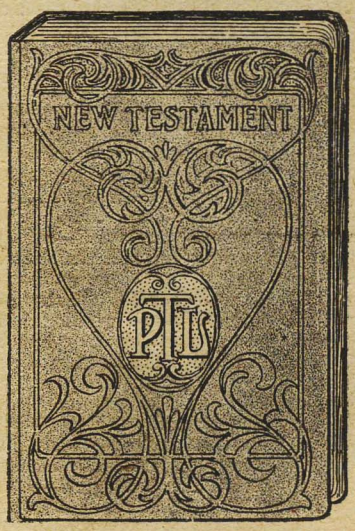
(Another long instalment of this grand serial next week. Order your copy to-day.)

Pocket Testaments

FOR

OUR SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

An Appeal to Readers of "Horner's Penny Stories."



WE want every brave British soldier and sailor to have a pocket edition of the New Testament, and we appeal to our readers to help us to present copies of the Word of God to every brave defender of our land. An illustration of the Pocket Testament we have in mind appears here. It is printed on India paper, is beautifully illustrated, contains the words and music of several excellent hymns, and a guide to the way of Salvation. It is published by the Pocket Testament League, and we are hoping that every brave soldier and sailor who receives one of these Testaments will sign the membership card, which is also contained in the Testament, and join the League. The members promise to read at least one chapter of the Bible every day, and to carry a Testament or Bible with them wherever they go.

If we are to go forward with this grand work of distributing the Word of God to the brave men of our Army and Navy, we shall need funds, and we appeal to our readers to help us. (1) By themselves giving donations towards this splendid effort. (2) By collecting from their friends. We shall be glad to receive large or small amounts from our readers, and we will send collecting cards to those who are willing to help us. All letters should be addressed as follows: "Pocket Testament," care of HORNER'S PENNY STORIES, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

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