

THE BEAUTIFUL WARRIOR.

["You shouldn't use cayenne pepper," said Nan. "And babies should speak only when they've spoken to," he observed. "Mother dear, I have arrived at the opinion that it is quite unnecessary to give young Hanbury an order of the day. The young gentleman is fool enough to do anything." "You always were spiteful against Mr. Hanbury," said Edith, "because his feet are smaller than yours." "My love," returned Mr. Tom, with imperiousness, "it is in his stupidity that he is really great. Jack Hanbury can only be described in the words of the American poet: he is a comical ass." "Now this conjecture of Mr. Tom's about the cause of Madge's disappearance was only a piece of my foolishness. I never did really order him to do anything, but I was sure to have a head capable of being broken—would have the wild anxiety to run away with one of his sisters while he, Mr. Tom, remained, was to the fore. But that afternoon post brought Nan a letter. She was amused to see by the handwriting that it was from Madge, she was still more alarmed when she read these words, scrawled with a trembling hand, and in pencil: "Dearest, dearest Nan, don't be angry. By the time you get this, Jack and I will be married. It is all for the best, dear Nan; and you will pacify them; and it is no use following us; for we shall be in France until it is all smoothed down. Not a single bridesmaid we haven't but what wouldn't I do for Jack's sake? It is time I did something to make up for all he has suffered—he was looking so ill in another month he would have died. He worships me. You never saw anything like it. I have just come back; so good-bye; from your loving, loving sister, Madge Hanbury. Do you know who this is, Nan?" "Nan, not a little frightened, took the letter to her brother and gave it to him without a word. Mr. Tom's rage was at once prompt and voluble. That she should have disgraced the family for, of course the whole thing would be in the papers. That she should have cheated and flattered her most particular friend. But as for this fellow Hanbury—" "I said it all along, I told you what would come of it. I knew that fellow was haunting her like a shadow. Well, we'll see how a shadow likes being looked up on bread and water. Oh, it's no use protesting, Nan; I will let the law take its course. We'll see how he likes that. "None walls do not a prison make," that's what love-sick fellows say, don't they? Wait a bit. Mr. Jack Hanbury will find that stone walls make a very good imitation of a prison, at all events." "Hut, Tom, dear Tom," Nan pleaded, "it's no use making matters worse. Let us try to make them better. If Madge is married, it can't be helped now. We must make the best of it." "He said no attention to her, he was still staring at the ill-written letter. "That's all gammon about their going to France. He hasn't money for travelling. She spends all her hours in knocking to prostitute people, the snake. They're in London." "He looked at his watch. "I can just catch the 3.45 express. Nan, you go and tell the others; they needn't squawk about it all over Brighton." "What are you going to do, Tom?" asked his sister, breathlessly. "Kind on where they are first. Then Colonel Fitzgerald and Mr. Mason must take it up. Then Mr. Jack Hanbury will suddenly find himself inside of Millbank prison." "Tom, is it what?" she pleaded again. "They are married. What is the use of weeping? You don't want to make your own sister miserable?" "She has brought it on herself," he said, roughly. "Then that is what I'm to think of you," she said, regarding him as if some day they might talk in that way about her. "He never could resist the appeal of Nan's clear, faithful eyes. "You wouldn't be such a fool," he said. "And they won't touch Madge. It's only that fellow they'll go for the mean bound, to marry a girl for her money." "How do you know it was for her money, Tom?" Nan pleaded. "I am certain they were fond of each other." "I don't want to miss the train," said he. "You go and tell the material I'm off to London. I suppose you don't know the address of Hanbury's father?" "No, I don't." "Well, I'm off, Te, te." "No, the train, Mr. Tom departed. But in the comparative silence of the Pullman car the fury of his rage began to abate; and it dawned upon him that, after all, Nan's counsel might have something in it. No doubt these two young folk, as he usually termed them, were married by this time. He still clung to the idea that Jack Hanbury deserved punishment—a horsewhipping, or something of the kind; but Madge was Madge. She was silly; and she had got into a hole; still she was Madge. She might be let off with a serious lecture on her folly, and on her disregard of what she owed to the other members of the family. Only, the first thing was to find their whereabouts. "On arriving in London he drove to his club, and after some little searching, he found that Mr. Gregory's address was Adelphi Terrace, whither he at once repaired. Mr. Hanbury was at dinner. He sent up his card, however, and asked to be allowed to see Mr. Hanbury on particular business. The answer was a request to step up stairs into the dining-room. He found that occupied by two gentlemen who were dining together at the upper end of a large table. One came forward to meet him. He took it for granted this was Mr. Hanbury, a slight, short man, with black hair and eyes, and a very stiff white cravat. "Mr. Hanbury," said he, "I am glad you have brought your horse. Let me introduce you to my brother, Major Hanbury. It is an unfortunate business." The other gentleman also slight and short, but with a sun-browned, flat-top face, and big grey moustache curled and combed like sea. "You know, then, that your son has run away with my sister," said Mr. Tom, somewhat hoarse, though he had determined to keep his temper. "Per-haps you know where they are?" "No further," said the black-haired gentleman, with perfect composure. "I believe them to be in London. It is only about a couple of hours since I heard of the whole affair. I immediately sent for my brother. Of course you are chiefly concerned for your sister; but my son is in a very nervous position."

"Yes, I should think so," exclaimed Mr. Tom. "I should think he was. But you don't know where they are?" "No; I only know they are in London. I received a letter from my son this afternoon, asking me to intercede for him with the Court of Chancery; and it is from this letter that I learn how serious his position is—more serious than he seems to imagine. He appears to think that, now the marriage has taken place, the Vice-Chancellor will condone everything. "He won't; I will take good care that he shan't," Mr. Tom said. "My dear sir, I am sorry to say that my son is in a very awkward situation, even although no personal vindictiveness be shown towards him. Your sister is not of age, I believe?" "Of course not. She's just turned eighteen." "I declare, you see, Jack had to declare that she was of age. And he appears to have stated that he had received the money in the parish, whereas he only came into it last year. And, again, marrying in the direct teeth of an order of the court—" "I am afraid, sir, that he is in a bad enough predicament without any personal vengeance being shown him. "I don't hit a man when he's down; I will let the law take its course. I shan't interfere." "Don't you think, sir," said this man with the calm black eyes and the quiet manner, "that it might be wiser, in the interests of your sister, if you were to help us to arrange some amicable settlement which we could put before the court?" "I believe the guardians of the young lady were very much misinformed about my son's character and his intentions with regard to her. I am certain that it was not her fortune that attracted him; or that could have led him into the position in which he now occupies. Now, if we could go before the Vice-Chancellor and say: 'The marriage is not so un-suitable after all. The young man comes of a highly respectable family. His relations (that is, my brother and myself, etc.) are willing to place a substantial sum at his disposal for investment in a sound business—indeed, there is a brewery at Southampton that my brother has just been speaking of—' "A brewery!" exclaimed Mr. Tom; but he instantly recollected that beer was as good as soda-water, from a social point of view. "And, if we could say to the Vice-Chancellor that the friends of the young lady were willing to condone his offence always providing, of course, and naturally, that your sister's fortune should be strictly settled upon herself—then, perhaps, he might be let off with a humble apology to the court, and the young couple be left to their own happiness. My dear sir, we lawyers see so much of the inevitable hardship of human life that when a chance occurs of friendly compromise—" "That's all very well," blurted out Mr. Tom. "But I call it very mean and shabby of him to leave my sister away like that. She was engaged to a friend of mine; a much better fellow, I'll be bound. I call it very shabby." "My dear sir," said the lawyer placidly, "I do not seek for a moment to excuse his conduct, except to remind you that at a certain period of life, romance counts for something. I believe many young ladies are like the young lady in the play—I really forget what her name was—who was disappointed to find that she was not to be run away with. However, that is a different matter. I put it to you whether it would not be better for every one concerned if we were to try to arrive at an amicable arrangement, and give the young people a fair start in life." "Of course I can't answer for all our side," said Mr. Tom, promptly. "You'd better come with me to-morrow, and we'll talk it over with Colonel Fitzgerald and Mr. Mason. I don't bear malice. I think what you say is fair and right—if the settlement is strict. And if it came to be a question of interceding, there's an old friend of ours, Sir George Strathmore, who, I know, knows the Vice-Chancellor very intimately." "My dear sir," the lawyer protested, "with other real or affected horror; do not breathe such a thing. Do not think of such a thing. The duty of the Vice-Chancellor to his wards is of the extreme kind; his decisions are beyond suspicion; what we have got to say we must say in open court." "But if they were to lock your son up in prison, said Mr. Tom, with a gentle smile, "that couldn't prevent Sir George taking my sister to call on the Vice-Chancellor some afternoon at his own house. And Madge is rather peevish. And she might cry." "Will you take a glass of wine, Mr. Hanbury?" said the lawyer, enthusiastically; for he saw that he had quite won over Mr. Tom to his side. "No, thank you," said the latter, rising; "I must apologise for interrupting your dinner. I'll look up Colonel Fitzgerald and Mr. Mason to-morrow morning, and bring them along here, most likely; that will be the simplest way. I suppose you are likely to know sooner than any one where these two fugitives have got to?" "I think so. I have sent an advertisement to the morning papers. I shall certainly counsel my son to surrender at once, and throw himself on the mercy of the court. My dear sir, I am exceedingly obliged to you for your kindness, your very great kindness, in calling." "Oh, don't mention it," said Mr. Tom, going to the door. And then he added, ruefully, "now I've got to go and hunt up my friend, and tell him that my own sister has jilted him. You've no idea what a treat that will be."

make off for Australia." "Oh, come, I say, interposed Mr. Tom, with a quick flash. "Oh, you needn't think I've anything to say against your sister, on whose face there was a smudge and quite radiant gladness. You don't understand it at all, Hanbury. It will take some explanation. But I assure you you could not have brought me pleasanter news; and yet I have not a word to say against your sister. I know that is a privilege you reserve for yourself, and quite right, too. It was manifestly clear that Captain King was not shamming satisfaction; not for many a day had his face looked so bright." "Well, I'm glad you take it that way," said Mr. Tom. "I thought you would be cut up. Most fellows are, though they pretend not to be. I really do believe you're rather glad that Madge has given you the slip." "Sit down, Hanbury, I will tell you all about it. I proposed to your sister Anne years ago." "To Anne? Why wasn't I told?" "These things are not generally preached from the house, you know, refused me point blank, and I knew she was a girl who knew her own mind. Then I rejoined my ship, and remained nearly abroad for a long time. I fancied it would all blow over, but it didn't. I had harter his shan't I thought; and then, you know, sailors are driven to think of by-gone things. Well, you remember when I came home—when I met you in the street. I thought I should like to see another glimpse at Nan—of Miss Anne, I mean—before she married the parson. Do you remember my going into the drawing-room? Madge was there—the perfect image of Nan. Indeed, I thought at first she was Nan herself. And wasn't it natural I should imagine the two sisters in the world? And then, as it was hopeless, Nan, I fancied—I imagined—well, the result, I made a most confounded mistake, Hanbury; and the only thing I've been thinking of, day and night, in my late, was what was the proper and manly thing to do, whether to tell Madge frankly, or whether to say nothing, with the hope that after marriage it would all come right. And now you needn't wonder at my being pre-occupied; she has herself settled the affair; and there is not a human being in the world happier than I wish her life-long happiness than I do. And I wish to goodness I knew some way of letting her know that, too." Tom stretched out his legs—his hands were in his pockets—and said, contentedly. "So you thought Madge was the same as Nan? I could have told you if you had asked me. You thought you could find another girl like Nan. If you want to try, you'll have to step out. By the time you've found her, the wedding time will be a fool compared to you. (This is like Nan don't grow on every blackberry bush.) "I know that," said Frank King with a sigh. "Then Mr. Tom looked at his watch. "I'm very hungry," said he. "Have you dinner?" "No, I have not. I was going to walk along to the club when you came in." "Come with me to the Waterloo. You see something must be done about these two sinners. He must get something to do and set to work. The baby has never been accustomed to live up a tree; she must have a proper house." Frank King got his coat and hat, and they both went out. He was thinking of his own affairs mostly, and of the singular sense of relief that seemed to permeate him; Mr. Tom, on the other hand, was discussing the various aspects of the elopement, more particularly with regard to the court of chancery. During dinner the two friends arrived at the conclusion that people generally would look upon the affair as a hardship, and on the ground, occupied; and that the court, seeing that the thing was done, would allow the young people to go their way with a suitable admonition. This was not quite what happened, however. To begin with, there was a clamor of contention, and advice among guardians and friends; there were anonymous appeals to the run-aways in agony-columns; there were futile attempts made to pacify the court of chancery. All the Hanburys came up to town except Nan, who remained to look after the Brighton house. The chief difficulty of the moment was to discover the whereabouts of Mr. John Hanbury. That gentleman was coy, and wanted to find out something of what was likely to happen to him if he emerged from his hiding-place. At last it was conveyed to him that he was only making matters worse; then he wrote from certain furnished apartments in a house on the south west side of Regent's Park; finally there was a series of business interviews, and it was arranged that on a particular day he should attend the court and hear the decision of the Vice-Chancellor. On that fateful morning poor Madge, her pretty eyes all bedimmed with tears, and her lips tremulous, was seated at her sister's and mother's rooms in Bruton street; the gentleman only attended the court. Jack Hanbury was looking exceedingly nervous and pale. And indeed, when the case came on, and the Vice-Chancellor began to make certain observations, even Mr. Tom, whose care for the future of his sister had quite overcome all his scorn for the fellow Hanbury, grew somewhat alarmed. The court did not at all appear inclined to take the free-and-easy view of the matter that had been anticipated. The Vice-Chancellor's sentences, one after the other, seemed to become more and more severe, as he described the gross conduct and contempt, of which this young man had been guilty. He deplored the condition of the law in England; allowed persons to go married on false statements. He wound up his lecture, which had a conscientious and pertinence about it not often found in the lectures by the brief announcements that he should forthwith make an order committing Mr. John Hanbury to prison. There was an ominous silence for a brief second or so. Then the court was addressed by Mr. Rupert—who was Mary Hanbury's husband, and a fairly well-known Q.C.—who made a very humble and touching little appeal. He said he represented the friends of the young lady; and they were all inclined to beg his lordship to take a merciful view of the case. They did not think the young man, though he had acted most improperly, was inspired by mercenary motives. He was now in court, and was anxious to make the most profound apology. If his lordship—

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