LOVE'S TRIUMPH.

By the Author of "KATE MASSEY'S FALSEHOOD," "BEATRICE'S AMBITION," "FOR LOVE OR KINDRED?" "A GOLDEN DREAM," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

Within a mile of a certain favourite Cheshire watering-place, where everything is new, garish, and altogether unlovely with the exception of the blue waters of the Irish Sea, lies the peaceful and secluded hamlet of Herby. It is situated but a short distance from the sandy shore, almost hidden from view in a slight hollow on the side of a very high and fertile hill, and is surrounded by orchards of apple and pear trees and lovely sweet-scented gardens.

It contains four zig-zag streets, without a yard of level roadway in any of them, forming steep ascents and sudden declivities in a way that severely tries the muscles and nerves of a stranger, but apparently is no inconvenience to the natives. It has quaint, overhanging upper storeys to its houses, with fantastically-carved beams crossing each other and forming diamond shaped panels that are filled in with plaster. It has one large low-roofed inn, a little modernised by the laying down of shiny oilcloth upon the floors, which only want polishing to bring out their rich dark colours, and by many coats of whitewash concealing the red sandstone walls; but such innovations have not deprived it of its old-world memories. Its quaint devices for the comfort of a generation of topers long since passed away, its low panelled rooms and ornamented galleries its deep window-seats and capacious chimney-corners vividly recall the past.

Perhaps the reason why this little hamlet is overlooked by the crowds that year after year seek the health-giving breezes along the esplanade of the fashionable holiday resort so near to it is because it lies so embowered in trees that, were it not for the square tower of its church, one would pass by the meretricious brick and stucco villas on the shore near the painfully new railway-station, and leave the place without ever dreaming that such a quaint village, which time seems to have left untouched for a hundred years, existed within a mile of modern seaside civilisation.

But the ivy-covered cruciform church that has so many secrets hidden beneath its lettered pavement, and the grass-covered graves surrounding its walls, sometimes attract the attention of an exceptionally observant visitor; and thus, although the "madding crowd" does not know of its existence, Herby is occasionally visited by artists who have been "doing" Welsh and Westmoreland lakes and mountains, and by anglers, who sojourn there for the sake of a certain trout-stream that flows through the grounds of the Grange.

Such was Herby on one fair and sunny June morning, when the shadows of the leaves formed a lace-like pattern on the broad red-gravel walk leading to the church, and the shadow of the tower was thrown across the graves. Other shadows too fell upon those grassy hillocks and old half-buried headstones as three persons came out by the vestry door and walked cross the churchyard towards a stile that gave access to a narrow lane from which the blue sky was hidden by a canopy of lilac and laburnum trees in full bloom—two men, and a tall slender girl of some twenty or twenty-one summers. The girl's clear-cut oval face was pale, and her beautiful hazel eyes appeared full of sadness. Her dark and delicately-arched eyebrows and long lashes were perfectly black, and formed a striking contrast to her hair, which was soft, fine, silken, and of a pale shade of yellow that it would have been flattery to call golden. She was clad in a tumbled, soiled, and faded gray dress, her straw hat was trimmed with a strip of shabby lace, and her luxuriant hair was carelessly coiled about her shapely head; her small white hands were innocent of gloves, and on the left a broad gold band with a flashing diamond set in it guarded a wedding ring.

The man upon whose arm she was lightly leaning was about twenty-five years of age, and as broad-shouldered and dark as she was slight and fair—a handsome, well-bred man, and a good one, or his noble brow, clear frank eyes, and sweet mouth belied him strangely—a man who would protect his enemy's life with his own, in whose hands any woman's honour would be safe, with a gentle chivalrous disposition that a wicked woman could deceive, a child or a dog would trust.

His handsome sun-burnt face was flushed and smiling as he looked over the girl's shabby hat, and, addressing the person on the other side of her—a fair-haired, blue-eyed young man in the dress of a clergyman—said—

"Well, it was not such a terrible business after all, Bob; and my wild Hyacinth is mine hard and fast, is she not?"

"Oh, yes, the marriage will stand firm enough! It is the clergyman who always has to bear the brunt when it comes out that there has been some informality in the case. It will be six months with 'hard' or a fifty pound fine if either of you drags this before the world with a view of breaking it. I tell you, Glynn, I would not run such a risk for any one but my sister, besides consider my conscience!" replied the clergyman, with dignity.

"Oh, come now—that's too much! A wedding isn't a crime! Is it, Hyacinth?"

The girl raised her white eyelids for a moment, then lowered them again demurely and leaned rather more heavily on her husband's arm, but made no reply in words.

"Well, it is evading the law, you see—and that gives one an uneasy sensation, as if there must be something wrong somewhere; one cannot help feeling where there's secrecy there's sin. You understand?" answered the young clergyman.

"Indeed I do not!" begun Glynn hastily; and he would have poured forth a torrent of words on the subject had not his newly-wedded wife interrupted him.

"I am sorry for this,' she said, looking gravely from one to the other and speaking in a low sweet musical voice. "Bob, you told me—you both told me—that everything was correct and legal." I am sure—with something like a sob—"I would not have consented had you told me so—no indeed!" and two glittering tears showed themselves on the dark fringes of her eyes.

"There, Hyacinth—there, my darling!" exclaimed her husband, in great distress, placing his arm aronud her and pressing his brown cheek against her fair face. "Why, you're crying—crying on you're wedding-day—so awfully unlucky! Look, Bob, at what you have done with your conscience and your scruples."

Before the perpetual curate of Herby could reply, his sister turned her face towards him, opened her large eyes—so tearful and yet so bright—looked up into his face, and said—

"It is right? It is legal? We are married—are we not? It is not a farce—not one of those mock marriages one reads of in books—ay, and in newspapers sometimes?"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed her husband, his face flushing with sudden anger, his voice shaking. "Can you suspect me of such a wicked trick? Why, Hyacinth——'

She made a gentle gesture with her slim white hand, and smiled at him, though her eyes were grave.

"I do not think you would play me such a trick," she said—"I do not indeed Glynn. But you are a man, and men have deceived women ever since the world began, and will continue to do so, I suppose."

"And you dare to place me in your thoughts by the side of the villains of whose crimes you have read in the newspapers! You forget that I am cheefully risking the loss of a great fortune; that you are as necessary to me as the air I breath; that you are as pure and holy in my eyes as the memory of my dead mother; that you are my cousin; that your brother, whom you know to be ordained participates in the 'trick' as you are pleased to call it! Oh, Hyacinth, I can scarcely believe you are in earnest!" and the young man withdrew his arm from his bride and walked on hastily, hot tears springing to his eyes.

She did not follow him and strive to woo him back to her side, as many a loving girl would have done; nor did she pout her lip and try to look indifferent. The ominous quarrel that was spoiling the first moments of their married life did not disturb her in the least. She raised her left hand, looked at the plain gold ring with its flashing guard, sighed a faint low satisfied sigh and turned to her brother, repeating the very question she had asked some minutes before—

"It is right—legal? Are we married, Bob?"

"Yes. It is a little informal, but it will stand in any court of law in the kingdom—you may be sure of that, Hyacinth. But you will be pretty well sold if you find you've married a pauper—a man without even a profession. And you know what a hatred our usurping uncle has of us all; if he knew Glynn was here, I believe he would disinherit him."

"I know it is a case of risk—a sprat to catch a salmon; but miles and miles of rich and fertile soil by the river Nore, and a stately and ancient castle, the home of our race since Henry the Second gave it to red Glynn Verschoyle, are worth risking something for. I would risk even my life to be Verschoyl e of Verschoyle; and her eyes lost their steady calmness and her cheeks flushed scarlet as she spoke. "Yes," she went on, after a pause, "I am willing to run the risk; and, if I fail, I must put up with the consequences."

"Well," said her brother slowly, "the plan is a good one if it only turns out all right; but there is generally a hitch in these things—the secret leaks out, or something."

"This secret will keep, Bob—you will keep it, I shall keep it, and we will make him keep it."

"People in love are generally fools," replied the young clergyman sententiously.

"And do you imagine I am in love with that gaby?" she asked, glancing contemptuously at the tall and handsome young fellow whom a few minutes before she had solemnly sworn to love and honour all the days of her life, and who was now sitting on an old stone stile leading into the lane, and still looking angry and mortified.

"'Gaby' said Robert. "An honourable gentleman, well born and well bred, and one of the kindest, best-hearted pluckiest fellows I ever knew! 'Gaby'!"

"I think so," replied the girl coldly; "I should think any man a gaby who, for the gratification of a whim, a fancy for a face that pleases him now, that may displease him a year hence, and that he is sure to grow weary of and hate in time, would risk such an inheritance.

"Oh, Hyacinth," cried her brother, "you—and all of us—ought to be the last to refuse to believe in love! Look at our father—of what he gave up for our mother, and how passionately he adores her and she him, and how happy he is in spite of our shabbiness and poverty!"

"Well, they are exceptions, I suppose," said the girl, with a sneer; but let that slide. If a cool head can keep a secret and force others to do so, this morning's business won't leak out until—well, dead men's shoes, you know, and all that kind of thing. Hush now!"—and her fair clear-cut face assumed its usual expression of haughty calmness.

"I wonder whether you have a heart Hyacinth?" muttered the curate. "It seems to me that you might be chiselled out of a block of stone, for all the human and womanly feeling you display—you are quite unlike the rest of us."

"Heart?" she said, immediately catching his words. "Yes, Robert, I have a heart to be Mrs. Neville—Mrs. Verschoyle Neville, of Verschoyle castle and Shangannon—but I have not the heart to love yonder gaby"—dropping her voice to a whisper as they came close to the stile and her husband rose and approached her.

"Forgive me, dearest," he said feeling heartily ashamed of his outburst of anger; "I ought not to have taken offense at such a—a— trifle. Of course you did not mean it."

She made no reply in words, but she smiled at him, placing her soft white hand in his as he helped her over the stile. Her brother followed, and the three walked down the lane together in the shade of the laburnums and lilacs, crushing beneath their feet the fallen blossoms that almost covered the ground. A little further on a grand old horse-chestnut tree that cast a cool shadow all about it, and towered upwards a pyramid of graceful fan-shaped leaves and white spiky blossoms, seemed to close the path. But on one side of the massive trunk—indeed almost behind it—another stile led into an ill-kept wood, where some of the trees were dying for want of light and air, others were already dead, and all were more or less encumbered with treacherous, clinging ground-ivy that it was apparently no one's business to clear away.

At this stile they paused, Glynn Neville, still assuming the air of an ill-used man, as if, athough he had forgiven, he had not forgotten his wife's distrust of him, said—

"This is the limit, I suppose, Hyacinth?"

"I think not," she replied, smiling. I think you might come home with us. I dare say breakfast—if you can call our morning scramble for food by such a name—is going on now; and, if any one saw us together and you did not come in, there would be talking and wondering and questioning on their part, and downright lying on mine—and"—with a little disdainful gesture of the hand—"I hate that."

Glynn, who had brightened visibly during her speech, declared with some warmth—

"Yes, I should like to go up to the Grange very much, dear; I delight in making my own coffee and frying my own trout—in fact, anything except blowing the fire with my mouth."

"As you caught Lil doing the first time that you came," said the curate, glad to find the conversation taking this turn.

"Yes,—the beautiful child! Hyacinth when you and I are rich—five or six years hence—we must take Lil to London and watch the world worshipping her. It would be a crime to let such a flower 'blush unseen' in a Cheshire village, to marry eventually the doctor or"—with a laughing glance at Robert Verschoyle—"the curate."

Hyacinth's lip quivered, and she said with some bitterness in her voice—

"Very well; if that time ever does come, it will most likely come when I am fading and the flower of her loveliness is fairest—a pleasant reflection! Ah, there is my ridiculous parent on the lawn!"

They had now skirted the edge of the wood, and come to another stile leading into nothing more imposing than a large sloping field in which some recently-shorn sheep were placidly grazing. It was most decidedly a field, and was called a lawn only because a large ancient mansion, in a state of partial ruin—with moss-grown roof and walls matted with ivy—stretched with its tumble-down stables and out-offices, across the upper end of it. The old peak-roofed, gabled building had no grace or beauty of its own; and yet it was a fair and refreshing sight to eyes tired with the glare of the sands in the hot sunshine, for a profusion of uncared for, neglected roses clambered over and clung to and ran riot through the ivy everywhere.

The sweet-scented blossoms spread across the little windows, starry sprays of jasmine peeped out between the stiff, formal passion-flowers. Everything but these fair gifts of nature spoke ruin and decay, and a hopelessness that have even led to a cessation of all efforts to keep up appearances. The broad gravel walk in front of the house was so covered with weeds that one of the sheep was nipping the grass growing between the stones. What had once been a row of stately oaks was now a line of unsightly stumps not more than a foot above the ground and bristling with bushy growths. A broken statue of Amphitrite in a grass-grown shell with a memorial of the time when this field was in reality the pleasaunce of a noble mansion. The broken escutcheon over the hall door—about which the ivy and some white roses were entwined—the ragged embroidered curtain hanging at an open window, the cracked and worn flight of red sandstone steps, the dilapidated, neglected, poverty-stricken aspect of the whole place, was such as is more often found on the banks of the Nore, the Shannon, or the Blackwater, than by the side of an English river. Its appearance would have suggested thoughts of the Court of Chancery, had the fact not been so very apparent that the disorder and neglect were evidently the products of swarming life rather than the desolation of a house of the "Courts,"

Such indeed had been Glynn Neville's thought concerning it when—a month or two before that fair June morning—he had first leaned over the stile by the wood, and looked with disapproving eyes at his uncle's home, little thinking that in this remote, unvisited Cheshire village he should find in his fair-faced, placid, flaxen-haired cousin his wife and his fate.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Hottest Place in the World.

The hottest region on earth is tropica-Africa, where the mean equatorial temperature of the air is 85° 10', the same equatorial temperature being 820° 94' in Asia, and 809° 96' in America. The great bulk of Africa, to the extent of three-fourths, or even four-fifths, of the whole lies within the tropics. Under any circumstances, therefore, a very high temperature might be expected to prevail on this continent. Its physical conformation favors and intensifies this tendency; the vast expanse of unbroken land in the northern division, the slight elevation of the surface, and the aridity of the Sahara, all tend to make Africa the hottest region in the world. It is pre-eminently the "tropical continent." The extreme of heat is found *not under the equator itself but in the neighborhood of the northern tropic*, in the Nubian Desert, where food may be cooked by being buried in the sand. The saying of Arabs is, "In Nubia the soil is like fire, and the wind like a flame." On the coast of the Red Sea, the mean temperature of Massowah is 88° and at Mourzouk, in Fezzan, the summer heat reaches 1308° in the shade. It must also be borne in mind that local circumstances increase both heat and cold immensely. Thus Sir J. Herschell observed a superficial temperature of 159° in soil at the Cape of Good Hope; and Sturt says that, on the Macquarie River in New South Wales, "the ground was almost a molten surface, and a match falling upon it was immediately ignited." 140° F. has also been registered at Colorado; and near the Euphrates, Capt. Griffiths found the thermometer standing at 156° in the sun, and 132° in the shade. At Calpee, in the East Indies, the thermometer on one occasion was observed to stand at 150° in the open air half-an-hour after sunset.

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