CHAPTER I.

"June! June! where are you?"

"I am here," answers a charming voice, and the owner of it trips out from behind a rosebush, holding a cluster of half-blown crimson blossoms of which she has despoiled it.

June, the month, links spring to summer; in June the birds sing their sweetest, the senses are keenest; June bears the hope and promise of the year. June has hot fits and cold fits, summer skies and angry tears, balmy airs and chilling winds. June is young and fresh, bright and hopeful, gay and careless in the faith of good days to come; June, when fair, is fairest of the fair; and June the month is a fit prototype of June the smiling maiden who answers so promptly.

Madge, a hoyden of sixteen, pounced upon her cousin, thrust a vigorous hand through her arm, and cried, in jubilant accents:

"Tom has come. Of course he asked for you at once, and Aggie said she thought you had gone home; but I said I knew you hadn't, and that I would find you; whereupon Tom beamed."

By this time they were half across the lawn, and a big, fair young man came striding out of the French windows to meet them. He looked, as Madge said, beaming. A joyous light shone in his blue eyes as he took June's hand in an eager clasp. No one, seeing the expression of his face, would have entertained a moment's doubt as to his feelings for the young lady whom he was greeting.

"I am so glad you have come back, Tom. It was so dull without you."

June did not blush, nor look coy or embarrassed, which was, perhaps, rather an unfavorable symptom for Tom.

"Was it?" he cried, eagerly. "I'm awfully glad to hear you say that."

"Well," cried Madge, "has aunt found a duke's daughter for you, and are we going to have a real swell cousin?"

"They won't have me," laughed Tom. "I don't suit them. I am not their sort. Fashionable young ladies don't care for me. I can't dance, and I can't talk their jargon."

"Never mind, Tom," uttered June, giving him a friendly glance. "You have come back to people who appreciate you. And I am sure you are happier here."

"I should think I am!" returned Tom, with emphasis.

"Poor aunt!" remarked Madge again, mischievously, pretending to sigh.

"My mother had Dal," answered Tom, laughing, "and he is exactly after her own heart."

"But he is not her son," said June.

"What is he like?" asked Madge.

"He's a very good-looking young chap, and very manly and plucky. And he dances 'like a seraph,' as some lady remarked, and looks at every pretty woman as if he loved her."

"How delightful!" cried Madge. "Oh, Tom, I wish you would have him down here!"

"He has promised to come. He is really tremendously fond of my mother. I feel quite an outsider when he is there."

At this moment Agnes came out of the window, smiling, yet scarcely looking pleased.

"Mamma says, Tom, will you stay and have high tea with us? She is afraid it will not be a very good substitute for your dinner, but we shall be delighted if you will."

Tom felt himself rather in a cleft stick. If June were going to stay, he would accept joyfully; if not, he wanted to walk home with her, and he was not altogether indifferent to his dinner when there was no object to be gained by going without it. Yet he would not for the world be impolite to Agnes and Madge, though they were his cousins. He hesitated for an instant.

"June is not going to stay to-night," interposed Madge, reading his thoughts with her sharp instinct.

Tom flushed crimson through his fair skin; June tried to appear unconscious, and Agnes closed her thin lips together, and looked as if she would like to pinch her sister.

"Thanks, awfully," said Tom, after a moment's pause, "but there are one or two people I ought to see to-night. I dare say my aunt will let me come another night instead. Is she in the drawing room? I will go in and see her." And he marched off.

Agnes wanted to get June away before Tom came out again. She was eternally trying to separate this pair, although she knew that Tom was deeply in love with her cousin. But she had heard that, when a woman is firmly purposed to marry a man, she not unfrequently succeeds, and she had long ago determined to marry Tom, if there was any truth in the saying. June saw through this and was provoked at it. She was not in love with Tom; but, when any one attempted to put obstacles between him and her, her regard for him went up with amazing rapidity.

She particularly wanted him to walk home with her to-night, but, as she was far too proud to run after him, she said:

"I must be going. I did not know it was so late."

"Give my love to auntie," Agnes called after her, sweetly.

June did not reply or so much as turn her head, which she held very straight up in the air. She would not condescend to linger even when she got into the road, being possessed of that strong instinct of self-respect which prevents a proud woman from seeming to make the smallest advance to a man. She had not, however, gone three hundred yards before she heard rapid steps behind her, and in another moment, Tom, flushed and breathless, was beside her.

"Why did you go without saying good-by to me?" he asked, reproachfully.

"It is late, and mamma will be waiting," answered June; not that she desired to screen Agnes from Tom's displeasure, but because her dignity forbade her to tell him how she had been hurried away.

"I can't tell you," he said, with immense emphasis, "how utterly delighted I am to get back."

"I am delighted," answered June, smiling up in his face.

"And have you thought," trying to check his eagerness—"have you thought whether—whether you could give me hope?"

"You promised," returned June, flushing a little and affecting an air of displeasure, "not to say another word about that for at least six months. Tell me about London. I am sure you must have seen plenty of lovely and charming women there to make you forget all about me."

"There was not one who could hold a candle to you!" swore Tom, with fervor.

By this time they had nearly reached the rose-covered cottage where June and her mother lived.

"May I come in and see Mrs. Rivers?" he asked, and June gave permission.

Then they went into the house together. A lady rose from a low chair as they entered the little drawing room—a lady whom one had no difficulty in recognizing as June's mother, although her eyes and hair were several shades darker. She was rather tall, with an almost girlish figure, but her face had a worn and suffering look. For the moment, as she greeted Tom, this died away in a smile, and, for his part, he looked almost as pleased to see her as he had looked at sight of June.

"Is it you, Tom?" she asked, in a voice that was own mother to June's. "What! tired of London already?"

"Yes," he answered, heartily. "I have come back, and I never was so glad in all my life to get away from a place."

"But, my dear boy, what does your mother say?"

"She isn't extra pleased, but she saw I shouldn't do any good, however long I stayed. I'm not fit for London life. I hate it! It makes me feel like a bird in a cage. It is getting late," remarked Tom, though he was dreadfully loath to take his leave. "I'm afraid I must be going."

"I wish we could ask you to stay," said Mrs. Rivers, "but our modest little tea would be a very poor substitute for your dinner."

Tom did not say how fain he would even go without dinner to stay another hour in the company that he loved; he had delicate instincts; he was afraid of putting these dear women, of whom he was so heartily fond, out of the way.

"I am coming in the afternoon," he told Mrs. Rivers, and added: "I have brought you and June a little reminder from London."

Tom bade a lingering good-by and walked off with a buoyant step and a light heart.

CHAPTER II.

Tom was a trial to his mother, the Honorable Mrs. Ellesmere. If Tom had been a brilliant, dashing scapegrace, she would have idolized him, and could have forgiven him anything; but Tom was honest and mediocre, and she had nothing to forgive. He was not in any way what she wanted him to be, not even in appearance. He was a fine young fellow, with frank blue eyes, a trifle blunt of feature; he looked like a gentleman, but a country gentleman. He made a capital squire, but among the gilded youth of the cities he did not shine.

On the day after his return from town Tom came to call at the Rose Cottage punctually at the time appointed. But June was not there. She had been sent for to the rectory, as the singing master had unexpectedly changed his day, and came over on the chance of its being convenient to his pupils.

June was educated with her cousins, Mrs. Bryan Ellesmere, wife of Tom's uncle, the Reverend Bryan Ellesmere, was sister to Mrs. Rivers, and when Captain Rivers died, leaving his widow indifferently provided for, Mrs. Bryan at once suggested that her sister should come to the Rose Cottage, then vacant, and that June should have the benefit of her cousins' governess and masters. And for five years the programme had been successfully carried out with fewer differences, jealousies and heart-burnings than might have been expected, considering that June so far outshone her companions in beauty and talent. But Mrs. Bryan was a placid, easy tempered woman, and Mrs. Rivers had an immense amount of tact, and was, besides, thoroughly conscious of and grateful for the advantages which her sister's kindness gave June. Tom might have been a stumbling block but that Mrs. Bryan had a rooted aversion to marriages between first cousins—a feeling which, as we know, was not shared by her eldest daughter.

Tom arrived at the Rose Cottage, and, finding Mrs. Rivers alone, was for a moment conscious of a pang of disappointment, when he suddenly bethought himself how a tete-a-tete might be turned to advantage.

"I want to say something to you—may I?" he asked; and Mrs. Rivers looked up at him with the sweet smile which made her sad face ten years younger all at once.

"You may say anything you like."

Then Tom broke into his discourse:

"You know—I'm sure you know how I love June. Going away, and seeing all these other women of whom my mother thinks so much, has only made me love and admire her ten times more; she is as far beyond them as—as anything can be."

"That is indeed praise," said Mrs. Rivers, who, in her heart of hearts, thought it no more than her darling's due.

"It's true! it's gospel true!" cried Tom, with energy. Then he faltered a bit, but, fighting with his diffidence, nair conquered it, and went on. "I am getting so unsettled. I did not feel it so much before I went away, but now I feel as if I must have something to go upon. Do you—do you," imploringly, "think she cares at all for me?—do you think she will marry me some day?"

Tom had the most sympathetic listener. Mrs. Rivers felt for him, and knew what he felt, but she would not say a word more than she conscientiously could.

"My dear boy," she answered him, not without a certain amount of hesitation in her tone, "I know exactly how you feel. What you say is perfectly just and fair. I don't think I need tell you how glad I should be to have you for a son; there is no man in the world to whom I would so gladly give my darling. You have not said anything to June since you came back, have you?"

"I tried to last night, but she wouldn't have it; she stopped me at once."

Mrs. Rivers paused a moment, then, looking up at him, said:

"Will you leave it to me? Shall I try and find out what her feelings for you are? You know girls, especially girls who have been brought up quietly in the country like June, require rather delicate treatment in the nature of their affections."

"Yes," replied Tom, ruefully.

"Then take my advice, and do not breathe a word to her on the subject this afternoon. I will talk to her to-night, and you will come and see me to-morrow at twelve, when she will be away."

And here the form of Miss June was seen tripping by the window, and the next moment she came in like a flood of sunshine.

"Have you brought my present, Tom?" she asked, as soon as she had greeted him and kissed her mother. "I have been quite absent all the time of my singing lesson, wondering and trying to guess what it could be."

Then Tom, a little bit nervous how his offering would be received, produced a small parcel from his pocket. Miss June, chattering all the time, deftly unfolded the various wrappers, and then brought her lips to a very round O, and looked up with glistening eyes.

"Oh, Tom! oh, mamma!"—carrying it to her mother. "It is too handsome. I must not have it, must I?"

"I do not know what to say," answered Mrs. Rivers, smiling. She felt that it depended entirely on circumstances whether June might keep and wear so valuable a trinket.

The present was a large gold locket, with a hieroglyph intended for June in diamonds in the center.

"Why not?" cried Tom, who had been expecting a remonstrance. "It is quite simple. Besides, you must have it. It wouldn't do for anyone else. It has got 'June' on it, and nobody else is called June but you."

"It is beautiful," smiled Mrs. Rivers, "and does the greatest credit to Tom's taste."

Tom was looking at his beloved's eyes and lips; nothing could embellish her to his mind.

"I suppose I must take it off again," said the girl, wistfully; but Tom cried, "No, no, no!" and her mother said:

"You might, at all events, wear it a little longer."

"And all this time," uttered Tom, "you," to Mrs. Rivers, "have not seen your present." And he dashed out into the little hall, and produced a good-sized parcel this time. It was a pretty velvet and gilt screen for photographs, and Mrs. Rivers was as much pleased with her offering as June had been.

"Now, Tom," cried the girl, with dancing eyes, "I want to hear all about London—all—everything."

"I tell you what it is, June, I hate London society—there is so much sham and make-believe about it; no one seems to be sincere, or to care to be real and honest; they only want to take each other in by pretending."

"And your cousin, Mr. Broke, is a most accomplished pretender?"

"My mother says he's perfect."

"I know I shall hate him," said June, emphatically.

"Oh, no, you won't. He's a thorough good chap. Besides, it's different with him. He's a Guardsman, and goes in for society, so he must make himself popular. And, by George! he does, too. I only hope to goodness," looking suddenly at June, "that—that——"

Then he flushed crimson, and turned away his face.

"That what?" inquired June, with an innocent air.

"Nothing," replied Tom.

(To be continued.

How to Be Great.

We are all born but once. Most of us marry but once. We certainly can die but once. And if we look at life "as a small bundle of great things," we shall certainly not think it worth while to practice small courtesies. But if we regard it, far more truly, as "a big bundle of small things," we shall as certainly feel that few things in life are better worth doing. It may never be in our power to save anybody's life, make for anybody a fortune, shed luster upon the family name, die for our country, or set the smallest river on fire in any way whatever. But if we conscientiously and sweetly give ourselves to the practicing of small courtesies, only the recording angel can ever set down the good we shall do in our day and generation to hundreds and thousands of our fellow creatures in the course of a lifetime.

Most people despise them as not worth doing. Few people perform them with any degree of consistency or loving kindness. Fewer still are content to do them in the best way, unnoticed, unremembered, really feeling it to be emphatically a virtue that is its own reward. Yet it is a wonder that preachers do not urge it upon their congregations from a thousand pulpits.

Senator Morgan's old school teacher says that the Alabama "ambassador" went to school for but one year. His lack of education, however, did not prevent him from studying law at an early age, and becoming a successful practitioner. The literary acquirements for which he has a reputation were gained by reading in later years.

An Illinois man has patented a hoe which has a divided shank at the end of the handle to support two narrow blades, the device being useful in weeding both sides of small plants at once without interfering with the plant.