CUPID ON STRIKE.

From Good Stories.

CHAPTER III.

"From my old friend, Dr. O'Brien, at Clievmoor. He knows something of Mrs. Burleigh, I believe. Now my boys, let us but stick to our flag," continued Hugh Sanders, triumphantly, "and the victory is ours. Hip—hip—hurrah!"

The news, by the gentlemen's instrumentality speedily reached the enemy's camp.

"Heiresses! Heiresses!" ejaculated Tommie, "and beautiful. Oh! I reckon some of us will suffer. I fancy we've gone a little too far, eh, girls? The question is, can we recover the ground we've lost? I met Mrs. Moore as I came here. She says she shall call on them at once."

"She must be in a hurry," said Rose Gray, contemptuously.

"Well, she is not, dear. It's her son, Percy, who wants to get the start of the other fellows."

"Mercenary creature," cried Rose, tossing her head, but losing color. She had but the smallest dowry.

"Well, my dear, he wasn't mercenary when he laid his heart at your feet," said Tommie. "You might have been Mrs. Moore by now had you liked."

"It was not my fault," retorted Rose, irately. "It's this absurd quarrel—"

"Now no bickering," put in Kate Greville. "It's mean, petty, and woman like; not, of course advanced woman."

"Bother the advanced woman," murmured Rose, sotto voce.

"We have more courage, surely, than to cry lost! lost! lost! at the shadow of a prospective enemy. I can only say, young ladies, these people arrive on Saturday. That gives you two days. My advice is, make the best use you can of them."

That afternoon Tommie, walking down a lane perceived Archie Boyne crossing a field to a stile that came on to it. Whereupon Tommie deliberately drew off her glove, and with a stout thorn spine deeply scratched her white wrist and hand, at the same time uttering a cry of pain.

Of course, as she had intended, the gentleman heard and recognized the tones. In a second, or two at the most, he was by her side, his countenance full of concern.

"Whatever is the matter, Miss Tommy?" he asked. "Are you much hurt?"

"Oh, it's nothing. Only a scratch," replied Tommie, smiling, and extending her wrist.

"Only. Good heavens! it's fearful. Let me tie your handkerchief round it for you."

This was a very delicate operation, requiring particularly slow treatment. During it Archie Boyne said:

"Ah, Tommie, if I could but have saved you this, as I would gladly from any suffering, little or big."

"Oh, nonsense," laughed Tommie. "One must suffer sometimes."

"Don't I know it? How you have made me suffer, Tommie, lately. I trust you don't know how much. That would be too cruel, but I suppose I may abandon all hope of ever calling you—wife?"

"I shall never call any man husband, Archie," replied Tommie, looking down, "if it's not you."

"Tommie!"

Well, what followed may be left to imagination.

"You'll come to tennis this afternoon?" asked Tommie, a quarter of an hour later.

"Yes, darling."

"And you'll bring some of the others, eh? You'll bring Hugh?"

"Well, that's if he'll come. He appears quite excited about the new arrivals, the heiresses—you know."

"What!" cried Tommie. "And he in love with Kate, and knowing she loves him?"

"Oh, come, Tommie! As to her love for him, she has treated him quite too atrociously, you know."

"There, Archie, you bring him, and I'm speaking as an oracle, let bygones be bygones. Just come all of you, and we will be there; and say nothing of the past, as if, you understand, nothing had happened. Archie dear!" a tender pressure on his arm, "we are happy, let us conspire to make our friends happy, also."

That afternoon the tennis courts had a full complement of players, and no less than three more to the fair enemy capitulated, uttering the momentous "Yes."

Yet there was one thing which perplexed Tommie. Having called at the rectory on her way home, as she was leaving by the gate shadowed by chestnuts, those three to whom the "yes" had been said passed by, evidently, as they should have been, in the highest spirit. Drawing back, not to be seen, she caught these words:

"By the renowned Bradshaw, old fellows, we've done it at last, and grasped the victory," exclaimed one.

"Yes, indeed; thanks to Hugh Sanders. It was a capital lead."

What did they mean?

The new tenants of Abbey for arrived late on the Saturday. The question was, would they appear at church on the morrow? Curiosity was on tiptoe.

It was a gloomy morning, threatening rain, but the sacred edifice was crowded. Not here yet Would the houris come?

The organ had just commenced, when every eye was directed to the western door. Entering therein were two ladies, tall, angular, with figures which, in past days, might have been described as "a yard of pump-water," sharp of feature, rigid of expression, and in years—well, in years—let it be said, somewhere between forty-five and sixty.

Heiresses, yes; but oh! where were the houris?

Kate turned her flashing eyes to a certain pew where a gentleman was apparently intent upon finding the day's lessons—apparently, for his shoulders heaved convulsively, while sounds issued from his chest, as though he were choking.

"Tommie," whispered Kate, when they knelt on their hassocks, "we have been sold."

"So it appears," responded Tommie, quivering with laughter. "Never mind; all is fair in love and war. When Cupid strikes, we women must do the same as the masters when the laborers strike."

"What is that?"

"Make the best of it."

THE END.

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