

THE EVENING NEWS.

Monday, April 29, 1872.

WON AND LOST.

[CONTINUED.]

"That's what I want," said he, "and they shall have it." Under these circumstances, Phil's honest acknowledgment that he had nothing to offer in the way of settlement was no bar to his prospects. His handsome face, his kindly manner, and the fact that he was a son of a good man, won Mr. Richley's heart, and the acute old tradesman read his character truly. If he had no very strong points about him, at least he had no very weak ones. His address and voice were all of the negative order, except that he possessed a splendid temper.

The paternal consent and blessing were soon given, and then appeared on the scene Mrs. Richley, who, duly prompted by her daughter, added her blessings and congratulations, till Phil felt he could do no less than kiss his bride-elect, in a most calm and decorous way, in full view (as was proper) of her loving parents.

Moreover, he was invited to take up his abode there for the remaining fortnight of his leave; and in a good or evil hour, as it may seem to each individual reader, he accepted. The luxurious establishment in Marquis square suited not only Phil's notions of comfort better than his three floor bed-room, but his club dinner, but also the state of his pockets. Room and dinner were gratis in Marquis square; there was a great point. All went well for a few days, till the arrival of some country cousins, who, being newly married, expected to see every couple of lovers as demonstrative as they were themselves; Phil did not do enough kissing to please them; he did not squeeze his fair one's hand in corners; and he made himself generally agreeable without seeking perpetual tete-a-tetes with his fiancée.

"My dear Theodora," observed Mrs. Richley one evening, on their return from the opera, "I suppose it is not the fashion, but really, now, if my William in our country days had not put his arm round my waist as we drove in the carriage, and in the dark, too, I should have been seriously seeking perpetual tete-a-tetes with his fiancée."

Another time it was, "Dearest, how very odd that Captain Kerr never seems to care to be alone with you. My William could not bear a third person in the room!"

Theodora might have disregarded this, but her own sense told her that Phil was not a devoted lover, and though the congratulations of the Kerr family had been most enthusiastic, though they had mentally adopted Theodora and her thirty thousand as a daughter and sister, and their aristocratic hearts, yet there were sundry outlying members who preserved the right to opinions of their own, and would have preferred Phil's bride being considerably younger and very much prettier, even if her pockets were not so well lined.

Now this harrow against the right divine of gold Theodora secretly resented, and again she had visions of the "Lionel Lincoln" and thought that "Lionel Lincoln" sounded quite as well as, or better than, the "Hon. Mrs. Kerr." In short, having landed her fish Theodora was getting weary of it.

The pleasure to her was in the catching, not the keeping, and Phil was far too secure and careless to please her.

Courteous and gentlemanly he could not fail to be, but he was no actor. He could not assume a virtue he had not; and he could not look impassioned, and he could not speak nobly, when he was feeling peculiarly cool and indifferent.

So the time went on, till on the morning that he was to leave, it was Mrs. not Miss Richley, who greeted him on his entrance to the library.

"It is a very painful task, Captain Kerr, that is imposed upon me, but I have no alternative," she began, opening her eyes, "I cannot control my daughter's feelings; indeed, in this instance, I coincide in them; so does her father. We all feel that there does not exist between you the love which alone can render marriage a state of blessing, and it is better at once to end this hastily formed engagement."

Phil stared, but said nothing. Mrs. Richley, having applied a filmy pocket-handkerchief to her eyes, went on: "Do not answer me, Captain Kerr," (Phil, by the way, had not attempted it); "this decision is final; yet, as an interview with my daughter would be very painful to her, and useless to yourself, I must beg you will at once leave the house without saying a word."

"What could I say?" A certain sense of relief, too, flashed over his mind. He simply bowed, expressed his thanks for the hospitality he had received, his regret at the sudden and, he must observe, unexplained termination of his engagement, and requested that a cab might be called to transport himself and his portmanteau to the club.

So ended Phil's dream of an heiress. Yet that heartless young man was actually heard to whisper "A le o cara!" as he drove away from the house, and Mrs. Richley would have felt herself more than ever justified had she read his thoughts: "Free, even if a beggar. Heed not, I may think of you lovingly now."

Phil did not lament when he found next morning that sudden orders had come for the regiment to sail for Canada.

One week later and he was on board the troop-ship as it steamed down the Mersey, and the band struck up "The Girl I'm Behind Me." A deaf, sweet face seemed to hover before him with bright, soft eyes, not cast up and down sideways like Theodora's pale, gray orbs, but yet with a smile of a beautiful adoration as pure and true as ever throbbled in the heart of a gently-born English maiden.

Yes, the hackneyed old tune carried his thoughts away to a bygone time and a southern land, and Phil Kerr came to the conclusion that he was, as he himself would have expressed it, "a brute," and that he had been "a big fool."

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