

# Beautiful Jean.

IN TWO INSTALMENTS.

To give her her due, it must be admitted that she was touched—that even her vain, worldly heart felt a little compunction when she saw how deep his wound had gone.

Probably he had never looked handsomer or nobler in his life than when he leaned towards her in the moonlight, his face pale but lighted up with a wonderful earnestness, his eyes aglow with love, his head bare, a light wind blowing the thick masses of hair from off his broad manly brow.

At that moment Clare Beverly wished one of the purest wishes of her life.

She wished it had been in her power to put her arm round that young man's neck, to pillow her head on his madly throbbing bosom, and to accept him as her husband.

Only one moment the softened mood lasted.

Then she was her worldly self again. 'Mr. Morton, I am so sorry,' she faltered, 'so very, very sorry.'

'You don't mean that you can't care for me?' cried Phil, in a very agony of fear. 'Oh, Clare—Clare, darling, don't—don't say that!'

'No, I don't say that. I like you very much, Mr. Morton, but it is only as a friend. I can never be anything else to you.'

'But if you like me even a little, you might get to love in time. I am certain I could teach you to love me; I would try so hard. Oh! don't—don't say I mustn't hope!'

'But, indeed, I must say it, Mr. Morton. What you wish can never be.' She paused a moment, then let the full blow fall upon his devoted head. 'I—I am engaged to Sir Joseph Hartley. We are to be married in September.'

Phil sprang to his feet, and stood as if turned to stone.

He was white to the lips now.

His heart seemed almost to have stopped its beating.

For a moment he could not get his breath.

'Why didn't you tell me this before?' he demanded, as soon as he could speak.

His manner was very stern; it almost frightened her.

She had never seen anyone look at her with such stern accusing eyes before.

'I—I thought you knew. Didn't my uncle tell you?'

Little liar!

She knew that she herself had begged her uncle never to name the engagement at Braeside.

Phil stood for several moments in silence, his face growing whiter and whiter, his eyes gleaming, his every feature set and rigid.

For those first few moments he seemed simply stunned.

Then the avalanche of his wrath gathered force and fell.

He took a step towards her.

He looked full into her face in the moonlight, and his own was sternly and bitterly expressive of contempt.

'You knew I didn't know! You knew I never dreamed or suspected such a thing. If I had dreamed it, should I have spoken to you of love? I am an honest man, even if you are not an honest woman.'

At that stern, blunt speech she rose to her feet, trembling, and even crying a little, protesting that she had never been so spoken to in her life before.

But he did not melt into pity.

His own wrongs maddened him.

He saw clearly now that she had deliberately led him on to love her because his love was in essence to her vanity.

He could not forgive her.

He was wild with wounded love and pride.

'You are as false as you are fair,' he said in a low, passionate voice. 'You know you have led me on. You know you have done everything in your power to make me love you. And you have purposely concealed your engagement. You are a coquette—a being without a conscience and without a heart. I have done with you. I hope I shall never take your hand again.'

He strode away, and left her—half mad with misery, reckless, despairing.

At five and twenty the passions are so strong and disappointments and disillusionments are so hard and bitter.

He wandered about the fields and lanes until nearly midnight, then went home, hoping to find everyone gone to bed.

Jean, however, was sitting up for him with one of the maids.

She came out into the hall to meet him, and when she saw his pale face haggard eyes she knew what had happened, it indeed she did not know it two hours earlier when Clare had come in, looking strangely subdued and a little paler than usual.

Jean knew nothing of Clare's engagement to Sir Joseph Hartley, but she was certain Phil had declared his love to night, and that he had been rejected.

'Aren't you well, Phil?' she asked gently, looking up into his face with such tender, loving sympathy in the depths of her clear hazel eyes.

'I have a wretched headache. I have been trying to walk it off, but nothing but a night's sleep will do it any good. Good night, Jean. I'm sorry to have kept you up so late.'

'That didn't matter at all. But I'm sorry your head aches—and when she named his head she meant his heart. Good night, Phil.'

He went up the stair slowly and heavily

like one in pain.

She stood at the foot, and watched him with an aching heart; and her grief was for his pain, rather than for her own.

The next morning, after looking at his letters, Phil announced that he should be obliged to hurry back to town.

He drove to the railway station before Clare came down to breakfast, and so they did not meet again.

## CHAPTER V.

PHIL HEARS SOME NEWS.

A little before Christmas, Phil sat in his chambers in London, smoking his pipe and he had never been down to the farm since he had left it so hurriedly in the summer.

It had too many painful associations; and, moreover, he felt he could not bear to meet the gaze of Jean's clear, steady eyes.

That she knew of his hopeless passion for Clare, he felt certain; it had been hidden from his father, but not from her.

Clare was Lady Hartley now.

He had read accounts of the wedding in fashionable journals, and had smiled bitterly at his own folly in dreaming that a girl who could become the wife of a baronet, would ever have stooped to mate with a plain farmer's son, a young, struggling doctor, who had still to make his name in the world.

Now, as he sat beside his fire, gazing somewhat moodily at the embers, he was thinking of Clare, and assuring himself that his love for her was dead at last.

He had fought it fiercely, perseveringly, and had conquered it.

This had not been done in a day.

Her witching beauty had dominated his senses even after he knew her to be all unworthy.

A man does not fall in love so madly as he had done, and pass from love into indifference either soon or easily.

It had taken him fully three months to accomplish it, and he had aged three years in the struggle.

But it was accomplished, and he could say, calmly and sincerely, in the words of Tennyson—

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a mouldered string?

I am ashamed thro' all my nature to have loved so slight a thing!

His musings were interrupted by a smart tap at the door, followed by the entrance of a friend.

'Hullo, Morton. Where do you think I've come from?' was the newcomer's greeting.

'Where?' asked Phil laconically.

'From Braeside Farm. Slept there last night.'

'You don't mean it, Dick?'

Phil was full of interest now.

His old home was very dear to him, and he longed for news of it.

Jean was his correspondent usually, but of late her letters had been few and far between, as well as very brief.

'True,' said Dick Edlin. 'I went down for three days' hunting, met your governor at the meet—what a splendid old fellow he is, Phil!—and he made me go and spend the night at the farm.'

Then of course you saw my cousin?'

'Rather! My eye, Phil! she's grown into a lovely woman. I don't wonder she's making such a stunning match.'

'Match!' exclaimed Phil, starting to his feet in his excitement, and turning pale. What do you mean, Dick? You don't mean to say my cousin Jean is going to be married?'

'Why, I thought you knew. I beg your pardon if I've been putting my foot in it. I'm sure I thought you knew.'

'I haven't heard from Braeside lately,' said Phil, still looking strangely white.

'Tell me just what you heard, Dick, there's a good fellow.'

'Why, there's a gentleman paying your cousin attentions—he's there every day almost; and he is a gentleman, mind you, none of your half and half sort.'

'Do I know him?' broke forth Phil impatiently.

'I don't think so. He has gone into the neighbourhood recently; has taken a hunting-box a few miles away from the farm. His name is Templeton. Do you know him?'

Phil shook his head; somehow he couldn't speak just then.

'Well, he is paying Miss Emerson attentions; and everybody says it will end in a match. I wonder your governor hasn't told you.'

'He never writes to me himself, said Phil lamely. 'I am going down, though, in a day or two, and then I suppose I shall hear all about it.'

When his friend had gone, he sat down again by the fire, and resumed his musing.

Dick Edlin's news had come as a shock to him—a heavy blow.

Ever since he had cured himself of his love for Clare, his mind had dwelt fondly on the possibility of a renewal of his old sweet intercourse with Jean.

He remembered how truly he had loved her.

Her image was perpetually in his mind. It seemed to him that he should never know happiness again unless he could make a full confession of his folly to Jean, hear from her dear lips that she forgave him, and see in her sweet eyes a look that might embolden him to ask her to be his

wife.

—a hunting man—exclaim in jovial tones.

'Well, Templeton, we'd a glorious run yesterday, and no mistake. The best of the season, I should say.'

Phil started as though he had been shot.

Templeton! That was the name of Jean's supposed wooer.

Curious that Fate should throw him in his way.

He met the gentleman face to face, and was forced to admit, with a sickening sense of dread, that he was a man whom any girl might have found it easy to love.

Not very young, nearer forty than thirty apparently, for his dark hair was silvering at the temples, and there was more than

Such having been his frame of mind for some weeks past, it may be imagined how he felt under Dick Edlin's news.

He was determined to know the truth; he could not bear uncertainty; if Jean were forever lost to him, he would know it; and if she were not so lost, then—so he told himself with almost dogged resolution—then he would win her if such winning could be accomplished by the tender assiduity of mortal man.

He took the first train in the morning, and reached a railway junction some twenty miles from Braeside about noon.

He had to change trains there and as he waited on the platform he heard someone one line across his handsome brow.

But his figure was erect and stately; his dark grey eyes held a kindly look such as women love, and his whole bearing was unmistakably that of a man of birth and breeding.

To make assurance doubly sure, Phil, as soon as the gentleman had passed out of hearing, asked a railway official if he knew who he was.

'Yes, sir, to be sure,' was the prompt reply. 'Mr. Templeton, of Heather Lodge.'

That was enough.

It was the Mr. Templeton.

It only remained now to be seen whether or not he was Jean's suitor, and whether, even if he was—Phil hoped against hope in his desperation—Jean might intend to refuse him.

He was feverishly anxious to reach the farm.

He told himself that he had but to see Jean alone for a single minute, and he should know the truth.

He knew so well every expression of her dear face.

Those clear, sweet hazel eyes would reveal her heart's secret in a moment.

But just as he was inwardly anathematizing the shocking slowness of their rate of travelling, the train came to a full stop with a bumping and a crashing which, even without the shrieks of mingled pain and terror which rang out shrilly on the still wintry air, convinced him there had been an accident.

He was unbent—almost unshaken.

He pulled himself together, and was out of the train in a moment, cool and collected, and only anxious to be of use in alleviating the pains of the sufferers.

Fortunately there were no very serious injuries.

A few broken bones and some contusions were the sum total of them.

But even these called for prompt surgical aid, and Phil—who had as tender a heart as ever beat in a young man's bosom—thanked Heaven most devoutly that he had been in the train.

For fully a couple of hours he was kept so busy that the perspiration streamed down his face in spite of the wintry weather and he had no time to think of Jean and Mr. Templeton; but when the last bandage had been adjusted, his own personal anxieties returned and he was eager enough to step into the train again and hasten onwards to Braeside Farm.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when he came into sight of it.

The sun had set; but there was still a fine red glow in the western heavens.

Phil had just entered the big, old-fashioned garden, and was about to take the nearest cut through the shrubbery, when the sound of voices quite close at hand—one of them the voice of a stranger—made him start and pause.

Looking past the intervening screen of a tall laurel tree, he saw Jean leaning on the arm of someone whom, even in that dim light, he at once recognized as Mr. Templeton.

She was speaking in low, earnest tones, and he was looking down into her face with tender interest.

When she ceased speaking, he gathered her in his arms, and pressed his lips to hers.

Poor Phil! He waited to see and hear no more.

His heart felt like lead within his bosom; he knew that his lips were cold, and that he must be ghastly pale.

Quietly he turned, and walked out of his father's grounds, and back to the railway station.

Not for all the world would he have gone into the house, and met Jean and her lover.

Since she was lost to him, it was better that he could see her no more.

Rapidly a scheme passed through his mind.

Yesterday he had been offered the post of surgeon on board a sailing vessel bound for Australia.

He would accept the appointment; the vessel sailed in less than a week.

It would carry him far away from England—a place which now held for him nothing but sad and bitter memories.

Not that he reproached Jean.

Towards her there was no scrap of bitterness.

He told himself over and over again that he was unworthy of her, and that he deserved to lose her for having suffered his heart to be touched by such a one as Clare.

'I have been a fool!' he groaned as he tossed restlessly in bed that night. 'A mad, blind fool! But it she knew how I love her, she would pity me. She was always so sweet and noble. My bonny, bonny Jean!'

And, despite the fact that he was a

grown man of five and twenty, his pillow was wet with his tears.

He a hered to his resolution.

He accepted the post on the ship bound for the Antipodes, wrote at the last moment to his father, explaining that his departure was so hurried that he had not time to go down to Braeside to bid them good-bye, and to Jean, telling her he had heard of her engagement, and wished her every happiness.

Then, with an aching heart, he left his native land.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE WIDOWED LADY HARTLEY.

Again the summer roses were blowing.

In a pretty London drawing-room Lady Hartley was sitting by the open window, looking out upon Hyde Park.

She was as radiantly fair as she had been as Clare Beverly.

But her dress now was scarcely so much in harmony with her beauty; for she wore a robe of deepest black; without so much as one scrap of color, and with not a ribbon or a flower to lighten its sombreness.

Her dress betokened her condition.

She was a widow.

Sir Joseph had died within three months of their marriage.

He had behaved very generously to his young bride; had left her an ample income and had not hampered it with restrictions as to her not marrying again.

This afternoon, in the seventh month of her widowhood, Clare was thinking of a second marriage with an earnestness such as she bestowed on few subjects, and yet with a soft, dreamy light in her lovely eyes which showed that her thoughts were entirely happy ones.

An hour ago she had been told that Philip Morton was back in England. that he had arrived yesterday, and that a medical friend of hers, who was also an intimate friend of his, had asked him to dine with him that evening.

It was Dr. Mabberley's wife, who had told Clare this, and as Dr. Mabberley's character was to be one of her very dearest friends, it was easy enough to get herself invited to the dinner party that evening.

Her widowhood had never kept her in very strict seclusion; and, indeed, in these few de-siccle days, young widows are permitted to go anywhere when the sixth month of their widowhood is passed.

Now, as she sat in her own drawing-room, she was recalling those delicious weeks spent at Braeside Farm.

She recalled Phil's manly form, and pleasant, handsome face.

How well he had loved her!

How sweet it had been to see his blue eyes looking into her with such adoring love; how pleasant to know that his strong hand trembled whenever it touched hers—that his voice faltered with emotion when it breathed her name.

Such a love as that was indeed worth having.

It was worth sacrificing something for. She felt now as though it was the one great good of life, and as though all other things were of little worth beside it.

True, his love had seemed to turn into scorn; he had said he would never willingly take her hand again.

But that mood would pass; nay, no doubt it had passed already.

She could not believe that he would resist her overtures if she showed him she wished to be forgiven.

When the evening came, she dressed herself with even more than her usual care and very lovely she looked in her black robes with her neck and shoulders pearly white against them, and a jet ornament in her pale-golden hair.

She was in Dr. Mabberley's drawing-room when Phil was announced.

She stole a glance at him from beneath her eyelids, and saw he looked older, and that he was deeply bronzed.

She was sitting in the shade, and he did not see her until his hostess said—

'I believe you know Lady Hartley, Doctor Morton?'

It was an anxious moment.

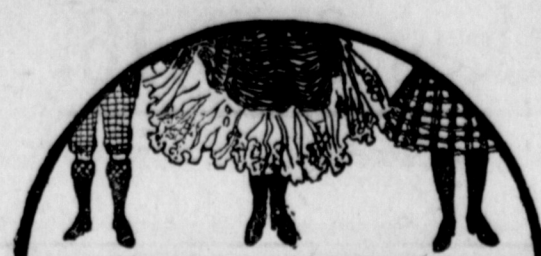
Clare drew her breath sharply.

Would he take her hand, or would he simply bow in cold disdain?

She sat quite still, her hands lying in her lap, her eyelids quivering.

Phil changed colour—a swift crimson overspread the brownness of his cheek, then retreated as suddenly as it had come, leaving him rather pale.

He held out his hand, however, saying in a voice of grave courtesy, and with perfect composure—



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