

The Gentleman Ranker.

IN TWO INSTALMENTS.

CHAPTER I.

'Do you think she really means to have him?' said Miss Grey to her companion, a tall, military-looking man, of fine appearance, whose eyes followed the two figures. 'she' and 'him,' as they disappeared round the bend of a path leading to the shabby.

He shrugged his shoulders. 'Doubtful,' he said. 'You see the difference.'

'Well, he's a doctor's son! And she the daughter of Lord Ray. She will have no fortune. He has nothing but what his brain or his hands can make.'

'Yet she encourages him,' said Miss Grey.

'He evidently thinks that his attentions are not unwelcome. It doesn't follow that she'll have him, though, when the crucial question comes to be put,' replied the Colonel dryly. 'If he's wise, he'll take it that she likes homage from such a handsome young fellow as himself perhaps might do more than like him if he had ten thousand pounds a year; but as it is—'

'But, uncle,' here put in a soft young voice, at sound of which Colonel Chevenix turned immediately, with a relaxing of the somewhat stern lines of his face, to the very pretty, slender, rather unformed girl, of perhaps sixteen, who hitherto had stood a silent listener beside him. 'Miss Ray is well off, isn't she? She could marry a poor man, surely, if she liked?'

The colonel laughed. 'A very Arcadian way of looking at things,' said he. 'She won't have much, you know, and must marry money, my child. Great people like to make great matches for their daughters, too. Lord Ray would be dead against young Delmar, of course, and not without reason, because he's not made his way yet, and people can't live on love nowadays.'

'I don't think they ever could, colonel,' observed Miss Grey, smiling.

'But then,' said Beryl Chevenix decidedly, 'if Miss Ray isn't going to marry him, she oughtn't to let him think she is.'

The colonel laughed. 'It's a way some girls have, my dear,' said he, patting her shoulder; 'you won't when you grow up.'

'Oh, no, indeed!' said the girl, earnestly; 'it seems so cruel.'

Whereat the colonel's eyes grew soft. Miss Grey, perhaps to draw her out, said, half smiling—

'Very pretty girls have great temptations that way, Beryl—their vanity is flattered, the love of power, which every woman likes in one way or the other, is appealed to.'

'But I am safe from the first temptation, anyway,' said Beryl ingenuously, and laughing.

The colonel laughed, too, and curled his grey moustache, while Miss Grey also laughed.

'Silly little girl!' said she, shaking her head. 'Wait awhile, we shall see about that.'

'Pretty or plain, my Beryl will never make a plaything of a man's heart,' said the colonel stoutly.

'Perhaps we are wrong,' suggested gentle Beryl, with a graceful glance at her uncle.

Was Lilith Ray only amusing herself with the devotion that was laid at her feet. She was a beauty—an acknowledged beauty—and was said to have turned more heads in town than any other girl of the season.

She was but nineteen, and Max Delmar was twenty two.

They had met only in the country, where Max was treading his heart out in the vain attempt to study for a doctor.

His father held all the practice around in the country, and was a clever man much looked up to, and had made up his mind that his son should follow in his footsteps, and take over the practice when the elder man retired.

He was not a rich man, not even well off, though he kept up a good establishment and mixed a good deal in society.

He had not a penny saved, nor could he send his son to London to study when the latter was through Oxford.

He was supposed to study with his father, but he detested everything connected with surgery, and spent half his time at Temple R. Y., and getting lathoms deep in love with Lilith.

His passion was for the Army, but Mr. Delmar would not hear of it.

He was not rich enough to give his son the necessary education, he said; and after all, was it an idle, do nothing life unless you happen to be on active service, and you couldn't live in a good regiment without an allowance besides your pay.

'No, he'd have none of it; and Max had perforce, to yield.

He was an immense favorite with everybody, and Lord Ray a porous noodle who saw no further his nose, was very pleased to have the young man come in to help him with the catalogues of his library, and so on.

His sister, who chaperoned Lilith and kept the house, never dreamed that Max Delmar would lift his eyes to the daughter of Lord Ray, and had quite other views for her niece, and so the two young people went on serenely love making without interference from anyone.

Max was undeterred by the fear of being called a fortune hunter, since the young

lady would have next to nothing; and 'his Lilith' would never dream of marrying just for wealth, nor would she obey anyone who told her she must do this thing.

Max Delmar was of the ardent, romantic and enthusiastic disposition which exalts all its worshippers; and with him love was worship.

He had at this time but little knowledge of the world, and to a great extent endowed those he loved with all his own high aims and exalted views.

In point of fact he was still half a boy, and Lilith Ray was very much a woman, and had her eyes pretty wide open to the main chance.

She took Max's worship as a tribute to her beauty and her goodness, and, had she been free to do so, would have preferred taking him to any other man she knew.

In fact she was really very fond of her handsome lover, for lover he was, though not declared.

But she loved fine houses, and horses and carriages, and diamonds and furs, position, ease, adulation—much more than a heart of gold, allied with brains and beauty.

She was happy in Delmar's devotion, very happy; but—

Perhaps some such thoughts as these were passing through her mind as she strolled on under the green trees, by moss grown paths, to the river, her delicate muslins and silks trailing softly behind her, her bright hued sunshade, with its ripples of foamy chiffon, making a spot of colour, delicious amid all the greenery around.

She was lovely—a "dream"—graceful, slender of figure, purest pink and white her skin—owing nothing to art—threads of gold her hair, all Nature's weaving, eyes of 'Heaven's own blue,' eyes that surfaced a well of truth, and passion, and poetry.

When Max looked into their depths, that was what he saw, but perhaps he mirrored his own soul in them.

And the tall, erect form that moved easily beside her, seemed to companion so aptly her lithe grace.

The strength in his clear-cut outlines of cheek and chin, the resolute set of the finely moulded mouth, the fire and flash that lay under the softness of his dark eyes, seemed all the complement of the girl's feminine beauty.

Alas! Lilith could have cried the blue out of her lovely eyes sometimes, that he had not ten thousand a year, or even five!

She could have managed with that even, for his sake.

But she didn't cry her eyes out; she was very happy just now.

'Come on the river,' Max was saying in that soft tone which is a homage of itself. 'It looks so lovely; see the gold and green on the water; the skiff lies there, as if she wanted to bear us away. Do come!'

'Oh, but we mustn't be away so long,' answered Lilith. 'What will everybody say?'

'What does it matter? At a garden party people scatter about as they like. Young Finch and Miss Trent went off to the ruins for an hour.'

'Ah, but—with an arch glance—they're engaged! However, such old friends as you and I may disregard Mrs. Grundy so far,' said Lilith rather quickly, as Delmar opened his lips to speak. 'Come, then!'

She had no idea of letting things come to a crisis.

They were very pleasant as they were, and a declaration would put an end to everything.

Delmar was too passionate and hot-blooded to take things quietly, and she didn't want to lose her devoted cavalier—at any rate, not till someone came who was eligible to supply his place.

But there was a look in his eyes which told Lilith that he would not be put off for very much longer.

However, she might be able to keep him on her own terms—put him off, give him hope, so that he wouldn't rush off in a hurry and do something rash.

Though it wouldn't be had, thought Lilith, with her hand trailing in the water, to have a man do something desperate for your sake—not suicide, of course, or anything like that, but to go off to South Africa, or to shoot in the Rockies, or to travel in Tibet, or volunteer for plague work—there was always plague in Hong Kong, or Bombay, or somewhere.

Still, it was much nicer to have this handsome lover at her feet, so long as he did not want anything more than she could give.

Marry a doctor's son, without any position or money!

The idea was really preposterous!

CHAPTER II.

Two days later Max Delmar stood, pale, with compressed lips, and eyes, in which burnt the fire of passion and despair, before Lilith Ray.

She was picking a flower to pieces; her eyes—innocent blue—half reproachful, were turned for a moment on his face, which frightened her somewhat, and she glanced up and down the wood path in which they two were alone.

'And this,' the man said low and hoarsely, 'this is your only answer?'

'What else can it be?' she returned. 'You are unreasonable, and—'

'Unreasonable!' he broke in almost roughly. 'Is it 'unreasonable' to think that a woman means more than to amuse herself when she lets a man do as I have done? Is it 'unreasonable' to suppose that a girl can have some truth and honor in her? You led me on to think that I might win your love, and when I ask it of you, you tell me calmly, 'Oh! I meant nothing; I thought you meant nothing.' If you did not care for me, why did you let me come about you day after day, look, speak, act the lover to you? Why, you have let me kiss your hand, you have seen me kiss the flower you gave me, and still you 'thought I meant nothing.' Do you usually let men treat you with such lovers' homage? A woman has a hundred ways of showing a man she does not care for him as a lover.'

'I do care for you Max, in a way,' said the girl plaintively, as he broke off in the passionate rush of words. 'Indeed, I like you awfully, and—perhaps— But there is no use in thinking of such nonsense,' Lilith added, in her most sensible manner. 'My dear boy, how can two people marry on nothing?'

'If you loved me, you would be willing to wait a few years. Are we not both young enough to wait? For you I would wait and wait—'

'Till we both got tired of a long engagement,' interrupted Lilith somewhat flippantly, 'I've no taste for that sort of thing. And my people look for me to make a good marriage. You know very well I shall have nothing, and what prospects have you? or position or—family?'

'My blood is as good as yours—my lineage as ancient as honorable,' Delmar said with a flush. 'But all this you know! Why play with me as you have done?'

'Oh, well, of course—you see,' said Lilith, smiling. 'I couldn't suppose that you ever dreamt of anything serious! Of course I never thought you would take it in this way. Naturally, I like homage and admiration, and all that a young and—well, not unattractive girl in her first season likes. I do think you are very hard on me, Max, and—very cruel!' putting her handkerchief to her eyes. 'Can't we still be friends? I—I—wouldn't remember the—horrid things you've said, and—'

'You would forgive me?' he said. 'You would like everything to go on just as it is or was; you would like a man to be at your feet, to fetch and carry, and be supremely delighted with the reward of a flower, a kind word, a hand given to kiss. And this man, so honored, could retire gracefully whenever the rich suitor came and stepped into his place. By Heaven!' he cried, through his teeth, 'do you think I am a bound? I am hot blooded, and I have the passion of the south in my veins I must be lover and husband, or—nothing not even friend! If you send me from you I go—at once and forever.'

Lilith was crying in earnest now, for she saw that, in truth, her fiery lover was not to be satisfied with the position she was minded to assign him.

And he looked so handsome, and so stern. Oh! it had only been rich!

'I can't go against my people,' she murmured weakly, 'and it's no good, Max; I'm not made for a poor man's wife. You'd find it out. And surely a girl has a free choice!'

'She has a free choice to marry whom she likes,' answered Delmar sternly. 'She has no right to lead a man on to think she loves him enough to give up the stupid baubles that can never satisfy a soul, and then break his heart. But you have no soul! Your tears don't move me; they are not for me, but for yourself. I am going. You need no escort in this wood. Good-bye.'

He waited for no more, but strode away through the vista of trees, leaving Lilith weeping; but not too much, and she very soon dried her eyes and turned to go back towards Temple Ray.

'So that is ended,' she thought, with a little sigh. 'Poor fellow! How hardy he takes things! And how unreasonable and selfish men are! What will he do, I wonder? I really am very fond of him, and, if he had money, I certainly should have thought about him. But he is very unkind and imperious! Oh, dear! what is a girl to do who has no money and must marry well? Fancy me in a poky house or flat, with no maid, and nothing but cabs to drive in! Poor dear Max! Men are so selfish!'

Lilith was rather depressed that evening, and missed Max dreadfully, though she was not going to show this to anyone.

Lord Ray asked what had become of young Delmar, and Lilith answered that she did not know.

But everyone in and around Temple Ray knew the next day, that Max Delmar had left his father's house, and taking train for Rayminster.

One of the servants at Dr. Delmar's said there had been a 'row' between father and son, and that the doctor had been heard to say 'if you commit any such folly you leave my house for ever.'

And the son had made no answer but quitted the room, told the man servant to pack a few things, and had gone out.

A porter at the station supplied the information that young Mr. Delmar had taken a ticket for the town named, twenty miles distant.

'He's gone to see Colonel Chevenix,' said Lord Ray. 'I don't fancy he's there though. Wasn't his troop moved to York

Points to Remember.

... IF YOU BUY...

A Singer Sewing-Machine

YOU will receive careful instruction from a competent teacher at your home.

YOU get an up-to-date model, not some ancient type cheaply made to deceive the public. We make but one grade, acknowledged the world over as being the best; nothing poorer is good enough to carry our name and trade-mark.

YOU will be dealing with the leading sewing-machine manufacturers in the world, having an unequalled experience and an unrivaled reputation—the strongest guarantee of excellence. Singer machines are sold only by our employees; they cannot be obtained through dealers or department stores totally unable to render the service specified above, and whose guarantee is therefore worthless.

Factory in Montreal. Offices all over the Dominion. You can always find us.

DELIVERED AT YOUR DOOR FOR FREE TRIAL. SOLD ON EASY PAYMENTS. OLD MACHINES EXCHANGED.

The Singer Manufacturing Co.

or somewhere?'

Lilith thought that was so, but was not sure.

In a week or two it became known for certain that Max Delmar and his father had quarrelled and that the young man was not going to return.

But as to where he went or what he was going to do, Dr. Delmar could not, or at any rate did not, vouchsafe any information.

CHAPTER III.

Colonel Chevenix, having returned from a somewhat protracted sick leave, was one day inspecting his men, among whom lately been drafted several newcomers from other troops.

As his eye ran along the line of stalwart well set up fellows, his face changed for a brief moment; his eyes, under their shaggy eyebrows, widened.

But he made no other sign of recognition, finished the inspection, and went off the ground.

A little later he sent for the captain of troop which he had been inspecting.

'We've some new faces, Captain Helstone,' he said.

'Yes, sir, the captain smiled; 'a gentleman ranker, one of them.'

'Oh, ah! Yes, I noticed him. Private Delmar, I think. What's the report of him?'

'A better man never was, sir. He enlisted at Rayminster over a year ago, and has never been in trouble once. Never infringes the slightest rule—hard worker, steady, and sober. Whatever brought him into the ranks, it wasn't drink.'

'That sounds good. How does he get on with the men and his superiors?'

'Very well, sir. Strangely enough, he's a great favorite with the men. Sergeant-major Floyd tells me he's very reserved, seems to know something about doctoring. All his spare time, he studies. I think he wants to work up for a commission, sir.'

'Poor lad! that's very difficult to get when one is out of active service,' said the colonel, with a half-sigh. 'Send him to me please, Captain Helstone. I know something of him.'

The captain retired, wondering within himself what Private Delmar's story was.

Private Delmar flushed to his forehead when told to go to the colonel, and bit his lip; but as he took his way to the officer's presence, he lifted his head and squared his shoulders.

Was he not the Queen's soldier, even if he was a ranker?

There was a certain grim sense of humor in the situation, which, somehow, tided him over the thorns of pride in appearing before Colonel Chevenix as a private.

How often had he dined at the same table with his chief, shaking hands with him, with Beryl, and with Miss Grey, who kept his house!

And here he was now, saluting respectfully, and standing like a statue, waiting to be spoken to.

For just a second, the colonel found it difficult to speak.

He knew pretty well what had driven young Delmar to this step, and it seemed to him so infinitely sad.

'Well, Delmar,' he said, after that fleeting second, getting up, and turning a little aside, 'I'm sorry to see you in this position.'

Delmar smiled, though his eyes drooped. 'It's an honorable profession, sir,' he said; 'I can serve my country in it.'

Colonel Chevenix looked pleased.

'Why, that's the right way to look at it,' he said more cheerfully. 'Still, for a gentleman to enter through the ranks is hard lines. How came it about? I don't want to pry into your affairs, Delmar, but I always took an interest in you, and thought you were making a great mistake. I mean—forgive me—you were taking brass for gold.'

'You are very good sir. I suppose I was a fool. But I had always wanted to go into the army; my father insisted that I should follow his profession, which I detested. I can climb up, I hope—I mean to.'

'Captain Helstone gives me the best accounts of you. By the way, you haven't changed your name,' said the colonel, smiling, 'like most gentleman-rankers.'

Delmar imperceptibly drew himself a little straighter; his dark eyes were lifted, clear and with a certain flash of pride in them.

'I have done nothing to disgrace my name, sir,' he said. 'As long as I bear myself as a gentleman in the ranks, I don't see anything to be ashamed of. I can do no more as an officer.'

The colonel's eyes beamed. He would like to have shaken hands with private Delmar.

'You'll do,' he said, with a nod; 'you're the stuff to be a credit to the service, whether as private or officer. I'll do all I can for you, but, as you know, that isn't much. I couldn't show favoritism, and I know—with a shrewd look, and a half smile—you're not the man to like it.'

Delmar smiled in return and saluted, taking this as dismissal.

At the door he half paused, hesitated, and then said—

'I hope, sir, Miss Grey and Miss Chevenix are well?'

'Thanks, Delmar; I'm glad to say, very well,' answered the colonel, and Delmar saluted again and retired.

Colonel Chevenix sighed when he was alone, and looked thoughtful.

'It won't hurt him, however,' he said to himself. 'By Jove! I'm not sure that that girl hasn't done him a service in throwing him over the way she did.'

He told Beryl that Max Delmar was in the ranks, and how well he was spoken of, and Beryl's beautiful eyes grew softer with the mist of tears, and her cheek flushed.

'We shall hear of him yet, uncle,' she said.

'I think we shall have a chance, my dear,' returned the colonel significantly. 'I rather fancy we shall go to India soon, and there's more field there for a man to get on better than here.'

And the colonel was right. Shortly after this, Delmar's regiment was ordered to India, whither Beryl and Miss Grey accompanied Colonel Chevenix.

CHAPTER IV.

A liveried servant stood by a dainty victoria awaiting the advent of his mistress, who was just coming out of a house where she had been calling.

She was beautiful, young, exquisitely dressed, but looked somewhat weary and disatisfied; yet surely Lilith, Lady Harwood, should have no cloud on her face—surely life had gone well with her?

Had she not married wealth and position and obtained all those things for which she had sold herself?

Was she not happily released, too, from such bondage as had to some extent diminished the value of her houses, and her carriages, and all her paraphernalia?

Was she not that freest of mortals, a young widow past her time of mourning, going into the world, free to marry again, if she liked, unbound by any considerations of wealth in her suitor?

Yet she looked anxious and weary. Perhaps she had not found the life into which she had stepped an equivalent for the heart she had put from her.

Perhaps she had cared more than she thought for the handsome 'boy,' as she had called him, who rushed away and enlisted because of her refusal of him.

She had not troubled to inquire about him all these years; she had had other things to think of, but now, since her husband's death, somehow she found herself dwelling on the remembrance of his devotion, wondering whether he had remembered her. It so, why—there was no impediment now!

Perhaps he was dead.

Lady Harwood was not interested in the newspapers generally, and had not read about the troubles on the North-west Frontier, nor of the later campaign in Egypt, else she might have seen the name of her once lover mentioned.

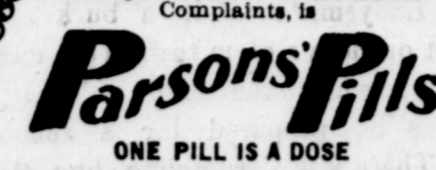
As she came easily down the steps, some newboys ran by shouting at the top of their shrill voices—

'Great victory—fall of Khartoum—great battle!'

She started, and into her beautiful eyes came a light.

(CONTINUED ON FIFTEENTH PAGE.)

The safest and surest cure known for BILIOUSNESS and SICK HEADACHE and for Constipation, all Liver and Bowel Complaints, is



ONE PILL IS A DOSE

They make new, rich blood, prevent and cure Skin Eruptions and Bleachings. Enclosed in glass vials.

Postpaid—25 cents a bottle; \$1.00 for six.

L.S. JOHNSON & COMPANY, Boston, Mass.

CANCER And Tumors cured to stay cured, at home; no knife, plaster or pain. For Canadian testimonials & 150-page book—free, write Dept. 11, MASON MEDICINE Co., 577 Sherbourne Street, Toronto Ontario.