HIS LITTLE WIFE:

IN TWO INSTALMENT-PART II.

to the truth, she filled him with anger and | tents fell out, and among them was the amazement.

That Richard Curtis, a mere private secretary, should have presumed to form an attachment to a baronet's niece, seemed to Sir Vane an unpardonable offence, only exceeded by Cicely's conduct in permitting

The young people walked away down the lane ere he had dedided how to act.

'I will speak to Cicely directly she comes home,' he fumed, riding on in a white heat of anger. 'I will insist on an explanation. That she should have granted this fellow, to her by a friend. Curtis, stolen interviews cuts me to the the look-out for a rich wife. He will learn my opinion of his unscrupulous conduct. Why, what has happened?'

Four men, carrying an improvised stretcher, and followed by a staggling crowd, distracted Sir Vane's thoughts.

He rode up to them. On the stretcher, his face white and drawn with pain, lay Julian Beaumont.

His horse, frightened by a passing automobile, had bolted, and thrown him, injuring his foot and shoulder. The farm-labourers were carrying him

home to the Abbey.

' My dear fellow, are you in much pain?' asked the baronet, full of solicitude.

'A good deal.' Julian torced a smile. ' It's enough to make one wish automobiles had never been invented. Will you be good enough, Sir Vane, to ride on ahead and prepare them for my arrival? I don't wish the mater to be unduly alarmed.

reached the Abbey, Sir Vane had informed | scorched him like molten lead. the Beaumonts of their son's accident.

Miss Holmes' was in the hall when the big footmen nelped to carry the sufferer into a room on the gruond floor.

Julian caught a glimpse of her white agonized face; then his mother bending over him, shut it out.

Poor little Nell! He pitied her, even in

It was hard that she dared not assert her right as his wife to nurse and tend him that she must stand back and look on, as a mere stranger might have done.

He had created the false situation himself, and the suffering fell, as usual, chiefly on the woman.

Two or three weeks elapsed ere Julian was able to leave the room hastily prepared for his reception.

His dislocated shoulder was set right long before he could put the badly injured | without his consent, wrung his heart. toot on the ground.

A trained nurse was sent for and Mrs.

Messages of condolence reached the injured man from all quarters.

He saw nothing of Nellie, though, during his enforced seclusion and Mrs. Beaumont did not once allude to her companion; she ignored 'Miss Holmes' completely.

Growing desperate, Julian spoke of her one day, asked if she where weil.

His mother's gentle features assumed a severe expression.

'Miss Holmes is no longer at the Abbey Julian,' she said.

The invalid gave a start but managed to keep his features under control.

Did she leave of her own accord?' he inquired, with assumed carelessness. 'No,' answered Mrs. Beaumont. I regret

to say, Julian, that I was compelled to send Miss Holmes away.' "Why!"

She was guilty of theft. It was a most distressing case. But for the actual proof against her, I could not have believed a girl, apparently so well-bred and reliable, to be capable of such a thing.

Julian passed his hand across his throbbing forehead. Guilty of thett! he repeated, slowly.

been some horrible mistake!

His vehemence surprised Mrs. Beaumont.

My dear Julian, don't agitate yourself, she entreated. Had the shadow of a doubt existed, I would have given that unhappy girl the benefit of it; but there was none. a dream. 'Tell me the circumstances, please,' he

said, in calmer tones. 'I feel sufficiently interested in your late companion, mother to uphold her innocence, even before I learn the nature of the evidence against

Really Julian she is unworthy of any lian's severe accident. companionship, was the displeased rejoinder. Two or three days before your acci- Pacing up and down the room in his wrath. dent I missed my favourite bracelet, the one with the pearl and diamond star, your father's gift to me when we were married. ·Well ?

'I had left it on my dressing-table, a somewhat careless thing to do, I admit; but then, I credit those in our employ were well enough to go.' with being strictly honest. When I went upstairs again it had dissappeared. Parker searched everywhere, but failed to find it. Of course, I was very much distressed. Parker, as an old servant, could not be suspected for a moment. It never Nell-never lived I can't regret having entered my mind to suspect Miss Holmes made her mine.' either, until nearly a week afterwards, when Sarah, the head housemaid, came to me with the bracelet in her hand.

There loverlike attitudes opened his eyes | desk. The fall broke it open, the con-

missing bracelet.' Julian stifled a groan.

'I sent for that wretched girl,' his mother went on. 'I showed her the bracelet in Sarah's presence, and said that itshe would admit her guilt I would deal leniently with her.

while obstina ely asserting her innocence. She actually had the audacity to declare that the bracelet found in her desk was not mine but one closely resembling it, given

When I asked Miss Holmes for her quick. He is probably an adventurer on friend's name she declined to mention it. Of course, the story was a fabrication, intended to cover her guilt, and the peculiar design of the bracelet, quite unique in fact together with the precise number of stones helped to condemn her. By what strange coincidence could she, a poor girl, have possessed the duplicate of so valuable an article? Are you in pain, Julian?"

'No-no. Pray go on.' 'The colonel came in and talked to her,' continued Mrs. Beaumont; 'but she adhered to that false statement of her innocence and thus left us no choice save to get rid of regard Julian Beaumont in the light of a her at once. She left the Abbey an hour suitor. later, in great distress, but still declaring the bracelet found to be hers.'

'Where did she go?' 'To London, I believe, I asked her if she had any friends willing to receive her,

and she said she had.' Julian Beaumont sank back among his pillows, speechless.

By the time Julian and his bearers | Every word uttered by his mother

Oh! that secret marriage of his! Would ! there never be an end to its disastrous the ground, and racked with anxiety and consequences?

Nell's plea of innocence had been well founded. Julian understood perfectly how the mis-

conception had arisen.

Unknown to Mrs Beaumont he had some months before, taken a sketch of her tavourite braclet which he greatly admired. From this sketch a London jeweller had | misery.

produced a bractet, similar in every detail, and Julian had given it to his young wife on her birthday.

Nell had been careful not to wear the trinket while living at Oriel Abbey, but had locked it away in her desk.

Her loyalty to Julian in leaving the Abbey, accused of theft, rather than vindicate her reputation by revealing her marriage

Until he gave her permission to speak, she had evidently resolved to keep the Beaumont was in frequent attendance on the secret, at any cost of suffering to herhis manhood rose up in

revolt against her expulsion from from the Abbey. The time had arrived when he must speak. To whom had his wife gone in London?

Under the circumstances, she might shrink from rejoining the grandmother who had brought her up, and who was still ignorant of her marriage.

Oh, to be well again-able to go in search of the woman he loved-to make atonement on finding her.

Meanwhile, there was much to be done. 'When did Villars leave?' asked Julian. 'On the day previous to the discovery of

Miss Holmes's guilt. I am so glad he knew nothing of it,' said Mrs Beaumont. 'Has it got widely circulated?' 'We have done our best to hush the

matter up, but servants will talk, you Precisely. Would you mind asking the

pater to come to me presently? There is something I want to say to him.'

'Yes, dear.' A little bewildered and mystified by her son's manner, Mrs. Beaumont sought the colonel and sent him to Julian's room.

'Well, my boy, what is it?' asked the old Who accused her? There must have soldier cheerily, in blissful ignorance of the nature of the communication awaiting him. Julian plunged at once into the story of his secret marriage, and the complications to which it had led, ending in the summary

dismissal of 'Miss Holmes.' Colonel Beaumont listened like a man in

Julian married, and to a mere nobody! He could scarcely realize the extent of the mistortune which had shattered all his plans for his only son's future; then anger

got the better of amazement. This calamity was even worse than Ju-

The colonel's temper rose to the occasion he poured forth a flood of reproaches, to which Julian-knowing they were well merited -listened in silence.

'Many men have disinherited their sons for less than this,' declared the irate veter an. 'I'd turn you out of doors. sir, if you

'I don't seem to detend my conduct in marrying clandestinely-going dead, against your wishes, father,' answered Julian; 'but my wife is blameless, and a sweeter woman-a more perfect lady than

The colonel glared at him. Your mesalliance will kill your mother,

when she becomes aware of it, 'he said. 'I hope not. I have kept silent hitherto, 'In dusting Miss Holmes' room she had chiefly on her account. But there is a accidentally knocked over a small locked duty owing to Nell, especially after the accident, Richard Curtis had received a

accusation brought against her. I was compelled to speak to set matters right. What man could have done less?'

'The injustice done to the young lady who bears your name,' said the colonel, arising from your own duplicity, can only be set right by an open avowal of your marriage, and of the existence of a duplicate bracelet.'

'You agree to this course ?' 'I hope I have never yet been wanting in this strict justice to man or woman,' was the cold response. 'My recognition of your marriage does not reconcile me to it, and you will leave the Abbey on your recovery. Nor is it my intention to increase

your present allowance.' . Julian's pride ross. 'If I can dispense with it entirely ere

long, sir, I shall do so,' he retorted. 'I will relieve you of my presence as soon as I can travel. My great longing is to find my wife.'

'You have not heard from her since she left the Abbey.' 'No; it is strange that Nell has not writ-

ten. Can you tell me if her brother, Rich-'Julian, she turned as white as death, and Curtis, is still at the Towers?' 'He went back to town with his em-

ployer, nearly a fortnight ago.' Colonel Beaumont lett Julian, in order to break the news to his wife.

She was inconsolable at first. Her late companion's innocence of the theft ascribed to her was lost sight of inthe terrible fact that she had inveigled Julian into marrying her, as Mrs. Bean mont put it.

She could not forgive the girl.

The announcement of Julian's marriage and the withdrawal of the charge against 'Miss Holmes' came as a surprise to every-

Sir Vane Carlyon might have resented it more, on Cicely's account, had not his niece previously assured him that no persussion or coercion would induce her to

The recovery of Mrs. Beaumont's missing bracelet-it had been stolen by a dishonest under-housemaid-turned the tables curiously on that much-worried lady.

By detaining 'Miss Holmes's' bracelet, wrongly indentified as her own, she had become possessed of a valuable trinket which did not belong to her.

She promptly handed it over to Julian to be given back to his wife.

Unable as yet to put his injured foot to remorse, he wrote to Mrs. Darcy, Nell's grandmother, who lived near Richmond, informing her of his marriage, and all that had transpired since.

He besought her to let him know if his young wife had gone to her on leaving Oriel Abbey. Mrs. Darcy's reply only added to his

Nell was not with her, and the announcement of her grand-daughter's marriage

had overwhelmed the old lady. Julian's letter was the first intimation of it that reached her.

Until then she had thought of the girl as being still at the Abbey. She was quite unable to explain Nell's

silence-her extraordinary self-effacement. I should have welcomed her with open arms, wrote Mrs- Darcy, 'even if she has not felt tree to vindicate her good name, to explain things to me as you, her husband have explained them. And Nell knew this. What can have happened to my dear girl? Can that false, cruel charge have turned her brain?

Richard Curtis, on being appealed to was no better informed respecting his sister's movements.

He also had imagined Nell to be still at the Abbey.

Her change of occupation, and the assum ed name of Holmes, which had annoyed and perplexed him at the time, were fully explained now by her secret maariage, necessitating more than one subterfuge.

In a sence, the fact of Julian Beaumont being Nell's husband, came as a relief to her brother.

Julian could not enter the lists against him, as far as Cicely Rivers was concerned. There was an end to any rivalry in that

quarter. He shared Julian's anxiety respecting

Nell's absence and silence, though. Dick Curtis ran down to the Abbey to interview his brother-in law.

He abstained from useless reproaches when he and Julian met. The latter was suffering more than

enough by way of atonement already. 'We must try to find Nell,' said Dick and to induce her to return to us by decaring that all has been satisfactorily,

cleared up. 'She can't hold me responsible for that accursed charge,' groaned Julian. 'I knew nothing of it till after she had left the

Abbey. 'Oh, Nell is far too generous to blame you without cause over the bracelet affair. We had better advertise for her. Since you are hors de combat, I will begin the

search for Nell myselt.' 'Thanks, old tellow.' Julian wrung the other's hand. 'I shall never know a moment's peace of mind till she is found and restored to me.'

'The Colonel and Mrs Beaumont hardly seem reconciled to the match,' Curtis re-'They are different views for me ; but

they will come round in time. I can think of nothing-care for nothing-apart from Nell.' Richard Curtis, on leaving Ociel Abbey,

walked towards Weston Grange. He wanted to see Cicely Rivers, ere he

left the neighbourhoad. Sir Vane's hostile attitude rendered it out of the question that he should call at the Grange.

There had already been one stormy scene between them.

CHAPTER IV.

On the day following Julian Beaumont's | house.

note from Sir Vane, asking him to call at the Grange.

He went, wondering greatly what the baronet could want with him.

Surely Cicely had not ventured to bring their engagement under her uncle's notice ?

Sir Vane received his visitor in the lib.

In no measured terms, he accused Cartis of having made clandestine love to his The expression stung the young man,

who felt he had not merited it. 'Until yesterday,' he said frankly, 'no avowal of love for Miss Rivers had ever crossed my lips, Sir Vane. I fully recognize the disparity existing between her

position and mine. 'This admission only renders your conduct he more unpardonable and presump-

'We met, atter, nearly a year's absence from each other,' resumed Curtis, stand. ing, tall, manly, and erect, opposite to the indignant baronet. 'I spoke to Miss Rivers on the impulse of the moment. But I am a gentleman, sir, despite my poverty. No idea of wooing your niece by underhanded methods ever

occurred to me.' 'Let us come to the point,' said Sir Vane coldly. 'I distinctly forbid you either to meet or communicate with Miss Rivers

again.' 'On what grounds?' By Jove, sir? You adopt a high tone! On the grounds of your social and financial unfitness to become her suitor.'

'My position may improve.' 'I decline to discuss that question. If my niece's prospective fortune bas formed her chief attraction in your eyes, Mr. Cartis, let me tell you that should she become your wife against your wishes, I should disinherit her. She would come to

you penn'less.' 'In that case,' exclaimed Dick Curtis hotly, 'your would give me a chance of proving that my love for Cicely is more disinterested than you imagine, Sir Vane.

I will not be insulted with impunity, and have my motives grossly misconstrued. I shall not relinquise the hope of winning Cicely one day, unless she bids me do so. Sir Vane could not help a secret admir-

ation and liking for the speaker, despite

his anger. · At least, Mr. Curtis, you are frank,' he rejoined. 'Well, I shall know how to son's proposals in reference to my niece.' protect my neice against your advances in Why?

'I wish to heaven Cicly had no fortune,' said Curtis vehemently; ' that she were as poor as myself. Then-

He paused as the library door opened, and looked round. Cicely, pale but resolute, stood on the

threshold. ' Ciceiy, I am engaged at present,' said the baronet sharply. But she declined to beat a retreat at his

bidding. ' So am I, Uncle Vane-to Dick Curtis. Oh, please'-going up to him with a little appealing gesture- ' don't be too hard on us; I shall never care for any man but

Dick. 'Your uncle would brand me as an adventurer, Cicely,' interposed her lover, with flashing eyes. ' A man's sincerity, it seems, must be gauged by the extent of

his income. Cicely glanced from one to the other. 'I am not responsible for Sir Vane's opinions,' she answered, 'neither do I share them. It he refuses'-her voice broke -' to accept you as my suitor, I, on the hand, decline to give you up.'

' Cicely, would you set my authority, as your guardian, at defiance?' cried the baronet. · You have never strained it before

What objection can you urge against Dick, apart from his want of fortune ?" · That alone constitutes a sufficient reason for my refusal to entertain his suit. Until you come of age, Cicely, you are subject to my control, and I intend to exercise it for your benefit. Our interview,

Mr. Curtis, is at an end.' Dick had gone back to town with his employer, more in love with Cicely Rivers

Her guardian's opposition had but fanned the flamed of his passion. No letters could pass between the young

people though. Sir Vane and a lynx-eyed aunt kept Cicely's correspondence well inspected. After an unbroken silence of several weeks Dick was yearing for some news of

his beloved. The lodge keeper's wife changed to be on duty duty when he came to the massive entrance gates of Weston Grange. A little golden persussive elicited the

information that Miss Rivers might be found reading in the rustic summer-house by the lake; the good woman was certain. Dick thanked her. and walked swiftly in

the direction indicated. Cicely, to his joy, was seated in the ivywreathed summer-house, an unopened book on her lap.

The next moment she was in Dick's You dear, wicked, disobedient boy, she said, as he took toll of her sweet lips; to venture into the lion's den against or-

ders ' 'You are worth the risk,' smiled Dick. 'I know I'm a tresspasser, and that Sir Vane is a J. P. What if he gave me into custody and passed sentence on me afterwards ?

'Tell me all about your sister's marriage,' said Cicely, as they grew calmer. You have no longer any reason to feel jealous of Julian Beaumont.' No, but I am very anxious about dear

Nell, and so is her husband.' 'It is the talk of the country,' Cecily assured him. 'What can have become of

is inexplicable. Why-He paused.

Cicely, her brown eyes glowing, moved

I am bent on finding out. Nell's silence

Sir Vane was at the door of the summer-

a little nearer to Dick.

'This intrusion is unpardonable,' cried the baronet, his voice trembling with rage.

Leave my grounds, sir.' Ere Curtis could comply, or remonstrate, a lady came up the wild avenue, within a stone's throw of the summerhouse.

She was a tall, graceful, silver-haired woman, with dark eyes and delicate features, a woman who had retained her charm of face and manner, despite ad-

vancing years and many sorrows. 'Grandmother,' said Richard Curtis, hastening towards her, 'what has brought

you here? Were you looking for me?'
'No, Dick.' She glanced beyond him to where the baronet stood, as if rooted to the ground. 'I wanted to see Sir Vane

Carlyon.' 'You know him?'

'I knew him-many years ago.' 'Marian'-it was Sir Vane who spoke-'am I mad or dreaming? Can it indeed be you?' Mrs Darcy smiled sadly at him.

'Yes; it is Marian,' she said. 'Changed from a young woman into an old one, since our last meeting, Sir Vane. And yet you recognized me? 'I have never forgotten you,' he replied,

a world of subdued pain and passion in his

voice 'or forgotten you for spoiling my

life when you refused to share it.' 'Your people were opposed to the match,' she murmured, 'and I was both poor and proud, I thought I was doing right when I sent you from me-left you free to marry your cousin. And now I am

here to plead my grandson's cause.'
'So Richard Curtis is your grandson,' observed Sir Vane coldly. 'I hardly know why I should regard him with more favor on that account.'

'I seek no tavors,' interposed Dick, astounded to learn that Mrs Darcy and the frigid, stately baronet had once been lovers.

His grandmother held up an imploring hand. 'You are angry with my Dick,' she said earnestly, addressing Sir Vane, 'because he has presumed to tall in love with your niece. When, recently, he told me of his love affair, I know the time had come to

you on his behalt.' 'I must decline to entertain your grand-

bridge over the gulf of years—to appeal to

'Need I enter into details? His position does not equal hers.' 'No; it exceeds her,' broke from Mrs.

Darcy's lips. 'Moreover, Dick has a

'On me? My dear madam, what do you 'He is my grandson. You cannot everlook that disadvantage, of course. But'her features quivered-'he is also yours!'

distinct claim upon you.'

The baronet recoiled.

'Mine? Good Heavens, you are beside yourselt!' he exclaimed. 'My only son died, unmarried, in Italy.' 'No,' corrected Mrs. Darcy, while Dick and Cicely listened with breathless interest Some three years previous to Bertram Carlyon's sudden death, he was married

to my daughter Mable, at Naples. Nellie and Richard Cutis Carylon are your son's children, Sir Vane, born lawful wedlock! 'Incredible!' 'I have brought the legal proofs of their parentage, the marriage and the birth certificates, with me,' returned Mrs. Darcy. 'I thought you might be hard to convince. Dick' -glancing proudly at her grandson,

through a mist of tears-' learns his actual i entity for the first time to day,' Sir Vane sank back on to a seat, torn by conflicting emotions. ' I can't realize-I can't accept it,' he

faltered. 'Yet it is true,' said Marion Darcy. Vane, won't you, as a simple act of justice, receive Dick now, and acknowledge him as your grandson and heir, for his tather's sake?

ren? And I to remain in ignorance of it He glanced, while speaking, at the tall, handsome young man, so lately the object

of his anger and disapproval.

Bertram married—the father of chid-

Sir Vane's heart relented towards the

offender. One supreme tact flooded his soul

He was not, after all, a childless, solitary His own flesh and blood would one day

succeed him at Weston Grange. He extended a tremulous hand to Dick. The tatter, unable to speak, wrung it in silence.

Sir Vane and his grandson were recon-Going across to Mrs. Dracy, Cicely kiss-I love you already, dear for having been

so faithful to my boy, said the widow: Oh I meant to marry him sooner or later, you know, regardless of obstacles, smiled the girl. But this announcement of yours, Mrs. Dracy, seems too good to be true. It has made us all radiantly happy. Why was I not informed of Bertram's

marriage sooner? asked Sir Vane. I teared your displeasure on learning whose daughter your son married, explained Mrs. Darcy. Dick and Nellie were all I had left to live for. You might have taken them both from me. But I know now that I acted selfishly. Forgive me if you can. And their mother?

She died when Dick was two years old. After our parting, Vane I married my father's curate. His health was delicate, and he secured a chaplaincy abroad. I continued to live in Italy with my daughter Mabel after I lost my husband. And Betram met your girl there? said

the baronet. Yes, at a friend's house. It was a case of love at first sight on both sides. I objected to the marriage but Mabel and Bertram overruled me.

'And the secrecy connected with it ?' That was Bertram's doing. He said his relations with you were terribly str

Continued on page elsven.