

JACQUEMINOTS.

"It was awfully good of you to remember me so handsomely, dear Bob," murmured Irene Benson as she buried her somewhat pronounced chin in the gorgeous bouquet that had elicited the remark.

The individual so affectionately styled "Bob" was, according to his *cartes de visite*, Mr. R. Sinclair King, though within a few years of the date of this story he had always given prominence to the first name bestowing upon him by his godfather and godmother, and had correspondingly obscured the one that now stood out so boldly against the chase cardboard background.

True, she was the fourth young lady in half as many years that the gushing, flaxen-haired, money-burdened Mr. King had bound himself to with sacred promises, solemnized by temporary sincerity, and of course society laughed at her for expecting to retain the devotion of a man who had so quickly tired of the same old-fashioned pretensions. But Miss Benson only smiled sweetly.

She was not beautiful certainly; but she never for a moment argued the question with the mirror. Her vision was wonderfully clear and easily discerned such defects as an elongated chin that would not diminish with age, an aspiring nose, and an absence of natural color in the cheeks.

Nevertheless, she was by no means plain, and at times her gray eyes seemed to lend their beauty to her features. Then, too, she was admittedly clever—a quality that can oftentimes hold a man when the tinsel bonds of fascination have snapped.

Already the engagement was three months old, and though the gentleman's fair complexion had gradually declined in the gentleman's attentions, there was nothing sufficiently marked to attract any general comment.

As a matter of fact "dear Bob" was trying ever so little of his fourth conquest, but he was not yet quite as handsome as his former admirer, and he scorned the old adage so redundant with caution.

He thought Irene looked remarkably well on this evening, and he led her away from the throng of dancers to a quiet corner where with a few efficient and well tried words of praise, they were a little battered with much campaigning, for Mr. King's range in metaphorical composition was painfully limited, but as they were all illumined with the glow of youth, the necessary effect was thereby produced.

more or less deranged her toilette. Anger sparkled in her eyes, but to no effect, Mr. King's gaze kept a close watch on his absent thoughts. Curiosity impelled his partner, to follow the former; she saw Miss Benson gliding gracefully along with Mr. Lovelace, a magnificent bouquet of Jacqueminots which she held peeping over her broad shoulder.

"Are you still enamored of Miss Benson?" she pertly asked, for the brevity of Mr. King's attentions was ordinary talk.

"I am engaged to her," he answered stiffly.

"The query was aggravatingly sarcastic. 'I hardly understand you,' remarked Mr. King with great dignity. The lady laughed good-naturedly. She was pretty much amused. Mr. King had neglected to pay due homage to her charms, and she took a malicious enjoyment in adding to his evident discomfort.

"You mustn't mind me laughing," said she, as the echoes of a well-modulated effort died away without a struggle, but you see, Mr. King, you've announced your engagement so many times, and you have transplanted your affections so rapidly from one lady to another, that—well, I presumed your understanding with Miss Benson had by this time become a misunderstanding."

"Indeed?" "Now, you shouldn't be angry with people for thinking this. You've been such a flirt, and it was whispered that your attentions to your present fiancée were—well—well." The speaker hesitated with charming provocativeness.

"Were what?" asked Mr. King more impatiently than etiquette demanded. The music had by this time ceased, and he noticed with rising wrath that Mr. Lovelace occupied a divan with Miss Benson, and was fanning her assiduously. Miss Archer viewed the same picture with different feelings.

"Well," she continued, "the rumor began to circulate that your attentions were as—ah—not as ardent as they might be, and, of course, every one expected soon to hear of your again being fancy-free. You've deceived us so often, you know."

"Every one is liable to make mistakes," retorted Mr. King.

Mr. King gazed at her ardently, though he winced slightly whenever she buried her protruding chin in the rose-petal. This chin had become perfectly moulded, in his altered imagination, and he disliked seeing it in such close contact with an unknown's gift. He was, however, so intent upon to disabuse her mind of the ideas it contained pertaining to his generosity and attention. Certainly he would not again leave himself open to the charge of neglect, and meantime Mr. Lovelace or some other envious man would derive his gratitude for having stepped into the breach.

"Irene," said he softly, and after a short search for over two months, "I have been engaged for over two months."

"There is nothing to prevent our getting married at any time."

"No, Bob."

"Then, dear, suppose we fix the day."

"Oh, Bob!" and Miss Benson's pale face became suffused with an exquisite blush that indicated maidenly pleasure not unmixed with confusion.

"Yes, dear, I want you to name the day."

"I'm afraid I couldn't get my trousseau ready in two weeks, dear," expostulated the blushing daisy; "there is so much to be done."

"Then say in a month," he begged, in amendment to his former motion.

Advertisement for Robert Hardy's Seven Days. A Dream and Its Consequences. By Rev. Charles M. Sheldon. Author of 'In His Steps,' 'The Crucifixion of Philip Strong,' 'Malcom Kirk,' etc. (Copyright, 1900, by Advance Publishing Co.)

CHAPTER I. It was Sunday night, and Robert Hardy had just come home from the evening service in the church at Belleville. He was not in the habit of attending the evening service, but something had impelled him to go out. The evening had been a little unpleasant, and a light snow was falling, and his wife had excused herself from going to church on that account. Mr. Hardy came home cross and fault finding.

"Catch me going to evening service again! Only 50 people out, and it was a sheer waste of fuel and light. The sermon was one of the dullest I ever heard. I believe Mr. Jones is growing too old for our church. We need a young man, more up with the times. He is everlastingly harping on the necessity of doing what we can in the present to save our souls. To hear him talk you would think every man who wasn't running round to save souls every winter was a robber and an enemy of society. He is getting off, too, on this newfangled Christian sociology and thinks the rich men are oppressing the poor and that church members ought to study and follow more closely the teachings of Christ and be more brotherly and neighborly to their fellow men. Bah! I am sick of the whole subject of humanity. I shall withdraw my pledge to the salary if the present style of preaching continues."

"What was the text of the sermon to-night?" asked Mrs. Hardy.

"Oh, I don't remember exactly. Something about 'This night thy soul shall be demanded' or words like that. I don't believe in this attempt to scare folks into heaven."

"It would take a good many sermons to scare you, Robert."

"Yes, more than two a week," replied Mr. Hardy, with a dry laugh. He drew off his overcoat and threw himself down on the lounge in front of the open fire. "Where are the girls?"

"Alice is up stairs reading the morning paper. Clara and Bess went over to call on the Caxtons."

by Mary's side, he had asked her to be his wife. It seemed to him that a breath of the meadow just beyond Squire Hazen's place came into the room just as it was wadded up to him when Mary turned and said the happy word that made that day the gladiest, proudest day he had ever known. What memories of the old times!

He seemed to come to himself and stared around into the fire as if wondering where he was, and he did not see the tear that rolled down his wife's cheek and fell upon her two hands clasped in her lap. She arose and went over to the piano, which stood in the shadow, and sitting down with her back to her husband, she played fragments of music nervously. Mr. Hardy lay down on the lounge again. After awhile Mrs. Hardy wheeled about on the piano stool and said:

"Robert, don't you think you had better go over and see Mr. Burns about the men who were hurt?"

"Why, what can I do about it? The company's doctor will see to them. I should only be in the way. Did Burns say they were badly hurt?"

"One of them had his eyes put out, and another will have to lose both feet. I think he said his name was Scoville."

"I think Burns said that was the name."

Mr. Hardy rose from the lounge, then lay down again. "Oh, well, I can go there the first thing in the morning. I can't do anything now," he muttered.

But there came to his memory a picture of one day when he was walking through the machine shops and a heavy piece of casting had broken from the end of a large hoisting derrick and would have fallen upon him and probably killed him if this man Scoville, at the time a workman in the machine department, had not pulled him to one side at the danger of his own life. As it was, in saving the life of the manager Scoville was struck on the shoulder and rendered useless for work for four weeks. Mr. Hardy had raised his wages and advanced him to a responsible position in the casting room. Mr. Hardy was not a man without generosity and humane feeling, but as he lay on the lounge that evening and thought of the snow outside and the distance to the shop tenements he readily excused himself from going out to see the man who had once saved his life and who now lay maimed for life. If any one thinks it impossible that one man calling himself a Christian could be thus indifferent to another, then he does not know the power that selfishness can exercise over the actions of men. Mr. Hardy had done a supreme law which he obeyed, and that law was self.

Again Mrs. Hardy, who rarely ventured to oppose her husband's wishes, turned to the piano and struck a few chords aimlessly. Then she wheeled about and said abruptly:

"Robert, the cook gave warning to-night that she must go home at once."



"One of them had his eyes put out."

family has kept her struggling for mere existence. The cook was almost beside herself with grief as she told the story and said she must leave and care for her sister, who could not live more than a week at the longest. I pitied the poor girl. Robert, don't you think we could do something for the family? We have so much ourselves. We could easily help them and not miss a single luxury."

"And where would such help end? If we give to every needy person who comes along we shall be beggars ourselves. Besides, I can't afford it. The boys are a heavy expense to me while they are in college, and the company has been cutting down salaries lately. If the cook's sister is married to a railroad man, he is probably getting good wages and can support her all right."

"What if that railroad man were injured and made a cripple for life?" inquired Mrs. Hardy quietly.

"Then the insurance companies or the societies can help them out. I don't see how we can make every case that comes along our care. There would be no end of it if we once began."

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