

old very badly. Let me tell you I mean to be attractive even at forty."

"We shall not disagree on that subject. You could not be anything else."

"How quickly you arrive at conclusions, Mr Ramsay! How rashly, too, considering we met for the first time to-night!" Her tone was grave, but her twinkling eyes somewhat contradicted the gravity.

"I feel as if I had always known you," said the enthusiastic Orlando. "As if I had been looking forward to this meeting all my life."

The girl looked curiously at the impetuous youth. What eyes she had! So dark and glowing!

"Did you look forward to meeting me in powder and paint? Otherwise, how do you know I am the right person? You cannot tell what I am really like under this disguise. I may be perfectly horrible."

A fatuous smile was Ramsay's only answer. "Horrible? This charming creature, with the pencilled brows, sparkling eyes, piled-up powdered hair, and softly flushed cheeks. How the quaint, old-world style suited her lively, original manner!"

"Surely you have some feeling in sympathy with mine?" Ramsay began, after a short pause. "We have got on so well together. You would not sit here with me if I bored you?"

"Certainly not. But why should you bore me? You are very original—quite unlike any one I ever met before. Do you always feel drawn to your friends so suddenly?"

"Oh, no. Not like this. Never before."

Her eyes fell under the youth's eager gaze. No blush could have shown on her face, owing to the paint.

"I think I must rejoin my party," she said, abruptly. "It is getting late."

Ramsay's momentary panic, lest he might have gone too far and offended her, was dispelled by the unrepining kindness of her glance and the smile, which made his heart beat quickly.

"I may come back again before you go," he pleaded, when leaving her, and Miss Maxwell assented.

Orlando, there was no doubt of it, had fallen head over ears in love. Never had the passion taken him more suddenly and violently. As it had possessed Romeo at the Capulet ball, so now did it possess the susceptible guardsman. History is nothing but repetition; the same old stories and the same old situations over and over again.

The impatient youth withdrew to the supper-room to await the moment at which he might decently return to Miss Maxwell's side. A quarter of an hour had hardly passed when he hurried back to the ball-room.

The lady was not in the old place, neither could he discover her in his quick glance round the room. It was late; the crowd in the ball-room had grown thin; Ramsay made a quick circuit of it, without discovering the object of his search. Consternation seized upon him. Could she have gone away? He made a rapid tour of the drawing and supper-rooms; she was not to be found. In deep despair he realised at last that she was gone, leaving him in ignorance of her address, and without any clue to help in finding it. An appeal to the aide-de-camp who had introduced him to Miss Maxwell gave him no information except that she had come with a Mrs Fraser, of Merriem-square, to the ball.

Ramsay lost no time in finding out the Fraser's residence, No. 98, Merriem-square. A study of the house from the outside was very unsatisfactory, but he could not venture to call. The circumstances of the case did not allow such a course of action, which might have been viewed as an impertinence. For several days the lover-lorn youth haunted Merriem-square and its neighbourhood in the hopes of a chance meeting with the object of his passion. Fortune, however, was in no smiling mood; sometimes his hopes had been roused by seeing ladies going into or coming out of the house, but no one bearing the least resemblance to Miss Maxwell had been among them.

Ramsay's state did not escape the observation and rallying of his brother officers. The Colonel, on becoming aware of it, and of the serious hold which the sudden fancy seemed to have taken of the youth, duly communicated with Lady Cheviot. The anxious mother took alarm at once; she recognised the gravity of the case. The fact that Orlando had so curiously lost sight of the object of his passion did not reassure her. On the contrary, she saw in this strange circumstance some deep design to lure her boy to more complete destruction.

"There is not a moment to be lost," Lady Cheviot decided. "I must implore of Helen if not in Dublin, to go there at once, and find out the real state of the case, and take it into her capable hands."

Lady Cheviot wrote an urgent appeal and received a prompt reply:—

"I am going to Dublin immediately, and shall do all that can be done to save your boy. How ruthlessly you ask me to try and destroy a young romance—me, such an advocate of sentimentality in both young and old! The strength of my friendship shows itself in my complete and unhesitating undertaking, exactly as an absolute trust in my own subtlety and diplomacy makes me confident of success. She must be very charming—I do not intend to make the mistake of underestimating the enemy—to have made such a deep and lasting impression at first sight. She can hardly be unconscious of it, though she has chosen to disappear so mysteriously. Your anxiety lest she may appear is therefore very natural. I know my families of Maxwells in Ireland, but cannot make out that the girl you describe belongs to any of them. Most assured, dear friend, that the matter will come right—or, else! It is wrong—in my hands. I am so delighted that you should have appealed to me.—Ever yours,

HELEN MACDONALD.

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figure of his dreams was coming towards him. A long cloak showed her figure to full advantage, but her face was closely veiled. The well remembered dark eyes, however, shone brightly through the thick folds of lace. In the rapture of the meeting but one thought absorbed Ramsay—he had found the object of his search and of his adoration at last; never again would he lose sight of her. The publicity of the place of meeting made the thick veil necessary. Like the 'mask of night' on Juliet's face, it did not interfere with her lover's ardour.

She was just as charming and lively as she had been at the ball; she playfully turned aside Ramsay's reproaches for her conduct in quitting the ball and leaving him no way of finding her again.

"Perhaps I expected you to send a herald searching for me all over the town, like the Prince in a fairy tale. As you did not, I have had to present myself, notwithstanding the horrible chance that you might have forgotten all about me."

"Forgotten you? Oh, Miss Maxwell!"

"Did you think me forward? Were you horrified by my letter?"

"May I tell you what I really thought? You will not be angry?"

"Certainly not. I adore frankness."

"And I adore you."

"Mr Ramsay!"

"You told me to be frank, that you would not be angry."

"But it was about my letter."

"Well, I thought it adorable too."

"You are incorrigible," Miss Maxwell's eyes, turned on Ramsay, shone deeply through her veil. "I don't know what to say or do. I am not accustomed to being adorable."

"Oh, Miss Maxwell!"

"Seriously, Mr Ramsay, you should not for many reasons talk like that to me. To begin with, you cannot possibly mean half that you say."

"Every single word of it," he vehemently asserted.

"Then you are a veritable enthusiast, with an extraordinary and unmodern faith in human nature. You are very, very rash."

"Doubt never comes in when it is a case of the right people meeting."

"Then, perhaps I am not a right person."

"But—but, a quick shade crossed Ramsay's eager face, 'I thought you, too, felt that we suited each other.'

"Or I would not have come here, is that it? You see, I did not know you were so enthusiastic or—so rash. You do not know who I am, or where I come from. And it certainly is strange of me to be meeting you in this garden."

"I know that you are unmistakably a lady, that you have friends in Merriem-square. Above all, I know that you are beautiful and charming, and that I love you—"

"Stop, stop," interrupted Miss Maxwell, rising hastily from the bench on which they had been sitting. "I cannot listen any more. You are dreadfully imprudent. Think how little you know about me."

"I know that you are adorable and that I adore you. That is enough. Miss Maxwell, listen to me for one moment." Ramsay had risen, too. Miss Maxwell was walking on with quick steps as if to escape from her enthusiastic wooer.

"I cannot listen. Not now—not here!"

"Will you listen to me in your home or at your friend's house?"

"Yes, I will promise to listen to anything you wish to say."

Ramsay's face glowed ecstatically.

"Only tell me when and where. To-day?" To-morrow?"

"Not to-day. To-morrow, in the afternoon, at 98, Merriem square, at my friend, Mrs Fraser's. You may say whatever you wanted to make me listen to just now—if you are still of the same mind."

"As if I could change! You cannot think it possible—you do not doubt me?"

"I have no doubt at all on the subject. And now it is best to part here. Good-bye, and au revoir!"

An idiotic smile of content rested on Ramsay's face while he stood watching the slight graceful figure, until it rapidly disappeared from sight on the Park road.

Meanwhile Helen MacDonald, who had arrived at the Shelbourne Hotel on the previous evening, had not been idle. On the very afternoon of the meeting in the Phoenix Park she wrote to Lady Cheviot, informing her that the matter was already progressing. She—Helen—had accurate information that the object of Orlando's romantic passion had returned to Dublin, and was in communication with him, at the house in Merriem-square, where the friend lived with whom Miss Maxwell had gone to the ball. Furthermore there was reason to believe that Orlando and the girl had met on that very afternoon. "You see I have not let the grass grow under my feet, you could not have been more active yourself had you been on the spot. Such a pretty romance as it seems to be! Are we not very relentless in trying to destroy it? I repeat? What a contradiction to heredity that such a practical mother should have such a romantic son. Poor boy! I quite feel for him in the part I am obliged to take. But do not be alarmed. I shall not fail you."

Next afternoon, Ramsay—blissfully unconscious of the conspiracy actively at work against his happiness—presented himself at 98, Merriem-square, his ardour greater than ever, his determination more steadfast. No passion can compare with love at first sight. It is the only true love, the only one worthy of the name. Come what would, come what might, Orlando was resolved to woo and win Miss Maxwell. The very fact of his being there entitled him to nourish hopes, which, however, alternated with loverlike fears. The girl was so unlike any other whom he had ever met; he could not feel certain of her. An indescribable something in her manner made him anxious, even when most hopeful. The doubt and anxiety, however, as a matter of course, in such cases, only increased his determination.

Ramsay was left alone with his tumultuous thoughts whilst the footman went in search of the young lady. How long the moments seemed; his heart beat quickly at

every sound, his eyes eagerly turned to the door. At last it was opened; a lady entered the room. Her face did not show for a moment as she paused to shut the door behind her, but there was no mistaking the tall, slight, graceful form. The ardent youth advanced with unexpressed delight. She turned round, standing opposite to him; he stopped abruptly with an involuntary exclamation. The dark, glowing eyes, which, beneath the arched brows had looked so effective with the powdered hair, were fixed on him. There was no doubt about them, though they did not look quite the same—not so wonderfully brilliant. But the face! What had happened? Was he dreaming, or the victim of some strange optical delusion? The lady confronting him was not a girl. She had probably passed the tableland of life that lies between twenty-five and thirty-five. Her face was shapely and pleasant looking, with well-cut features and a pale complexion; her soft hair was almost red. The same, but not the same, as the lovely being of the ball. As if some wicked enchanter's wand had added nearly twenty years to her age. Ramsay stared aghast. His mind, in the confusion of the moment, seized on the idea of a practical joke. Impossible to realise that the soft outlines of cheek and chin, the smooth face, the tender rose-leaf tinge, had been a mere matter of artistic make-up! That the quaint fancy dress had perfected the illusion which the prevalence amongst the other guests of powder and paint had also helped! But, no; the hope died as quickly as it had come before the growing smile on the lady's face and the twinkling of her eyes. They and the graceful, still girlish figure were unmistakable. The girl of the Gainsborough picture was standing smiling before him.

"Miss Maxwell!" he managed to falter.

"Yes and no." An involuntary flash of eager hope leaped to Ramsay's eyes, to vanish as the lady went on quickly. "But I am the person you mean, though Maxwell is not exactly my name. Your trust was with me; you have kept it, and I have done the same by you. You look disturbed, as if you hardly recognise me."

"Yes—that is—no—!" In fact—you look so different."

"Yet you would not believe in the magic power of powder and paint. I fairly warned you. They changed me completely, did they not? And now, have they not done the same to you?"

"I always stand by my word," said Ramsay heroically, but turning deadly pale.

"But there is no word for you to stand by in the case; it was never spoken. There is a law that a man may not marry his grandmother, though it is not quite so bad as that; still, my dear boy, I doubt that your mother would be pleased to have introduced to her as a daughter-in-law her old friend, Helen MacDonald."

Ramsay uttered a sharp exclamation of amazement; he stared hard at Miss MacDonald, his face flushing crimson.

"We did not meet for the first time at the ball," she continued, smiling; "you were a little over four, and I was just twenty, when our acquaintance began, during a visit which I paid to your mother. I didn't correct the mistake about my name at first—well, just because the spirit of mischief entered into me—and afterwards, my dear Orlando, I took the liberty of giving you a lesson. Romeo's example, always a dangerous one to imitate, is especially so at a 'Picture Ball.'" Now, let the whole thing be consigned to oblivion. Forgive and forget. And for pity's sake don't tell your mother of my masquerading."

When the somewhat crestfallen youth had taken his departure, Helen MacDonald wrote to Lady Cheviot:—

"The deed is done; your boy has been saved. It is the girl herself you have to thank. Matrimony, it appeared, though proffered by your rash son, was an honour that she did not dream of. While rejoicing, one cannot but regret that her Irish double dose of original sin should have led her into becoming poor Orlando. By the way, what can you expect but romance from the owner of such a name? What in the name of common sense made you select it for your boy? You might just as well have called him Romeo and saved yourself for the consequences."

Truth.

MEREDITH'S INVOLVED SENTENCES.

EMERSON said of Carlyle that there is not to be found in his writings a sentence which will not parse. It would be a decidedly difficult task to attempt to parse the following complete sentences from the pen of the eminent George Meredith in his latest novel published in *Scribner's Magazine*:

"She wrestled with him where the darknesses rolled their snake-eyed torments over between jagged horns of the nether world. She stood him in the white ray of the primal vital heat to bear unwithering beside her the test of light. They flew, they chased, battled, embraced, disjoined, adventured apart, brought back the count of their deeds, compared them—and name the one crushed!"

"She had the privilege of a soul beyond our minor rules and restraints to speak her wishes to the true wife of a mock husband—no husband; less a husband than this shadow of a woman a wife, she said; and spoke them without adorning the bowed head beside her to record a promise or seem to show the far willingness, but merely that the wishes should be heard on earth in her last breath, for a good man's remaining one chance of happiness."

"Her mind was at the same time alive to our worldly contentions when other people came under its light; she sketched them and their views in her brief words between the gasps, or heaved on them, with perspicuous humorous bluntness, as vividly as her twitched eyebrows indicated the laugh. Gower Woodser she read startlingly, if correctly."

CARRYING MAILS BY SHELL.—The Postmaster-General of England has from time to time received suggestions of several methods of conveying the royal mails besides locomotives. Among others was one by a royal engineer, who advised that the mails should be included in shells and fired from one stage to another. A good bombardier would be able to drop a shell within a few feet of the mortar or cannon which would be required to send it on to the next stage.

DEAR MR RAMSAY.—We talked of many things at the 'Picture' ball, amongst others of flowers. Do you remember? They are lovely just now in the People's Garden in the Phoenix Park. Especially in the wide walk between the hours of three and four on any afternoon, say to-morrow, for instance.—Yours truly,
M. H. MAXWELL.

Three o'clock next day found Ramsay impatiently pacing up and down the side-walk. At twenty minutes past the hour his heart gave a bound, the blood coursed wildly through his veins. The unmistakably tall, slight