

week he granted himself that trifling concession, feeling that flesh and blood could no longer endure a system of solitary confinement; but Mariel sat all day long in the silent drawing-room, where a hundred trifles kept reminding her of her loss, and had not the heart to go out of doors. She would not even seek out Mr Compton, much though she longed to confide all her sorrows to him. She knew instinctively that he would understand her, that he would not be hard upon her in this hour of her despair, that he would condone the weakness which he had predicted, and from which, after all, no evil consequences had resulted; yet she could not summon up courage to take the risk of a rebuff. He must have heard the news of Sylvia's death; in all probability he had heard of her previous betrothal to Sir Harry Brewster; if, then, he felt any pity for one whose intentions at least had been good, and upon whom a heavy visitation had fallen, he would surely find time to call at Upper Brook-street. In fact, she so fully expected him to call that she gave instructions for his admission in the event of his presenting himself.

As, however, he failed to put in an appearance, she was forced to the conclusion that he felt no pity for her. Well, he had never shown himself very compassionate; perhaps, clever though he was, he could not quite enter into a woman's feelings. It had been clever of him to lay his finger upon the weak spot in her character; yet he might have divined that there is a species of strength belonging to that particular species of weakness, and that just because she could not bear to see others unhappy, she was capable of devoting herself heart and soul to such a work as he had in hand. Being thus defrauded of sympathy from a quarter to which she had looked for it with more confidence than she had been aware of, her thoughts not unnaturally turned towards one who had once told her that she was essential to his happiness and had furthermore implored her to let him know if at any time he could be of service to her. Her occupations and her troubles had not caused her to forget Colonel Medhurst; she had often thought of him, she had often accused herself of having behaved badly to him, she had more than once longed for the sight of his honest face and the sound of his voice, and certainly it was in his power to render her a service now at no greater expense of time and convenience than might be implied in finding his way to her house. But such favours cannot be asked for; they ought to suggest themselves to persons of ordinary intelligence. Moreover, it had to be borne in mind that Colonel Medhurst was not the man to look leniently upon such a surrender as that to which she had been driven. Sylvia was dead; but Sylvia, if she had lived would have become the bride of the villain who had wrecked his sister's life, and he might not unreasonably hold Mariel answerable for an abomination which had only been averted in that tragic way. Upon the whole, the chances seemed to be that his friendship, like that of Mr Compton, had been fruitlessly sacrificed.

He cleared himself in some measure of that unmerited suspicion by a letter, written from Colchester, which was delivered to Miss Wentworth, one morning, and which was not much more infelicitously worded than letters of condolence usually are. What disappointed and vexed Mariel was that it was a letter of condolence, pure and simple. Anybody and everybody, writing to her at such a time, must have made use of commonplaces, which he appeared to consider adequate. He would have set them down on paper earlier, he said, but he had shrunk from intruding upon her and had also been kept busy by troubles of his own here, although not to be compared with hers in magnitude, had left him little leisure for correspondence. He was sure, however, that she would not attribute his silence to indifference—and so forth.

It was easy enough to read between the lines and to guess at the nature of the troubles alluded to. His sister, no doubt, had been horrified by the intelligence that the man who had once been her husband was about to contract a second matrimonial alliance; she would have said some hard things about the Wentworth family, which Colonel Medhurst was in no position to contradict. Nay, he must have shared her indignation and disgust; for how was he to know anything about the cruel dilemma in which the Wentworth family had been placed? He might, to be sure, have been wise enough and charitable enough to understand that one member of that family would not have given way without reasons of overwhelming cogency for so doing; but, when all is said and done, wisdom and charity are not such every-day qualities, and since Mariel did not intend to marry Colonel Medhurst, it was perhaps a matter for congratulation that he had been thus summarily and effectually cured of a vain attachment.

That he had been cured was quite evident. She read his letter through again from beginning to end and was more than ever struck by its cold and constrained tone. No lover could possibly have written so formally, nor could he have felt any doubt as to the sense in which his composition would be interpreted. Indeed, he had evidently been at some pains to make his meaning unmistakable. 'You are not what I took you for,' he seemed to say. 'Of course, under the circumstances, I feel your bereavement, I cannot openly upbraid you; but I wish you to know that you have lost both my love and my esteem.'

Now there are very few women in the world, or men either, who can endure to have that kind of thing said to them. Most of us, knowing full well that we deserve all the love and esteem we are ever likely to get, would be made exceedingly angry by such a statement; but Mariel, who was in a deplorably low condition of mind, was only moved to tears by the thought that her best friend had turned his back upon her. She did not blame him; his conduct was—at all events ostensibly—justified by hers, and perhaps, if no allowances were to be made, she might be said to have fairly forfeited the friendship which he had been so kind as to offer her. But she pitied herself very much, and she realised for the first time what a heavy penalty was implied in the payment of that forfeit. She had always been lonely. Now she was absolutely and utterly alone; nothing remained to her, save the intermediate companionship with James, and the pleasing duty of ordering James's dinner for him every day.

But who can tell when the turning in the long lane of misfortune has been reached? Mariel had begun to devote her attention once more to cookery-books—since that appeared to be her sole mission in life—when one evening, not long after this, Mr Wentworth entered the drawing-room with a smile of suppressed amusement upon his lips which seemed designed to provoke inquiry. It produced

that effect after a minute or two and elicited a prompt reply.

'You want to know what I am laughing at?' said he. 'Well, I will tell you because it is really funny, and I hope it will make you laugh too, though I notice that you have rather lost the trick of laughing lately.'

'Neither you nor I have much reason to feel merry,' observed Mariel, with a shade of reproach in her voice.

'My dear girl, sorrows are sorrows, and jokes are jokes. We are so constituted that both appeal to our sensibilities, and why should we pretend that we can't laugh through our tears, when the phenomenon is one of daily occurrence? Permit me to indulge my humble little joke and don't be so foolish as to accuse yourself of heartlessness if it tickles you. What should you think of me in the character of a blushing bridegroom, for instance?'

If this was a joke, it was not a very successful one. Mariel had never lost sight of the possibility that her brother might marry again; but that he should contemplate such a step just now amazed her and, to tell the truth shocked her into the bargain. She said something more or less appropriate and gravely inquired the name of her future sister-in-law.

'Ah,' answered Mr Wentworth, leaning back in his chair and nursing his leg, 'this is where the comic part of the business comes in. I should like to make you guess; but you look so forbidding that perhaps I had better hurry the point and secure my reward of cheers and laughter without more delay. The name of the lovely and accomplished being who has deigned to bestow herself upon me is—Mrs Hill.'

Muriel was so taken aback that she could only stare incredulously. Her first impression was, that her brother was amusing himself by talking nonsense, but on scrutinising him more closely, she thought she could detect a certain shamefacedness beneath his assumption of jocularity. 'I don't know what to say, James,' was all the reply that she could make, after a prolonged pause. 'You have always cited Mrs Hill as an example of everything that is vulgar and ridiculous; but I suppose that you must be serious and that you are telling the truth.'

'I am certainly telling you the truth,' answered Mr Wentworth; 'as for my being serious you will perceive that the subject is not one which lends itself very readily to serious treatment. Mrs Hill, is, of course, ridiculous and she may also be vulgar, although I do not remember calling her so; but she is good-natured, she has plenty of money, and I am convinced that she will take the greatest care of me. Moreover she will provide me with constant diversion. Far be it from me to utter a word of complaint against you, my dear Muriel; but you must acknowledge that home has not been made particularly diverting for me of late. And I really cannot live without diversion in some form or other.'

It was impossible to feel very angry with one who was so candidly selfish. 'You have a right to please yourself, James,' began Muriel hesitatingly, 'and now there is no need for you to consider anyone except yourself. But—but Mrs Hill, of all people!'

'Oh, she is rather old and rather fat, and she lies open to hostile criticism in a great many respects. She possesses, however, the solid merits which I have enumerated. I understand the significance of the reproach which you convey so delicately when you tell me that I am not now called upon to consider anyone except myself; but in all sincerity don't you think I have as much consideration for you as you have for me? I am not asking you to live in the house with Mrs Hill; I know you wouldn't do such a thing; but then I also know you won't live much longer in a house with me. Nothing seems to me more certain than that you will either marry or join some eccentric society before the year is out. Now isn't it a fact that your eyes have already begun to turn longingly toward your friend Compton?'

The retort was fair enough. There are more ways than one of displaying selfishness, and Muriel could not but acknowledge to herself that if Mr Compton had offered, at any time since her return home, to receive her into the Society of St. Francis, she would have been sorely tempted to abandon her brother to his fate. She did not answer his question, but somewhat hastily disclaimed any intention of reproving him; and so, after a few more words, the conversation ended.

Later in the evening she was able to derive some comfort from the thought that she was at all events emancipated by this change in her prospects. Mr Compton might continue to disbelieve in her vocation; but he could no longer represent to her that her duties began and ended at home. She was about to be deprived of her home; she would have to provide herself with a fresh one; she was not sufficiently advanced in age to live alone, and surely she was entitled, if ever any woman was, to claim the refuge afforded by the association of which he was the head. Since he did not choose to come to her, she would go to him; she would lay her case before him, begging him to disregard all preconceived notions that he might have formed respecting her and to treat her as what she was—an individual without family ties and with a certain amount of money which she was anxious to expend in furthering the objects that he advocated. In common justice and consistency he could scarcely dismiss her. Being thus firmly resolved as to her course, she went to bed in comparatively good spirits and slept more soundly than she had done for a long time past.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

NOT ENGAGED.

'Are you engaged?'—He whispered low
And low the sad sea breezes
Went sighing through the stilly night
And through the leafy trees.

'Are you engaged?'—He whispered low
And low the white capped billows
Come drumming in upon the beach
Green fringed with drooping willows.

'Are you engaged?'—He whispered low
And low the night birds winging
Their silent courses through the sky,
Brought distant notes of singing.

'Are you engaged?'—He whispered low.
'No, no,' she said, and tarried
A moment, while he kissed her hand,
'No, no,' she said, 'I'm married.'

A TRIUMPHANT FOOTBALL CLUB.



THE Alhambra Club (Dunedin) by their victory over the Athletic Club (the champion club of Wellington for the year) brought to a successful close what has been a brilliantly successful season. The first fifteen played 12 matches, all of which they won, scoring 25 goals and 27 tries, while the score against them only amounted to 4 goals and 8 tries. Backed by the system that is at present in vogue, the Alhambra scored 87 points while 17 were obtained against them. It may be of interest to know the scores of individual players in the team, and by virtue of his place kicking G. Restieaux heads the list. This crack place kick was responsible for 25 goals kicked from tries, a really splendid record, in addition to which he has placed two tries to his credit. W. H. Noel has been the heaviest scorer of tries, having the substantial number of ten to his name; A. Downes secured three tries and potted two goals; T. Cunningham obtained two tries, and U. Crawford four. Of the forwards G. M'Laren has scored most, four tries being down to his account, but J. Baker and D. M'Laren follow him closely with three each; W. Johnston obtained two tries; and A. Esquilant and J. M'Court one apiece.

The following list shows how the club's record for the season is made up:—

- March 28—v. Star (Invercargill): Won, 2 tries to nil.
- May 9—v. Kaikora: Won, 4 goals 1 try to 1 goal.
- May 23—v. Merivale (Christchurch): Won, 2 goals 1 try to 1 goal.
- May 30—v. Taieri: Won, 1 goal 2 tries to 1 try.
- June 5—v. Pirates: Won, 1 goal 2 tries to 1 try.
- June 13—v. Union: Won, 1 try to nil.
- June 20—v. Zingari-Richmond: Won, 2 goals 1 try to nil.
- June 27—v. Dunedin: Won, 4 goals to nil.
- July 11—v. Kaikora: Won, 2 goals 1 try to 1 try.
- July 25—v. Union: Won, 2 goals 1 try to 1 goal 1 try.
- August 1—v. Dunedin: Won, 7 goals 2 tries to 1 try.
- August 27—v. Athletic (Wellington): Won, 1 goal 1 try to 1 goal (penalty) 1 try.

The Alhambra Club first came into existence in 1884, when, at the request of about a dozen young fellows, Mr W. J. MacLaughlin, then a prominent member of the Zingari Football Club, convened a meeting, which resulted in the formation of the present club. In his position as President



F. L. Jones, photo., Dunedin.
MR. W. MACLAUGHLIN,
Founder of Alhambra Football Club.

Mr MacLaughlin found the first difficulty which presented itself was the want of a suitable ground. He then applied to the City Council for a piece of bush land, which was granted. The bush was so thick that he and the city surveyor, on visiting the spot, had to cut a track before they could go over the site. Despite the manner in which the proposition of forming a football ground in such a place was ridiculed, he and a few other enthusiasts set to work, and subscriptions having been raised, a small contract was let for the clearing of the bush. The members of the Club, with laudable zeal, assisted at these operations in the evenings and early mornings with such good effect that in the following season the ground was used constantly for playing on. Varying success followed until a few years after when, having beaten all the junior teams, they considered themselves sufficiently strong to cope with senior teams. An attempt to amalgamate this and the Zingari Club having fallen through the latter then joined the Richmond, and formed what has since been known as the Zingari-Richmond Club. Owing to this amalgamation Mr MacLaughlin severed his connection with the Zingaris, and devoted all his energies to forwarding the Alhambra's interests, and was elected captain. The first day's play under his captaincy after their advent as a senior club resulted in their first second and third fifteens winning their respective matches. The second and third fifteens won the premier positions for that year, the first only losing the same honour by a narrow majority. About this time, too, a number of the Club's supporters presented them with a banner. The Club has successfully continued its career until it now heads the list for the South Island, having this season, under the captaincy of Mr McCleary, not only beaten all the Dunedin Clubs, but also the premier teams of Wellington, Canterbury, and Southland. The last two, indeed, met a similar fate last year, when the Alhambra beat them at Christchurch and Invercargill, respectively. Although the Club has paid all travelling expenses incurred by the teams representing it, the Club is in a good financial position, having a credit