

to be even with her another day. However, for now he let them turn, bowing obsequiously to Jessie with a cold snarl on his handsome face. So from that day there was a feud between them, and Jessie felt the first forebodings of coming ill disturb her newly found peace.

Strange to say Mrs Rothsay possessed the greatest possible faith in Rufus Lilworth. He had been her husband's college chum; his people were well connected; she had known his sister in her girlhood, and when Edward Rothsay had told her of the application for the post of manager she had thrown her atom of weight into the scale of acceptance. He seemed a link of the old life, almost a brother at times, and she could not understand Jessie's evident disinclination for his further acquaintance.

"Poor girl! She must be engaged to someone else," thought the kind hearted lady, "and perhaps he is a scamp."

She sincerely liked Jessie, whose presence had brightened the home life of Havenside not a little, who was ever ready to sing, play, sew, ride, read aloud, or talk of English scenes and people, as her hostess—as Mrs Rothsay liked to be called—might wish, and whom Mamie simply idolised. A most efficient nurse too proved Jessie, for when Mamie took a feverish cold, and cruel croup threatened her her little life, it was Jessie's prompt measures and clear perception that came to the rescue; and no hand could soothe the little sufferer like hers, no voice hush her to sleep like the sweet, low tones of her young governess. So passed the weeks and months quickly away. No mail brought any welcomed Home letter to Jessie. She was quite alone in the world, and these new surroundings absorbed all her love and care.

If sometimes a wistful thought would wing its way across the broad Pacific it never seemed to take form or attract to itself an answering chord of love. All was silent, and the past seemed buried, save in memory.

Rufus Lilworth was wont to bring home the mail bag from the little bush post office he passed on his daily rounds. On one particular occasion there was given to him a paper addressed to Miss Komisky, and simply out of curiosity he drew it from its wrapper to read the news.

An advertisement caught his eye:—"If this should find Miss Komisky, who left London on June 18, will she please communicate with Charles Forester, G.P.O., Melbourne. Still true."

Here, he thought, was the solution of the mystery. She loved another. If she could be made to believe that other false or dead he might at last prevail. Should he deliver this paper? Again and again the thought of evil was suggested until in a lonely spot of road, where no one saw him save God's watchful angels, Rufus lit a match and watched the last scrap of that paper as it curled and blackened at his feet. There! It was done. Now she might never know that Charlie was faithful, or at least not until she was the wife of another, and that other should be himself. So he rode on, and that very night he sought Jessie, declared his love, only to be refused, repulsed, with quiet dignity, and told that love for him was impossible.

Chagrined, baffled, he retired, determined, however, to bide his time, and in some way obtain power to gain his end.

CHAPTER III.

"I hear we are to have some near neighbours," said Rufus one day, as he presented himself at early lunch. "Some new arrivals have taken up the next block, and we shall soon see a flourishing station. A house is to be built without delay."

"Oh, I am indeed glad," cried Mrs Rothsay. "Have you heard the name of the newcomer?"

"Mr and Miss Hepworth, late of Hepworth Manor, Berks, having met with reverses, after the manner of many, desire to retrench and mend their fortunes by becoming sheep farmers and wool growers in this lonely land," said Rufus; "and very good neighbours they should prove."

"Squire Hepworth has always kept his pack and followed the hunt. I believe his horses were far-famed too, and have been the means of bringing him to grief. However, he will soon find plenty of sport here, and if he can retrieve his fallen fortunes will soon

keep his hounds again, I trust. Miss Komisky, have you ever ridden to a hunt?"

"No," replied Jessie. "I have passed most of my time in the town, with exceptional visits to health resorts with mamma. I have never even seen a hunt."

"Then the sooner you learn to follow the hounds the better," was the reply, "and I will teach you."

"It had much rather be excused, Mr Lilworth, thank you," said Jessie, as she rose from the table. "It is but cruel sport at best, and I prefer to remain at home."

"You two are always sparring," said Mrs Rothsay. "It would be simply lovely, Miss Komisky, to see a hunt once more. I often rode with my father when I was at Home."

Jessie only shook her head and left the room, with Mamie clinging to her hand.

Then Rufus spoke out. "I do wonder why that girl dislikes me? I am hopelessly in love with her, and she knows it. I would do all in my power to make her happy, but she shuns me at every point, cannot you help me, Mrs Rothsay?"

"Win her I must, there is no another girl in the colony whom I could love as I love her, she must and shall love me, or —"

"Or what, Mr Lilworth? You cannot force affection; you must have patience. Jessie is a good girl, worthy of any man's choice; she will see in time how devotedly you love her, and appreciate your patient steadfastness."

But Rufus thought of that paper. And meanwhile Jessie was thinking to herself, "If he does not desist from his detestable attentions, I shall have to leave this home, and seek a livelihood elsewhere."

So in due time the Hepworth house was finished, the surrounding out-buildings completed; numbers of men employed upon the estate, fencing, ploughing, draining, planting, etc., and at last the family themselves arrived upon the scene.

There was the Squire, his three sons, two daughters, and last, but not least, the maiden aunt who had taken upon her portly shoulders the responsibility of conducting the household management, and chaperoning the daughters of her widowed brother; for all of which kind and arduous responsibilities she declared she obtained but poor thanks. "Indeed, my dear," the good lady exclaimed on the occasion of Mrs. Rothsay's first call, "it is no light matter I have undertaken, I assure you; and my brother Samuel only smiles at my difficulties, and says, 'girls will be girls, you cannot put old heads on young shoulders.' It's all very fine, but suppose a mesalliance should occur in the house of Hepworth, I wonder what brother Samuel would say?"

"He would be the first to complain bitterly of the want of training, of the loss of a good mother, etc. Indeed, Mrs Rothsay," continued Miss Hepworth, "I should get all the blame."

"My dear Miss Hepworth," replied the amused little lady, "indeed you need have no manner of fear of such a catastrophe occurring here; there are simply no men, except the labourers, shearers, and a manager here and there. You see the town, such as it is, is a safe distance away, and I am sure you will not be troubled with many visitors here; if you wish to keep your nieces single, you have done quite the right thing to bring them here."

"Mrs Rothsay, I am not so sure. I actually saw a man critically eyeing us the other day; a gentlemanly looking fellow enough, but I've no doubt a nobody."

"Oh, I suppose it was our manager, Rufus Lilworth, you need not fear him; his heart is lost to a really nice girl, who does not know when she has a good chance; and he is well connected at Home. My husband visits his people."

Somewhat consoled, poor Miss Hepworth looked with less suspicious eyes upon Rufus after this; indeed, riding parties were formed, and Mr Lilworth was always one of the number. Picnics were arranged, and then he could not be overlooked, for he made himself so necessary to them all, so obliging, and attentive, indeed Aunt Hester became quite charmed by the way in which he managed and arranged everything for their comfort.

Jessie became a great favourite with them all, especially with Ellen and Alice; for they were wont to declare that Aunt Hester was "horrid," and life was not worth living; and a thou-

sand other things which Jessie's bright face and charm of manner helped them to forget.

Time passed very pleasantly that summer; and then a letter came which filled Mrs Rothsay's heart with dismay.

It was from her husband's sister, telling of Edward Rothsay's sudden illness and death at his father's home in Berkshire.

Overcome with grief, the widow at last decided to leave Havenside Station in the hands of Rufus Lilworth, and return to England with her little girl, and a faithful nurse.

Rufus and Jessie accompanied her to Lyttelton, and saw the poor lady off on her homeward journey.

Then it was that Rufus renewed his appeal, sure, that now he was virtually master, living at the house, etc would accept him. But he had reckoned without his host. Jessie declared that "she would never return to Havenside, and she would never be his wife."

A wild idea entered the mind of Rufus. "Jessie," he said, "you must hear me; I know why you always refuse me; you love another—a Charlie Forester in England. Believe me, I heard of his death from Harold Hepworth, but to save you sorrow, I kept it from you. I destroyed the paper that had the notice. But now, dear, in it any use waiting for him any longer? Come to me, and I swear I will make you the happiest woman in Canterbury. Jessie, don't you see how I love you, I cannot live without you."

"Hush, Mr Lilworth," cried the girl, whose face had grown suddenly white and set. "However you obtained the knowledge of Mr Forester's death, and whatever you may know about him, I hold it a cowardly thing of you to trade upon such knowledge; and again I tell you, that I will never be your wife. Leave me, I wish to see you no more."

So Rufus returned alone to Havenside; and Jessie obtained a situation as assistant to a lady who kept a dry goods store in the township.

Here was change of scene and occupation, which was decidedly a benefit.

Mrs Lucas speedily found out the value of her assistant, and after a year or so, offered her a partnership, which Jessie accepted, placing all her small capital in the business, and thus became quite a small capitalist.

Time passed, Mrs Lucas became so attached to Jessie, that she placed the fullest confidence in her, and presently retiring through uncertain health, enabled Jessie to purchase by degrees the whole of the business.

By this time Christchurch had grown a considerable town; prosperity was apparent all around, and some really fine buildings were in course of erection. Sometimes the Hepworths, came to town, and poor Aunt Hester would confide her grief to that "very sensible young person, Jessie Komisky." Ellen was married to Rufus Lilworth; Alice engaged to a young surveyor, and actually the old Squire, instead of buying a pack of hounds, as had been anticipated, had taken to himself a young wife, the only daughter of an officer who had retired upon his pension, in a pleasant little home on the Avon.

"Well, Aunt Hester," replied Jessie, at the end of the recital, "there is only one remedy. You should follow their example."

Now, whether the good lady really took Jessie's words to heart, or whether it was purely an accidental occurrence, has never really transpired, but this is certain, according to the "Press" of the day, that Miss Hepworth, of Hepworth Manor, Berks, England, was married to Captain Charles Jackson of the ship "Goodwin," on a certain day therein recorded.

And thus ended the most important episode of Aunt Hester's life.

Just at this time Mrs Lucas died, and as she had neither kith nor kin, she left all her worldly goods to Jessie Komisky, in recognition of her kind services during her illness, etc.

Jessie thus became comparatively a rich woman, and of course offers of marriage were not wanting, all of which she most steadily refused, and why?

Because one night shortly after Mrs Rothsay's departure, she had had a dream, in which she saw her young lover, Charlie Forester, standing on a sandy plain, beneath a scorching sun.

A long line of camels passed slowly by, tired, patient beasts, looking exhausted evidently for lack of food. Then all

were lost to sight and only Charlie remained, standing alone, stretching out his hands to her, saying in a low familiar voice, "Jess, wait, if I live I will come. Wait!" and he faded from her sight.

No she waited still, so firm was her conviction that he lived.

The years passed. Streaks of grey appeared among the strands of gold, and Jessie realised in many ways that she was not growing younger. No word had ever come, yet still she felt he lived, and she yet would meet him.

One day a ship came in to Lyttelton, and among her passengers was a tall, dark man, whose bronzed face told of much travel and toil. Eagerly he looked around, and seeing a newsboy, called for a paper. Scanning the pages hastily, he seemed to find what he wanted, for without further comment, with only a stern, set look on his face, a sudden hope in his eye, he set out for Christchurch. He reached it ere long, the pretty little town, and gently laid out around the central square, and again referring to his paper, turned towards the street he sought, that led to Miss Komisky's drapery establishment.

He looked around a little, then entered, and addressed a smart young body at the counter, asking "if Miss Komisky could be seen?"

Presently there came to him a woman, calm browed, steadfast eyed, with that look of waiting in her eyes, which only he could read.

He stretched out his hand to her, and said: "Jess, my Jess, is it really you?"

And she? She never cried, or fainted, or did anything of the kind. She only laid her hand upon his arm, and took him aside into the office beyond. There she looked him in the eyes, and said: "So you have come home to me, Charlie?"

"Yes, my love. I have sought the colonies through for you. I went to Australia, thinking you were there; advertised for you, got no reply; thought you were lost to me.

I went on an expedition with Burke and Wills, and just escaped with my life. They all died, even the camels, in the desert, some by hunger, others by the blacks.

Then I came to Sydney again, then to New Zealand, and in Auckland, I saw the "Press," and your name.

I would not write, it might not have been true, you know; but Jess, it is, Am I too late?"

"No, Charlie, I saw you in the desert. I knew you would come."

And then, only then, he folded her in his arms, and let the hot tears fall that only a strong man sometimes sheds, upon her face as she rested on his heart.

They were very quietly married, and people wondered why Miss Komisky should marry such a nobody as he; but as she herself appeared perfectly satisfied, it really mattered little what other folks thought. Handsome presents came from Squire Hepworth, whose regard for her was very great; also from Mrs Captain Jackson, and the rest of the family. Also in due time a package from England from Mrs Rothsay, who had never forgotten those old days.

Charlie Forester told his wife all the story of his seeming faithlessness, how his people had kept him from any knowledge of her mother's death, or her whereabouts, sending him on a Continental agency in desperate haste. How, on his return, he had sought in vain for her, till at last he learned she had gone to the colonies. With this vague direction he had started in pursuit, the result being weary years of search, which ended at last in happy reunion.

"Never mind, Charlie, better late than never," was her reply.

The sunset flow is on the close of life; we leave them there, true man and happy wife.

The Queen has an album in which are written the dates of the birthdays of all Her Majesty's children, grandchildren and other relatives. It is the duty of her private secretary to keep her informed of the approach of any of these festive occasions, but her memory is so good that his services in this respect are seldom necessary. Pearson's.