The Bow of Orange Ribbon

A ROMANCE OF NEW YORK

By AMELIA E. BARR.

Author of "Friend Olivia," "I, Thou and the Other One," Etc.

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CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

And it was during this hour of trial to Miriam, that Joris was talking to Lysbet of her. It did him good to put his fears into words, for Lysbet's assurances were comfortable; and as it had been a day full of feeling, he was weary and went earlier to his room than usual. On the contrary, Lysbet was very wakeful. She carried her sewing to the candle and sat down to think.

In the midst of her reflections, Bram returned. She had not expected him so early, but the sound of his feet was pleasant. He came in slowly, and, after some puttering, irritating delays, he pushed his father's chair back from the light and with a heavy sigh sat down in it.

"Why sigh you so heavy, Bram? Every sigh still lower sinks the heart."

"A light heart I shall never have again, mother. For me there is no hope. So quic, and shy was my love."

"Oh, indeed! Of all the coquettes, the quiet, shy ones are the worst."

"No coquette is Miriam Cohen. My love life is at an end, mother."

"When began it, Bram?"

"It was at the time of the duel. I loved her from the first moment. O mother, mother!"

"Does she not love you?"

"I think so; many sweet hours we have had together. My heart was full of hope."

"Well, then, my son, be not easy to lose thy heart. Try once more."

"Useless it would be. Miriam is not one of those who say 'no' and then 'yes.'"

"Nearly two years you have known her. That was long to keep you in hope and doubt. I think she is a coquette."

"You know her not, mother. Very few words of love have I dared to say. We have been friends. I feared to lose all by asking too much."

"Then, why did you ask her to-night? It would have been better had your father spoken first to Mr. Cohen."

"I did not ask Miriam to-night. She spared me all she could. This is what she said to me, 'Bram, dear Bram, I fear that you begin to love me, because I think of you very often. And my grandfather has just told me that I am promised to Judah Belasco of London. In the summer he will come here and I shall marry him.'"

"What said you then?"

"Oh, I scarce know! But I told her how dearly I loved her and I asked her to be my wife."

"And she said what to thee?"

"My father I must obey. Though he told me to slay myself, I must obey him. By the God of Israel, I have promised it often.'"

"She is a good girl. I wish that you had won her, Bram." And Lysbet put down her work and went to her son's side; and with a great sob Bram laid his head against her breast.

"As one whom his mother can comfort, eh!" Oh, tender and wonderful consolation! It is the mother that turns the bitter waters of life into wine. Bram talked his sorrow over to his mother's love and pity and sympathy; and when she parted with him, long after the midnight, he said cheerfully, "Thou hast a brave soul, mijn zoon mijn Bram; and this trouble is not all for thy loss and grief. A sweet memory will this beautiful Miriam be as long as thou livest; and to have loved well a good woman will make thee always a better man for it."

CHAPTER XII.

London Life.

The trusting, generous letter which Joris had written to his son-in-law arrived a few days before Hyde's departure for London.

Hyde knew well the importance of Katherine's fortune. It enabled him to face his relatives and friends on a very much better footing than he had anticipated. So he was no longer averse to meeting his former companions; even to them, a rich wife would excuse matrimony.

His first social visit was paid to his maternal grandmother, the dowager Lady Capel. He found her in the most careless dishabille, wigless and unpainted, and rolled up comfortably in an old wadded morning gown that had seen years of snuffy service. But she had outlived her vanity. Hyde had chosen the very hour in which she had nothing whatever to amuse her, and he was a very welcome distraction. And, upon the whole, she liked her

So she heard the rattle of Hyde's sword and the clatter of his feet on the polished stairs, with a good deal of satisfaction. "I have him here and I shall do my best to keep him here," she thought. "Why should a proper young fellow like Dick bury himself alive in the fens for a Dutch woman? In short, she has had enough, and too much, of him. His grandmother has a price claim, I hope, and then Arabella Suffolk will help me. I foresee mischief and amusement. Well Dick, you rascal, so you have had to leave America! I expected it. Oh, sir, I have heard all about you from Adelaide. You are not to be trusted, either among men or women. And pray where is the wife you made such a fracas about? Is she in London with you?"

"No, madam; she preferred to remain at Hyde, and I have no happiness beyond her destire."

"Here's flame! Here's constancy! And you have been married a whole year! I am struck with admiration."

"A whole year—a year of divine happiness, I assure you."

"Lord, sir! You will be the laughing stock of the town if you talk in such fashion. They will have you in the playhouses. Pray let us forget our domestic joys a little. You can make a good figure in the world; and as your cousin, Arabella Suffolk is staying with me, you will be the properest gallant for her when Sir Thomas and the House. Here comes Arabella, and I am anxious you should make a figure in her eyes."

Arabella came in very quietly, but she seemed to take possession of the room as she entered it. She had a bright, piquant face, a tall, graceful form, and that air of high fashion which is perhaps quite as captivating.

Arabella made Hyde a pretty, mocking courtesy, and he could not help looking with some interest at the woman who might have been his wife.

Katherine was ignored in the conversation that followed, and Hyde did not feel any desire to bring even her name into such a mocking, jeering, perfectly heartless conversation. He was content to laugh and let the hour go past in flim-flams of criticism and persiflage.

A couple of hours passed; and then it became evident, from the pawing and snorting outside, that his horse's patience was quite exhausted. Hyde went away in an excitement of hope and say anticipations. A momentary glance toward showed him Lady Capel and Lady Suffolk at the window, watching him; the withered old woman in her soiled wrappings, the youthful beauty in all the bravery of her white and gold pondesoy. He made them both a profound bow, and, in a clamor of clattering hoofs, he dashed through the square.

During the next six months society made an idol of Capt. Hyde, and, if he was not at Lady Arabella's feet, he was certainly very constantly at her side.

Hyde loved his wife, loved her tenderly and constantly; he felt himself to be a better man whenever he thought of her and his little son, and he thought of them very frequently; and yet this joy in his existence, this sense of his voice daily led his cousin, Lady Suffolk, to imagine herself the empress of his heart and life. Unfortunately, his military duties were only on very rare occasions any restraint to him. His days were mainly spent in dangling after Lady Suffolk and other fair fames. And it must be remembered that the English women of that day were such as England may well hope never to see again. In the higher classes they married for money or position, and then, in a clamor of flattering hoofs, she dashed through the square.

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