

HEIGHT OF THE RIDICULOUS.

Write some lines on a time
In wondrous merry mood.
And thus it was as usual say,
They were exceedingly good.

Lady Latimer's Escape.

BY CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.

CHAPTER IX.—CONTINUED.
It had been arranged that on New Year's eve a grand ball should be given. The entertainment was called a ball, but it was to comprise charades, music, cards, and everything else that was enjoyable.

I forgot all about myself; my heart was heavy over her. I could not divert myself of a fear, a foreboding that something was to happen that night. A presentiment of coming evil seemed to weigh me down.

They neither saw nor heard me; they were sitting behind a group of white camellias, tall trees with glossy leaves, and I was on the other side, hovering near her, always fearful, yet without knowing why.

I turned away sick at heart, and from the depths of my soul I prayed heaven to save her, for she was in deadly peril.

CHAPTER X.
How, or how suddenly, I missed her, I cannot tell. Whenever Lady Latimer quitted a room she seemed to take some of the brightness away with her.

Where was she—the beautiful, radiant, graceful woman who had given light and brightness even to that bright room? Not with Colonel North, that was one comfort, for he stood at the end of the ball room, talking to some ladies; but when I came to watch his face, it was unlike itself, there was a strange expression on it, as though he were waiting, and waiting impatiently.

"The carriage will be at the turn of the road by 2 o'clock."
Oh, God! did it mean that? I stood for a minute paralyzed; my heart almost ceased beating, the blood ran cold in my veins, my limbs trembled. Could it mean that?

Quick as thought I went to Lady Latimer's room. There was nothing unusual at first sight, but when I opened the wardrobe door, I saw the blue velvet and pearls hastily thrust aside. I knew—I knew she had gone away with him, and had chosen the night because they imagined during the excitement they would not be missed.

"No," I answered; "you are not strong enough to save yourself, but I am strong enough to save you. Unless you, Colonel North, strike me down dead, you shall not take her."
I do not kill women," said Colonel North.

"What, in heaven's name, brings you here, Audrey Lovell?" cried Colonel North.
And I answered, "Heaven itself, to save her from ruin and death. You shall not take her away; we are close to the lodge gates, and if you try to pass them and take her with you, I will raise such an alarm that you will be overtaken in five minutes, and she shall be dragged from you by force."

"Come back with me, my darling," I said, "come back. It is only a bad, evil, black dream; come back with me; no one shall know."

"You mean well, Miss Lovell," said Colonel North, "but if you have any heart in your breast, you will not ask her to go back. I maintain that she is not married—marriage means a union of hearts, it means two souls made one."

"Marriage means the vows taken before God and man, which can never be broken," I cried.
"Can you ask her," he continued, "to go back to that loveless, cheerless, miserable life?"

"I will make a heaven on earth for her," I cried.
"You cannot," I answered; "and if you try to do it, you will lose her both worlds. Oh, my darling, come back with me! Never mind the misery, never mind the pain. It is all as nothing compared to what you will and must suffer if you go with him. Come back, dear."

could not live without him; let me go."
"Let her go, Miss Lovell," said Colonel North, in a tone of deep emotion. "You mean well, you are very good. But she could never be happy there again—never again."

"She shall go!" said Colonel North, in a low, resolute voice. "Unload your arms, Miss Lovell. I have won her by right of love; she is mine and I shall take her!"
I tightened my clasp on the trembling figure.

"She belongs to Lord Latimer," I said, "and while he lives no man shall take her from him."
She flung her arms round my neck, and cried to me:

"There is no time to lose," I said. "If you take one, you take both; if you take Lady Latimer, you take me; I will not lose my hold on her until she is safe from you. I repeat there is no time to lose. You do not fear my words; I shall give a cry that will soon bring help to us."

"One word, Colonel North," I said. "I will keep your secret, but it must be on my own terms. You must leave the house to-morrow morning under the pretext that you have received a telegram, and you must swear to me that you will never return. If you do so, I shall at once tell Lord Latimer all that has passed."

"I am sure I heard voices," she replied.
They looked about for some time, then went in-doors again.

Plato believed that diamonds were formed by a vitrifying quality imparted to certain portions of pure water by "star-shine." Pliny says that the diamond is the hardest as well as the most valuable of the precious stones, and that it can only be softened by immersing it seven days and seven nights in goat's blood.

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