A ROMANCE.

HAPPY SEQUEL TO AN UNPLEASANT MISUNDERSTANDING.

How the Old, Old Story Was Told Under the Boat—All's Well that Ends Well.

Nan Duncan made a mistake. It was absurd, of course, as mistakes usually are and a long, solitary walk through the country was the result, But the frequent glimpses of the lake through the tress, and the cool, damp air, heavy with the quiet fragrance of the woods, were very refreshing to the city girl as she walked briskly along, humming to herself and meditating. If those dark clouds above did not burst before she reached her destination, this would not be such an unpleasant adventure after all, she thought.

How foolish it was of her to make that mistake to be sure! What could have made her so absent-minded? How they all would laugh, how Jack would laugh, when she told how she had gotten off at the wrong station and had to walk the distance to their cottage. Of course Anne and Cornelia had driven to the Pine Nook station for her. She had written a note accepting their invitation to visit them at their lake home, and they had answered, "We're delighted, will meet you at the train."

When they did not find her at the train, what would they think? Probably they would not care. Nan felt that the friendship between them would not be very strong. She thought the girls given too much to fashion and society, and knew they thought her too free and independent. But they were Jack's cousins. Why was she going to visit them, she asked herself. Well, they were urgent; so was her mother, and then she had no reason for refusing. Jack would not be there; he was in the East, and she was glad. She did not want to see him. "Are you sure?" something asked. "No, I did not." This aloud with a little toss of her head.

She knew Jack did not care for her in the least; that was galling to her pride and she was angry with him. He must explain himself before they would be on the old friendly terms again. How many pleasant hours they had spent together. After all he was bright and fascinating, and handsome too. If he were at the lake now, instead of miles away, and if matters were as they used to be, what good times they might have on the water, what delightful strolls through the woods! It could not be now. Why had the fool remark come between them? It meant so much to her.

"Thank goodness," why had he said it? Indeed he did have something to explain. What could he have intended? To tell her in a rude way that she was nothing to him? Nan breathed quickly. Could he have misunderstood her? What had he been saying? Oh, yes, they were returning from the last of a series of lectures and he had just told her of his near departure for the West. He was going to his old home to live. The news had startled her, had made her a little faint. For a moment, she had said in a low tone, "Then this is the last time we shall be in lecture hall together." Her voice had quivered and foiled.

And then, oh, how angry it made her to think of it! he had heartily and immediately ejaculated, "Thank goodness."

Stung her to the quick and her proud, over sensitive nature did not permit her to ask for an explanation. She saw only one thing he had been trifling with her. His devotion had been meaningless. At the door he had asked, "When would she come to the lake? Would she not come when he was there, before he went East?"

"It makes little difference," she had coldly answered. Did she not have reason for her coldness, she asked herself. Was it any wonder the servant said, "Not at home," when he called a few days later? It seemed a long while since she had heard from the Lough Anne and Cornelia.

One mile more and she would be with them. Still she could not get those two little words of Jack out of her head. "Thank goodness!" repeated itself again and again. It made her bitter, furious, unreasonable. Such a pretty thing, too. Perhaps he misunderstood her, perhaps he did not mean it. A bright look beamed through the frown that had clouded her brow. If only she was not so sensitive and did not take everything so seriously.

In this mood she emerged from the woods, and found herself face to face with the Warren cottage. It had two verandas, an upper and a lower. She could hear a group of young people talking on the upper. She [illegible] right up by the outer staircase and surprise them. Nan had mounted the first few steps when—what was that? her name? It was distinctly spoken.

"Well," Anne Warren was saying, "you can't imagine how glad I am that Nan Duncan did not come. Its a great relief."

Nan stopped short, dumbfounded.

"Don't be so jubilant, my dear," said her sister, "she may come yet. Of course I don't want to say anything against the girl, but then, she bores me terribly with her books and queer notions."

"But why did you invite her, then?" inquired a sarcastic, [illegible] voice, which made the pretty listener start. "Jack here? I thought he was East. Oh, what will he say next? I must go hear him speak once more—then I'll go."

"Policy—her wealth—soufiht after—position—put up with eccentricities," were snatches from Cornelia.

Then Anne said, "Perhaps we don't understand her."

"That must be for she is an unusual girl, in the fineness and beauty of her nature," said Jack Warren, "I'm sorry she did not come. I declare its raining! Excuse me, will you, while I attend to that boat of mine."

"I'll say 'thank goodness' on my own account, now," thought Nan, as as she walked rapidly away in the rain. But not before Jack had seen her. With one glance he took in the situation, said nothing to his cousins, but quickly followed the retreating figure. At the edge of the woods she turned and put out her hands with a look of welcome. She was delighted over something and the light she saw in Jack's eye when he spoke to her made her so.

"You heard?" he asked, with concern.

"By mistake, I got off the train two miles from here and walked through the woods," Nan explained hurriedly. Yes. I heard," she added, with a strange expression of elation.

Jack was mortified. Would those cousins of his never hold their tongues?

"Well, Nan, what will you do?" He was still troubled.

"Do you see two courses of action?" inquired Nan, saucily.

"No, my dear, little Yankee, I confess I do not," slowly said Jack, looking at her with eyes full of affection, but I wish it was possible for you to forgive and forget."

"I'll forgive and forget—them," replied Nan in a mischievous way, "not you. Do you know, I really think that—it is raining quite hard."

"Well, I know you well enough to know that you won't go into the Warren cottage for shelter. Come to the boathouse, you're getting wet."

"No, I'll not go in any boathouse of theirs," said Nan.

"It's raining hard, Nan, and that umorella is no protection. Really, you will take cold."

"No I won't. This is just a passing shower; when it stops I'll walk to the station and take the next train."

"Well," said Jack, looking about, "if you won't, you wont, I suppose. Ah, I have an idea! Perhaps if I turn over my old row-boat on the beach, you will come and sit under it? It belongs to me," he added, slyly.

"Of course, and it will be great fun, too. But will they see us from the cottage?"

"No, come on." A few minutes later they were comfortably seated beneath Jack's boat. The rain came down in sheets, but they were safe and dry.

"Jack, your cousin's remarks this noon were somewhat disagreeable, but you—you were my friend and I thank you for it," began Nan, in a hecitating voice.

"Nonsense, Nan, if you knew how much—"

"And then," she hastily interrupted, "I thought after that remark of yours, coming from the lecture, our friendship—"

"My remark, Nan? What do you mean?"

"Thank goodness. Don't you remember! Why did you say it?"

"Thank goodness," said Jack mystified. "I don't recollect—him—oh, maybe I did, when you spoke of those dry lectures being over."

She had misunderstood.

"What a mistake! I am so sorry, Jack."

Then came, explanations and confessions, and there under the old boat, while the sun smiled on them through the vast scatterlug clouds, the old, old story was told again.

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