

# The One Woman By Baroness Von Hutten



Campion was so sunk in his reverie that he did not hear the light tap on his door, and after a pause the door was opened and Madge's voice said: "May I come in, Humphrey?" He jumped up. "Of course—of course, come in, my dear. Sit down here."

She obeyed, sitting so that the red firelight fell on her little dark face, and drew a great blaze of color out of the diamond on her left hand. It occurred to Humphrey that he had paid for the ring, and he asked himself, not without humor, whether it would become his, in the breaking off of the contract it stood for, or whether Paul would give it to Aurora?

"Humphrey, Aunt Julia says that Paul is coming to-night?"

"Yes, he is."

"And she is crying. Humphrey, what has he done now?"

"That is, do you know, a rather sad question for a girl to have put about her—that is—" He laughed and broke down.

"I know it is a sad question, but he is such a mad thing! I really believe he can't help getting into mischief. We always speak of mischief as if it were a peaceable bog, into which people founder, but in Paul's case it seems to me that mischief is like a stage snow storm—it follows him around and descends on him of its own volition."

"That's not, my dear, and you know it. He gets into trouble through—weakness."

The girl winced. "You are hard on him, just because you happen to be strong."

"Am I strong? If I am, it isn't a mere happening; it never is, so far as I know. And you are indulgent to him just because he has charming blue eyes and can sing Tosti's love songs to you. In shocking bad Italian du resto."

"I'm not indulgent to him, Humphrey. I hate his being that way. Sometimes, when he lets himself just drift into some awful scrape I could—box his ears."

"If you feel that way why not give it all up?"

"I didn't say I don't care for him. I do, of course I do. You know that. But I feel as if he was a naughty child. That's why I came in tonight. I want you to tell me what my mad boy has been up to this time, and then I want you—just and plain—to talk it over and decide what we had better do."

Humphrey frowned. He couldn't tell her himself, and yet every word she uttered made him feel more of a brute, and more of a hypocrite.

"It money?"

"No."

"Thank heaven for that! For that's where I can't help him. Well, what is it?"

"I can't tell you, Madge. He'll tell you himself."

"But I want you to tell me! He hates so to hurt me, he never tells me the whole truth. I have a right to know, Humphrey. And you know the last time he was here, he tried to persuade me to marry him at once. Perhaps I ought to. It might help him. What do you think?"

She looked at him earnestly as she finished.

"I—really, Madge," he broke out, rising, and walking away with an impatient frown; "why do you ask me such a question? I know nothing of such things."

"You do, Humphrey. If you had been in trouble—just out of—of amiable weakness, and a wish to please people, and Lily Runyon had offered to marry you at once, would it have been a help?"

He realized as she spoke that his situation was an unusual one. As a rule a masterful, strong man has, by the time he has reached his forty-second year, reduced his womanhood to an at least ostensible timidity, but his mother was not afraid of him, and now here was this little thing daring to speak to him of Lily Runyon!

"Lady Barker would never have done such a thing," he answered dryly, "and I really don't see what she has to do with the case at all."

"You do see. But you are disagreeable this evening. I am glad Paul is coming. He may be weak as you are so fond of saying," she went on, with a rush of inconsistent indignation, "but he is, at least, not as cross as a bear!"

"I'm sorry I was cross, but—"

"O, it's of no consequence. I'm sorry to have troubled you with my small affairs. I shall ask Paul what he has done, poor boy, and then—I'll ask him to marry me at once, and we'll be weak together!"

"Madge! You mustn't do that—I say, you really mustn't!"

He caught her hand as she passed him, and held her fast.

"But I can, and I will. If I hadn't said so, in August, we should have been married by this time, and he might not have got into this dreadful scrape which so offends you."

"Look here, Madge—now don't wriggle; it's no good,



you know, for you can't get away. You must tell Paul you'll marry him at once. Wait until you've had a talk with him."

She stared, struck by something in his voice.

"Why should I do that?"

"Because—he'll probably tell you what his troubles—"

"And you think that I'll draw back? O, Humphrey, you frighten me so. Is it so bad?"

"It is—yes, it is bad," he cried, with sudden vehemence, dropping her hand. "It is damnable!"

Sir Humphrey's language in the hunting field was noted for being anything but academic, but it was the first time that Madge had ever heard him utter arid oaths. She stood quite still for a moment, and then, going to him and laying her hand on his arm: "Humphrey, you must tell me, for I can't wait."

"Then—be—O, Madge, it kills me to tell you, but—he has fallen in love with another woman!"

"The blow was so utterly unexpected that it took her breath away."

"And—he was afraid to tell me!" she said at length.

"Yes."

"Who is she?"

"A Miss Anstruther—I think you had better ask my mother to show you his letter. He knows he is behaving like a scoundrel!"

"I'm glad he knows it, for it's what he is doing. Anger is always easier to look on than tears. Humphrey was almost grateful to her for taking it thus."

"Now, little Madge, if I could only think it does not hurt you badly."

She hesitated a moment. "Of course it hurts, Humphrey, but—I think it's more my vanity than anything else."

"Madge!"

"Yes, you see, I have struggled, for I did love him with all my heart. But I have grown to know you better of late, and his weakness has stood out so against your

"It would be a pretty maxwell quart d'heure to give him. And after all, I am not yet eighty!"

When Paul Campion came into the drawing room that evening, at about 10 o'clock, he found his mother sitting alone.

"Well, mother, here I am. Where's my reverend brother?"

"He's in the garden with Madge," she replied, nervously.

"With Madge?"

"Yes. They go and look for them, Paul."

"How queer you look at me. Are you really so angry, after all? I know I behaved badly, but—she is the only woman in the world for me. I—I couldn't help it."

Lady Campion rose. "I'm not angry, Paul—ah, here they are!"

Sir Humphrey came in as she spoke, a rose in his coat, a smile on his face. "Hallo, Paul, old fellow! Look here; I've not behaved well towards you, but—well, she's the only woman in the world for me, isn't it?"

"The only woman—what do you mean?"

Paul's handsome face, as yet so rarely puzzled, turned from his brother to his mother, and back again.

"Yes, it's Madge. She—Paul we couldn't help it, could we, Madge?" The girl entered the room as he spoke, and stood close to him, her face downcast, but covered with blushes.

"Madge! You don't mean to say you and Madge—"

"You going to marry?" he repeated dryly. "And Madge; I seem to have an impression," he added, recovering himself a little, "that Miss Palfrey was engaged to me—"

"O, Paul, I am so sorry—"

He turned to his mother. "I am going to the inn, mother. I cannot stay under this roof. Will you come to me tomorrow morning?"

"Then, with a low bow, he left the room."

Sir Humphrey looked after him. "Poor old Paul," he said, kindly, "I shall make a good provision for him; will you tell him, mother?"

"I am so surprised that I can think of nothing, Humphrey," returned her ladyship, "and I must say that, considering you had his plan in your head, you might have omitted your lectures on Paul's business this afternoon." She passed her handkerchief to her eyes. "My poor boy! Then she left the room."

Madge sat down. "O, Humphrey," she said, faintly, "I wish we hadn't done it!"

"I don't. I'm glad. He deserved it."

"I know he did, but poor Aunt Julia!"

"Aunt Julia has nothing to do with the case, Madge. In such a situation, she only people who have anything to do with it are the man himself and—the one woman."

The girl shuddered. "O, don't use that expression. How you did rub it in! I don't see what you made me so horrid and vindictive. I should have been simply thankful to be free."

"I enjoyed his wriggling; don't pretend to be sanctified, my dear."

"Humphrey!" She rose and faced him indignantly. "I'm not pretending anything. I am ashamed of myself, though, and of you. Why, Humphrey, you, who always tell the truth—how could you?"

Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke. "I know it's horrid of me to be so ungrateful, but when it comes to the point, I'd much rather have just let him jilt me than have you be for me!"

Sir Humphrey's reddish face whitened.

"Madge! But, dear, you needn't be ashamed of me. I haven't lied."

She looked at him with dazed eyes. "You haven't lied?"

"No, Madge; you are the one woman for me, and I've known it for weeks. Will you marry me?"

She turned, and walking to the window, stood looking at the moonlit lawn for several seconds. Then she turned, and he saw that the tears had overflowed and were rolling down her soft cheeks. "You want to marry me? You?"

"Dearest, come to me—"

She went and gave him her hands. "You have known for weeks, Humphrey; how could I be so stupid as never to guess why I didn't love Paul any more?"

"That was not love which went," he quoted, taking her in his arms. "Thank God you found out in time, my one woman."

"Thank God—"

LADY Campion took up the letter that she had dropped into her lap, and with a sigh and a frown read it again.

"Dear Mother, You never quite approved of my half-engagement to poor little Madge, and I am sure, when the first shock of my behaving like such a sweep is over, you will not be altogether sorry to hear I have met and am engaged in form to—the one woman in the world for me. I was going to run down home to see Madge, sometime this week, for of course as soon as I saw how things were going I knew I shouldn't marry her, but last night (wait till you see Aurora) in a black evening gown, you lover of the beautiful! I lost my head utterly. Will you tell Madge? I know it's a hard thing for you to do, but, dear mother, I am in such a state of still half-incredulous exultation that I'm afraid I'd make some awful blunder. I can't help thinking, however, that she will not care much, for she must have found out by this time what a hopelessly unintellectual chap I am. Dear little thing, I hope she won't take it hard, for I am so happy that I want every one else to be the same! Perhaps in time she will have pity upon Tompest in a Teapot."

"Now, Mummy dear, you'll be a lamb and smooth matters for your outrageous boy, won't you? Aurora has seen your picture in my watch, and says she loves you already. Old Humpy will be furious, and give me one of his horrid cold wiggings, I suppose, but that is a detail. —Best love for you from your affectionate, Paul."

Lady Campion's handsome face was full of trouble as she read. Paul had always been her torment, as well as her delight, but this was the first time in her life she had felt herself to be ashamed for him. Until tonight her great love had proved stronger than her sense of justice, but as she laid down his letter she felt, with a pang, that this time she could not stand between him and his brother's wrath.

"Humphrey will be furious," she thought, rising wearily, and walking about the room in her distress, "and—Humphrey will be right!"

Paul was right in one thing. She had never been satisfied with his engagement to Madge. Palfrey, Madge seemed to her to be a charming and suffering companion to herself, but Paul was wrong to have let himself fall in love with a dependent!

Now, however, as she reflected on the situation, moving restlessly about the long, flower-filled room, the fact of the young girl's poverty and dependence seemed to make Paul's cruelty the more heinous! She remembered the morning when she had found her dreaming over a fire, and the little creature had courageously done Paul's bidding and "broken the news" to his mother.

"I am good enough for him," Madge had said, "though of course you do not think so, because I love him so much."

"She loves him so much!" I wonder how I can tell her."

As Lady Campion put the question to herself the door opened, and her eldest son came in.

"Look here, mother," he began, with the lack of all soothing preliminaries which always rather annoyed her, "do you know anything of Paul's devotion to a Miss Anstruther?"

Sir Humphrey sank down into a low chair by the fire, and with a blow from the poker shattered a smoldering log, and sent a red light splashing upon her reluctant face.

"I never heard of a Miss Anstruther in my life," she returned promptly, "and I wish you'd be a little more careful of the rug. Look at that scrag!"

Sir Humphrey frowned, but trod on the spark of fire in question before he went on.

"I've a letter here from Clara Cust, in which she says that unless she had happened to know that Paul is engaged to Madge she would expect an announcement in connection with this Miss Aurora Anstruther. That can mean only one thing. Do you know anything about it?"

Lady Campion came of a family in which lying in so-called small matters was regarded leniently, and Humphrey's nerve truthfulness, which demanded as much as it gave, was a quality that always annoyed her. If a lie had been possible just then without a certainty of immediate detection, she would have told it. As it was not possible, she suddenly lost her temper.

"He writes me that he is engaged to an 'Aurora.' Somebody; I suppose it must be this Miss Anstruther," she returned crossly. "Don't be any more disagreeable about it than is necessary."

Sir Humphrey turned to her. "Give me the letter," he said, slowly. When he had read it he handed it back.

"Paul is a beast," he said in a quiet voice, much belied by the swollen veins about his temples. "Have you told Madge?"

"The letter came an hour ago, and she is out."

"And you yourself, mother, what do you say?"

"I? My dear Humphrey, you know that Paul and I are made of the same paste. I am sorry for Madge, but I confess I don't see, having fallen in love with this Miss Anstruther, he can do anything besides break his silly half-promise to Madge! 'Love knows no law!'"

She spoke with an airy carelessness which was far from feeling, but he always got on her nerves, this big, black-browed man with his painfully plain language.

"Honor knows a law, however. I've wired Paul to come down. I wanted an explanation—Clara's letter was quite conclusive—"

"To come down! How unkind of you, Humphrey! Think how painful for him to be in the same house with Madge!"

"I hope it may be," he returned, grimly. "I mean him to tell her himself. He can be decent in that one detail, at all events."

"And you will pride yourself on having arranged a most miserable half-hour for both of them! I really cannot see—"

"Then I'll tell you, mother. He must tell her himself because, if she had been one of the Mowbray girls, or Katy Wiscombe, for instance, the possibility of shifting the unpleasant burden of doing so on to some one else's shoulders never would have occurred—even to him!"

Lady Campion shuddered. "Thank heaven it isn't one of the Mowbray girls or Katy! We can be thankful for that much, at least!"

Sir Humphrey's grim mouth relaxed into one of the sudden, half-unwilling smiles characteristic of him in his relations with his mother.

"Yes—I suppose you are grateful to him for breaking the heart merely of a poor little companion!"

"Nonsense! 'Breaking the heart' indeed! Because you choose to let your life be ruined by a woman, you must not think that all hearts are as brittle as yours!"

Lady Campion was a brave woman; almost as brave as her big son himself. Not many people would have dared say to him what she uttered so glibly, as she walked up and down the room. He did not answer her for a moment, and then said, without heeding her speech: "I wired him an hour ago, so he will come down by the 9-10, if he was at his club."

"You are sure of your power?"

"I am. He is in debt again. Ah! There's Madge's voice. Poor child!"

He was busy, ostensibly with the poker, when the girl came in, and did not look around while she read aloud a list she had made of books to be sent down from the library.

Then he rose and went to his study. It was so painful to him to see her all unconscious of the blow about to fall on her, that he could not stay. She had come to him with his mother seven years ago, on the death of her father, a distant cousin of Lady Campion's, and watching her grow from what was almost childlike into womanhood, he had become fond of her. She was clever, too, and it amused him to give her books to read, and then, discussing them with her, to mark their influence on her young mind.

When Paul had come home from Japan and fallen suddenly in love with the girl, Humphrey had not been pleased, but her influence on his handsome, able, young brother was good, and then the older man, admiring and liking her, had little by little grown to be glad that Madge Palfrey should become the mother of Paul's son, and thus, ultimately, of his own successor.

And now—who was this Aurora Anstruther? And what would become of her influence on Paul?

## The House That Jack Built.



This is the wife, that lived in the house that Jack built.

This is the man, all tattered and torn, that carried coal for the young "greenhorn," that helped the cook of ample form, that cooked the food, that fed the maid, that worried the wife, that lived in the house that Jack built.

This is the maid, that worried the wife, that lived in the house that Jack built.

This is the man, all shaved and shorn, that tended the furnace every morn, to help the man all tattered and torn, that carried coal for the young "greenhorn," that helped the cook of ample form, that cooked the food, that fed the maid, that worried the wife, that lived in the house that Jack built.

This is the cook of ample form, that cooked the food, that fed the maid, that worried the wife, that lived in the house that Jack built.

And this is Jack, all wan and worn, he works all day from early morn, and vaguely wonders if he was born, to help the man all shaved and shorn, that fixes the furnace every morn, to help the man all tattered and torn, that carries coal for the young "greenhorn," that helps the cook of ample form, that cooks the food, that feeds the maid, that worries the wife, that lives in the house that Jack built.



A SONG OF THE 'SHEE.

Have you not heard us calling you? My grief, will you never hear  
Our voices in the quacken-boughs, when never a wind is near?  
The echoes of our reviling, when the stars are deep  
Plays half the world to uselessness and half the world to sleep!

Have you not seen and known us in many a strange disguise?  
Beneath the nun's hood marked you not the gleam of elfin eyes?  
You heard the gray nurse hushing the babe by the father's bier,  
You heard the widewid waiting sore, and us could you not hear?

You'll hear our feet pass softly amid the withered leaves,  
If you will put the world aside nor count the harvest sheaves;  
Turn from the white and dusty road that goes the churchyard way,  
And sit beneath the quacken-trees and dream 'tis yesterday.

You'll hear no sweeter singing than ours, though you roam far;  
You'll see no kinder faces 'twixt earth and the nearest star;  
Put lying by and selling! O harken and draw near—  
Have you not heard us calling you? My grief, will you never hear?

NORA CHESBORN.