

The Sound of Wedding Bells

—OR—
Won After Great Perseverance!

CHAPTER XXII.
Then he pulled himself up abruptly and grew crimson, for a sudden pallor had swept over Dulcie's face.
"I can safely promise that, my lord," she said, and she slipped the costly ring on her slim finger, and bent over it until the treacherous pallor had passed away.
"I knew it—I knew it," muttered Lord Edward, as he rose. "I wish I had that fellow, I'd break his con-founded neck!"

Dulcie wore her diamond ring—it was the only ornament that relieved her plain black cashmere dress, and Lord Edward was immensely gratified.

"Some day, my lady, she'll forget that fellow, and some one will run off with her, mark my words! That girl is fit to wear a coronet."

"You can wait till I die, and offer her yours, my dear," said the old lady, with a laugh.

Yes, her lines had fallen in pleasant places, and all would have been well if that bitter-sweet past could have been obliterated—if she could have forgotten that tall, soldier-like form, and the handsome, grimly grave face.

One morning Lady Brookley looks up from her letters, and utters a little exclamation. Lord Edward had gone out, and Dulcie was turning over the Morning Post for the fashionable intelligence.

"What is the matter?" she asks with her bright smile.

"Nothing's the matter, my dear," replies the old lady, nodding and smiling over her letters; "we're going to have a visitor, that's all."

"Yes?" says Dulcie.

"Yes, foolish boy!" goes on Lady Brookley, smiling. "It's a nephew of mine, my dear—a great favorite, but a dreadfully foolish and wild fellow. We haven't seen him for a long time, and wondered what had become of him. We've expected that he would 'turn up,' as he calls it, when he was in trouble."

"And as he is about to 'turn up,' I am afraid he is in trouble," says Dulcie. "Has he run away from school, or what?"

"School! my dear, he is a grown man, though really he is more like a boy, when we come to think of it, merriest-hearted, best-natured young man I know, my dear Dulcie, though he is my nephew. He has been getting into awful trouble lately, so he says, and writes more seriously than usual."

Dulcie looks over her shoulder, with pleasant interest.

"The boy is such an impulsive, reckless fellow," goes on the old lady; "you must know, my dear, that he is very handsome—now there's a chance for a compliment—you might say that that was only natural, considering his relationship to me."

"Let us consider that I have said it," says Dulcie; "well?"

"He is a very handsome boy, and dreadfully impressionable, always falling in love—and generally falling out of it."

"That is a pleasant way of spend-

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ing his time," says Dulcie; "pretty harmless, isn't it?"

"Yes, my dear, better than taking a theater, or going on the turf, as some of them do, but it appears as if his favorite pastime has resulted rather seriously for him."

"I see," says Dulcie, "he has got married."

Lady Brookley laughs.

"How sharp you are, Dulcie, dear! No, that is not just it. It seems that he has really fallen in love at last, and hasn't succeeded in falling out, and, worse than all, he hasn't been able to persuade the object of his affections to accompany him in the falling in."

Dulcie laughs softly.

"It sounds very dreadful; and does he tell you all this? If so, I should say that there was fair hope of his recovery. When lovers do their loves confide, you know."

"No, he doesn't tell me much, but I have heard it indirectly. It is the tone of his letter which strikes me so; he must evidently have taken it to heart, for instead of coming up to town for the season and enjoying himself, as he usually does, he has been wandering in South Wales, fishing. Now, if there is one place more melancholy than another in Great Britain, it is South Wales; it always rains there, you know."

"I suppose," says Dulcie, with a faint smile, "he went to mingle his tears with the water."

The old lady laughs.

"I'll tell him that when he comes, my dear," she says. "He always enjoys a joke, even at his own expense."

"He must be an angel," says Dulcie.

"Well, he is one of the best-tempered and kindest-hearted boys alive," says the old lady.

"What a foolish young person she must be to refuse him!"

Lady Brookley folded the letter with an emphatic nod.

"You are right, my dear, and if I knew her I'd tell her so!"

"Then you don't know?" asks Dulcie.

"No, I don't know her name. She doesn't move in society. He met her at some country house and fell in love with her there. Well, we must make him comfortable. He had better have the blue room—or perhaps the one next Lord Edward's dressing-

room. He likes to be in the south. Let me see—"

"Shall I see about it?" says Dulcie, who is always ready to take any trouble off the old lady's hands.

"Will you, my dear? You are always so willing. I don't know what I should do without you," and she puts the warm, white hand nearest her.

"Am I?" says Dulcie, with a little sigh. "It seems to me that I don't do enough to justify my existence, much less repay you for all your goodness."

"My dear, you do too much. Lord Edward is always flying into a rage over my hard-heartedness in letting you work so much. Don't talk about repaying; that's nonsense. Why, your pretty face about the place is worth a thousand a year, you silly puss!"

Dulcie leans over and kisses her.

"When is the love-sick young gentleman coming?" she asks.

"When? Oh, let me see," and she opens the letter again. "Why, bless me, he will be here this evening. I shall dine at the club and drop in afterward. That is just like men! Now why couldn't he dine here? This evening, my dear."

"Then I'll go and see about his room," says Dulcie, cheerfully.

"Shall I"—and she looks back from the door—"shall I put a bunch of forget-me-nots on the table, just to show that we sympathize with him?"

Lady Brookley laughs.

"What a hard-hearted girl you are," she retorts, and Dulcie goes out laughing.

She summons the indispensable Sarah and the house-keeper, and decides, after a conference, upon the blue room, and with her own hands gathers a big bunch of hot-house blooms and puts them on the table, fetches two or three volumes of poetry from the library and lays them beside the flowers, and puts those finishing touches in the room which only a woman can put, and without which even the most sumptuously furnished apartment is cheerless, and then felt satisfied.

"It is all ready," she says to Lady Brookley. "I have put some flowers, and a supply of poetry of the most mournful type, within reach; but if you take my advice you will get a box of cigars from Lord Edward's cabinet, and place them in the room; I believe that men when disappointed in love generally fly to tobacco."

"Very well, my dear," acquiesces the old lady, who does not always know when Dulcie is joking. "There's the key, get the cigars, dear, by all means."

And so Dulcie adds the box of cigars to the other consolatory articles, and awaits the advent of the disappointed lover with faint curiosity and amusement.

The evening comes, and Dulcie having poured out the tea, gets up and smilingly says:

"I am going upstairs, Lady Brookley. I am sure I shall be in the way when your nephew arrives; he will want to talk to you."

"My dear!" remonstrates Lady Brookley, "he won't say a word to me about it. Pray stay—he likes some one here; do, or he'll think it dull, and start off again to-morrow morning."

But Dulcie shakes her head, laughingly.

"Get him to confide in you," she says; "it will be such a relief to him. Perhaps I'll come down late in the evening, to say good-night, if I may, and she goes out, not a moment too soon, for the thunder of the big knocker resounds through the hall.

For all her cheerfulness, there is a shade of melancholy about Dulcie to-night, and she goes up to her room—which even Castle Holme is innocent of—and coils herself up in a big chair, and takes up a book.

But she cannot read to-night, and after a time gives up the effort, and sits with her hands folded in her lap, and her eyes closed, her thoughts wandering back to Hugh, and those few short hours of sweet delight.

Where is he now? she wonders, and what is he doing? Perhaps he has forgotten her, or if not forgotten her, looks back upon the short space in his life, in which she shared, as a wasted, mistaken time, a time full of peril, from which he has happily es-



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aped. Perhaps he has returned to his old love, the woman he really always loved—she shrinks with a pang of bitterness—the little woman with the auburn hair and changing eyes, and he finds comfort and consolation there.

"What a mistake it was," she murmurs, with an aching heart. "I should never have been happy. He would always have doubted me; his people would have been at daggers drawn with both of us; and—and—all would have been misery and wretchedness! And yet"—with a smile more sad than tears, in its little self-scorn and mockery—"yet I would choose misery and wretchedness with him, rather than happiness and a pleasant life with another. Oh, Hugh! if you had but believed in my love, I think I could have made you happy; yes, in spite of Lucy Fairfax. Will she, I wonder, make you as happy as I should have done? At least she will never try you as I would have been certain to do! Yes, it is best for you; but worse—worse for me! If we had never met—if that wretched will had never been in existence!"

Ah, wasted regrets! Life is made up of "ifs" and "buts." Sorrow's crown of sorrow is the remembrance of happier things!

Presently Sarah knocks at the door. "Lady Brookley's love, Miss Dulcie, and would you please come down?"

Dulcie rises reluctantly, and bathes her face, for there are signs of tears in her eyes, and goes down. She pauses a moment at the door to smooth the lace at her wrists, and hears Lord Edward's loud voice addressing some one in boisterous fashion as "my dear boy!" Then she enters. Lord Edward is standing with his back to the fire-place—his hands thrust in his waistcoat arm-holes—his jolly red face brimming over with good humour. Lady Brookley is seated at a table mixing a glass of spirits and water, Lord Edward's evening dose; but it is neither of these to whom Dulcie looks; for there, leaning back in the easiest chair, is Sir Archie!

(To be Continued.)

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Mr. A. S. Mace, J.P., endorses the above statement and says: "This is to certify that I am personally acquainted with Charles R. Tait, and believe his statement in every way to be true and correct."

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War News

Messages Received Previous to 9 A. M.

ON THE ITALIAN FRONT.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1.—Thirty thousand German soldiers, including two generals of divisions, were killed in the great battle of Bainsizza Plateau, according to cabled reports received here to-day. It is further stated that Gen. Cadorna is pushing his reserves rapidly towards the Italian front with every prospect of checking the enemy's advance. The assurance of British and French support which will be immediately forthcoming, has been announced by a War Council held in Paris to-day. Reassuring news came from Rome to-day in official despatches. The Italian front is described as far from desperate. Gen. Cadorna's army is declared to be practically intact, and the complete confidence is expressed in his ability with the aid coming from the Allies to stop the Austro-German drive. The cables summarize the situation as follows: The military situation on the Italian front is serious, but it is far from being desperate. At the present moment, however, recovered from their first surprise, it may be stated that our allies are pre-

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