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OR,
TRUE LOVE'S PASSION.

CHAPTER XXIV.
A Black Outlook.

"Why—why did he entice her away?" faltered Harman, not unreasonably.

He shook his head.

"There may have been reasons of which we know nothing," he answered. "We know nothing of Mr. Cyril Burne or his affairs, and cannot surmise his object in running off with her. He may have very good reasons for a secret marriage. For instance, he may be afraid of offending some relative from whom he has expectations."

"Marrying her!" echoed Harman, doubtfully, and yet with a gleam of hope.

"Yes," he said, with quiet confidence. "My belief is that Mr. Burne intends making your niece his wife."

Harman drew a long breath and looked agitatedly at Norah; but Norah avoided her eyes, and stared straight before her, vacantly as before.

"I have no doubt we shall find that they were married this morning."

A shudder ran through Norah's frame, and the hand that held the reins shook.

"Yes," he resumed, musingly, "the more I consider it, the stronger I am convinced that my theory is the right one. Why did Mr. Burne go off to London so suddenly, and why did he come back so secretly, so to speak. He must have gone up to make arrangements for their flight and marriage, and no doubt he came down, using the fete as a blind, to carry her off. Depend upon it, they are married by this time."

"Oh, if I could only think so, sir," murmured Harman, clasping her thin hands.

"I am sure of it," he said. "I can scarcely explain why I feel so convinced that I am right, but I am convinced. However, we can soon find out the truth."

Harman looked at him anxiously and expectantly.

"If you will allow me to help you, Mrs. Harman," he said, "I will undertake to trace them and discover what has really happened."

Harman could only look at him with unpeaking gratitude.

"Yes," he said, reflecting, "I know a person in London—a detective—who will have no difficulty in working out the whole matter, and I will telegraph to him at once."

"I—I don't know how to thank you, sir," faltered Harman.

"Don't you think that will be the best plan, Lady Norah?" he asked, speaking to her for the first time.

Norah forced herself to reply, "You are very good."

"Not at all," he said, with self-deprecation. "We must all help each other when and how we can, and I am only too glad to be of some slight service. Don't be anxious, Mrs.



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Hartian; all will come right."

But Harman's eyes filled with tears again.

"The scandal, sir!" she moaned; "we have always been so respectable."

"As to that," he said, thoughtfully, "I think we might prevent any gossip if we took proper steps."

Harman waited breathlessly. "Oh, sir, if we could!"

"It is easy enough," he said quietly.

"We have only got to say that we have heard satisfactory news at the station or elsewhere—"

He saw Norah's face suddenly flush, and he went on more cautiously: "You need say nothing, Mrs. Harman; in fact, the less you say the better. Leave it

to me. I am afraid I must tell a white lie or two, but it is pardonable to suppress the truth sometimes. I shall say that Becca has gone to a situation in London, which she had procured without the knowledge of her friends. She was such a restless girl that the story will be readily believed."

Harman sighed. "Yes, sir, she was always restless, poor girl!"

As she spoke a sudden pallor swept over Guildford Berton's face, for the vision of the motionless form rose before him, and the thought that she was restless no longer flashed upon him.

"I will go on with you to the village," he said, "and put this explanation into circulation, and then return to the station. I know the station-master very well, and I am sure I can show him good reasons for keeping the booking clerk silent, and he himself will understand that the affair is not to be talked about."

Harman faltered out her gratitude, and they drove on in silence.

"Will you put me down at the inn, Lady Norah?" he said.

Norah pulled up the ponies at The Chequers, and he got out.

"You are letting this matter trouble you, I am afraid," he said, leaning forward to her and speaking with the deepest respect and sympathy.

The color rose to Norah's pale face for a fleeting second.

"I—I liked Becca—once," she said, in a repressed tone.

"Yes, I understand," he murmured. "But do not let it worry you too much. I shall find her in a very short time, and I am sure it will turn out as I have said. She is Mrs. Cyril Burne by this time," and he smiled.

Norah drove off without another look at him or a word of good-by, and he went into The Chequers.

Mrs. Brown was still surrounded by a knot of idlers drinking her beer and discussing the event of the day, and Guildford Berton advanced to the tiny bar.

"Ah, Mrs. Brown," he said, in a cheerful voice, that was loud enough to be heard by the persons inside and outside the inn. "I thought you would like to hear the result of our inquiries. It's a very tame ending to the sensation, but we have discovered that Becca South has gone off to a situation she has got in London."

"There now!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, throwing up her hands, and a murmur of surprise—and possibly disappointment—rose from the rest.

"Yes," said Guildford, laughing lightly. "It is a very prosaic finish, isn't it? But I am glad it's no worse."

"Ah, you may well say so, sir," said Mrs. Brown, tragically; "we was just talking of dragging the pond—"

He looked her straight in the face, but still smiling.

"Oh, nonsense; Becca was the last person, I should think, to commit suicide!"

"I shouldn't be surprised at anything Becca South did," said Mrs. Brown, pursing her lips, "and I'm glad it's no worse than it is. But there, it's just like her to go off like a flash o' lightning and without a word to any one. Why couldn't she tell her aunt and her grandfather, like an ordinary girl?"

"Because Becca isn't an ordinary girl," he retorted, pleasantly. "But, as you say, Mrs. Brown, we are all glad it isn't worse."

"And what about my Mr. Cyril?" demanded Mrs. Brown, in a tone that implied that his disappearance was of far greater importance.

"Oh, he went up to London by the market train," he said, carelessly. "Important business, I expect. There is nothing wonderful in that."

"Why, he and Becca must have travelled by the same train!" said some one, shyly.

Guildford Berton turned to the speaker leisurely.

"Very likely," he said, easily. "However, I am glad the matter is set at rest. Good-morning, Mrs. Brown; good-morning all," and, humming an air, he sauntered out, leaving them to discuss the termination of the sensation.

Outside on the bench the man Furlong was still lying, apparently asleep, and Guildford Berton scarcely noticed him.

He made his way back to the sta-

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