



Ruled Destiny!

CHAPTER III.
AN EXTRAORDINARY STORY.

"That is my new companion, Edward," she said, with a birdlike laugh. "How late you are! Dinner is waiting!"

"I beg your pardon," he muttered to Floris. "Glad to see you."

Then shooting one keen glance at her, he allowed himself to be led away to make his apologies in the proper quarters. But still, though the butler hovered round the room, and the footman hung about as if ready and waiting, dinner was not announced.

"So annoying!" exclaimed Lady Pendleton. "We'd better go in!"

The gentlemen thereupon made for the ladies allotted to them, and there being one more of the fair sex than of the rough, Floris modestly drew back to follow the rest by herself.

But fate—well, say chance—had ruled that she should not go in alone. As she reached the door, there was a little confusion in the double file, and Lady Pendleton's voice was heard in good-humored complaint.

"Oh, Bruce, here you are! Really, it is too bad! Can't you keep time? Haven't you got a watch? Well, I'm glad you have come! Will you please take in the countess—and you, Mr. Parkis, if you please—"

"Oh, don't disturb yourselves, please," said a voice, deep, full, and yet strangely musical and attractive.

The sort of voice that makes hearers turn their heads to see the speaker. "The voice with a character behind it," as Swift says; and Floris saw a tall figure standing in the doorway. He waited until they had all passed but herself, then came slowly into the room.

Floris looked up and saw a tall, broad-shouldered man with the handsomest face she had ever pictured, and her imagination was not a poor one! But for the moment only one feature of the face struck her; the eyes. Calmly, masterfully, they rested upon her face, as if they took in the whole of her person in an instant, measuring her, weighing her and judging her, mind, body, and soul. One forgot, while under the gaze of those eyes, that the rest of the face was handsome, that the nose was straight, or the lips as seen under the dark mustache, clearly cut, or the short hair dark or fair; all she could do was to meet those eyes and try to satisfy them.

It was not until he looked away from her that Floris noticed how strangely well the evening dress sat on the stalwart, graceful figure, or that the one unglued hand was white and shapely as a woman's, yet strong-looking as a laborer's.

Then his gaze returned to her, and with a slight inclination of the patriarch, he quickly said:

"I am more fortunate than I deserve. Will you allow me?" and he offered her his arm.

Floris tried to call up some commonplace remark, but failed, and in silence permitted him to take her to the dining-room. His place had been reserved for him near the hostess, but with a disregard which in another would have seemed a rudeness, he sank into the chair next Floris, and the company had to reseat themselves.

"For what we are going to receive," mumbled Sir Edward; the butler, anxious about his delayed dinner, cut the rest short and the meal commenced.

There was a chatter and buzz as the soup went round, but Lord Bruce uttered not a word. He had not spoken when the fish gave place to the entrees, but he was careful to put the menu card near Floris, and once, when a footman, new to his duties, offered her champagne, said "Hock."

Floris wondered whether he meant to maintain silence during the whole of the meal; but, suddenly, and yet slowly, and as if he had been talking all the time, he turned his eyes on her.

"Have you been to the concert today?"

"No," answered Floris; "I only arrived in London this afternoon. What concert do you mean?"

"Alban's. Don't suppose that I have been, I never go to concerts. Who is that old lady opposite?"

"I don't know," faltered Floris.

"I have seen her somewhere. One never knows half the people Betty gets."

"You must include me in the half," said Floris, with a smile.

"Fairly hit!" he said.

The buzz of conversation went on for a while, then suddenly Lady Pendleton's thin, birdlike voice rose above all the others.

"Oh, Bruce!" she exclaimed, in a little flutter of excitement, "this isn't true that Lady Glenloona is telling me, is it now? She says that you are getting your yacht ready, and are going to the Levant."

He turned to Lady Glenloona, who did not seem over pleased at being quoted so publicly.

"Lady Glenloona is always well-informed," he said. "Yes, Betty, I am going to the Levant."

"Oh, it is too ridiculous!" exclaimed Lady Pendleton, with an injured air. "Just as everybody is moving too—"

"That is why I am moving."

"Oh, you know what I mean! Don't be provoking! The season is just at its height, and I want to get about! Who is to take me if you go off in that stupid yacht, pray? Can't you go sailing about when the season is over?"

"And it is wet, and cold, and generally stormy! Thanks! Are you fond of the sea?"

The question was addressed to her, not so suddenly, but so unexpectedly that Floris, who had been listening to this passage of arms with curious

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amusement, turned her face to him a little vaguely.

"The sea? Oh, yes! I don't know much about it. I have never done much sailing, if that is what you mean. It must be very delightful to get away from London while it is hot and sunny, and sail about the Mediterranean."

"Yes," he assented, but not very eagerly. "At any rate one may as well do that as anything else."

By this time it would seem as if he had finished his dinner, for he put his arm on the back of his chair and regarded her with a calm, yet not obtrusive attention, and into his eyes stole the appreciative expression of a keen critic more than satisfied.

Floris, happening to look in his direction, caught his eyes fixed thus upon her, and a faint thrill ran through her, which almost made her angry.

Who was this Lord Bruce, who was treated as a favored mortal, and allowed the privileges of a small despot, and why should he look at her as if she were a picture on approval?

And yet there was nothing disrespectful in the gaze he fixed on her; its very openness deprived it of rudeness and made it a compliment.

"Now, don't let Sir Edward talk you all asleep on politics!" said Lady Pendleton, with charming candor.

"And, Bruce, mind you come into the drawing-room. I want you to do something for me."

Floris followed the rest of the ladies into the drawing-room in "fine amaze," as Spenser says. It was her

first introduction to such society as that of to-night, and it amused and yet puzzled her.

Lady Pendleton carried Lady Glenloona into a corner to see some plates which she had recently purchased, and Floris seated a little apart, was left alone. She wondered whether she was expected to do anything, and was quite relieved when Lady Pendleton, looking over her shoulder, said quite humbly:

"Oh, would you mind playing something, dear, or singing; just to keep us all awake till the tea comes?"

Floris thought that it would be kinder to sing them something to send them to sleep, and going to the piano, played a sonata.

She was not a skilled musician, and she knew it; but she had a sweet voice, and waiting until the buzz of talk, which always begins at the sound of a piano, ceased, she sang a simple little ballad.

It was a song which she used to sing to her mother, and she was half sorry that she had chosen it, for it brought the tears to her eyes, and made her voice tremulous. Perhaps on that account it affected her listeners, for when she had got through one verse she found the attention of the half-slumbering audience riveted upon her.

Then she began to feel nervous and would have stopped short, but remembering that she was fulfilling part of her duties as a lady's companion, she went bravely on.

When she had finished she looked round, and saw that the gentlemen had entered very quietly, and that Lord Bruce was standing near her, his hands folded behind him, his eyes fixed on her face with an expression that was almost sad; instantly it vanished, and gave place to the usual calm impassiveness, and he came close beside her.

"That is a very pretty song," he said, in his low, grave voice. "Will you not sing us another?"

Floris shook her head with a smile. "You might not think the next one so pretty," she said.

He bowed with a faint smile, as if struck by the answer, and walked away. In an instant Floris caught herself regretting that she had made it, and then, ashamed that she should feel any regret, resumed her former seat.

The footman brought in the tea equipage, and, still intent upon making herself useful, she got up and went to the table.

"Can I help you, Lady Pendleton?" she asked.

"Oh, will you? Thanks!" responded her ladyship, eagerly. "It is very kind of you!" and she gave up her chair with alacrity.

Floris supplied two footmen, and sent them around with the tea, and was pouring out a cup for herself, when she heard two ladies talking behind her in a suppressed whisper and knew that they were talking of Lord Bruce.

"Not going away so suddenly in the middle of the season for nothing," murmured one of them.

"I should imagine not," assented the other, with that eagerness which denotes the scandal-lover. "I wonder what it is. Quite quietly, too. Hadn't even told Lady Pendleton. Some mischief, depend upon it. One does hear such dreadful stories about him! Not that I believe them, or one-half of them! Wasn't there some talk of his being engaged to his cousin, Lady Blanche?"

"Oh, that was some time ago. It would have been a good match for him then, but now things are altered. He doesn't want to marry money. Dear me, I never did believe quite in his affection for Lady Blanche."

Floris, with a strange feeling of disappointment, turned and stopped the conversation by asking them if they would take some more tea, and receiving a cold, haughty negative, returned to the cups again.

Several guests took their departure, and Sir Edward, muttering something about "the house," stole out as if glad to get away; but Lord Bruce still stayed on.

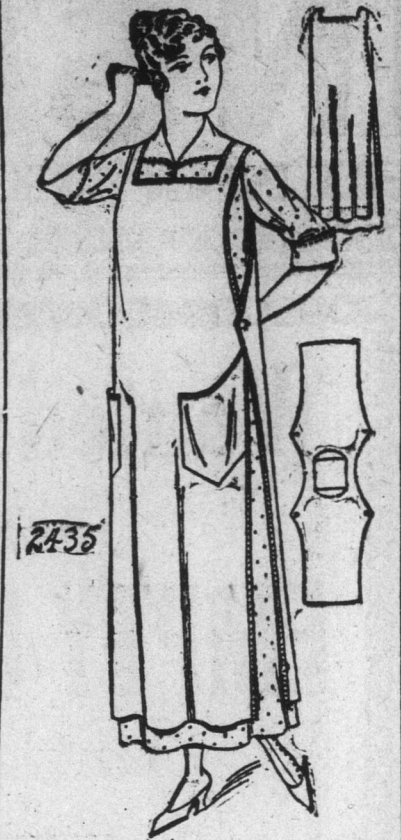
Floris got up and seated herself in a retired nook, and got an album containing the usual number of plain people in unnatural attitudes, when Lord Bruce rose, looked across at her hesitatingly for a moment, then came and seated himself by her side.

"The social pity," he said, nodding at the album. "Shall I tell you who is who? or, perhaps, you know them all?"

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WAR REVIEW.

The Allied stone wall of resistance is still being imposed against the Germans on the battlefield from Soissons to Chateau Thierry. Nowhere the enemy progressing. For the moment at least he is being held in tracks. The fury of the invader however, has not yet been checked for assault after assault on the front by the Allies. The ranks may give further ground which would enable the enemy to straighten out the curve in the line from Meuse to Soissons, northwest of Soissons, to Prosees, which lies southeast of Villers Cotterets. Great masses of artillery and large numbers of troops are being used by the Germans in almost continuous battles, but notwithstanding this fact the Allied line everywhere has held strongly, and several points the defenders have taken the offensive into their own hands and improved their position. Standing out in sharp contrast against previous reports issued by the German war office, claiming gains in feat of arms, or the falling back of the Allies, is the announcement in Berlin on Wednesday night that the situation is unchanged. The Germans are still suffering heavy casualties their unsuccessful assaults. Also the Marne front there has been no further fighting of great moment, though in the vicinity of Rheims the German artillery has begun a violent bombardment which probably induces another infantry attack in the region which has been relatively quiet for some days past. The African troops in the Lunelville sector are showing their merit in fighting with the enemy. Wednesday witnessed another venture carried off successfully by them. Thirty of the men from overseas attacking the enemy lines and penetrating to the defences and assaulting the 200 occupants of them with rifles, bayonets and grenades. The losses to the British were great, while the American casualties were very small. They still has been no resumption of the battle on the front in Flanders as Picardy, where the British are facing the Germans. The enemy, however, is carrying out violent bombardment on various sectors. In the Amiens sector near Morlaucourt the Germans made an attempt to capture British positions, but were repulsed. The British taking some prisoners. Near Lens the British also captured a number of Germans. Unofficial reports credit the Russians with a victory over the Turks and Germans in the Kars district of Trans-Caucasia. The enemy is reported to be in retreat and massacring the populations.

WORK OF THE SUBS.

NEW YORK, June 5.

Two more ships—a Norwegian steamer and one schooner—were added today to the list of vessels known to have been sunk by the German subs, raiding in American waters. The total now stands at thirteen, five steamers and eight schooners. The fact which stood out most prominently in the day's development is that the subs are still operating near the coast and have not returned to their bases, assuming the two already identified are the only ones on this side of the Atlantic. This was demonstrated when the Norwegian steamer Eidsvold was sunk off the Virginia Capes late yesterday. The location of the attacks shows also that the subs are moving steadily southward, if they are the same which attacked shipping almost at the gateway to New York Harbor. The Navy Department reported yesterday an encounter between a destroyer and a

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