

LADY ALYMER.

CHAPTER II.

AN UNEXPECTED APPOINTMENT.

About two months after this a sort of melancholy fell upon the little household in the Mansions. It took the form of a letter from Lord Alymer, the old savage at the end of the field, and as Dick in his first surprise exclaimed: "Now, who the devil is to expect the old savage would be up to his sort of game?"

He began by assuring his nephew that he was enjoying the very best of health, that he had not had a touch of gout for some three months, but that her ladyship was in exceedingly queer health—that she was, indeed, thoroughly out of sorts at present giving both himself and her medical adviser cause for the gravest anxiety. Then he went on to say that he had had a visit of nearly a week from his nephew Barry Boynton—"That Lord Skerversleigh," said Dick, as he read the letter aloud—and that Barry Boynton had been appointed Governor-General of Madras, and that as he—"the old savage" sat staring at his uncle's name in speechless surprise. She noticed his look, and asked, with a laugh: "What is the matter, Dick? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"Not a ghost, Lady Alymer," he said, recovering himself; "but I certainly expected to see more of a ghost than you are at this moment."

"Why, how do you mean?"

"I had a letter from Lord Alymer this morning, and he said that you were ill."

"Ill! I?" she echoed. "Nonsense! You must have mistaken him. I was never better in my life."

"I couldn't possibly mistake him," said Dick, firmly. "However, I'll show you the letter, there is nothing at all private in it."

No Lady Alymer took the letter and read it. "H'm," she muttered. "I am afraid the wish is father to the thought, my dear boy," she said drily. "It's true I had a touch of toothache or neuralgia about a week ago, entirely because he was consumed with gout—though, mind, he declared stoutly that he hasn't had gout for more than three months—and persisted in having the window open all the way from Leicester. But as for my health or anyone's health but his own giving him a moment's anxiety—why the idea is ludicrous, simply ludicrous. The gravest anxiety indeed! H'm! If I was lying at the point of death his lordship might be anxious till the breath was out of my body."

"That was just what I said to myself," said Dick, who had been on the very point of uttering his wife's name. However, Lady Alymer, I am very glad to find that you are alright and in good health."

"Thank you, Dick," she replied, holding out her hand to him; then, after a moment's silence, she suddenly burst out, "Dick what is he after?"

"Lord Alymer? I don't know," Dick answered.

"He is after something; I've known it for weeks, but I can't make out what," Lady Alymer went on. "First by his persistence that he has not got the gout. I had been married to him a great many years, but I never knew him deliberately deny himself the pleasure of gloating over his gout before. He must mean something by it. I thought, of course," she went on, with a nonchalant air, "that there was somebody else. But his anxiety about my health, and his desire to pack you off to India, where he knows you don't want to go, make one think differently. In any case, ever you do, my dearest boy, don't irritate him. Don't contradict him; tell him at once that you don't want to go to India—that is, if you really don't want to do so; but if he insists, take my most serious advice and temporize—put the time off anything—tell him you must have a week in which to consider the idea."

"Yes, I'll do that," said Dick, rising.

"Stay, we had better send him first," said Lady Alymer, touching the button of the bell. "Yes, Jenkins, tell Lord Alymer that Mr. Alymer is here and wishes to see him."

"Best to treat him in the imperial way that satisfies him," said her ladyship to Dick, as the man closed the door behind him. "I always do it when I want to make him a little more humble than usual. I don't do it at other times, because he is eminently a person with whom familiarity breeds contempt."

Dick laughed outright. "Very well, I will be most careful," he replied; then added, "It's a wretchedly good of you to give me a good tip out of your experience. I have never been able to hit it off with his lordship yet. Perhaps I shall be more fortunate this time."

"You may be," said Dick, of course, Dick, that it was your steady refusal to marry Mary Annandale that set him so thoroughly against you."

"Mary Annandale's money," corrected Dick.

"Ah! yes, it is the same thing," carelessly.

"But I don't believe Mary Annandale would have had me," Dick declared.

"Perhaps not. Still, you never gave her a chance, did you? Now, of course, it is too late."

"Very much too late," returned Dick, promptly, and grinning good-humoredly at the remembrance of how very much too late it was for him to build up the fortunes of the house of Alymer by means of a rich wife.

He turned as the door opened again. "His lordship will be pleased to see you in the library, sir," said Jenkins.

"I will come," said Dick.

"And good luck go with you," said Lady Alymer, kindly, as he went. "Come back and tell me how you get on."

Poor Dick! he did not get on very well. He found Lord Alymer sitting in a big chair in the library looking ominously bland.

"Good morning, sir," said Dick.

"Oh, good morning, Dick, sit down, my boy," rejoined Lord Alymer, quite tenderly. Dick gave himself up for lost at once,

but he sat down and waited for "the old savage" to go on with the conversation. For a minute or so Lord Alymer did not speak; he moved his left foot uneasily, in a way distinctly suggestive of gony twinges, and fidgeted a little with his rings and finger nails.

"You got my letter," he remarked at last. "Yes, I did, Sir; that brought me here," Dick answered.

"Ah, that's all right," said the old lord, in a self-satisfied tone. "Great piece of luck for you, my boy; great piece of luck. I couldn't have got it for any one else; in fact, I rather fancy Barry Boynton had somebody else in his eye, though, of course, he couldn't very well refuse me. Still, of course, I had to tell him you were devilish anxious for the appointment."

"But I'm not devilish anxious for the appointment," Dick broke in at last, "I'm not anxious for it at all."

For a minute or two the old man looked at him in profound amazement. "Dumme, sir, do you mean to say you are going to turn round on me after all the trouble I've taken for you? Dumme, sir, do you mean to tell me that?"

"Not exactly that," answered Dick, still keeping Lady Alymer's advice in his mind; but

"Then what do you mean, sir?" roared the old man, losing his temper altogether.

"I mean this," said Dick, firmly, "Up to now I have, as you know, always set my face against going to India. I have and I have the very idea of it. England is good enough for me, and I went with the Forty-third on purpose that I might not have to go to India, or lose a lot of seniority. What I want to know is this: What has made you take a lot of trouble, and put yourself under an obligation to Lord Skerversleigh, would be under obligation to what you know Lord Alymer looked at Dick as if words had failed him; but presently he found his tongue and used it freely. "Dumme, sir," he roared; "do you mean to accuse me of any sneaking, second-hand motives? For my soul, sir, I've a good mind to write to Lord Skerversleigh and ask him to consider the appointment refused. But stay, as he saw by Dick's face that this would be the most desirable course he could take, "I will do no such thing. Dumme, sir, I've had about enough of your airs and graces. Hark you, and mark what I say! To India you go without another word, or I cut off your allowance from this day week, every penny of it. As you yourself said just now, I go to a lot of trouble for you, put myself under a great obligation to a friend in order to serve you, and all the return I get for it is that you get on your high horse and accuse me of second-hand motives, Dumme sir, it's intolerable—simply intolerable. And I suppose you think I don't know why you want to shirk a year or two in India, eh?"

"I don't understand you, sir," said Dick with icy civility.

"No, no; of course not. And you think I didn't see you the other night at the Criterion, and mopping your eyes over 'Dumme, sir' afterward. Bah! you must think I'm a fool!"

For a moment Dick was startled, but he did not show it by his manner in the least. "Well, sir," he said quietly, "I have never been in the habit of asking your permission to take a lady to a theatre."

"No," the old savage snarled, in return; "nor when you wanted to start housekeeping in Palace Mansions either."

"And that was why you refused to marry Mary Annandale?" Lord Alymer snapped.

"Not at all. I refused to marry Miss Annandale because I did not care about Miss Annandale."

"Bah!" grunted the old man, in a fury. "I suppose you believe in all that rot about marrying for love."

"Most certainly I do."

"I don't mean to do it?"

"I don't mean to marry anybody at present," said Dick, coolly. He felt more of a sneak than he had ever felt in all his life to leave the old man in his belief that his dear little Dorothy was less to him than she was, yet he knew that for her sake, for the sake of her actual bodily welfare, he could not afford to have an open declaration of war just then. Sneak or no sneak, he must manage to put the time on a little until the child had come, and all was well with Dorothy.

Lord Alymer rose from his chair in a rage of tottering fury. "Listen to me, sir," he thundered. "It may be all very pretty and idyllic and all that, but you wouldn't marry such a girl as I chose for you, and now you are thinking you have any choice in the matter—you haven't. I've had enough of your excuses, and your shilly-shallying, and all your sentimentalities, love, and all the rest of it. What do you want, with love?"

"I believe you married for love yourself," suggested Dick, in his mildest tones.

"And repented it before three months had gone over my head, and have gone on repenting ever since," the old man snarled.

"Dumme, sir, that woman is never tired of throwing it at me. If I'd married her for her money, she couldn't very well have thrown that at me—been a fool if she had."

There was a moment's silence, then the old lord went on again: Look here, Dick, you've got to make up your mind to one thing—I mean you go to India, so you may as well go with a good grace."

"I'll think it over," said Dick.

"I want an answer now," irritably.

"That's impossible, sir, unless you like to take no for an answer, right away," Dick replied, firmly.

"I suppose you want to talk the matter over with the young lady in Palace Mansions," said the old lord, in his most savage tones.

"I don't think that would interest you, whether I did or not," said Dick, coldly; "but one thing is very certain, which is that I am not going to India without thinking over the whys and wherefores thoroughly over. I will come again on Friday, and tell you my intentions."

"And you'll bear in mind that a refusal of the appointment cuts off your allowance at once."

"I will bear everything in mind," said Dick, steadily; and then he shut the door, leaving the old man alone.

"Well?" cried Lady Alymer, when he looked in to the little boudoir again. "How did you get on?"

"We didn't get on at all," Dick answered.

"He means me to go to India by hook or by crook."

"And I wonder," said my lady, thought-

fully, "what it is that he has in his mind. No good, I'm afraid."

CHAPTER III.

DINNA FORGET.

After this interview it was Dick's pleasant task to go home and tell the news to his wife. It had to be done; it was useless to know why and where he had gone, and he was too eager to hear the result of his visit to his uncle to let him even light a cigarette in peace, until she had heard all that was to hear. In fact, as soon as he put his key into the door she flew out to meet him. "Dick, is it good news?" she cried, eagerly.

Now Dick could not honestly say that it was good news, but he did not wish to tell her how bad it was all at once; so he gently prevaricated, kissed her with even more than his usual tenderness, and asked her if she had been very dull without him and whether he had been too long away.

His well-meant prevarication had exactly the opposite effect to that which he had intended. Dorothy's sensitive heart went down to zero at once, and the corners of her sweet lips drooped ominously. "Oh, Dick! it is bad news," she said, mournfully. "and you are trying to hide it from me."

"No, no, I am not," he said, hurriedly. "But there's no need to tell all our private affairs just here for everybody to hear."

"But there isn't any everybody," said Dorothy; "there's only Barbara."

In spite of his anxiety, Dick burst out laughing. "Come in here, my darling," he said, drawing her toward the drawing-room; "and you shall give me a cup of tea while I tell you all about it."

"And you've not promised to go?" she asked, as she began to make the tea. "No, I don't trouble Dick, dear, it is lighted, and the water will boil in two minutes."

She had a pretty little brass stand, a tray, spirit-lamp and kettle, and with this apparatus she always made the tea herself. It was much pride, and some help from Dick. It generally fell to Dick's lot to light the lamp, but to-day she was all ready for him, and had to turn up the light a little to have the water boiling.

"There," she said, after about five minutes, and handing him a cup of tea. "Now, tell me all—everything."

"Well," said Dick, finding himself thus fairly up in a corner, and unable to put off the evil moment any longer, "I went."

"Yes?" eagerly.

"And I saw her ladyship."

"Oh! and is she up?"

"Up! My dear child, Lady Alymer is as well as I am," he answered.

Dorothy looked at him in wonder. "Oh, Dick!" she cried, "but what a wicked old man!"

"Ah! I fancy it runs in the blood," said Dick, easily. "One man couldn't have so much original sin of his own as the old savage has; it must be hereditary."

"Then do you think you will tell her how wicked stories you will tell Lord Alymer, Dick?" she asked roughly.

"Perhaps—who knows? All the same, there is one story I shall never tell you, drawing her tenderly toward him. "I shall always be true as the gospels when I tell you that I love you better than any other woman in the world."

Something in his voice touched the tender chords of her heart, and set it throbbing and beating with a sickening sensation of fear. "Dick," she said in a whisper, "is it very bad news that you are trying to break to me—does it mean India after all?"

Dick looked straight into her clear eyes. "My dear little love," he said, "am afraid it does mean India, after all; but if it does, it shall mean India for us both."

He told her everything then—how Lady Alymer had received him, how she had openly declared that her husband had some scheme of his own to get rid of them both, how the old savage had received him, and what end their interview had come to.

"But of course," he wound up, "although I took time to consider it, my mind was made up in a moment. I shall refuse the appointment."

There was a moment's silence. "Dick, dearest," said Dorothy, in a quivering voice, "is it a very good thing to be a military secretary to a governor-general?"

"Oh! well—yes—it is, dear," he admitted.

"I mean would you have refused it if you had not been married—if you had never seen me?"

"No, I don't suppose I should. I daresay I should never have bothered to get such an appointment, because, as you know, I hate the very idea of going to India, but at the same time, to be quite honest, I don't suppose any man in his senses would."

Dorothy drew her breath sharply, and for a minute or two did not speak. "Dick, darling," she said, at length, "it is true that that is any reason why you should not be in your senses, too."

"What do you mean, Dorothy?" he asked, quickly.

"Well, just this. Supposing that Lord Alymer had let you refuse this appointment, and had not made himself disagreeable about your allowance, we should have to go on just as we are doing now. And, of course, Dick, dear, I should like to be Mrs. Alymer instead of Mrs. Harris, and to live with the regiment rather than in Palace Mansions; but—but, at the same time, since there is so much to be gained by it, I would just as soon be Mrs. Harris in one place as in another, if I must be Mrs. Harris at all."

Dick caught her close to him, "Dorothy, you mean"—he began.

"I mean," she ended, firmly, "that I would sooner go to India as Mrs. Harris than drag you down in your profession, and put you at loggerheads with your uncle; because he is your uncle, and the head of your family even though he is such an old savage as he is."

"But, my dear, my dear, do you know that that is the case I should have to go at once?" he asked.

"Yes, I know that, Dick," she answered.

"But I can't leave you alone, just now—I can't, Dorothy," he exclaimed. "It's impossible; it would be inhuman. Why I should be out of my mind with anxiety and distress."

"No, no—you would know that I was proud and happy to be able to do something to help you," she replied. "I would rather that you were here; but, then, I would al-

ways rather that you were here. That is not a new feeling for me, and I shall not be alone. I shall have Barbara, you know. Barbara will take care of me, and let you know exactly how I get on."

"No; I cannot let you do it," he said, when she paused.

"Yes, yes, you can, dear. Besides, it is not only ourselves that we have to think of. There is one other, we ourselves, we might be able to get along pretty well by ourselves, we should not be able to afford to send the child home, if the climate was bad for it. Why, Dick, dear, we should not be able to afford to come home ourselves, if we could not stand the heat."

"That is true," he admitted.

"And don't you think," she went on, eagerly, "that I would rather live as I am doing now for a year or two longer than I would run the risk of seeing you die, perhaps, because we had no money to bring us home? Just think what I should feel like if we were in such a case as that."

"But, darling, you don't know—you don't realize how very different life would be out there," he urged. "Here, very few people take the trouble to notice us, one way or another, and if they do, it does not much matter. But out there, as military secretary, I should have a lot to do. I should scarcely have a moment to myself. I should not be able to go anywhere with you, and probably very seldom be able to come and see you."

"But you would be able to come some times," she answered, with a brave smile. "Every one knows that half a loaf is better than no bread, and if one cannot get even half a loaf, it is foolish to quarrel with the slice which keeps one from starving."

Dick's heart felt like to break. "Dorothy, Dorothy," he said, "my dear, little, brave, unselfish wife, every word you say makes me love you a thousand times more than I did before. My dearest, I give in to anything that you wish; you shall decide everything, and I will give all the rest of my life trying to make you feel that you did not throw away your love and confidence when you gave them to me."

So they arranged that Dick should accept the appointment of military secretary to Lord Skerversleigh, and that two days later he should go and see his uncle again, and tell him the decision to which he had come. Dorothy had begged him to go and see him the following day, but Dick held out firmly there. No, he would have one more day of liberty before he went over to the enemy and gave himself up.

"We will have a real happy day, darling," he said, when Dorothy had given away about imparting the news to the savage. "By and by we shall have more money than opportunity of spending it together; let us make have a look at the shops together, and I will buy you something you can always wear till we meet again; then we will go to some good place and get a little lunch; and, afterwards, have a drive, come back here, dress, dine somewhere, and do a theatre after it. There, what do you say to that a real happy day?"

Dorothy said that it would be delightful, and thought—well, with something like dismay, that she should never get through it all. Yet the fear of once giving way and breaking down altogether kept her up, and she went bravely through with that happy day, which afterward lived in her mind as being one long spell of agony.

And after that she wore upon her wrist Dick's trust gift to her—a golden bangle, with two words inscribed upon it in little diamonds, which caught the light and flashed their message at her a hundred times a day—two simple words, "Dinna Forget."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

LITTLE SOLDIERS.

The German Emperor's Children Follow Their Salute to a Hug.

Sons of a father who prides himself on being a soldier rather than a citizen, who has frequently declared that he would sooner be in history as a great general than as a great ruler, and scions of a dynasty which owes its origin and its present eminence to the sword, it is only natural that the boys of the Emperor William of Germany should have inherited the military tastes of their ancestors. Every prince of their house is ipso facto a soldier, and they have been reminded of this since their earliest infancy. While their training has been essentially military, it has not been permitted in any way to interfere with that softness of heart, that generous impulsiveness, and that ingenuousness which are so endearing in children. And, although they invariably greet their father with the correct military salute, yet this is immediately followed by a thoroughly boyish and loving hug.

It is on attaining their tenth year that they first enter the army, and on the birthday table of every prince of the house of Prussia on that anniversary are always to be found the epaulet, the sword and the sash of a lieutenant of the first company of the first corps is composed exclusively of the tallest men to be found in the length and breadth of the German Empire, and their gigantic fellow-officers and soldiers is exceedingly entertaining.

Of all the Emperor's sons the one whose military tastes are most pronounced is the Crown Prince, and no one is quicker than he to detect any fault in drill, any defect in the uniform or equipment. Indeed, he gives promise of proving eventually quite as much of a military martinet as his father, William II.

Going One Better.

Mrs. Sharpe—I'm going to stop trading here, an' deal with Lightweight & Co., the new grocery firm across the street. He lets his customers guess at the number of beans in the bag, an' gives a reward for the correct guess.

Mr. Quicksale—My dear madam, if you'll continue to give us your custom, we'll let you guess at the number of beans in two bags.

Appearance Orten Deceptive.

Tramp—Please, mum, I'm almost starved. Housekeeper—I saw you enter half-a-dozen houses before you got to this one, and you stayed a good while in each.

Tramp—Yes, mum, but they was all hordin' houses.