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TALES OF THE LINKS OF LOVE

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LILLYMERE.

CHAPTER XV.—Continued.

"Only a few words more on the philosophy, these:—The Deity, say the Euryrnians, has endowed the human being, individually or as communities, with mental faculties sufficient to penetrate, sooner or later—as the faculties of mind may be sooner or later applied, all the laws of nature, and comprehend every physical and moral influence affecting social well-being."

"Is religion discarded?"

"Religion is Euryrnia's primary force."

"Happy to know that; permanent success impossible else."

"Churches are invited as powers; but to come without their feuds. The social forces of fashion, even of avarice, the instinctive conservatism of property; and all that is morally chaste in sumptuous luxury,—heretofore spurned by social renovators, are wooed, won, and welcomed as indispensable. And the Donna Euryrnia herself possesses supremacy of genius, with inexhaustible finances. These, together, confer a moral ascendancy potent, irresistible. Enabling her to accomplish for old nations and new this stupendous reformation."

"The Donna Euryrnia should be happy."

"One might expect she would be happy, so far as human finity can be; but she has a deep, personal sorrow, marring individual development before the world, at times almost crushing her in dismay. Great and good the service, and rich the reward of man or woman who may dissipate the cloud of that sorrow—by demonstrating that a certain lady with one unmerited dark spot is spotless."

"Is there a spot on Euryrnia?"

"Guiltless is that lady. A juror fell asleep at the trial of a Gipsy for a minor felony; that was the slight beginning of the series of adversities which now mar Euryrnia—for a time only—in the magnificent schemes of social and moral amendment of nations."

"A romantic riddle: this, truly."

"Yes, truly romantic the adversities. The juror, Admiral Ogleburn, having had political differences with an influential family of Eccleys, and the Gipsy's name happening to be the same, murmured in his slumber when the verdict was called: 'Hang the whole tribe of the Eccleys!' The man was convicted and sentenced to death, but got a reprieve by interference of the political Eccleys on certain conditions. Then a duel ensued between members of the two families. A babe, heir presumptive to the Ogleburn Scottish estate, and to the far richer Lillymere territories, and an Earl's son in England, was abducted, and though now grown a man is not yet found."

"In what way does this affect Euryrnia?"

"In this way. A young girl, Essel Bell, American born, a mere child in years, was abiding for education at Ogleburn Castle. In certain contingencies she might inherit the castle and lands. The mother of the infant, Lady Lillymere, was one of the Ogleburns. Leaving the babe with nurses and friends, the lady followed her gallant lord to a battlefield abroad, found him dying on the field, returned to England, discovered her babe to have been stolen, and then disappeared."

"In what way stolen? And by whom?"

"Abducted by Gipseys of the Eccley tribe, no doubt, in reprisal for the sleeping juror's unhappy words. The child, Essel, had taken the babe from a nurse, gone to the woods, laid it to sleep in an arbor while gathering flowers. Missed it, and raised a cry of 'wild eagle!' falling over a cliff herself, in frenzy of affright. The babe was not recovered, is not yet found, though known to be grown and living in the States, or in Canada. Rewards for recovery of this Heir of Lillymere, or proof of death, have been offered by those interested in succession to the Earldom of Royalfort and princely revenues of Lillymere, but only anonymous letters, I am told, have resulted. It is supposed the young man most interested is ignorant of his real name and birthrights."

"Romantic, rather; but how does this affect Euryrnia?"

"The child, Essel Bell, was wrongfully suspected and threatened for complicity in the infant's abduction; not by her own relatives who knew the innocent thing better; but by ignorant clamour inspired, possibly, by agencies of the Eccleys, to screen the real culprit. In terror, poor Essel fled unknown to her friends; assuming the garb of a boy, and got on board a Liverpool ship as a stow-away. Was put out of the ship with another stow-away boy on the ice off Newfoundland, and left to escape or perish. Frostbitten and hungry they got ashore to a light-house keeper. He warmed, clothed and fed them a time,

then put them in a ship for Canada. Nothing more was told to me."

"Still, this does not connect Euryrnia with the romance."

"No, but the Donna is thought to have some profound personal interest in the Heir of Lillymere, and in the imputation attaching, or once alleged against the child Essel Bell. Perhaps also about the mysterious darkness resting on the fate of the babe's mother."

"Hark! that music in the air again! A plaintive wail."

"It sounded in my ear, Anna, as notes of 'Flowers of the Forest.'"

"The banks of Rama river seem haunted. Ocean, I don't feel at ease; something is about to happen."

CHAPTER XVI.

DONAL CLANDONAL'S LEAP AT ONE TREE BRIDGE.

OCEAN HORN and Anna Liffey walked still on, and on, by the winding margin of Rama river, holding charming discourse inspired by love. She, saying pretty words; he, many delightful things. A little poetic imagery from the lady, with science of botany, or mineralogy; from the gentleman pleasant glimpses of professional expectation. And much of that grandly beneficent, and comprehensive—nationally conservative socio-moral renovation, designed for old world and new, by Euryrnia. Again, little flowery compliments to personal charms; or science suggested by magnetic rocks; Anna diverging from love, poetry, music, to minerals and botany which, with troops of young lady pupils, she enthusiastically studied in the Rama woodland dells.

Precious ores were supposed to abound there, and in the narrow gorge at which they were now arrived the loadstone. From that magnetic ore to poetry of the Midsommer Night's Dream and Shakspeare, was but one short fancy-flight for Ocean. Said he:

"Oh, happy fair, Thine eyes are loadstars; and thy tongue's sweet air, More tunable than lark to shepherd's ear, When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear."

And the young lady of science smiled at the compliment paid to her beautiful eyes by this dear, dear, worshipping lover boy.

They had now walked by Rama over two miles. The steep slopes, or precipitous rocks converging, obedient on one side to the eccentricities of form opposite; then above a roaring lyn and some hundred yards of rapid stream leading to the lyn, was deep still water, skirted by a ledge on the north, sufficient for two to walk on and no more. This continued four hundred yards nearly; rocks rising in some places vertically; in other places in rugged slopes, a hundred feet high on north side; a little less on the south, the width of river in the gorge varying from sixty to ninety feet.

Beyond this, going up stream, the river slept in a small lake with lovely shores, which, seen from the lyn and rapids through the telescopic eye of the Rama gorge, disclosed a theatre of splendour. Or seen from the heights this lake of Rama's rest presented several green islets, each wearing on its head one or two bushes of tiny sugar maples. They lay scattered, as playful children might, on a floor of silvery blue sparkling under the summer sky.

At lower verge of this lake, and just within a bend in the ravine, an oblong rock rose on the bosom of Rama to a height of forty feet, presenting a longitudinal upper surface of a hundred by about half of that breadth. In rifts of this small island, over natural beds of gypsum, a soil had gathered by disintegration of rock in the long, long centuries and ages; and at last some gale of wind, or bird, wafted to the soil two acorns. These grew up sapling oaks, fifteen feet high, each from its own rift and soil; then they united as one tree; partaking of the magnetism natural to the rock, probably. The tree, in a growth of centuries, attained to an average thickness of fifty inches up to a height of thirty feet from the place of union. There it branched in three great limbs, each with its boughs.

In a storm which had riven from rocky footholds many old trees in Rama glen, an elm eighty feet in altitude growing within a steep gulch of the north cliff, fell with its head descending into the arms of the central oak, and there lodged, the root remaining in the rift within the cliff.

And there, white men found it, and soon discerned that a foot bridge was half made, at a point in the Rama ravine where such gangway might be convenient. Protuberances were smoothed; branches of the oak—the central pier—cut away to admit of passage; continuation of plank being laid from thence slanting down to a hollow in the south cliff, and handrails attached on the entire length. The portion of the structure made of plank covered a chasm, about sixty feet wide, ninety deep.

Of late years One Tree Bridge had fallen into partial decay, and evil repute, the central rock being more or less magnetic.

In certain conditions of atmosphere it became electrically positive exuding a phos-

phoric flickering light in dark nights. At other times so magnetically attractive partially paralysing feet walking on the timbers above.

Most immigrants had left Will o' the Wisps, Jack o' Lanterns, Lancashire boggarts, or Scotch boggles, in the old lands. But all brought over the sea, or found awaiting them on the American continent, the Old Serpent, who, in person or in works, was too real to be lightly discarded. Him, in Conway township, the settlers enthroned on the magnetic rock in Rama river, where he abode and grew amazingly; more potent by mere name, aptly applied than most homilies from pulpits, or any number of constables. Him, travellers had to thank for a safer handrail bridge and better pathway in the woods. When two or more passengers walked together in damp dark nights of electric disturbance, they sometimes discerned glimmering lights on one another. Others again who had seen no lights, nor felt magnetic influences, called such reports absurd contrivances to get a new pathway, or to make government of ignorance easy.

So, One Tree Bridge became deserted, except to mineral explorers, or piscatorians, or lovers.

In their walk and dear delightful interchange of thought, Anna Liffey had said, when they last heard music floating indistinctly in upper air, and were looking to the streak of sky between the tall cliffs and over-casting trees:

"Something is about to happen."

"Have you a superstitious forecast, Anna?"

"No; it is science. A fore-reading by light of science within the arcana of my own being."

Almost as she spoke, the sky was suddenly, gloomily, covered with tumultuary clouds, rolling in folds over one another, in laps and folds of lighter and darker fiery vapour.

Ocean remained silent, gazing through the telescopic eye of Rama glen to the lake and islets, now lying under lurid brown and red refractions. He gazed there, then overhead, listening for the weird fiddling, or piping, or fluting, or Eolian harping—for the sounds had been like all or any of these. And again he heard aerial music. And Anna hearing it, started in alarm, clinging to him. Then, to his amazement, the lady of his love abruptly disengaged her hold, standing apart, rigidly upright; glowing on him, he thought or felt, with supernatural light in her eyes!

"Anna, are you afraid?"

She remained silent; the unwomanly light in the eyes glaring.

"Anna, are you ill? Let me hold you! Anna, you fall in the river. Come to me, come in my arms."

With energy, in ghastly gesticulation, she made sign with the hands that he should not touch her. Then in efforts at words imperfectly articulated, said:

"No; not ill, not superstitious. This is science. A reading in high science. Have longed for this to occur. Was never before at Rama magnetic rock on occasion of great electric disturbance. Grand! Sublime! Feel the Infinity. See into the Universe. See, as we lately read, when the farmer was struck by lightning, that he saw through the crown of the head, and behind his back. I see, dear Ocean, not with eyes, but through limbs, hands, feet, shoulders, nape of the neck, crown of the head!"

"Anna! Anna! You are in a white glow of fire! Yet the clothes? No, they don't burn!"

"Speech, Ocean, going, going.—Ecstasy! Hold me! Dear Ocean, hold me, else I fly, I fly from earth!"

He grasped her hands, drawing the glowing luminous form from the river brink toward the wall of rock; but, with a screech, suddenly quitted her, wildly crying:

"Anna! Mystery of heaven and earth! You are a burning, glowing, electric battery!"

Both were now silent for a time—several minutes: then the lady essayed to speak:

"It is passing—passing away. Saw all through the arcana of my being, and in yours, every pulsation, vein, artery; interior of the bones; interior of the brain! All gone now, and natural light returning. Ocean, dear boy, this is a sublime demonstration in science."

"I know it to be a reading in science, Anna; and perceive in it the beginning of marvellous services to mankind. New curative powers following newly discovered electric perceptions."

"List!" said the lady in a tremour. "That music again."

"No, Anna, not this time, that is the voice of a coming storm howling down the river."

Soon and terribly it came. The tumultuary brown and black rolling clouds flashed out lightnings one at the other; and all shot fires into Rama glen.

A tempest swept the lake, the cliffs, the trees; severing decayed boughs first, then fracturing great limbs, uprooting exposed trunks, dislodging and hurling down stones, which the lovers escaped by retreating under a projecting ledge.

A tall elm, near the brink of the south cliff, growing in the gulch where the gangway bridge rested its shore end, bended, bowed, swayed to and fro in the tempest, until its

roots displaced a rock. Then it fell, one limb striking down a portion of the bridge, leaving a gap over the chasm. Possibly a fatal trap for the next passenger.

Again, in the lurid sky, flashing electricity vertically descended, dazzling forked fires came down into the deep, dark bosom of Rama, wooed thither by the magnetic rocks, and there absorbed. Electric loves of the elements. Solar and planetary equilibria in process of redress.

Thunderbolts exploded in short or long resounding roarings, and in coruscations wildly luminous. Celestial and Terrestrial Nature testifying to the Life of All Life.

The quivering air, maddened in the narrow prison of the Rama gorge, shook the rocks on either side hurling down fragments; death in every piece, should any living thing stand under. But now Anna Liffey and Ocean Horn, recovered from the first shocks of electro-magnetism, were in a condition of scientific exultation, adoring the Supreme that theirs was the felicity inexpressible, of witnessing elemental commotions so instructive, suggestive, sublime.

Under the projecting foot of the precipice they avoided the falling rocks and limbs of trees, and shunned the pouring deluge of electric rain.

Then a lull came. The tempest holding its breath, as if listening to its own reverberations in the upper woods and rocks of Rama.

And with the lull of tempest a brief cessation of rain. Ocean and Anna stepped to the river brink to look up into the eye of the sky between the cliffs. While they yet stood, uncertain if the elemental commotion were over, the tempest re-arose from its brief rest; and in very passion of vehemence of winds, whirlwinds, glaring lightning, sounding thunder, bent the woodlands, shook rocks, tore trees as dishevelled hair may be torn on the head of agony.

Such were the aspect and idea to Ocean and Anna. Yet both had then an exulting mental joy that they were witnesses, in science, to manifestations of elemental communion supremely instructive.

While yet in ecstasies over this climax in science, their minds encountered an astounding revulsion.

By a narrow pathway, downward and athwart the north slope, visible by a bending elbow in the rugged hillside, and leading to the broken foot bridge, they beheld coming along at speed of agile swiftness—bounding over broken branches, dislodged rocks, prostrate trees—Donal Clandonal the Flying Highlander.

And, near behind Clandonal, they beheld, routing and roaring, leaping and tossing the horned head, Taura Durra the savage red bull.

Donal, a stranger in those parts, and never in sight of the Rama magnetic rocks until then, perceived the narrow foot bridge, but not the gap of fifteen on a descending slope feet and chasm of ninety.

Destruction before him, death behind, he gained the central section, and a step or two more; then saw the abyss.

Frantically, Ocean Horn gesticulated and called:

"Go up the tree! That limb behind you! Get on the tree and branches overhead!"

As well have gesticulated and called to the lightning—that instant bursting and dazzling Donal with a momentary blindness!

Nothing but the electric gleam of the thunderbolt was seen by the wilder runner; nothing heard but the quivering shock and reverberating roar. In the luminous envelope he discerned no limbs of a tree, no branches overhead.

He drew back some paces, the eye of courage open, the ear of terror filled with the malignant bellowing of the infuriated demon bull, already shaking the bridge impetuously.

The distances offered a run for momentum of twenty paces. With that ram-race of impulsion—with a spring and bound of muscular inspiration, as Taura Durra's horns came to the fluttering Highland kilt, Clandonal spread his wings—bagpipes and ribbons on one side, tartan plaid on the other, eagle feather on head, and alighted firmly, several feet beyond the brink of the cliff.

Turning only to perceive vacancy, and comprehend that Taura Durra had disappeared, the Flying Piper paused not a moment more, but fled.

Anna Liffey and Ocean Horn breathed in relief that the kilted wonder of Conway had escaped, but for themselves came a dread, less a pleasing dread than the electric tempest, that Taura Durra—gone to the bottom of the river, might come up alive and land untamed beside them.

Presently the creature rose, some rods away from where he had plunged on crashing down through the decayed planks. He looked around for a landing place; then, preferring the nearest low green islet made for that.

Least the appalling brute might return they prepared to depart home. But Ocean, climbing to the farthest projecting bar of rock partly to observe if any clear speck of sky appeared, though mainly to watch the horned enemy, called wildly:

"Anna! Come hither, Anna, come!"

She went, and in astonishment saw another raging short horn. The black bull of the