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TALES OF THE LINKS OF LOVE.

BY ALEXANDER SOMERVILLE.

LILLYMERE.

CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

That sportive youth having been in street literature somewhere socially educated to the delight of anonymous malice, now groaned the name of Larrik as the doer of all the evil. A lad, who if merry was not mischievous; if guilty of a fault never denied it; but who, on the contrary, despised the cowardice of anonymity.

"We'll make Larrik work for this some day," said the master to comfort the sufferer; "and you do no more work until entirely recovered. My mother will doctor and nurse you; kind woman my mother."

But the Doctor said he could not answer for the patient's life if not removed to Conway Hospital. So that was done, Larrik, generous boy, conveying the sufferer in a waggon with great tenderness.

The bridegroom danced in one reel, but no more. Though inclined, as he said, to make a day of it, he desisted because the bride refused to dance with the Minister, or with any one, even with her joyful husband. And for that reason the reverend guest also declined to step a measure, though loving it dearly.

"Do you still hold against dancing, my dear, on principle? You admitted, some time ago, that no principle was involved."

"It is not that, Thomas. I have discovered something never expected to be seen by me; never expected to be seen by eyes of mine: never, never."

"My dear, my loved, my darling bride, what have you discovered?"

"Of all days in my life that it should fall on this day."

"What is it, Tibby, my own one? My own darling bride, and pride, and love, and wife! My own wifey, what is it?"

"That it should happen at all, but on this day, of all days, and under the roof where I have come expecting contentment, peace, and moral propriety."

"Gracious, Tibby! What is the matter?"

"The matter? Matter enough."

"Tibby, such words of gloom make me fear you see the end of the world coming again?"

"The end of the world coming again? Better it did come than have such ongoings."

"Is it anything I have done?"

"No, Thomas; nothing you have done."

"Anything mother has done?"

"Nothing your mother has done, dear, good creature, no."

"If neither mother nor I have done the wrong, why not out with it? We should correct it if we can."

"Correct it if you can? All creation will not mend it. Since the Fall of Man in Eden's Garden, the world has had nothing more astounding and confounding."

"And is it something which your own eyes have seen? And in this house? In my mother's house?"

"In this house. And my own eyes saw."

"Tibby, my own dear wife, riddles of this kind, beginning on our wedding day, don't promise well. I ask but once more, if you don't tell the thing right out, keep it. What did you see?"

"I saw the Deacon's wife, in private, in the arms of Donal Clandonal, the Flying Piper! After staring at him for hours, she at last sidled in beside him, whispering; and he whispering again. Oh, the world! the world! the world!"

"What Deacon's wife do you mean?"

"I mean Nancy Pearly. Deacon Willy Pearly's wife—poor man."

"Delusions, my dear girl. Your brain must be touched with the whirl and excitement of the day. What! Nancy Pearly, one of the flowers of womankind, talk secretly with that gallant, the Flying Piper! Kissing and being kissed, as you insinuate! Impossible."

"I did not speak the unchaste words; but since your lips, Thomas, have given them utterance, they are not retracted. They did embrace, and in secret, too."

"Some near relation, unexpectedly discovered."

"He is no relation. If one of her kin, wouldn't she speak to him openly before her husband?"

While bridegroom and bride troubled themselves in this manner, Mrs. Pearly sought her husband, but he had gone to his farm, on duties of the homestead, intending to return. Taking her daughter Essel aside, when one of the dances closed—a girl in her eighteenth year, and almost peerless among the many beauties present—mother and maiden talked together. Essel's features glowed and paled alternately; her eyes seeking and resting on the sprightly Highlander, who now sat apart,

at the entrance of a bower within the garden.

Then the amazed bridegroom and bride from another flowery arbour near by, saw through intervals in the leaves, that Mrs. Pearly led Essel to Donal Clandonal's presence; spoke a few words to both, then—what then? the Flying Piper threw his arms around Essel, imprinting two distinct kisses, one of which the young lady returned; yet blushed, and paled, and blushed again, seeming as if she would faint and fall, when all three came away, moving towards the house. Donal, as he passed the arbour of the listeners, was heard saying to Essel, in accents of tenderness, something which included the words:

"My daughter," and "Found at last!"

His daughter? All in the township knew Essel Pearly to be Willy and Nancy's second child.

It meant something, but what this strange incident did mean, the few who witnessed external appearances could not satisfactorily surmise.

The Piper, for reasons best known to himself, engaged a light waggon and driver to take him to Conway, and at once departed; but promised to return before dark, after conferring with his sister and her maid.

Willy Pearly soon returned from his farm, and before seeking wife or daughters, dived, as it were, into the depths of a manifold dance, then heated, and in gay spirits, he partook of simple, deaconly, orthodox refreshments, cups that cheered but not—betrayed. Then looked for Nancy.

"Willy, oh Willy! so glad, so glad!"

"I'm glad also; but you are not all yourself, Nancy; have you taken anything that is disagreeing?"

"Nothing; taken only cold water to cool me. Oh, my Willy, my dear husband, what a day this is. Never in my life did such a day of fortune, of gladness, of joys, of joys dawn on me."

"Hoots, Nancy, that's haivers. You had a wedding-day yourself once; and not so long ago your daughter Alcy had a wedding-day to give us gladness. We may rejoice with neighbours, but our own happy events concern us most."

"It is another kind of happiness than that of wedding-days; and you'll be as glad as I, Willy, when you know. Come within the arbour alone and we'll talk it over. Let Essel come also."

"Certainly, let Essel come; why not? Here is a nice shady quiet seat. Now, what is flustering you, Nancy? If I did not know my wife so well, as discreet and good, and—and, in fact, all goodness, as she once was the lovely, lovely Nancy, bonny lass of Branxton, I'd say you've been taking something."

"I have taken something, William, since you half insinuate, but not what runs in your mind at present; something not intended to have been named just yet, but for that remark; and hardly proper to be said by a wife to a husband."

"Nancy!"

"I've been enfolded in a stranger's arms, and embraced in your absence."

"Nancy! Nancy!"

"And who, of all people here, do you think enfolded me in arms?"

"The bride may, in a fit of gaiety; but I would have hardly expected such remarkable demonstrations from her to you."

"The bride! No, indeed. What think you of Clandonal, the Flying Piper?"

"Nancy!"

"He whom half the ladies of Conway are said to be crazed about."

"Nancy! Nancy! Nancy!"

"And, by my introduction, after enfolded me, the Flying Piper took our daughter Essel in arms, calling her by the most endearing epithets."

"This is wholly improper to be spoken of, even as a jest. Surely you have partaken of drinks, or meats, or magic potions, improper to be tasted. Who is the rowdy run-the-gate? I suppose some hundred and nineteenth Highland cousin of yours, never before heard of?"

"Willy, did not your honest eyes detect the Clandonal, or suspect him, to be only a man in pretence?"

"No, I thought him a real, fine, bonny lad; and would think him so still, but for what you say; but for his—his—impudence. Where is the rascal now?"

"Gone to Conway, but returning to stay with us all night, if you do not object."

"Object! If I do not object? He shall not enter our door. There is sin in some form; covertly or openly, it is present in this matter. Even if a woman in male disguise the misconduct is unwomanly, and indefensible. I do object, most seriously."

"You may think otherwise on knowing good reasons for the disguise."

"There may be reasons; they cannot be good reasons. Say on, however; I listen."

"You remember our daughter's full baptismal name?"

"Yes, Essel Bell; named after the missing child who lost the babe, Lillymere, in the woods of Ogleburn—poor young dear, whom we all loved so well, refusing to think she had any share in losing the infant of purpose."

"And you remember what we heard of

Essel Bell, after her departure from Ogleburn Castle, frightened at threats held forth by some people?"

"Yes, we heard the ship she went in from Liverpool to her native country, the Ten Thousand Islands lying between Canada and the States, was wrecked; all on board perishing."

"All did not perish. Clandonal, the Flying Piper, is no other than that missing young lady, Essel Bell."

"Nancy!"

"I knew him—her, I should say—and after much observation, and some indifferent questions about his native country, assuming him to be Scotch born—her, I mean—which I knew she was not, being of Scotch parentage born on one of the Thousand Islands, I hazarded the inquiry pointedly and direct."

"May the villain, catching at your credulity, not be deceiving you?"

"I knew the person to be Essel Bell. She told me things in corroboration which no other creature under the skies could have named; things known only to me and to her."

"Where has she been all those years?"

"We are to learn everything, in time."

"Knows she anything of the babe Lillymere, which so mysteriously disappeared?"

"Only lately, quite lately. She had cause to expect that he, now a young man, would come to Conway about this time in search of himself—for he does not know who he is, but is employed by instruction from England to make search for the lost heir of Lillymere; and that, though not knowing her, nor that she assists, he might be accompanied by some one interested in deceiving him, who would prevent their meeting."

"Nancy, if this should turn out to be all as told to you, it will indeed be a day of gladness and of wonders. Yet I fear it impossible. Essel Bell to be alive, after all those years! And the lost babe of Lillymere to be alive, also!"

"Yes, Willy; we may yet see that babe which disappeared in the Ogleburn woods, by a wild eagle, or by gipsies, poor little Essel could not tell which; and I myself, running, running when she screamed, was the first to discover her down on the point of rock, fifty feet from top of the cliff where the babe lay asleep, and from where she fell;—we may yet have the happiness of seeing Essel's innocence clear to everybody as it always was to me and you; and that babe may be restored to its birthright, and in time be the English Earl Royalfort, owner of the great landed estates and wealth of that family."

"And a worthy successor, I trust, of that wisest and best of noblemen, the present Lord. But—but, Nancy, if this Flying Highlander be lying?"

"The Flying Highlander is my loved, long lost young mistress, Essel Bell; no other."

"It was really Essel Bell, you are sure, who enfolded you in arms, embracing your lips?"

"No other, Willy dear; no other."

"And embraced our Essel, calling her daughter?"

"Meaning daughter in friendship, named after herself."

"And this good reason for disguise is the hope of discovering lost Lillymere, unknown to persons interested in concealing him?"

"It seems so, William; is it not an admissible reason?"

"What should set her dancing and piping and singing?"

"Not to earn money, Essel owns sufficiency of wealth; but her object in Conway demanded disguise; and on us, for the present, she imposes secrecy."

"Did people see this unfolding in arms and embracing?"

"None, so far as I am aware. What if they did? I was at no pains to conceal it."

"But this person imposes secrecy, you say; may not the good name of our daughter suffer?"

"I'll not permit that. If a whisper arise against her, all shall be fully explained."

"In that case, at risk of your own good name, Nancy?"

"My good name is not to be so lightly touched."

"But your discretion may. What if this Flying Piper disappears from Conway before morning, never to return?"

CHAPTER XV.

MUSIC ON THE WIND, AT ONE TREE BRIDGE.

In the hamlet of a hundred houses, about to be incorporated as a village, and likely in a few years to be a town, owned chiefly by the bridegroom of yesterday,—one pretty cottage, embowered in flowers, was the dwelling of Anna Liffey; a young lady, aged nineteen, learned Directress of the Female Seminary. She came two years previously from a city training school as a junior assistant.

Not long could a lady teacher be retained in Ramasine, or anywhere else in rural Canada. Like marriageable servant girls, all went away as brides. So might Anna, any time in those two years, but for an early engagement with a medical student. She was bridesmaid

yesterday, and this youth came from the West to be groomsmen. Few persons knew then or previously, but it became demonstrated in time, that the hard-toiling, reputedly miserly blacksmith—Laird of the Corners—had, with his revered mother, done many generous actions to persons touched by misfortune. This boy fell under blight. In one of the sectional commotions Humfry Horn, who had assumed the office of Baptist preacher, went out at a 'rising' to pray with, guide and restrain the insurgents from evil, but being found in such company was accused of complicity, and condemned. Popular clamour, because he was a Baptist, demanded to know what Humfry did with his flail among the insurgents, if not guilty? The law said he "abetted and comforted." None assumed the toil, danger, expense, as in a later case, of searching for and sifting out the facts to arrest execution of the law after the hurried, helter skelter trial. Humfry Horn, not a favourite in the sect, only an interloping chaplain of the movement, self-appointed, was led to the scaffold. History said, "taken red hot."

The widow, Bess-of-the-Barn, removed to the States with her child. After a time this boy returned to Conway, seeking to recover his father's lot of land. Spurned by most people as son of Humfry Horn, he was kindly treated, from the depths of her natural tenderness, by the blacksmith's mother. She and son put him to a superior school, then to the University and medical classes.

On the occasion of "happiest day in his life," Ramasine had the best suits of dress for himself and groomsmen which town artists could produce, going to excess in some things, that his young friend might be arrayed in freshest style of elegance. Hence such items as silken hose and pumps of glittering patent leather, gold studs, a diamond or two on themselves, and several brilliants on the bride.

This young gentleman, Ocean Horn by name, born at sea, (Chapter V.) stood early in the morning after the wedding, within the floral arbor embowering the dwelling of the bridesmaid. Thus ran his thought:

"Given the latitude of Rama River, dawning in the dell behind the dwelling of Anna Liffey, 45° 22' 36" N.—Day of the year, 18th of June. Sun above the horizon one hour by Tom's sun dial; and I waiting, expecting, longing—waiting and longing for my love to rise. Given these data, to find the minute when she will rise."

"To find the time to awaken Anna, girl of my joy with the sleek black tresses, glossy, curling, flowing hair."

"Lips all rosy, but so pure, so nearly holy, almost too sacred for touch. Eyes softly eloquent, spiritually mystic. Long eye-lashes enclosing the mirrors where her lover looks reading, or learning to read in the deep, deep mysteries. Reading psychological essences of two young beings finding their affinities. Looking in the mirrors of Anna Liffey's soul, reading in their witcheries that in the innermost recesses she holds, as in a treasury—a sealed and sacred treasury, the image of this impetuous young Æsculapian, Ocean Horn."

"To find the time to awaken my love, by salutation of convulvuli, roses, honeysuckles, flowering branches, embracing the crystal of her chamber windows."

"Rosebuds saluting their sleeping sister; shooting kisses on sunbeams into the chamber, flushing muslins, dimities, damasks, laces. Purities surrounding my own bird of paradise."

"Come, my darling, come walk in the woodlands, among pink and white anemones, down on the banks of Rama: clear, limpid water, boldly flowing river."

"I venture, I whisper, faint to awake her. Anna, my darling, you promised to be early, and walk to the maple grove down by the river, then up the banks of Rama to One Tree Bridge. Are you waking yet, or sleeping, Anna?"

To be continued.



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