

LOVE'S MAGIC CHARM.

(Continued.)

"If ever I love any one at all," she said to herself, "it must be some one whom I feel to be my master. I could not love a man who was weak in body, soul, heart, or mind. I must feel that he is my master; that my soul yields to his; that I can look up to him as the real guiding star of my life, as the guide of my actions. If ever I meet such a man and vow to love him, what will my love do for me? I do not think I could fall in love with a book-hero either; they are too coldly perfect. I should like a hero with some human faults, with a touch of pride capable of being roused into passion."

Suddenly, as the thought shaped itself in her mind, she saw a tall figure crossing the sands—the figure of a man, walking quickly.

He stopped at some little distance from the cliff, and then threw himself on the sand. His eyes were fixed on the restless, beautiful sea; and she, attracted by his striking masculine beauty, the statuesque attitude, the grand, free grace of the strong limbs, the royal carriage of the kingly head, watched him. In the Louvre she had seen some marvellous statues, and he reminded her of them. There was one of Antinous, with a grand, noble face, a royal head covered with clusters of hair, and the stranger reminded her of it.

She looked at him in wonder. She had seen picturesque-looking men—dandies, fops, *petits maîtres*—but this was the first time she had ever seen a noble and magnificent-looking man.

"If his soul is like his face," she thought to herself, "he is a hero."

She watched him quite unconsciously, admiration gradually entering her heart.

"I should like to hear him speak," she thought. "I know just what kind-of voice ought to go with that face."

It was a dreamy spot, a dreamy hour, and he was all unconscious of her presence. The face she was watching was like some grand harmonious poem to her; and as she so watched there came to her the memory of the story of Lancelot and Elaine. The restless golden waters, the yellow sands, the cliffs, all faded from her view, and she, with her vivid imagination, saw before her the castle court where Elaine first saw him, lifted her eyes and read his lineaments, and then loved him with a love that was her doom. The face on which she gazed was marked by no great and guilty love—it was the face of Lancelot before his fall, when he shone noblest, purest, and grandest of all King Arthur's knights.

"It was for his face Elaine loved him," thought the girl—"grand and noble as is the face on which the sun shines now."

Then she went through the whole of that marvellous story; she thought of the purity, the delicate grace, the fair loveliness of Elaine, as contrasted with the passionate love which, flung back upon itself, led her to prefer death to life—of that strange, keen, passionate love that so suddenly changed the whole world for the maid of Astolat.

"And I would rather be like her," said the girl to herself; "I would rather die loving the highest and the best than live loving one less worthy." It had seized her imagination, this beautiful story of a deathless love.

"I too could have done as Elaine did," she thought; "for love cannot come to me wearing the guise it wears to others. I could read the true nobility of a man's soul in his face; I could love him asking no love in return. I could die so loving him, and believing him greatest and best."

Then, as she mused, the sunlight deepened on the sea, the rose became purple, the waters one beaming mass of bright color, and he who had so unconsciously aroused her sleeping soul to life rose and walked away over the sands. She watched him as he passed out of sight.

"I may never see him again," she thought; "but I shall remember his face until I die."

A great calm seemed to fall over her; the very depths of her heart had been stirred. She had been wondering so short a time before if she should ever meet any one at all approaching the ideal standard of excellence she had set up in her mind. It seemed like an answer to her thoughts when he crossed the sands.

"I may never see him again," she said; "but I shall always remember that I have met one whom I could have loved."

She sat there until the sun had set over the waters and the moon had risen; and all the time she saw before her but one image—the face that had charmed her as nothing in life had done before. Then, startled to find that it had grown so late, she rose and crossed the sands. Once she turned to look at the sea, and a curious thought came to her that there, by the side of the restless, shining waters, she had met her fate. Then she tried to laugh at the notion.

"To waste one's whole heart in looking at a face," she thought, "would be absurd. Yet the sweetest of all heroines—Elaine—did so."

A great calm, one that lulled her brooding discontent, that stilled her angry despair, that seemed to raise her above the earth, that refined and beautified every thought, was upon her. She reached home, and Miss Hastings, looking at the beautiful face on which she had never seen so sweet an expression, so tender a light before, wondered what had come over her. So, too, like Elaine—

All night his face before her lived,

and the face was

Dark, splendid, sparkling in the silence, fall
Of noble things.

All unconsciously, all unknowingly, the love had come to her that was to work wonders—the love that was to be her redemption.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE STORY OF ELAINE.

Miss Hastings laid down the newspaper, with a quick glance of pleased surprise.

"I am glad that I came to Ombroleigh," she said. "Imagine, Pauline, who is her. You have heard me speak of the St. Lawrences. I educated Laura St. Lawrence, and she married well and went to India. Her husband holds a very high appointment there. Lady St. Lawrence is here with her son, Sir Vane. I am so pleased."

"And I am pleased for you," responded Pauline, with the new gentleness that sat so well upon her.

"I must go and see them," continued Miss Hastings. "They are staying at Sea View. We can soon find out where Sea View is."

"St. Lawrence!" said Pauline, musingly; "I like the name; it has a pleasant sound."

"They are noble people who bear it," observed Miss Hastings. "Lady St. Lawrence was always my ideal of a thoroughbred English gentlewoman. I never heard how it was, but the greater part of their fortune was lost when Sir Arthur died. He left but this one son, Vane; and, though he has the title, he has but little to support it with. I know their family estates were all sold. Lady St. Lawrence has a small fortune of her own, but it is not much."

Again Pauline repeated the name to herself—"Vane St. Lawrence!"—thinking there was a sound as of half-forgotten music in it. That was a name that would have suited the face she had watched on the sands.

"Vane St. Lawrence!"

Unconsciously to herself she had said the words aloud. Miss Hastings looked up quickly.

"Did you speak, my dear?" she asked; and Pauline wondered to find her face suddenly grow warm with a growing blush.

"I think," said Miss Hastings, presently, "that I should like to visit them at once. Lady St. Lawrence may not be staying long, and I should never forgive myself if I were to miss her. Will you come with me, Pauline?"

"Yes, willingly."

She was ready to go anywhere, to do anything, with that great, wonderful love, that great, grand calm filling her heart and soul.

For the first time the sight of her own magnificent loveliness pleased her.

"I may see him again," she thought to herself, with almost child-like simplicity, "and I should like him to think of me."

She took more pains than she had ever taken before; and the picturesque taste that was part of her character greatly assisted her. Her dress was of purple silk, plain, rich and graceful; her hat, with its drooping purple plume, looked like a crown on the beautiful head. She could no more help looking royal and queenly than she could help the color of her eyes and hair. Miss Hastings looked up with a smile of surprise, the proud face was so wonderfully beautiful—the light that never yet shone on land or sea was shining on it.

"Why, Pauline," she said, laughing, "Lady St. Lawrence will think I am taking the Queen of Sheba in disguise! What strange change is coming over you, child?"

What indeed? Was it the shadow of the love that was to redeem her? Was it the light that came from the half-awakening soul? Wiser women than good, kindly-hearted Miss Hastings might have been puzzled.

They were not long in finding Sea View—a pretty villa a little way out of the town, standing at the foot of a cliff, surrounded by trees and flowers—one of the prettiest spots in Ombroleigh. They were shown into the drawing-room, the windows of which commanded a magnificent view of the sea.

Before they had been there many minutes there entered a fair, gentle, gracious lady, whose eyes filled as she greeted Miss Hastings warmly.

"You are like a spirit from the past," she said. "I can see Laura a little child again as I look at you. Nothing could have pleased me so much as seeing you."

Then she looked admiringly at the beautiful girl by her side. Miss Hastings introduced her.

"Miss Darrell," she said, "it seems strange that I should meet you. My husband in his youth knew Sir Oswald well."

Lady St. Lawrence was just what Miss Hastings had described her—a thoroughly high bred English lady. In figure she was tall and upright; her face had been beautiful in its youth, and was even now comely and fair; the luxuriant brown hair was streaked here and there with silver. She wore a dress of rich brocade, with some becoming arrangement of flowers and lace on her head; she was charming in lady-like simplicity and gentleness.

Pauline, knowing that the ladies would have much to talk about, asked permission to amuse herself with some books she saw upon the table.

"They belong to my son," said Lady St. Lawrence, with a smile.

There were Tennyson, Keats and Byron, and written inside of each, in a bold, clear hand, was the name "Vane St. Lawrence." Pauline lost herself again in the story of Elaine, from which she was aroused at intervals by the repetition of the words—"My son Vane."

She could not help hearing some part of Lady St. Lawrence's confidential communication, and it was to the effect how deeply she deplored the blindness of her son, who might marry his cousin, Lillith Davenant, one of the wealthiest heiresses in England. Miss Hastings was all kindly sympathy.

It would be such an excellent thing for him," continued Lady St. Lawrence; "and Lillith is a very nice girl. But it is needless counselling