



The Lost Will; OR, LOVE TRIUMPHS AT LAST!

CHAPTER XXI.

"Thank you very much," said poor Jack; "but I'm afraid that won't be possible. Fact is, he went on, as if inspired, "I have just accepted an appointment which will keep me in London. I was going to write to Miss Norton, but perhaps you will be so kind as to discuss the matter with her."

Ferndale looked slightly surprised, and Jack hurried on: "As you know, I have been acting as her agent, and, as I have to take up this appointment at once, I'm afraid I shall have to ask Miss Norton to accept my resignation without much notice—or any, in fact," he stammered. "Everything is straight. I dare say I can run down once or twice—if it's necessary; but I hope it won't be. You see, it's quite probable I may have to go abroad any moment. Perhaps I could see Mr. Horton in town and settle up affairs with him."

Ferndale still looked surprised; but he thought that the appointment Jack spoke of was an urgent one, and he said, good-naturedly enough:

"You must not let anything stand in the way of your interests, Mr. Chalfonte. I am sure Mr. Horton could arrange so that you should be quite free. You have told her, I suppose?"

"Well, no—no, I haven't," replied Jack. "Fact is, I didn't want to bother her about business this afternoon. I'll see Horton in London." He glanced at his watch. "By George! I've only just time to catch the train. Good-bye, Ferndale—and good luck!"

"Thanks; and good luck to you," responded Ferndale, and he held out his hand and gave Jack's quite a warm, hearty shake.

Jack walked about London for the rest of the day; he felt that he could not meet even Jiggles; but he need not have been afraid of doing so, for that hard-working barrister had gone on circuit.

Jack made the appointments with Horton; and the next morning he went to that gentleman's office.

"How do you do, Chalfonte? Why, what's the matter—sore?" was Mr. Horton's greeting. "You don't look well."

"Just a bit off colour; nothing more. Can we settle up the matters of the estate right away, as I wrote and asked you to do?"

"Why, yes," said Horton, glancing at him keenly. "This is rather sudden, isn't it? I mean, your change of movements. Lord Ferndale told me about it last night. I hope this appointment of yours is a good one. What is it, by the way?"

Jack was floored for a moment, and he turned away as he replied: "Well, it's something I'm not quite at liberty to speak about just at present; tell you later. Got the papers?"

They seated themselves at the table and went into business; everything was clear and straightforward, and the settling-up did not take very long. Presently, and suddenly, with a penetrating look, Horton said:

"Of course, you have heard of Miss Norton's engagement to Lord Ferndale?"

Jack was prepared for the question, and, bracing himself, answered quite cheerily:

"Oh, yes. Splendid match, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Mr. Horton, knitting his brows as if he were slightly puzzled. "Yes, they seem eminently suited to each other, and from a financial point of view, it is an excellent match. Of course, they will live at the Abbey—there will be plenty of money now—and Chertson Hall will have to be let. By the way, Chalfonte, have you ever mentioned to any one the incident of the two wills? I ask because it occurred to me that perhaps Lord Ferndale should be informed of the mysterious incidents connected with Mr. Chalfonte's bequest of his fortune to Miss Norton."

"I've never mentioned the matter to a single soul," said Jack quickly; "and I don't intend doing so. And I don't see any reason why Miss Norton or Ferndale should be told. It would only make them—well, uncomfortable; and why on earth should you do that?"

Mr. Horton nodded gravely. "Well!" he said, thoughtfully. There was a pause, then he went on: "That mystery—if I'm not using too big a word—worryes me still, Chalfonte. That two wills were signed that night is absolutely certain; the men's evidence is too clear to leave any doubt about it. The mystery lies in the question—What became of the other will? I am certain it was not burnt; for there were no traces, no ashes to be found in the room; and it was not torn up, or it would have been in the waste-paper basket. It is in evidence that Chalfonte meant to leave the money to you, and I'm inclined to think that very night he signed one will leaving it to Miss Norton, and the other leaving it to you."

"Oh, what's the use of speculating or worrying about the thing?" said Jack, with a touch of weary indifference and impatience. "I thought we'd settled that question long ago. Anyhow, that torn letter of Chalfonte's made it clear that he was leaving everything to her. Don't bother any more about it. I've ceased to trouble my head about it long since. Besides, I'd a darned sight sooner she had it than I. Oh!" He jumped up and took his hat. "Well, I must be off; got lots to do: may have to leave England at any moment; perhaps sha'n't see you again—for some time. Everything's squared up, isn't it?"

"Everything excepting one little matter," said Mr. Horton, with a dry smile. He handed Jack a cheque. "It isn't often a man forgets his salary, Chalfonte."

Towards evening he found himself at the Sports Club, and, though he had no appetite, he ordered a modest chop. While he was eating it, Telby came in. You had only to look at Telby's face to see that 'By the Wayside' was going strong, and he seated himself opposite Jack and told him, with unctuous self-satisfaction, that they were playing to "capacity," meaning that the house held every night as large an audience as it was capable of doing, and he added that Miss Grace Lawless was in fine form.

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"Oh, that!" said Jack, flushing redly and staring at the cheque. "Oh, well, look here, Horton. I've got a curious kind of feeling about this money. I don't want to take it. You see, I've had a lot of fun over this job; it's been more pleasure than work, and I—I'd rather not accept anything in the way of screw. Here, look here! You take the cheque and buy a wedding present for Miss Norton for me."

He scrawled his name on the back of the cheque and laid it on the table. Mr. Horton looked from the slip of paper to Jack's face, then he laid his hand on the young man's shoulder and bent a piercing gaze on him.

"I understand, Chalfonte," he said, in a low voice. "I'm sorry. I'm very sorry."

"That's all right," said Jack, and he shook Horton's hand and went out.

When he reached his chambers, he wrote a letter to Mrs. Feltham, telling her of his "appointment," and his possible sudden departure—for some place unnamed. He tried to write a line or two to Nora, but he could not, simply could not. Reopening Mrs. Feltham's letter, he added a postscript: "Will you please give my kind regards to Miss Norton, and ask her if she will be good enough to accept Jim from me? I couldn't possibly take him where I am going."

Having got through his correspondence, he formed himself into a committee of ways and means. It was not a cheerful committee; for Jack found that his worldly possessions consisted of a little over ten pounds, his furniture, clothes, and a few articles of jewellery. As he had given up the Law, or the Law had given him up, the chambers were an unnecessary luxury. He gave notice to the landlord and wrote a line to Jiggles, asking him to take over the furniture or sell it; then he went out into the street and wondered what his "appointment" was and how he was going to get it.

Towards evening he found himself at the Sports Club, and, though he had no appetite, he ordered a modest chop. While he was eating it, Telby came in. You had only to look at Telby's face to see that 'By the Wayside' was going strong, and he seated himself opposite Jack and told him, with unctuous self-satisfaction, that they were playing to "capacity," meaning that the house held every night as large an audience as it was capable of doing, and he added that Miss Grace Lawless was in fine form.



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"Better come round with me and have a look at her," he said.

But Jack declined, and remarked abruptly that he was going abroad for a considerable period and that he had to do his packing. As a matter of fact, he did not pack at once, for the simple reason that, though he longed to get away somewhere, he did not know where to go; but during the sleepless night he did succeed in making something of a plan. Jiggles had laughed when he, Jack, had suggested the Colonies as the place for him, but now it seemed to Jack that there was nothing else. When a man cannot earn his living by his brains, he must do it with his hands. He was a strong man, even amongst strong men, and surely it would be possible for him to get his bread and cheese as a farm labourer. He could even drive a milk-cart.

With the desire of men in his condition to be doing something definite, he began to pack a portmanteau, deciding to start at once for somewhere. He was in the midst of the litter which he had created when there came a knock at the door, and Jack, thinking it was his charwoman, answered, "Come in!" without turning his head. The door opened and closed, but no one spoke, and Jack, looking over his shoulder, saw Maud standing looking at him.

London has a mysterious power of working sudden changes in those who come under its spell. It had certainly worked a marked transformation in Maud Delman, and the change did not lie so much in the fact that she was now beautifully dressed in something approaching perfect taste, but that her mien and carriage were altered; the old grace of her form was accentuated by a certain refinement and ease of bearing which even her short training had given her. But it was evident that the self-possession she displayed at this moment was attained by an effort, for her face was pale, her lips slightly tremulous, and there was a shamed look, an expression of painful anxiety, in her eyes.

"Halloa!" cried Jack pleasantly; then he grew suddenly grave. "I say, what's brought you here? This is no place—I mean, I'm a bachelor, and don't receive lady visitors."

She came forward with outstretched hands. "Don't be angry, Mr. Chalfonte. I—I couldn't help it. Mr. Telby told me last night"—she struggled with her voice, and tried to smile—"that you were going away—abroad."

"That's so," said Jack, in a matter-of-fact voice. "But there's nothing extraordinary in that. I'm not the first man to go abroad."

"But he said you were going for a long time," she faltered, and involuntarily she sank into a chair and, gripping the arms, gazed at him with the eyes which worked such havoc with the male part of the audience at the Thespis.

"Oh, so you'd thought you'd come and say good-bye," said Jack, vaguely confused and worried by the trouble that was shown so eloquently in her face. "That's very good of you, Maud. And so you're getting on quite famously, Telby tells me. You'll be at the top of the tree before long—one of the stars, with a hundred pounds a week and your portrait in all the papers. But it's been there already—saw it last week. Well, I'm very glad. I suppose you're going to have a big part in the new piece when it comes?"

(To be Continued.)

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WASHINGTON

President Wilson has informed the cabinet that he has transmitted its message to the British government, asking that it make an armistice and peace to the effect that if these governments are able to bring peace upon the terms and the principles of the military advisers and the military states be asked to submit the necessary armistice as will fully protect the interests involved. He says that should such concrete evidence of her unequivocal terms and principles of peace.

WILSON FORWARDS REPLY TO GERMANY.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 23. President Wilson's reply was forwarded Germany at 9 o'clock to-night.

BRITISH OPEN NEW ATTACK.

LONDON, Oct. 23. The British began a new attack early to-day on the front between Lezardrieux and Solesmes, south of Valenciennes, Field Marshal Haig announced to-day. The British have captured Bruyay, two and a half miles north of Valenciennes.

HUN LINES SMASHED.

WITH THE BRITISH ARMIES IN FRANCE AND BELGIUM, Oct. 23.—The British Third and Fourth armies to-day smashed through strong German defensive positions south of Valenciennes. They gained ground to a depth of more than five thousand yards on an extended front, capturing many important villages and several thousand prisoners, together with numerous guns and driving a wedge into the enemy positions at what probably is the most vital point of the line. The Germans are holding. The fighting was of a desperate nature, as German machine gunners holding out to the last. Large numbers of the enemy were killed. The advance continues and the menace to the Germans to the north and south of the front attacked is hourly growing. Further retreats are expected.

AN IMPORTANT ATTACK.

WITH THE ALLIED ARMIES IN FRANCE AND BELGIUM, Oct. 23.—The attack of the British Third and Fourth Armies on a wide front south of Valenciennes to-day, is of vital strategic importance. The Allied advance here menaces the German lines all the way to Holland and if it is widened it will have a tremendous effect also on the enemy front to the south.

BRITISH PROGRESS.

LONDON, Oct. 23. North of Valenciennes the British captured about two-thirds of the

ENEMY

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