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Love a Conqueror

—OR—

WEDDED AT LAST!

CHAPTER X.

It was a rough, boisterous night, as he had said; but the avenue was well lighted in anticipation of the coming festivities.

Shirley stood still in the lighted doorway, with Sir Hugh at her side, as the dogcart drove away; and Guy turning as he came to the bend in the drive, waved his hand in farewell; then they both turned away and went into the hall again. Shirley shivering a little from the cold sharp wind which had been admitted.

"You are cold," Sir Hugh said gently; he was still very pale, and his voice was husky.

"It is a rough drive for Guy," she remarked sorrowfully, as they stood for a few seconds in front of the fire, side by side; and a momentary flash of angry pain sprang into the young man's handsome eyes.

"Yes—but I would rather be Guy driving away in the cold wind and darkness than—than—the happiest man in the world," Sir Hugh said slowly. "Ah, forgive me, Miss Ross. I will not offend you again. That was an irrepressible little outburst," he added, with a smile. "I won't vex you by my folly any more. And now since Guy has left you in my charge," he continued, "will you not let me ask you to go and lie down for an hour or two, so as to be rested for to-night? Guy would not like to think that he had spoilt all your pleasure."

"But Aunt Geraldine will not be pleased if I do not come down to dinner," she said, coloring shyly, and smiling a little as she added, "and I dont thi'nk Guy would be pleased if I were to let people think I was such a goose as to cry because he has left me for a fortnight; so I must not, although I should like it, act upon your suggestion, Sir Hugh."

"It is because it is my suggestion that it finds no favor in your eyes," he said regretfully. "Do you bear malice, Miss Ross? No? Then give me your hand in token of forgiveness and as I am Guy's friend, let me be yours."

With a little smile she gave him her hand, and Sir Hugh bent over it and touched it with his lips. As he did so Alice Fairholme and Ruby Capel, coming out of the oak parlor, saw the two standing by the hall fire; and Ruby said, in surprise—

"Why, it is Shirley and Sir Hugh!"

"Shirley putting her theory into practice," remarked Alice, with irrepressible bitterness. "She ought to be ashamed of herself!" she added, as she passed up the broad staircase holding her graceful head erect, and sweeping her soft blue dress disdainfully after her.

And Ruby, as she followed, with a touch of gravity on her beautiful piquant face, was reminded of the lines of the old song—

"It is well to be off with the old love
Before you are on with the new,"

and resolved to take Shirley to task for flirting before poor Guy's back was fairly turned.

CHAPTER XI.

"It seems as if the Fates would be propitious, Latreille," said Sir Hugh Glynn to his servant, as he put the finishing touches to his evening dress a little later in the evening. "Nothing could have been more a propos than Major Stuart's departure."

"The game is in your own hands, Sir Hugh," returned Latreille quietly. "A proverb in my country says that the absent are always in the wrong. I think you will be able to see that Major Stuart was in the wrong to leave Miss Ross so confidingly. He must know that such a beautiful young lady will not lack admirers."

"It is a nasty business," Sir Hugh said rather discontentedly. "I wish Guy were not so trusting," he said to himself, "he makes it so difficult to deceive him. Poor old Guy! We were boys together too."

"It will not be your fault if Miss Ross changes her mind, Sir Hugh," remarked his valet coolly. "You are not to blame if she has the good taste to prefer you to Major Stuart."

"But she will not," Sir Hugh said moodily.

"Then the alternative is in your own hands, Sir Hugh. I have shown you that it is an easy matter, and the young lady, even if she storms a little, will be grateful to you when she finds that she really is Lady Glynn."

"And it is safe and secure?"

"As safe and secure Sir Hugh, as if the Archbishop of Canterbury had performed the ceremony. Here are your gloves, sir."

Sir Hugh took the gloves and left the room, with a grave, thoughtful, remorseful look upon his handsome face—a face which had grown haggard and pale during the last few days, and bore visible signs of unrest which he tried to conceal under an appearance of gayety, which now feeling himself unseen, unwatched he had dropped. Those days which had been such happy days to Shirley Ross, as she dreamed her happy love-dreams and smiled into her lover's eyes, had been days of intense agony to Hugh Glynn. He, in general so careless and selfish and languid, had no repose night or day, no rest from the bitterness of his thoughts; he who had been heartlessly selfish, and proud in a certain way of his heartlessness, who had smiled to himself at other men's weakness, he, Hugh Glynn, loved utterly as ever lover had loved, and in vain. It maddened him to think that the smiles for which he longed, the gentle words for which he hungered, the kiss for which he would almost have laid down his life, were all given to another, while he was rejected and almost scorned. At first his love had been a **melange** of desire, of admiration for Shirley's beauty, of pride piqued by her indifference; but now he loved her—not with the great, noble, unselfish love which Guy Stuart had given her, and which would have sacrificed itself unhesitatingly to her happiness, but deeply as he could love, with a passion which her indifference could not quell, but which opposition increased a thousand-fold. It was as much self-love as love perhaps, but it was a strong passion, and Sir Hugh had not power for resistance. She should be his, he swore passionately again and again in the long sleepless nights during which he paced his room in misery by fair means or by foul; and since fair means failed, since she loved Guy Stuart so deeply that nothing—Sir Hugh felt that to the depths of his passionate, aching, jealous heart—would tempt her from her allegiance, he would try foul.

But he had not yielded to temptation without a struggle; he loathed the means whereby he could steal her from Guy, he hated the man who had suggested those means, and yet, helpless against the torrent of his overwhelming passion, he was carried away so low as to think treachery no dishonor if it would give her to him.

He was thinking of those means now as he went slowly down the picture gallery, drawing on his gloves, and looking so handsome and distinguished in his faultless evening dress and Guy Stuart leaning back in his corner of the railway carriage in which he was speeding toward Edinburgh, was thinking tenderly of the girl he had parted with so lately, and kindly of the friend in whose charge he had left her.

Lady Fairholme met Sir Hugh in the hall, looking stately and magnificent in her rich velvet dress, with its trimmings of old point lace, and, while they were exchanging a few words about the music and the number of waltzes upon the programme, which Lady Fairholme thought was too large, and Sir Hugh considered not large enough, Alice came slowly down the stairs, looking very lovely in a dress of palest pink, with wild roses in her curly yellow hair.

Sir Hugh went forward to meet her with some **empressement**, but Alice, remembering the little firelit scene, the tall man's head bending low, and his lips touching the girl's slight hand, passed him with a quick reproachful glance and went toward her mother.

"Delphine wants your opinion, mamma," she said, smilingly. "She says that Worth himself never made a prettier dress, and that you must praise her for it."

"It is very pretty, dear," Lady Fairholme allowed. "Sir Hugh, you are a better judge, perhaps, having seen more of Monsieur Worth's **confections** than I have."

"One forgets the dress," Sir Hugh began, as he bent his blue eyes on Alice for a moment in smiling admiration; but the girl turned away petulantly.

"How have I offended you?" he asked her presently; "and why are you not wearing my flowers? I thought you would do me so much honor."

"You do not care whether I carry them or not," Alice said pettishly, "so long as Shirley carries those you sent her."

"How can you be so unjust?" Sir Hugh asked reproachfully. "What can your cousin be to me but the **fiancee** of my oldest friend, and as such a very interesting person? May I tell Latreille to ask your maid for the flowers?"

"If I thought you cared," Alice began relentingly, dropping her eyes coquettishly, and then lifting them again to his face.

"You know I care," he said quickly, leaving her side for a moment to give the order to Latreille.

(To be Continued.)

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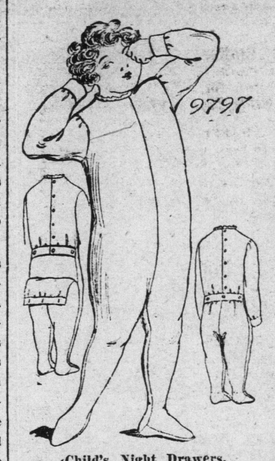

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