The Web;

OR,

PASSION. LOVE'S TRUE

Cyril's Bride.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Miss Norah wouldn't think so," he retorted. "My dear boy, don't repine. We must all bear our lot cheerfully, whatever it may be. I sympathize with you deeply, deeply; it must be so trying to be an earl with ever so many thousands a year; but you must bear your heavy trouble like a man, you know. And here's the hansom at last."

Cyril hurried to the door as if he were going to catch a train and hadn't a minute to lose; then he stopped short and thrust his hand into the breast pocket of his beautifully-fitting frock coat.

"What's the matter? Palpitation of the heart?" demanded Jack.

"No," said Cyril, gravely pulling out a long blue envelope. "I was wondering whether I had forgotten this," and he tapped it significantly.

"Oh, that's all right. What you'll forget will be the ring——"

"No, I shan't," retorted Cyril, and he took it out gingerly from his waistcoat pocket. "Come along, come along!"

"Certainly, but allow me to lock the door. Are you afraid the church will run away, or that Miss Norah may change her mind?"

The church was still standing in its secluded corner, and Norah had not changed her mind, for after Cyril had been pacing up and down the small vestry for ten minutes, while Jack had been chatting with the clergyman—a young curate, who really did seem to enjoy the fun of this strange marriage—Lord and Lady Ferndale arrived with the bride. Cyril—and perhaps Jack, too—thought she had never looked more lovely than she did in her simple dress of quiet gray, her glorious eyes downcast, her lips just parted by the quick breaths of mingled joy and shyness.

For herself she still felt as if she were moving in some strange, delicious dream, and it was with a start she heard the young curate murmur softly, "Are we ready?"

Then Cyril and Jack walked up to the altar, and Lord Ferndale drew her arm within his and followed.

There were no other witnesses than these dear and tried friends, excepting the inevitable pew-opener. Norah felt as if the throbbing of her heart could be heard all over the little church.

In his soft, suave voice the curate performed the ceremony; she felt Cyril's dear hand clasp hers as he slipped the "plain ring of gold" upon her finger, then, leaning upon his arm, they led the way back to the vestry.

"My wife!" she heard Cyril murmur in her ear, and as she raised her eyes to his shyly, he bent his head to kiss her. But Lord Ferndale put a hand upon his arm quickly.

"Excuse me," he said, "but I think you are trespassing upon my privilege!" and Norah, blushing and smiling, presented her cheek to him.

"That's my reward for giving her away," said Lord Ferndale, kissing her hand also. "God bless you, my dear, and make you and the man you have chosen as happy as we all wish you!"

While this pretty little ceremony had been enacting, the curate had been getting out of his surplice and filling in the certificate.

"I have dispensed with my clerk's services this morning," he said, making a great fuss with the blotting paper. "Now—er—Mr. Burne, will you sign, please?"

Cyril wrote his name.

"Wilfrid Avon Cyril, Earl of Arrowdale," and the curate covered it quickly with the blotting paper as he turned to Norah.

"Here, if you please, my lady," he said, then stammered and turned red. But Norah did not notice his confusion, or, if she had done so, would have attributed it to his having addressed her by the title she had borne, and, bending down, wrote her own name.

The curate folded the certificate two or three times.

"Will you—er——" he said, addressing Norah, but looking at Cyril.

"Give it to me," he said, quietly, but with downcast eyes. "I have some papers of importance here; I'll put it with them. It will be sure not to be lost then," and he took the envelope from his pocket, inclosed the certificate, and fastened the envelope securely.

As he did so he drew a breath of relief, and glanced at Jack, who smiled significantly and softly clapped his hands.

Then they went back to the carriage, and were rattled off to Grosvenor Square, where what Lady Ferndale called "an apology" for a wedding breakfast awaited them.

It was certainly not a large party, but what they lacked in numbers they made up in happiness.

The newly-married pair were naturally too intent upon each other to need much merriment, but, though they did not need it, Jack had got a fair supply on hand, and for the first time in his life forgot to be cynical, and was content to be genial and amusing, and, as Lord Ferndale remarked afterward, displayed such a vast talent for entertaining that he might have made a fortune on the stage if he had not been in a fair way to make it as a poet.

Indeed, the breakfast could not have been a greater success if there had been half a hundred guests, with the usual complement of bridesmaids and the stock speeches.

The health of the bride and bridegroom was given by Lord Ferndale, and, though he did not make a speech, the way in which he spoke Norah's name and looked at her was worth, as Jack declared, "a dozen set orations," and Cyril's "Thank you, sir; thank you, dear Lady Ferndale, and you, Jack!" spoken with a suspicious moisture in his joy-lit eyes, was pronounced by the same critic just a perfect bit of elocution.

All through the meal Lord Ferndale had kept watch and guard over his tongue, and it was not until Cyril had glanced at his watch and said that time was getting short that he said with a mischievous twinkle in his eye:

"I suppose you won't take a very long holiday, Mr. Burne? You'll be wanting to get back to work, eh?"

And Cyril had, with a marked increase of color, murmured something inaudible, and hurried Norah out of the room. She and Lady Ferndale disappeared together for half an hour, and then they came down, Norah attired in the travelling dress and a set of sables which Lady Ferndale had produced at the last moment. Both women were rather red about the eyes, and Norah clung to her friend until the last moment, when Cyril, standing beside the cab door, held Jack's and Lord Ferndale's hands, and whispered:

"Remember! The Court, Thursday week."

Then Norah tore herself away, Cyril put her gently and tenderly into the cab, and Jack and Lord Ferndale having flung a handful of rice over their nice clothes, they drove off, Norah leaning forward and waving her hand until the cab turned the corner and carried them out of sight.

"Well," said Lord Ferndale, with a smile and a sigh. "There goes the prettiest and sweetest girl in Christendom!"

"And the best and warmest-hearted man!" responded Jack, loyally.

"God bless them both!" said Lady Ferndale, with a sob, and she ran in and up to her own room that she might enjoy the "good cry" she had fully deserved.

The two men went to the smoking room, and mixed themselves a soda and brandy, and talked over the strange history of the young couple and the surprise which awaited one of them; but presently Jack grew very silent and thoughtful, and Lord Ferndale, noticing it, said:

"A penny for your thoughts, Wesley."

Jack raised his head, and there was a grave earnestness on his handsome intellectual face.

"A penny for my thoughts? You shall have them for nothing. But stop. I'll give you a guess."

"You weren't thinking of the young people—your face was too grave for that," said Lord Ferndale. "Let me see. Were you thinking of that scoundrel Guildford Berton?"

"Well, yes, partly," said Jack. "To tell you the truth, I was thinking of some one else. I was asking myself a question that has worried me a great deal lately. I was wondering at the moment where that young girl Cyril was supposed to have run off with could be. The question that bothers me is: 'Where is Becca South?'"

"Becca South!" said Lord Ferndale. "Ah, yes. Hidden away somewhere, I suppose. Perhaps here in London—and quite near us. I'll be bound," and he smiled, "that fellow Guildford Berton knows."

"Yes," said Jack, grimly, as he lit another cigar. "Yes, I think Mr. Guildford Berton knows."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Home-Coming.

Nine days later Cyril and Norah were walking along the parade at Torquay. It is summer and sunshine at this English Naples when the rest of England is cowering before the wintry blast, and these two young people walked arm in arm under the bright rays of King Sol, sauntering as slowly as if the month were June instead of November.

Nine days of perfect happiness will work miracles, and in these nine days Norah had lost all her pallor, and was as blooming a bride as even the most passionate of lovers could desire. Indeed, it was not the Norah who watched, pale and weary, beside the sick bed of her supposed father, not the Norah flying from the Court and crushed by the fear of Guildford Berton, who walked with springy step and erect head; but quite a different Norah, with the rose of health on her cheeks, and the light of happiness in her eyes as she leaned upon her husband's arm.

"And you don't ask me why I want you to go back to the Court so suddenly, dearest?" Cyril said.

"No," she replied, turning her loveyy eyes upon him trustfully. "Why should I? Didn't I promise to obey—and obedience means asking no questions. If you don't wish to tell me why we are going there to-morrow, why—well, don't. I am quite satisfied!"

Cyril—there happened to be no one in sight at the moment—bent down—he hadn't to bend very low—and kissed the soft red lips.

"Norah, I always suspected that I had married an angel, now I know it! Will it be painful to you to go there, dearest?"

Norah thought for a moment.

"No," she said, softly; "I was very happy there sometimes, and I—well, I grew to love the grand old place, and will you mind my saying that I shall feel rather sorry when I think to-morrow will be the last time I may ever see it again?"

Cyril was silent for amoment.

"Perhaps it won't be," he said, guardedly. "The new earl may—well, may be friendly, and invite us now and again—especially as you have surrendered all that money so readily."

Norah laughed gently.

"I don't know that it would be wise to be too intimate with earls and countesses—always excepting the dear Ferndales! Don't they say that professional people should keep to their own class? Perhaps if you knew too many 'swells,' as Jack calls them, you would grow lazy and discontented. You see how prudent I am becoming," and she laughed. "Cyril?"

"Well!"

"When are we going to begin housekeeping, dear?" she asked, nestling closer to him, and looking up in his face with a delicious gravity in her eyes. "I can't tell you how anxious I am to begin the part of the economical wife and housekeeper. I think I shall take lessons in cookery—would you mind?—and I mean to watch every penny. Shall we be—don't laugh, sir!—shall we be very poor? Mind, I don't care if we shall be——"

Cyril coloured. She was treading on very delicate ground for him.

"Well, er—not very poor as incomes go," he said. "You know what Lord Newall is going to pay me for the pictures I am finishing? And there are plenty of commissions in hand. No. I rather think we shall be—well, tolerably off."

Norah sighed.

"Do you know, I am not so glad as I ought to be?" she said, with a laugh. "I had set my heart upon proving myself a miracle of economy and managemeht. But never mind; at any rate, we shall have to be careful, I suppose?"

(To be Continued.)

At a large dinner-party at Hatfield a bumptious young man, very much-up-to-date, was teasing his neighbouring, an old-fashioned squire, whom Lord Salisbury highly appreciated. The young man constantly referred to him as "Philistine." At last the old gentleman testily replied:—

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Andrews, Isaac, Patrick St.

B

Bartlett, John
Basher, Winnie, card, Quidi Vidi Rd.
Bell, Wm., sr., Nagle's Hill
Byrne, Edward, card, Alexander St.
Bucham, Miss Mary, Duckworth St.
Byrnes, Miss A., Prescott St.
Best, Joseph, Holloway St.
Bounds, Mrs. Joseph, Wills' Range
Butler, Miss, late Newtown
Bursey, Mrs. A. L., care Mrs. Hinds
Bursey, Susan, retd.
Brace, Miss Mary
Byrne, R. C.
Burry, Mrs. Baxter, Long's Hill
Barnes, J. J., Boggan St.

C

Carr, Mrs. Augusta, card
Chaulker, Miss Maud, Military Road
Colbert, Thomas, retd.
Cotter, D., Nagle's Hill
Cooper, W. W.
Corkum, Miss Helen V., Gower St.
Cuff, George, care Joseph Ryan, Murray St.
Constable, Miss Lizzie
Cole, Mrs. Philip, card, Livingstone St.
Churchill, George, Gower St.

D

Davis, Miss Theresa, New Gower St.
Davis, Miss Sarah, Gower St.
Davenport, J. E.
Dwyer, Michael, Nagle's Hill
Diamond, Miss Jennie, Bond St.
Dower, James, Nagle's Hill

F

Foley, Miss Annie, Lime St.
Ford, Mrs. E., retd.
Flynn, Miss Katie, Mullock St.

G

Gladney, Mrs. Agnes, Carter's Hill
Green, Miss Ella M., LeMerchant Rd.
Greenor C., card, Pleasant St.
Gushue, Leonard, Water St. West
Greenin, Miss Dora, Temperance St.

H

Haines, Mrs. Samuel, care Mrs. Jabez Butler
Hawkins, Mrs. Wm., Monroe St.
Halward, Miss Sarah, Patrick St.
Harding, Mrs. C.
Hawco, Miss B., Duckworth St.
Hawkins, Wilfred, New Gower St.
Hennessey, Mrs., care Mr. Power, 32 —— St.
Hickey, Miss Aggie, care Mrs. Morrissey, Patrick St.
Hopkins, Mrs. Jane, care General Delivery
Hollahan, Mrs. James, Battery Road
Hobbs, John
Holmes, Miss A., Hayward Avenue
Hogan, Thomas, care Reid Co.
Hussey, Mrs. S.
Hurley, John J., Water St. West
Hart, George, Brine St.

J

Johnson, Miss G., Bond St.
Judge, J., New Gower St.

K

Keeping, Miss Maggie A., care Gillis, Patrick St.
Kennedy, Miss P., Cookstown Road
Kearney, Martin G.
King, Joseph
Kelly, Miss Annie, Livingstone St.
King, John, New Gower St.

L

Lamb, Miss H., New Gower St.
Legge, Elijah
Linthorne, Miss Alfreda, Methodist College Home
Lynch, Mrs. Amelia, William St.

M

Martin, Miss Helen, Carter's Hill
Martin, Miss L., Long's Hill
Mason, Mrs. Joseph, Casey St.
Meadus, Miss Barbara
Mercer, Miss Janet, Lime St.
Miller, Miss Leonard, Coronation St.
Miller, Mrs. Clara, Cochrane St.
Mills, Miss Lizzie, Henry St.
Moore, Mrs. John, Colonial St.
Moore, Mrs. M., Cook St.
Moore, Edgar
Meaney, Miss L., care Mrs. Anderson, Circular Rd.
Murphy, James
Mullett, Miss B., Henry St.
Murphy, Joseph, George's St.

N

Newhook, Leander
Nicholas, John
Nixon, Mrs. D., card, Mundy Pond Rd.
Noseworthy, Miss Ida, Bond St.
Nugent, Mrs. Edward P., 34 —— St.

O

Osbourne, James, Hamilton Avenue.
O'Sawyer, Mrs. Frank

P

Pretty, Miss Jemima, Forest Road
Percy, Albert
Parsons, Miss Ethel
Peddle, Miss Alice, care Mrs. Chard, Monroe St.
Power, Mrs. Peter, George's St.
Pierce, Mrs., Cochrane St.
Peddle, Miss Nellie, Water St.
Penney, Mr. Michael, Hamilton St.
Payne, Andrew, care Gen'l Delivery
Penney, Miss Carrie, Long's Hill

R

Rellis, Miss B., card, care Parker & Monroe
Richardson, care G. P. O.

S

Shaw, Jane, card
Sainsbury, Paul, late Newtown, B.B.
Shaw, Miss C.
Simmons, K., Pleasant St.
Simms, Miss Bride, New Gower St.
Scott, Miss Fannie, care Mr. Ryan, LeMerchant Rd.
Snow, Mrs. Timothy, Duckworth St.
Shute, Mrs. James, Simms' St.
Stone, John, South Side
Spurrell, Herbert, care G. P. O.
Squires, Miss Sarah, Henry St.
Spurrell, Miss Blanche, New Gower Street
Sheppard, John
Saunders, Miss Maud, Cabot St.

T

Tracey, Robert W., 70 —— Street
Tavernor, Miss M. E., Duckworth St.

U

Udle, Mrs. James, Duckworth St.

W

Warren, Miss Mary, care Post Office
Warren, Miss Milley, care G. P. O.
Warren, Miss Mary, Springdale St.
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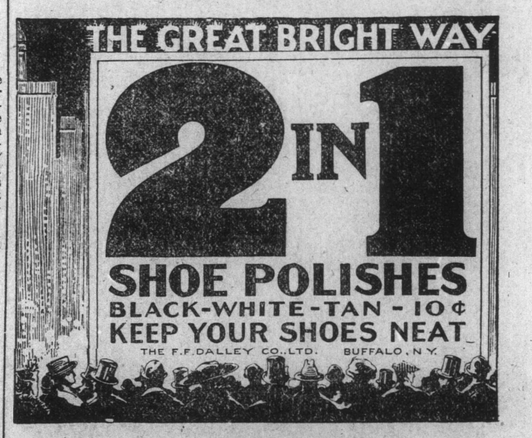

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