



The Lost Will; OR LOVE TRIUMPHS AT LAST.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"As well as could be expected, thank you, Forbes," replied Jack. "Are the ladies—Mrs. Feltham at home?"

"No, sir," responded Forbes, with a quickly-repressed air of surprise. "Mrs. Feltham and Miss Norton have left the Hall. I thought you knew, sir. Mrs. Feltham left a letter for you."

He got it from the library, and Jack tore open the envelope as he went up to his room. This was the letter:

"115, Riverview Mansions, Batterssea, S.W.

"My Dear Jack—Nora and I have taken this flat. It is very tiny, but quite comfy. I dare say you know the situation; our windows overlook the river and the park; and it is quite pleasant and amusing to watch the people enjoying themselves in a healthy and wholesome way."

Jack growled impatiently as his eye raged over the lines.

"It was Nora's idea. You see, she couldn't remain at the Hall now it had come into your possession; and so she has consented to share this flat with me—alas! I fear only for a time; for you know how terribly proud and independent she is. She talks of getting some pupils; she plays the piano delightfully, as you know; and she is quite confident that she will be able to earn her own living. But I don't know—it is terribly hard now for young girls to get their livelihood. However, I shall keep her with me as long as I can. I hope you left poor Damersfeld comforted and resigned; he must have been very glad to have you with him; for I know that he is fond of you. Of course, you must go back as soon as you can. When you are in town you must come and see us; you will be quite amused by the smallness of our domicile; it is very fortunate for us that neither Nora nor I am given to the pastime of swinging cats. The little flat is like a rabbit-hutch; but, as I say, it's quite comfy and pretty—With my best love,

"Yours affectionately,
"MADEL."

There was a P.S., and it was for Jack the most important, and at the same time the most disappointing part of the letter:

"P.S.—I tried to speak to Nora about the Chalfont estate and what you wished to do respecting Chertson and the money; but she—well, she flew at me; and I'm afraid I shan't have the courage to mention the matter again. Nora is the dearest and sweetest creature in the whole world; but she behaved like a perfect tigress to me almost as soon as I'd opened my lips."

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Jack read this postscript no fewer than three times; then he crammed on his cap, caught up a stick, and calling Jim, strode out of the house furiously.

Nora in a poky little flat in London! Going to try to earn a living by giving music lessons! What was Ferndale doing? Surely he had some authority over her, ought to be able to put a stop to this nonsense! Nora poor, and he, Jack, heir to an earldom and a vast estate, and saddled with the house and the fortune of which Nora had been deprived.

For a time Jim bounded about his restored master, yapping loudly and proclaiming his love in every possible canine way; but presently he saw that the master was gloomy and preoccupied, and he subsided into a slow and demure trot. Jack, heedless of his direction, got on to the high road, and was striding along, when he came upon the familiar pony-carriage. Lady Blanche was alone, her brother not riding beside her as usual, and Jack jumped to the conclusion that Ferndale had gone to the "poky little flat overlooking the river and the park."

At sight of him Blanche blushed, and she spoke to her old and shabby retainer, who pulled up the pony. Bare-headed, Jack went up to the carriage, and Lady Blanche held out her hand with a somewhat nervous and timorous smile.

"I am glad to see you back, Mr. Chalfont," she said, when she had replied to Jack's inquiry respecting her health. "I have to congratulate you and condole with you. It was very terrible! We read the account in the newspaper. Edward knew one of your cousins. Oh, it is very, very sad; and I fear Lord Damersfeld must be quite overwhelmed."

"Yes it's hit my uncle pretty badly," said Jack, "but I'm glad to say he's recovering from the shock and getting stronger." There was a pause; then he said, glumly, "I suppose, when you say that you want to congratulate me, you are referring to the will Miss Norton found?"

"Yes," said Blanche quietly. "You are now the owner of Chertson and all Mr. Chalfont's money, are you not?"

"Yes, I'm afraid I am, worse luck!" said Jack. "And it's worrying me pretty badly. Look here, Lady Blanche, I hope you won't think me intrusive; but, as I said, I'm awfully worried, and I don't know where to turn for help. May I walk beside the carriage?"

"Come inside, if there's room for you," said Blanche, with her gentle smile.

"It's this way," said Jack, in his downright fashion. "You see, the place and the money was left—and very properly—to Miss Norton. There were business relations between Mr. Chalfont and her father—But I needn't go into that; let's take it that the property really ought to have gone to her. Now this ridiculous will has turned up, and taken it from her and given it to me, and I don't want it. Unfortunately—I do hope, Lady Blanche, you will think I am speaking genuinely—unfortunately, I'm booked to come into the Damersfeld title and the estates; and they're pretty big, as I daresay you know. So that, take it by and large, I shall be very well tiled in. What I mean is, that the Chalfont property is of no use to me; I don't want it, and I don't want to take it."

"I can guess what you want," said Lady Blanche.

"You do?" he said, gratefully, and his huge hand enclosed her tiny one and pressed it. "That's the best of women—they can see into a man's mind and understand what he means before he has blundered half through his explanation. Of course you see, I want Miss Norton to keep the Chalfont property. Look here, Lady Blanche, I'm an awfully clumsy kind of idiot, and I'm no good at beating

about the bush. I know how it is with your brother, Lord Ferndale; like a great many more of us—how soon one grows accustomed to altered circumstances: Jack, the most modest and unassuming of men, had learned already to think of himself as an aristocrat and a prospective landowner—"he is hard up; and Nora's—I beg her pardon, Miss Norton's—money is—er—er—necessary. What I mean is—"

"I know what you mean, Mr. Chalfont," said Blanche, smiling up at him gravely. "But you don't seem to know that all sorts of things have happened while you have been away. By the way, where have you been?"

"I've been at work on an embankment on an island off the mainland of Essex," said Jack, in his direct fashion. "But," he went on, looking straight into Blanche's blue eyes as they stared up at him perplexedly. "It doesn't matter what I've been doing; I don't count. What has happened?"

"Well, one of the happenings to us," said Blanche, with a smile at his impetuosity, "is that coal has been found on Edward's property in the North. It seems that there is a great deal of coal, and that Edward will be quite rich. But it is not only the money—it means that he has a new interest in life—"

"Oh, that's all right," said Jack, drawing a long breath. "I'm awfully glad! Oh, yes, that puts matters straight. Look here, Lady Blanche, a good deal of my worry was concerned with Miss Norton. Now that this beastly will—oh, I beg your pardon, and I beg poor Chalfont's too!—well, now that she's done out of Chertson, she has gone off with my cousin Mabel to live in a poky flat and talk about giving music lessons, or some rot of that kind. Music lessons!" He laughed indignantly and derisively. "As if anybody could get a living out of music lessons! But, of course, if Ferndale had found coal—well, there you are, you know! It's all right."

Lady Blanche looked at him with an expression in her patient, placid blue eyes which puzzled Jack.

"You don't seem to know all the happenings, Mr. Chalfont," she said in a low voice. "You don't know that Edward and Nora have broken their engagement—or, rather, that she has?"

Jack stared at her and gasped.

"Broken their engagement—I beg your pardon? What? Oh, I see; she broke it off because she found that she was poor again. She did not know of this coal find."

Lady Blanche shook her head and looked straight before her, and her lips quivered slightly.

"No, Mr. Chalfont," she said; "it was not because of her loss of fortune."

"What was it, then?" demanded Jack, leaning forward and gazing at her with fevered anxiety.

"It was because—she did not love Edward."

"Did not love?"

"No, Mr. Chalfont. It comes as a surprise to you; you did not know, did not guess; but I did." She sighed. "I divined it from the first. She never loved him; and she caught at the loss of the money—Oh, don't think I blame her! She behaved as every true woman would behave who discovers the real state of her heart. She caught at this loss of her fortune as a means of escape from an engagement which—"

"Would you mind stopping the carriage?" said Jack, in a repressed frenzy. "I've—I've got to catch a train." He jumped out of the phaeton, caught Lady Blanche's hand, and pressed it. "I'm awfully obliged to you! I mean—what a very hot morning it is, isn't it? Splendid weather for this time of the year. Rattling good pony this of yours! You're looking awfully well, Lady Blanche, and much stronger. I—er—I've got to catch this train—just got time. Good-morning. Give my kind regards to your brother. Yes, awfully hot! Good—good-morning!"

He started off with the last word, and Lady Blanche dropped back and smiled. And sighed; a sigh of sympathy, not only with her brother, for the love he had lost, but with the man who was going for the love he would find.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE train which had the honour of carrying Jack Chalfont to London happened to be a slow one. As a rule that gentleman was never in a particular hurry, and, as the reader is

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aware, generally took things pretty easily; but, on this journey, his impatience was so great that it drove him to the length of remonstrating with the guard, of whom he requested sarcastically permission to get out and push up behind. However, most things come to an end; the train crawled into Waterloo, and Jack hurried himself into a taxi-cab, and was conveyed, at a speed which somewhat comforted him, to the row of flats overlooking the river and the park.

A trim maid-servant, whom he recognized as one from the Hall, opened Mrs. Feltham's door, and sent Jack's heart into his boots by informing him that both ladies were out. Jack said he would come in and wait, and he did so—for five minutes, which, in his present condition, drew themselves out to five hours. He sprang up and, muttering to the demure and no doubt surprised maid that "he would go for a stroll," went down the stairs and paced up and down the pavement in front of the residence of his mistress, as many a lover has done before him, and will do after him.

At last he espied Mrs. Feltham coming along in her leisurely way.

"Oh, here you are!" he exclaimed, complacently. "I've been waiting hours for you."

"I've—been gone just five-and-twenty minutes by the clock; but I'm very sorry I was out, Jack, dear."

"Well, try to look it," he said grumpily. "But you'll have something to be really sorry for when I've had my talk with you."

"If you're going to bully me, we'd better wait till we get upstairs," remarked Mrs. Feltham. "The London police are very attentive, and are sworn to protect all unprotected females. And there's a policeman looking at us now."

Jack followed her up to the flat, and, still pacing up and down, with his hands thrust in his pockets, demanded wrathfully what she "meant by it."

"Of course, you mean why I left the Hall," said Mrs. Feltham meekly, as she took off her hat and jacket and smoothed her hair at the glass.

"Won't you have something to drink, Jack, dearest? Wonderful to say, I've got some whisky—I thought you might drop in."

"I won't have anything to eat or drink," he said, indignantly. "I decline to break bread with you until you've explained this idiotic behaviour of yours; and I don't think it's very nice of you to desert a chap and—leave the cares of a big house on his inexperienced hands in the way you've done, let me tell you, Mabel."

(To be continued.)

WRONG BOTTLE AGAIN!

Mr. Thomas Wade, of Alma, N.B., accidentally applied some acid to a sore leg, thinking the bottle contained liniment. Writing of the effect, he says:

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Hohenzollern Follow Militarism is Ass Kaiser Wilhelm?

AMSTERDAM, Nov. 11. The Handelsblad says it learns the Dutch Government will object to the German Emperor residing in Holland. Another report says he will be interned.

AMSTERDAM, Nov. 11. Emperor William, it is reported, was on his way to the British coast to surrender when he was headed off by German revolutionaries, and fled to seek safety in Holland.

LONDON, Nov. 11. Field Marshal Von Hindenburg has been reported to have been ordered to the disposal of the new people's government at Berlin, says a despatch from the German capital by the Associated Press.

LONDON, Nov. 11. The Field Marshal asked the Golegole Soldiers' and Sailors' Council to send delegates to the German headquarters at once.

LONDON, Nov. 11. The British Government has decided to suspend recruitment in the British Army.

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