

ANNABEL OR THE TEMPTATION.

CHAPTER XIII. PARTINGS—THE TEMPTATION GROWING INTO FORM.

"Well, I hope so, my dear. It's very likely as how we'll have a bit o' difficulty about it, though, for America is a wide country as I have heard say, and the man may be thousands and thousands of miles away from us after we come to hear about him. But we'll do our best, you may depend, and Mr. Philip ain't the man to leave, nor am I the man to desert him, while there's a chance o' getting sight o' this Jerry just."

"And I am not the girl to want you to do so," returned Sally; "but don't go more into danger than you can help, Jim, and don't let Mr. Philip do it. He scorns it. I know, and so do you, and you may despise it more than his safe; but think of us, dear Jim, and for our sakes be prudent and cautious."

"Bless yer sweet heart, Sally, we'll not be rash or venturesome more nor is needed. 'Taint likely we should, for it's only your foolhardy chaps as courts danger for danger's sake. All I bargains for is that we don't turn back when we should go on, just because there's danger to meet. Our two purposes in goin' to America is to find the man and put the agency at Montreal in better order. When we gets them two things done, back we comes, and I hopes as how we'll meet in joy and happiness, and have a double wedding to celebrate the event. Eh, Sally, my love, don't you?"

"I long for your safe return at any rate, dear Jim," she softly responded. "We shall be lonely and anxious while you are away; but Miss Annabel and I will console each other with speaking about Mr. Philip and you."

"In course you will; and won't we be talking together in the wood and wilds of Rockstone and those that are there? That's a topic o' conversation that won't ever run out."

And as they talked and talked, their hearts coming closer and closer together as they sat, till the sun went down, and the gloom of twilight fell around them. Fain, fain would both pair of lovers have prolonged the precious time, and protracted the thrill of sweet yet sad enjoyment; but the hour of departure was now drawing near, and the final preparations required to be made, so, with vows of love and constancy, with low-breathed prayers and blessings, they indulged in the long, last, clinging embrace, and returned to the house as the stars began to beam upon the sultry summer night.

These were the true moments of parting. The farewell which was said two hours later, when they all stood on the steps at the hall door to see them off in the dog-cart, was not the fond, passionate utterance spoken in the dell—but when the vehicle vanished in the darkness, and the inmates of the mansion returned to their various apartments, the two girls different in station and education, yet one in feeling and fear, in hope and love, withdrew to one chamber to weep in company, and receive that support and soothing which common grief and common experience can give.

The days passed, and that very quietly at Rockstone, much to the disappointment, almost the disgust, of Mrs. Langton, who could not, in the position of affairs, begin that round of fashionable country life to which she had looked forward. Matters had got into a state not only perplexing, but highly inconvenient. Legally, the property left by Mr. Seymour belonged to nobody, and nobody could freely use it. It was Annabel's moment her mother's marriage was proved, but as proof of this fact was at present wanting, she could neither be entered as heir nor enjoy the use of the property as its owner. Still less could Mrs. Langton claim it under either the last or the former will. The last will was, of course, that which must stand, and she was benefited by it only failing Annabel—that is, only if Annabel died unmarried, or was unable to show that her parents had been lawfully married. On this last point it had been managed by Bernard Hayes and herself to cast a difficulty, and a difficulty only, when they hoped to raise a doubt which it would be impossible to dissipate. The result of their machinations had been very different from what they intended, and that really made matters worse for Mr. and Mrs. Langton than they otherwise would have been. The latter was realizing this now, and bitterly, though in secret, fretting at the consequences, though the full gravity of these were not yet discovered by her. But she was to be made cognisant of them ere long.

The house in Gower Terrace was for the present partially shut up, a portion of the merchant's establishment having been transferred to Rockstone, where he came likewise at the end of each week, and every time he arrived it might have been noticed that the lines of anxiety were deepening on his care-worn brow. One Saturday morning he entered his wife's room as she lay on a couch yawning listlessly over a novel. His entrance did not cause her to change her occupation, and he walked to and fro for some time in silence, but with a troubled countenance.

"Augusta," he remarked at length, "if your brother had any hand in the framing of that clause of the will, he has done us a terrible mischief."

She threw down the book at once, raised herself half up, and looked at him.

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