



WHEN LOVE Came Too Late.

CHAPTER XVII.
Blinded by Self-Conceit.

Olivia waited for a moment or two, until her heart beat less wildly, then went to the lodge door, which was usually unlocked, but to-night she found it fastened, and knocked. Bessie opened the door, and uttered an exclamation of surprise and welcome. "Miss Olivia! Is it really you? Come in," and Bessie led the way into the sitting-room, which her natural good taste had converted into a pretty little parlor. "I thought it was father, miss. Were you surprised to find the door locked? Father bade me keep it fastened, as there were some gypsies and suspicious characters about, he said—but, oh, miss, what is the matter? Are you ill?"

"She broke off as Olivia sank into a chair, and with a deep sigh put back her shawl. "No, I'm not ill, Bessie," replied Olivia; "only a little worried."

And she tried to smile, but her eyes filled with tears.

Bessie, with womanly tact, gently took off her mistress' hat and shawl, and silently resumed her seat and went on with her work.

Olivia leaned back with her eyes closed and her hands clasped listlessly on her lap. What was the meaning and extent of the gipsy woman's warning? What was it she was going to tell Olivia to ask Bartley Bradstone? Was it some trick of the woman's with the object of extorting money? These and similar questions flashed through Olivia's harassed mind, and she could find no answer.

That there should be any secret in common between a gipsy tramp and Bartley Bradstone, the wealthy owner of The Maples, seemed impossible and absurd; and yet the woman's words and accents bore a terrible earnestness, a tone of solemn entreaty and truth which haunted Olivia.

What should she do? To this question the answer came readily enough. One knows what to do with an anonymous letter; throw it in the fire and forget it; and how, then with scorn, could she treat a vague accusation or insinuation made by a vagabond gipsy against a man of Bartley Bradstone's respectability—her future husband?

Her future husband! The sting lay in those significant words. Was it not her duty as his affianced bride, to tell him of the incident, and leave the matter in his hands? Yet how could she bring herself to do it? The woman's interrupted communication might have referred to some past incident in Bartley Bradstone's life with which she—Olivia—could have no concern, and she could scarcely go to him and demand his confidence, perhaps his confession of a past wrong—she who had, even since their betrothal, treated him with cold civility, and kept him at arm's length.

No, she could take no notice of the woman's warning; after all, it was probably a prelude to a request for money; these gipsies, she had always heard, were accomplished and daring beggars; an attempt to coax or extort money from her or Bartley was probably the woman's only motive.

She sighed again, as she arrived at this decision, and put the matter from her mind. "Are you rested now, miss?" said Bessie, gently.

"Yes, Bessie," replied Olivia; "I am all right now. I am tired and—and I was frightened by meeting a gipsy outside the lodge."

Bessie looked up quickly. "Father was right, then, miss—there are some of them about. Father is in the woodshed; shall I call him and tell him to look after them?"

"No, no," said Olivia, quickly, with a slight flush; "they are far away by this time, I dare say. I haven't been to see you for some time, Bessie," she went on, hurriedly, changing the subject.

"No, miss," said Bessie, softly. "But I didn't expect—I knew you would have a great deal to do." She faltered and colored. "I've heard the news, miss, and—she dropped her work and clasped her hands, her eyes fixed with affectionate earnestness on Olivia's pale face—"I do pray you may be happy!"

"Thank you, Bessie," said Olivia, a slight flush passing across her face. "Yes, I am going to marry Mr. Bartley Bradstone; so you see you will not lose me altogether."

"No," said Bessie, with a quiet sigh; "that thought comforts me a little. The Maples isn't far, and—and you'll let me see you sometimes, Miss Olivia?"

"As often as you like, Bessie," said Olivia. "But you speak as if I had been ordered to execution," and she smiled.

Bessie colored, and took up her work again.

"Did I, miss? I didn't mean to; I only meant that it—it was a surprise." Olivia's eyes dropped.

"Such things are always a surprise, Bessie," she said. "I came to ask how you were, but I see there is no need to do so. It's just the Bessie of old, sitting there so quietly and happily at her needle."

A strange look flashed across the girl's face, and she bent still lower over her work.

"Yes, miss, I'm all right now," she said, quietly. "Father was afraid that the fright would upset me for a long time; but Mr. Faradeane says such care was taken of me that I shall come to no harm. I'm quite right now."

At the mention of Faradeane's name, Olivia started slightly, and reached for her shawl.

"Have you seen—Mr. Faradeane lately?" she said, coldly.

Bessie looked up quickly; no tone or accent of her mistress' beloved voice could escape her.

"No, miss; not here at the lodge—that is, I've seen him at a distance riding and walking. He's been ill, miss—very ill, I'm afraid."

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"No, how should I know, Bessie?" responded Olivia, almost sternly. Bessie sighed.

"No, miss," she assented, meekly. "I suppose nothing can be done—I mean to help him, if he is ill or in trouble. I'd—her pretty face flushed, and her voice quivered—"I'd walk a hundred miles barefoot to serve him—"

She stopped and restrained herself. "But I'm only a poor, ignorant girl, miss, and can't do anything. What seems so dreadful is his loneliness. From week's end to week's end no one goes near him, now that Lord Bertie has gone away. He was the only friend he had, father says."

Olivia rose and put on her hat. "Mr. Faradeane does not wish for any friends, Bessie," she said, speaking with an air of indifference. "I am sorry he has been ill, and glad that he is better. As for any trouble, I don't know—" She stopped. "I must go now, Bessie. You must come up to the Grange; there are some dresses I want you to look over."

"Yes, miss," said Bessie, obediently, and, taking up her hat, followed her to the gate.

"Where are you going, Bessie?" asked Olivia.

"With you to the Grange, miss," replied Bessie, firmly.

"Indeed you shall not," said Olivia. "But I mean to, miss," retorted Bessie, steadily. "You've been frightened already to-night, and that's quite enough. I am coming to take care of you."

Olivia regarded the slim, girlish figure with a laugh.

"Why, you silly child, and who is to take care of you coming back alone?" "I can take care of myself, miss," said Bessie, firmly.

"Go in at once," commanded Olivia. "Do you think I am afraid to run up our own drive? Why, what a coward you must think me!"

"I mean to go—" began Bessie, more firmly than before, when both girls were startled into silence by the sound of a third voice.

"I will go with Miss Olivia, if she will let me, Bessie," it said.

"Mr. Faradeane!" said Bessie, with a little catch in her voice. "Yes, sir, you shall go."

Olivia's heart seemed to stand still at the sound of the voice which had been the first and only one to thrill it to its secret depths, and her face went pale. With a great effort she forced a slight laugh. "Bessie disposes of me as if I were her exclusive property," she said, and the

effort she made to control her voice caused it to sound hard and cold. She moved on, and Faradeane, taking her remark as permission, walked by her side. Olivia's heart was beating wildly. Scarcely for a moment since her scene with him in the wood had he been absent from her thoughts. At night in her dreams she could hear his voice calling her name, calling her his darling! Shame and love—alas! yes, love—battled for mastery within her as she felt the influence of the near presence of the man who had absorbed her whole life, who had become to her, as the old Persian poem says,

"The sun and the moon and the stars and the light thereof," this man who, while he had dared to take her in his arms, had stopped short of asking her to be his wife.

She felt now, as her face burned as if with fire, that she ought to bend him from her with a cold word of dismissal; but she could not, for there was a miserable conviction within her heart that he was her soul's master, and that she was his slave.

For some minutes they walked on in silence, Olivia with her shawl drawn round her, almost concealing her face, Faradeane with his head erect, his hand thrust in his pocket, a set look of earnest thought upon his pale, haggard face. At last he said: "Miss Vanley, I find it difficult to speak to you to-night, almost impossible to say what I feel it is my duty to myself, and to you, should be said."

His voice was very low and grave, and his eyes, as they turned to her, were full of sad earnestness. "I know what it costs you to talk with me thus—how much you wish to rid yourself of me."

"Why should I?" she said, though she knew.

"Because you feel that I have forfeited your esteem, that I have acted dishonorably. You will think still worse of me when I tell you that I cannot, that I dare not explain my conduct to you the other day—that I am compelled to suffer the continuance of your contempt and scorn because I am unable to tell you all, to lay my heart bare to you. But it is so," he stighed. "I asked you to forgive me when we parted in the wood. Is it possible that you may learn to do so? Yours is a sweet and pitying nature; extend your mercy to a man who needs it very badly."

The words, the tone, went straight to her heart.

"I—I forgive you," she said, almost in a whisper.

He made no response for a moment, and the silence was more eloquent than words.

"Let me speak one more word," he said. She made a slight gesture of assent. "Lord Granville has gone—left England, you know. Will you believe that I broke as well as I could the sorrow your refusal cost him?" "You—you did the best for him, your friend," she said, faintly. "Yes, I can believe that."

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LONDON ENTHUSIASTIC.
LONDON, Aug. 28.
Roumania's declaration of war against the Austro-Hungarians, while not unexpected, created the greatest enthusiasm in London. Long after the news had been received from Berlin, the Roumanian Legation was without official confirmation from Bucharest. Before conferring with the members of the Crown Council with whom the final decision rested, King Ferdinand had a prolonged conference with the leaders of all the Roumanian political parties, including those favorable to intervention in the great war and those who supported Roumania continuing her neutrality. Roumanian military officers have discussed for some days what probably would be the first step taken when war was declared, and had dismissed all alien employees, many of them German. Despatches from Berlin stated that the Roumanian Minister to the German capital would be handed his passports to-day. The Roumanian Minister at Vienna doubtless has asked for his passports. The meeting of the Roumanian Crown Council, at which the decision was reached, was held in the Controceni Palace. The King presided. The Council consists of nineteen members, of which number it is believed four to six opposed intervention. The Bucharest newspaper "Adevart," commenting on the Council meeting, said: "At last the decisive hour has struck. Events have dictated government intervention and the realization of Roumania's national claims. The King viewed the recent events like the late

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