

One in a Thousand, BUT TRUE TO THE LAST

CHAPTER XXI.
CHANCE ADVICE.

I am very glad when Loys signals to Theo, and we all rustle into the drawing room. I ask Edith Dare to go and play something, and then I shut my eyes and fan myself slowly, for there is no actual need to talk to anyone. She is still playing when the men come in, for certainly four of them prefer women to wine. I begin to think that Mr. Wynne has transferred his admiration from Stewart to Maud, for he makes straight for her, and settles himself comfortably by her side. Once Mrs. Bracepeth tries to put a stop to it by asking Maud if she does not sing.

"Oh, no," is her ready answer; "I don't do anything I ought to do! I can only ride and talk." After this Mrs. Bracepeth leaves her alone as utterly impracticable.

Then Edith Dare sings a little, and song about forget-me-nots, which brings my heart into my throat, and presently Capt. Gore comes to ask me if I will sing.

"Oh, I cannot, indeed!" I say, hastily. "But why?" he persists.

"Well, I have not sung for ever so long, and I am very tired to-night, and, really, I cannot."

He looks sorry, and says so, and it seems as if we are fated to have no more music to-night, and but very little conversation, for several times I hear what Theo, who is at the opposite side of the room, is saying. Mrs. Bracepeth is talking to her now.

"I suppose you will stay to see the very last of them?" She is evidently alluding to our removal to Ireland.

"Oh, dear, no; I am going with them!" says Theo, with all the sweetness imaginable.

"Are you, indeed?" Mrs. Bracepeth cannot hide the intense surprise this announcement causes her.

"Yes, strangely enough, I have never been to Ireland; and, really, I am almost ashamed to own it. I know the continent well, but I have never set foot on the Green Isle."

"Do you intend to remain long?" "That I cannot say. I shall see how I like it—most probably until they get leave."

"I wonder if they really think I shall submit to this? Evidently Theo does, or she would not publicly pro-

claim her intentions in this way. I fancy Adrian is not quite so sure of his ground. He has found by experience that I am tolerably good at keeping my word, as I did the other day about going to call upon Lady Myers. I can hear Theo, with the polite grace of a Frenchwoman, telling that same lady deliberate lies.

"I was so sorry, dear Lady Myers," she is saying, "that when Audrey came to see you I could not come with her." If she only had the sense to leave off there, she would get through pretty well; but she has not. "I was suffering so intensely from my head," she says, by way of explanation, "that I was not really equal to the effort."

"I understood you were out driving with Sir Adrian," says Lady Myers, with a laugh.

Theo looks at me darkly, and I return it defiantly; but she continues the subject more suavely than ever.

"I think it must have been the day before," she murmurs. "I can only just catch the words."

"Pardon me, it was the same day, Lady Lasselles," answers Lady Myers, blandly; "but it is not of the least consequence."

When the tea is brought, Loys finds her way to my side.

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leaning back and looking up at Adrian in that shameless way! And she in the first months of her widowhood! It is not decent; it is not, really!"

"I glance across the room at the sight which calls up Loys' indignation so hotly. I am not shocked as she is; I am getting used to it. I suppose one gets used to anything in time. I have read a story of a man who for twenty years was made to live and sleep on a bed or floor of sharp pointed spikes, and so accustomed did he become to it that, when he was set at liberty, he had to have such a bed made before he could go to sleep. I must be growing accustomed to the sharp spikes; but I have not yet arrived at it at liking period. Even that may come after a time. It is no wonder if Adrian is carried away by Theo's loveliness. What man would not lose his head when such a woman as that is literally at his feet? She has left no art untried, no stone unturned; she has spared no trouble to herself, no pains to others, that she may gain her object and win him back to her. It would be a miracle if she had not succeeded!"

"There is Col. Cardyllon ready to kiss the ground she walks upon," says Loys. "Why cannot she be satisfied with him? He can make her a duchess; and, surely, the fact of having conquered 'the invincible' ought to satisfy her vanity."

"Yet she will hardly look at him," I say.

"No. Well, I cannot bear this any longer. I'll put a stop to this nonsense—for to-night, at all events." And away she sails across the room, and turns Adrian deliberately out of his chair, in which she seats herself, regardless of Theo's plainly expressed annoyance.

I am scarcely left alone for a moment, for Mr. Wynne comes to tell me that Stewart has made him the happiest man in the world, and to thank me for my ready help. Well, they are happy—I am sure she looks so, and I am very glad of it. How suddenly they have made it up—almost as soon as Adrian and I did! Ah, what is that about marrying in haste?"

"Have you noticed," says Teddy, sitting down beside me, "that Loys has her hair dressed differently?"

"Yes," I answer; "I like it very much. It suits her better than the way she has been wearing it lately."

"So I think. Do you know, Audrey, I never saw a woman who can hold a candle to Loys. Theo is not half so good-looking."

"You are very fond of Loys," I say, wistfully.

"Very," he says, briefly, yet in his tone a whole world of love and pride is expressed.

"Suppose, by chance, you found out that Loys didn't love you at all—had never loved you, but always cared for some one else—what should you do, Teddy?"

"He looks at me with troubled eyes, and shivers."

"Upon my word," he says, slowly, "I don't know! I think I would go away and hide myself!"

How the words echo in my heart. "Go away and hide myself!"

CHAPTER XXII.
THAT LETTER.

When I come downstairs on the morning following our visit to Loys, the house seems quite deserted. I do not expect to find Adrian, but Theo is not in any of the sitting rooms, and I want her. I go into the morning room, the drawing room and even as far as the door, to see if she is in the garden; but there is

With wounds that discharge or otherwise swell, that when you press your hand to the spot, it is as if you were touching a live coal. The pain is so severe, that the patient is unable to get up, and the disease is so dangerous, that the patient is liable to die. It is a disease that is not common, but it is a disease that is not to be despised. It is a disease that is not to be feared, but it is a disease that is not to be ignored. It is a disease that is not to be treated, but it is a disease that is not to be neglected. It is a disease that is not to be cured, but it is a disease that is not to be abandoned. It is a disease that is not to be forgotten, but it is a disease that is not to be denied. It is a disease that is not to be denied, but it is a disease that is not to be denied.

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not a sign of her. As I turn into the hall again, Green comes downstairs, and I ask her where Lady Lasselles is.

"In her own room, my lady," she answers, pertly—so much so that were she my servant, I should dismiss her at once. However, she is not my servant, so I take no notice, but go upstairs and knock at Theo's door.

"Who is there?" "It is I—Audrey," I answer. "May I come in?"

I hear an impatient movement, and then she flings the door open, and asks, crossly, what I want.

"I have already told you I want to speak to you," I answer, shutting the door, in spite of her detaining hand. "I heard you telling Mrs. Bracepeth last night that you intend going with us to Ireland. Is that true?"

"Of course."

"And may I ask why you are going?"

"To please myself, principally," is her answer.

"Oh! And has it never occurred to you that your presence may not be agreeable to us?"

"I cannot say that it has," she says, indifferently, "because Adrian has assured me so many times to the contrary."

"And will not the knowledge that I do not wish for you deter you from coming?"

"Well, no, Audrey," she says, candidly; "I don't think it will."

"And you really intend to go?" "Yes."

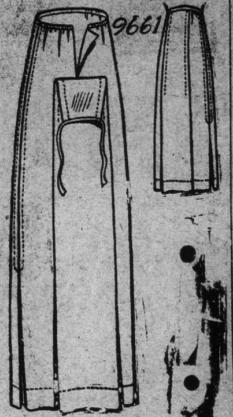
I glance at her listless, graceful pose, the swaying, artistic folds of her dress, the beauty of her carelessly folded, white hands, and in her drooped eyes I see no mercy, no self-denial.

"And you think I shall quietly submit to this?" I say, in a voice shaking with passion.

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