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Love a Conqueror
OR
WEDDED AT LAST!

CHAPTER XV.

"I cannot imagine how you fell in love with him when Sir Hugh was to the fore," Jack observed rather discontentedly.

"Perhaps Alice has marked Sir Hugh for her own," Shirley said lightly. "Jack, you are going back to-night?"

"Yes; my train leaves in an hour."

"I wish I dare stay," Shirley said wistfully, "but I am afraid I shall get into trouble as it is. We shall have to drive home fast."

"Will you, Lady Glynn?" interrogated Jack. "Shirley dear, you have not given me the money," he added, in a shamed hurried manner; and Shirley started almost guiltily.

"How stupid of me!" she said. "Sir Hugh has it. I wonder where he is. I had better go and ask him," she added, shrinking a little at the thought.

"No, don't go," Jack advised, interpreting the little gesture rightly. "Write a few lines and send it to him. You must not be seen down there now, Shirley. The passage and bar are full of men."

"But there are no writing materials here," she said, "and I could not see to write, Jack."

"We will remedy that," Jack returned carelessly, striking a match and lighting the candles on the mantel-piece. "And here are pens and ink," he added, crossing to the what-not and bringing to the table a heavy leaden inkstand adorned with two or three quill pens. "Here you are, Shirley," he said lightly. "These are the pens you most delight in; and here is a sheet of paper," he concluded, tearing off the blank page of a letter which he took from his pocket.

"You are quite a man of resource, Jack," Shirley remarked, smiling. Her spirits had risen now, and she was full of joy at the thought of her brother's deliverance and his promises of amendment. "What am I to say?" Jack laughed.

"I don't quite know how wives address their husbands," he said, "but you had better write in that manner, in case the person who takes the note is inquisitive enough to look at its contents. You see I am a man of precaution, Shirley, as well as a man of resource."

"Do you think I ought to put Dear Sir Hugh?" asked Shirley, dubiously, kneeling by the table, pen in hand, as with puzzled eyes she looked up at her brother.

"I am sure you ought not," he said, laughing. "Do you think that the future Lady Glynn would call her husband 'Sir Hugh,' during the honeymoon?"

"I don't know," Shirley answered

coloring. "But I cannot say 'Dear Hugh,'" she added, smiling a little.

"Then say 'Dear Husband,'" Jack suggested lightly. "Sir Hugh will appreciate the joke."

Shirley hesitated a moment, and then wrote in her pretty half-foreign handwriting the words he had suggested. They looked very strange and startling, she thought as she looked at them gravely.

"Well, dear," Jack said, "can't you continue?"

"Yes," she replied, hesitatingly. "Shall I say that he has forgotten the object of our visit here, and that I am waiting?"

"Something to that effect," Jack said. "Put it as prettily as you can, Shirley. We have been so good to us."

"I need send only a few lines," she remarked, writing rapidly for a minute, with a little smile on her lips; and when she had finished the note she passed it to her brother.

"Will that do?" she asked, smiling, and Jack read, smiling also, the few light words that she had written every one of which told so terribly against the writer a few weeks later.

"That will do capitally," Jack said approvingly; and after he had run the bell, they stood together before the dying fire, waiting in silence.

A smart knock at the door was followed almost immediately by the entrance of the neat-looking male servant who had already waited upon Shirley and Sir Hugh.

"Did you ring, my lady?" she said.

Jack glanced at his sister with little smile which brought the color into her face.

"Yes," she said quietly. "Will you take this note to my husband?" she added, with a little effort.

"Yes, my lady," the maid answered, looking somewhat surprised as she took the note and left the room.

Shirley waited with her hand on her brother's arm until the girl came back with a little twisted note and a pocket-book from Sir Hugh. Coloring crimson, Shirley handed the pocket-book to her brother and glanced over the little note. It ran:

"Dear Little Wife, - I do not like to hurry you; but, as we want to keep our little escapade a secret for the present, it will be safer to start at once."

"Your devoted husband,"

"Hugh Glynn."

"What a brick he is!" Jack said warmly, as he glanced at the contents of the pocket-book. "I can never be grateful enough. I will begin to save at once, Shirley; you may be sure of that."

"Now we had better go," Shirley said nervously, crushing Sir Hugh's little missive in her hand and throwing it carelessly upon the table. "It is getting very late. Oh, I am afraid!" She broke off suddenly, unwilling to grieve her brother with the thought that he might have got her into trouble at home.

"Yes, I must not keep you," answered Jack huskily. "My darling, how can I ever thank you enough?"

"You will not," she began wistfully, her sweet eyes looking up into his through a mist of tears; and, although the sentence remained unfinished, Jack finished it rightly in his own mind.

"Never again, my dear little sister," he said fondly; and the kiss which ratified the promise had something solemn in its tenderness.

"I ought to thank Sir Hugh," Jack remarked presently; and then, while Shirley began putting on her heavy sealskin jacket, he added hastily, "I will go down to him, dear."

He left the room, returning after a few moments with Sir Hugh, who was already equipped for the drive home.

Jack's face was pale and earnest, while Sir Hugh looked a little nervous and agitated, Shirley thought. She fancied that Jack's gratitude had distressed him.

"The dog-cart is quite ready, Shirley," he said, quietly. "Are you well wrapped up? Latrelle was thoughtful enough to put a shawl in the dog-cart. It is too soon to take your brother to the station, I think."

"Yes, he has three-quarters of an hour yet," Shirley answered. "You had better get something to eat, Jack."

"Yes. Don't linger, Shirley dear," he counselled quickly. "I had no idea it was so late."

They went down stairs together, and the landlady and the barmaid and two or three stragglers hurried out curiously to have a look at the distinguished company who had caused no little excitement at the Half Moon Inn that afternoon. Not that there was anything wonderful to see—simply a tall handsome man in a fur-lined coat, a slender, shrinking closely-veiled girl leaning on his arm, and a young man at her other side who bade them farewell at the door, leaving Sir Hugh to lift his companion into the dog-cart.

As they drew near Fairholme, he said, smiling:

"I think I had better drive you up to the house, Shirley. I am sure you would be terrified to death to walk up that ghostly avenue alone."

"Oh, no—oh, no—indeed I can go!" she said eagerly. "They would bear the wheels."

"But I could say that I had picked you up on the way," answered the baronet.

"Nevertheless, Uncle Gilbert would be seriously angry," she declared. "Indeed, Sir Hugh, it would be kindest to leave me."

(To be Continued.)

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wind and over the dark country road, Sir Hugh Glynn drove rapidly and in almost unbroken silence; while Shirley was in an agony of dread lest her absence should have occasioned remark at Fairholme Court.

Once or twice Sir Hugh bent down with a little tender inquiry as to whether she was tired or cold, but Shirley felt more grateful to him for the consideration which left her quiet.

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(To be Continued.)

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