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The Web;
OR,
TRUE LOVE'S PASSION.

CHAPTER XIX.
A Suspicious Scene.

"Great many people here? Yes, Becca. I hope you are enjoying yourself. Where have I been? Well, that's a long story. So you have missed me, have you? I wonder," almost to himself, "whether any one else has?"

"Lor, yes, sir. Mrs. Brown says The Chequers isn't the same without you."

"Oh, Mrs. Brown," remarked Cyril, disconsolately. "Has—has Lady Norah been well, Becca?"

Becca shot a mischievous glance at him from her black eyes.

"Lor, yes; and so gay! I never see a young lady so happy and light-hearted. She's singing and laughing all day. And she's been out so much lately. All the grand folk make so much of her, they do."

Cyril stifled a groan. Singing and laughing all day! And he had spent a fortnight of mental torture. And now he came back to find her dancing with Guildford Berton, who seemed to be her shadow.

He looked at that gentleman as he bent over the chair in which Norah was seated, and for the first time Cyril realized how handsome a man Guildford was. Perhaps he had been paying her attentions all the time he, Cyril, had been away? He had probably seen her every day at the Court, had walked and ridden with her, had spent hours in her society whispering to her, as he was whispering now. And she had been light-hearted and gay! Had she forgotten him? He asked himself. She had not looked his way yet. Surely she must know that he was in the room, and could have given him one look of recognition, of welcome.

There can be no love where there is no jealousy, or vice versa, and Cyril was scarcely himself that night, unfortunately. At another time he would have thrust aside the thoughts that were torturing him, but he had had a fortnight of suspense and impatience; he had rushed down from London without his dinner, and was tired and overstrained, and the merry demons who delight in tormenting mankind had got firm hold of him, and were enjoying themselves amazingly.

And still he danced without a mis-

take, steering Becca through the crowd as he would have steered a duchess, and thinking a little of her as if she were a lay figure.

They attracted some attention. Becca was slim and pretty, and the delicious exercise, combined with her pride in being the partner of the handsomest man in the room, had set her eyes dancing and given a warm flush to her dark face; and the spectators were looking on admiringly and curiously.

"Who is that gentleman dancing with that pretty girl with the black hair?" asked a dowager sitting just behind Norah.

"Oh, he"—replied the gentleman she addressed, who had got Cyril's name from Lady Ferndale, but knew no more, and was yet anxious to appear well informed and gratify the dowager's curiosity—"oh, that is Mr. Cyril Burne, a rising artist; quite a clever young fellow. And he is dancing with the girl he is engaged to. Quite a love affair of the old romantic kind, I assure your ladyship."

"Indeed," responded the dowager. "Well, they are well matched, I'm sure. What nice hair the girl has! And he is—yes, really he is, very handsome."

Norah heard this, and her face flushed for a second, and her heart ached. How could he whirl round with that vain and giddy girl while she sat waiting for him? Had she not waited for a whole fortnight? Why did he not come to her and, making any excuse he liked, take her away from the hateful man who persisted in following her like a shadow, and murmuring in her ear?

Oh, that game of cross-purposes! The music ceased at last, and Cyril, driven desperate, took Becca to a seat, and it is to be feared, left her rather cavalierly.

"You must give me another dance, Becca," he said, not meaning it in the slightest, scarcely, indeed, knowing what he said; and, resolved to go straight to Norah, he began to thread his way through the now confused and entangling throng.

But he had not got half-a-dozen yards before Lady Ferndale met him. She was on the arm of a gentleman who bought pictures and flattered himself that he was a critic; and good-natured Lady Ferndale, who was always on the lookout to do some one a good turn, had bethought her of introducing the patron of art to Mr. Cyril Burne.

"Oh, Mr. Burne," she said, "let me introduce you to Mr. Romley. You

and he will be able to talk pictures," and with a kindly smile, away she went, and left poor Cyril in the art patron and critic's clutches.

Mr. Romley proceeded to talk pictures at once, and poor Cyril, though he tried his hardest to get away, and cast wistful, despairing glances toward Norah—still seated next Mr. Guildford Berton—found himself, like the wedding guest, firmly buttonholed by this ancient mariner, who was delighted at getting some one upon whom he could pour out his artistic twaddle.

Cyril listened—or, rather, did not listen—answering in abstracted monosyllables to the stream of insanity and pompous ignorance, and edging further and further away from his tormentor; and he had just succeeded in escaping when the band struck up again, and he had the mortification of seeing Norah going off on the arm of a tall guardsman.

If he could have seen the look Norah cast in his direction, he would have been somewhat comforted and encouraged; if he could have guessed with what impatient pain she was asking herself why he avoided her, why he preferred to dance with Becca, and talk to any old fogey, rather than come to her, he would have broken away from the bore who buttonholed him, and flown to her side; but he did not guess what was passing in her mind, and it seemed to him that she was avoiding him, as it appeared to her that he was keeping away from her.

To those two longing, wretched hearts the music made horrible discord, the room was stifling, the light bewildering.

Cyril would not dance again, but wandered round the edge of the waltzers, looking at Norah as the guardsman deftly steered her through the maze, and at last he found himself outside the marquee. Two or three men were walking up and down smoking cigarettes in the darkness, which, in comparison with the brilliance within, seemed Cimmerian, and Cyril, in no mood for company, kept away from them and lit a cigarette himself. Presently they halted near him, but not seeing him, and he heard one of them say:

"Yes, it looks like it. Confound the fellow! It seems as if none of us had any chance against him."

"No," assented another with a sigh.

"Not to be wondered at when you come to think of it. He's better looking than any of us—youself included, Charlie. Women admire that kind of man; dark, mysterious, romantic."

"More like a confounded foreigner than an Englishman," grumbled the young fellow who had just spoken, the son of a neighboring peer, and one of Norah's most devoted slaves.

"Got the best of the running, you see, Charlie," resumed the other man; "sees her every day; and then he's one of the clever chaps, don't you know. Can talk and all that sort of thing. Yes, he's got all the odds in his favor, and I'm afraid he'll carry off the prize. At any rate, he's making all the running to-night."

"Yes, sticks to her like her shadow," grumbled Lord Charles. "I heard her promise him another dance after supper, and I'll be bound he takes her in."

Cyril listened half-absently. It never occurred to him that they were talking of Norah and Guildford Berton, until suddenly he heard her name.

"Yes, Charlie, my boy," said his friend, "you may look upon yourself as a gone coon. The divine Norah has slipped through your fingers. Accept my sympathy and another cigarette. Mr. Guildford Berton will be the happy man!"

Cyril started, and his face crimsoned, and then went white. These men had put into words the doubts and the dread that were haunting him and driving him half-mad.

He flung his cigarette away, and was turning to go into the ballroom again, scarcely knowing why, when he heard a stifled sob near him in the darkness, and, peering into it, caught the glimmer of a woman's dress, a few yards from him.

He went up to it, his own misery moving him to compassion, and put out his hand.

"Is anything the matter?" he asked in a low voice. "Who is it?"

The sob was repeated, and a voice said:

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War News

Messages Received Previous to 9 A. M.

LONDON, Nov. 27. The Governor, St. John's: Bad weather. No special events on French and Italian fronts. Enemy continues to resist north of Monastir. In Romania the enemy has captured Grosova and advanced beyond Craiova and crossed the Danube at two points. Six enemy destroyers approached the northern end of the Downs on Thursday night, and fired twelve rounds, hitting one drifter and then steamed away.

BONAR LAW. SERBIAN OFFICIAL. SALONIKA, Nov. 27. An official bulletin from the Serbian headquarters reads: "Yesterday the brave Zouaves, co-operating with the troops, undertook a series of attacks against Hill 1050, which is of great strategic importance. The attacks were crowned with success. We carried the Hill by assault. It was defended by picked German troops (Chasseurs of the Guard, who were ordered to hold the hill at all cost). Several enemy counter attacks were the object of retaking; the lost positions were recaptured. The hill remained in our possession definitely. On the rest of the front intense weather stopped operations."

BULGARIANS REPULSED. PARIS, Nov. 27. Bulgarian forces on the Macedonian front launched a counter-attack against the Serbians in the Orta River region last night, the war office announces. The Bulgarians were repulsed with heavy losses.

NO SUBS. REPORTED. NEW YORK, Nov. 27. Steamships arriving here today from European and West Indian ports reported they caught wireless messages yesterday to watch out for

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