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**GILLETT'S
LYE**
EATS
DIRT."

**Grand Alliance;
Love That Knew No
Bounds.**

CHAPTER XVI.

"He knows I am at his mercy, and takes advantage accordingly!" said the frate hostess. "Dishonest, I call it," and Sydney winced. Rupert Villiers felt the minutes wasted. It was impossible to make love across a plateau of roses and jellies; with a couple of lynx-eyed waiting-maids ready to make note—for kitchen gossip—of every soft word or expressive glance. And to Sydney, comparison of this, her delicate and elegant home with Jacob Cheene's poor lodgings rich only in what were banished here—relics of her father—sight of her mother's long white jewel-necker, hands, with remembrance of John Lewis's toll, pain-wrung joints, and poverty-stricken garments—these turned her so heart-sick that each minute seemed interminable. Involuntarily she breathed a heavy sigh, as Rupert filled the glass from the glittering silver jug, and he interpreted it according to his own desire.

"A hot dining room is a bad place to shut you up in, Sydney, after six hours of railway-carriages. It's a lovely night," emptying his glass, and walking off, with a gesture of permission from Mrs. Alwyn, to the long open window at the end of the apartment. "Doesn't somebody say somewhere, 'Methinks I will go forth and scent the new-mown hay?' They've been cutting in the field opposite this afternoon. Sydney—with an effective change of note, and momentary halt upon her name—"won't you come out? It's just what you will like."

She got up, a tinge of color rising and went to the window.

"Now," he said, for her ear alone "you will come with me, Sydney? Do! I have been wanting you so long."

He put all needful pleading in his tone. It sounded marvelously true. Would he stand by her now? And if he did—

"May I get you a shawl?" he persuaded on. "You must be taken care of, you know. You are a valuable person. You are coming?"

But that stray hint, slowly, almost faintly; "I dare—I can not come now—indeed."

"Too tired?" very softly.

"Yes—too tired, Rupert."

"Then you shall not be troubled."

The young man reckoned himself chivalrously unselfish. To give him his due, when, as now, he deemed himself secure of his end, his disposition was not unkindly. "Aunt Helen, Sydney should sleep the clock round to revive her from this jaunt. I am bidding her good-night."

"Wise, I have no doubt," said Mrs.

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Alwyn. "Good-night, my dear," as Sydney, returning, stooped over her. "What? Will I not come to your room by and by? Certainly not."

Gossiping at night is against my rules, and you must defer to them for a few more hours. To-morrow you are your own mistress, and I suppose we must honor the occasion by letting you talk as you like and do as you like."

So, shivering over this unusually complaisant forecast, Sydney was dismissed; and Mr. Rupert, after a few minutes star-gazing by himself, put his head in, with—

"It's too agreeable out-of-doors for anyone to stay in. Suppose you venture out, and take a turn with me, Leonora? You won't mind a cigar?"

"Would you have asked Sydney to allow it, Cousin Rupert?" said she, jutting.

"Circumstances alter cases, Cousin Norah," said he taking out his Russian case, and thinking, "She's overold to jout; but it's uncommonly becoming to her."

"Then suppose I don't come?" coquetted Leonora, attitudinizing by the window-frame.

"Take me, or leave me, as you will," said the gentleman, resignedly, striking his match and stepping out on the gravel.

"Then I'll be benevolent enough to take you," she said, "out of pity!" and tepped forth after him.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mr. Villiers was down betimes next morning.

Knowing that Sydney was generally earliest in the breakfast-room, he calculated on receiving her alone. He had something in his waist-coat pocket that he kept fingering, taking it out now and then to look at—a third gold circle, set with sapphires three he had the words ready with which to offer this and birthday greetings and—himself! He ran the little speech through mentally half a dozen times while pacing to and fro in the fresh morning air, casting a glance each turn he took past the window to see if she for whom he waited had appeared. He felt the minutes tu multuous. Once over, he could get his breakfast without that awkward sensation as of a screw-propeller working under his shirt-front. He could dash off a line to Tutter and send him a note, or he could go to the door opened. "Now for it!" thought he, and made one stride in check! It was Leonora!

Leonora in pale-blue cambric, looking, for twenty-nine, quite youthful as she stood with her back to the light, her brown locks relled away in a tight knob, bathing fashion. No hearing her cousin's step, she was bestowing all her attention on some object by Sydney's plate. It was her birthday gift, characteristic enough—a gilt-framed tinted photograph of her own fair self in sumptuous array—square bodice deep-cut, pearls on the side display of bosom, golden coils veil-nigh the only covering of the well-posed arms, face raised just enough to give the stately curve of her neck and catch the upward tilt of the eyelashes, folded hands resting on a tall vase so as to conceal no undulation of the handsome figure—it was the likeness of a very good-looking person, and the original, contemplating it with satisfaction, felt sorry she was going to part from it.

None of fashion's beauties whom she had seen could compare with it to her mind. Fashion's beauties! Ah!—with an audible "Heigh-ho!"—was the day coming when some society paper, perchance, would go forth bearing her lineaments to the upper ten thousand, her name above, not an unwed belle, her signature below, not Leonora Villiers? "Heigh-ho!" said she again, and gave a great start when her cousin, advancing, echoed her jocosely.

"What mean these plaintive sounds, Leonora mia? Are you wishing it were your twenty-first birthday over again, and you were going to have all sorts of good things given to you?"

"Indeed, no, Rupert. I am not envious of Sydney in—any respect. I suppose I sighed because I want my breakfast."

"Creditable subterfuge, if not correct answer. Well, I've been sighing here the last half hour because I want—my breakfast! Is Sydney taking my injunction literally and going to sleep the clock round before she comes down?"

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"When she does we shall have to wait for mamma," answered Leonora, demurely. "But take comfort, dear cousin, they won't be long. I heard mamma call Sydney into her boudoir just as I came down, to give her some tea, and a lecture, I presume. This—indicating the picture—"is what I have got for her. Do you think she will like it?"

"She must," said Mr. Villiers; "that goes without saying. I do."

"Which," returned Leonora, with a droop of her red lips, "is a perplexing arrangement of sentences. Am I to infer that because you like it—or say so—Sydney must do the same? And do you expect my step-sister's opinion invariably to mold itself sweetly to yours, good cousin?"

"Oh, I've no fears on that point," replied Mr. Villiers, thinking with amusement, "Ah, charming Norah, she is disposed to be spiteful, then, are you?"

"Then I hope you may find you've no need for them," said she, dryly. "Oh! here comes mamma," looking up he hall. "Sydney reserves herself for the last to-day, to be received with united honors. Why, mamma, what is the matter?"

She might well ask. Mrs. Alwyn entered with a rapid sweep; storm or anger; extreme paleness underlying pearl powder, making her almost ghastly; the grand dame completely lost in the angry woman. She pushed to the door, cut short Mr. Villiers' salutation, and throwing herself into a chair, panted, in an abandonment of violent agitation.

"Aunt Helen," exclaimed Rupert Villiers, while Leonora ran to the well-sal volatile must be wanted—are you ill? Or what on earth has happened?"

"Ah! what, indeed? Why," cried Mrs. Alwyn, turning on him with an almost ferocity that made him fall back a step—"why, what never would have happened, at all, Rupert, don't ring, Leonora; Phillips is not to come in—never at all, if you had let me follow my own senses and stop Sydney from going on that crazy journey! Now you'll see what you have done for yourself—for Sydney—for all of us. Oh, it's enough to drive a woman wild!"

"My dear aunt," Rupert began, soothingly, but she flung a snarl at him with "Don't Mr. Villiers! Don't speak to me. Not to me! If you've any persuasion in you, any reason, any influence, go and exert them on Sydney. Tell her I shall never forgive her; not—with a tempest-clap of ironical laughter—"that she will mind that! Tell her she'll break

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your heart, Rupert—invent any plea you choose, but, for mercy's sake, put an end to this mad idea, or I can't tell

what will come to us all. Go to her, pray! I said I should send you, Leonora, my poor darling, get me some water!"

Profoundly puzzled, Mr. Villiers went, as he was hidden, to the boudoir. Not too quickly, for he wanted to arm himself with some clue to this sudden turmoil before entering. What was the mad idea that was to be the undoing of them all? Another love? Another engagement? Something beneath her? Not likely, with Sydney's temperament, but women are ungainly cattle, he thought, with a sudden spice of savageness, in affairs of the heart. Once Mrs. Alwyn had said something of a man called Drayton. Was he at the bottom of this hullabaloo? Had not he, Rupert, been hot enough in his siege? At any rate he vowed, with the peach so near his lips he wouldn't lose it now for want of warm wooling! So with the hot front of impatient fervor he prepared to fight, tooth and nail for his own interests—and thus entered Sydney's presence.

She seemed waiting for him, and met his first gaze of questioning entreaty with a bearing incomprehensible in its blending of womanly firmness with girlish tremor.

"My dear, dearest Sydney," he exclaimed, offering to grasp both her hands—he was ready to take her to his arms even—the bolder the attack the better now!—but she repulsed him with a blush that was not unkind, and asked, looking up most wistfully.

"Have you heard, Rupert? And do you—"

"I have heard," he interrupted, "only that you have been frightening Aunt Helen with some fancy that is to upset us all. But I can't have that, you know!" (with a masterly softening of tone. She could never keep her eyes on him like this if there were another man in the case.)

(To be Continued.)

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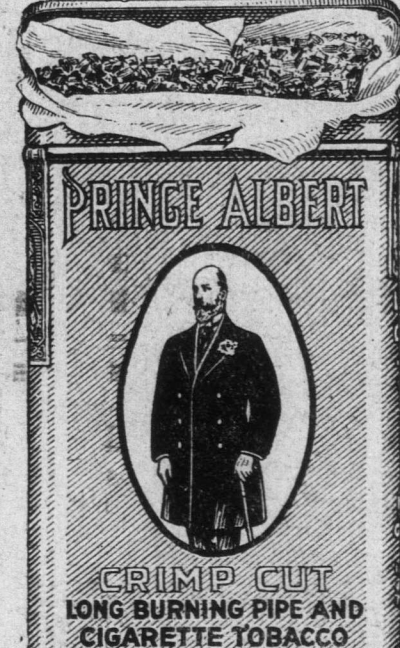
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