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

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Is gone to the same place he was coming from when you met him last July; to James Legh's, an old friend of our family. He told poor Gilbert last year if anything could ever benefit him it would be total cessation from work, absolute freedom from anxiety; and that I know he has had. 'Try those,' said Doctor Legh, 'and come again next summer; so he is gone, much to my surprise. I thought he had given up the notion, but this morning it appeared to have taken hold of him, so I would not vex him by saying 'no' to it; I merely remarked, 'I'm afraid it's a waste of money. Gilbert dear, and with quarter-day near I am short, as usual; nevertheless, here are two sovereigns, and I know you'll give me any change you bring back.' But really, Miss Grey, you look as if you had a headache; how glad you will be of a quiet day with me alone. While you are getting up I'll go down and make you some strong tea. You'll enjoy that; and with a pleasant glow of self-appreciation of trotted Miss Hurst.

In half an hour Sydney descended; too: the stairs, the hall, the very sunshine, all looking strange, as if she had some illness since noticing them last. The gleaming river beyond the garden set her shuddering. The house seemed curiously, eloquently empty. The absence of one pervaded every room, every minute.

At the end of the breakfast table Miss Hurst sorted and dusted sundry inherited treasures of crockery. While Sydney made the best feat of a meal she could, the industrious lady proceeded with her Crown Derby, explaining,

"I take the opportunity of doing this while Gilbert is away. I am so careful not to hurt his feelings; I always try to avoid saying, 'Mind where you are going or what you are doing; and I'm sure the way he moves about is extraordinary; but I tell him prevention is better than cure; so I put cups and saucers like these out of his reach, for he would be sorry to do me an injury in anything, little or large, as I'm sure he proved last night." Then, after ostentatious pause,

"You will like to hear how I got on with him, Miss Grey?"

"Yes. If you don't think Mr. Hurst will mind your telling me."

"Why should he! If I choose to confide in any one, what need stop me? Mr.—Mr.—Oh, dear!—with quite a juvenile simper—"I must say Horatius, is gone to Hereford till this evening, and I am not one who can

stand I had no intention of driving him into work. 'Of course,' I said, 'dear Gilbert, if you just live with us, you will make—our children your companions. They are backward now, but in a year's time Belle will be able to read to you. And you wouldn't expect me to go on paying Miss Grey to stop here, when there will be plenty of us to attend to you, and my poor little income will be wanted in fifty new ways.'

A tremor of that coming separation turned Sydney cold.

"It is reasonable," she said, shrinking from her own words, "that I should leave you."

Miss Hurst had strayed on awkward ground. In her own embarrassment she overlooked Sydney's emotion.

"You and I will settle that by and by. But I was bound to just name it to my brother. And, dear Miss Grey, now don't mind this, but I said, too, that I thought for your own self it would be a good thing for you to leave us."

The blood rushed tingling over Sydney's face. Was her secret an open one? What had Miss Hurst guessed? What had she told her brother?

"A good thing for me to leave!" she faltered; "but—why?"

Miss Hurst had finished her china. Now she drew her chair close to her startled companion, and patting her arm, said, with genuine kindness,

"Because, my dear, if I may call you so—for Miss Grey sounds stiff, and whether you or Susan, or Sarah, or Sybil, you've never told us—because I really do not think this is the place for you. As Horatius himself said, being interested, you know, in every one I like, a lady so young and nice-looking ought hardly to have been put in such a post. I was conscious of it from the beginning. But I never spoke of your age or your appearance to my brother. They have been alluded to before him, but such remarks seemed simply to go in at one ear and out of the other; so I am free from trouble on that score. But other people make comments. Mrs. Preece has done so. And I think, and Horatius thinks, that another home would be more suitable for you. Besides—"

"Well—besides?" said Sydney, slowly.

"Why—I must drop concealment, and say to you as I did to my brother last night, that I feel confident—yes, quite, that you have some matrimonial project which may be brought to a happy crisis by your quitting us. Now, don't be offended"—as Sydney started violently—"I will be quite frank. I have put things together which you have said, and so on, the weekly letter you are so particular over, and the one that comes for you—the gentleman's letters, as that inquisitive-eyed Fanny called them, though I've never seen even the address of one—and I can quite see you have had disagreements with your family. But—with a gust of romantic fervor—"you and your lover have been constant! So let me just write to this mother and sister of yours, 'travelling in France,' you know, and tell them that you've earned a right to be rewarded! It's not that I want to lose you. If I had the means we lost really through that wretched Mr. Alwyn, why I would say 'stop, Miss Grey!' Some one, I am told, has paid that unfortunate man's actual creditors after all. But we have no legal claim. No one thinks of our moral one. So we must go injured to the end of our days, and so must others, indirectly, even you. But, as I said to Gilbert, it is my firm trust that Miss Grey in leaving us will gain her due—a home and a husband such as she is fit for. Now, my dear, have I not guessed right?"

Over this excellent-intentioned labyrinth of words Sydney turned dizzy. What to set right, what to leave unexplained, she could not sift out. Deeply reddening, then chill and pale, she was able only to thank Miss Jean disjointly for her expressed interest, interrupted by a brisk "Don't say a word about that. Our obligations are equal. As I insisted on to Gilbert. He was naturally taken up with my prospect, and appeared to pay no attention to yours; kept walking at the other end of the room, and didn't answer once till I said, 'Really, Gilbert, you ought to wish Miss Grey prosperity in marriage or

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anything else! Don't let me have to tell her you care nothing for her going or staying! Then he said—(Sydney sat motionless, but with hands so tightly locked her father's small seal ring cut deeply into the finger it encircled)—I certainly care for Miss Grey's well-doing. I have regretted her being here for months past. She should be freed from us immediately. No more breakfast?"—Sydney had risen, had moved away—"Well, I am to fetch the dear children to lunch, and must be going for them. Take a day or two to determine what you wish. And ask me to do anything you can think of for your advantage."


So ended Sydney's last lengthy conference with Miss Hurst. For during her remaining days at Wynstone, if the elated fiancée was not holding charmed converse with Mr. Babington, Florry's frocks or Harry's food or Bella's boots, or some willingly antedated duty, demanded her time, and Sydney was left weary leisure in which to chafe her spirit more and more sorely. Miserably useless encouragement, despite all her cravings to serve them, no matter how cruel the wrench. One hour she longed to be away; another, the prospects of him who, all-unbearing, had drawn forth her love, never to be given back, the foresight of his isolation, sympathy only too poignant with that night fatal acme of his desolate sorrow, and leaving him seemed impossible. But very soon decision was imperative.

(To be Continued.)

BROUGHT SEALS.—The S.S. Prospero, which arrived yesterday, brought along five hundred seals, which were taken in White Bay. They were white coat pelts and very small.

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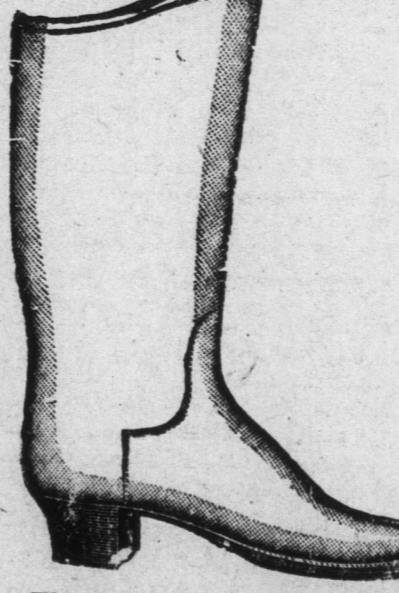
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