

# UNDER FALSE COLOURS.

(Concluded.)

He only knew that he liked her and to talk to her; and there always seemed to him something wanting when she was not in the room. But he did not quite realize how necessary she had become to his happiness until the house became crowded with visitors. Then there was no more practising in the small drawing-room, no more undisturbed conversations in the library where they used to chat in the morning, no more accidental meetings in the hall or on the stairs. He seldom saw Leslie alone now, or spoke to her for more than two or three minutes together. She felt the difference too and thought that the house was not so nice as it used to be, though she did not exactly understand why.

A waltz was being played as Leslie went slowly downstairs at about half-past nine o'clock on Christmas Eve. The dance was an impromptu one; but several people besides those staying in the house were present. Leslie wore a dress of black satin and tulle, with silk poppies to brighten it a little, and long *Suede* gloves. Graham Lynn, to whom she had promised the first dance, was awaiting her in the hall.

They entered the room and he took her hand. Leslie loved waltzing, and this was the first waltz she had had since June. Now, as she found herself once more with a perfect partner, she experienced the dreamy sense of pleasure she always felt in the first waltz of the season—a sensation which did not return with every dance, though with Leslie waltzing never became a mere mechanical movement.

As the dance came to an end and they stopped, Graham Lynn looked down into his partner's eyes with such an unmistakable expression in his own that she looked away from him, trembling from head to foot. Lynn's heart beat high with hope; he longed to tell her then and there that he loved her—worshipped her. But she was besieged with requests for dances from nearly every man in the room, and he could not get her to himself for a time. Leslie danced every dance, keeping out of Lynn's way as much as possible. She danced with Jack once; but Captain Stanley did not come near her.

After the last dance was over and those of the guests who were not staying in the house were dispersing, Leslie found herself, without knowing how or why, alone in the small drawing-room with Captain Stanley.

"Miss Danvers," he began, evidently speaking with difficulty; but the sight of her smiling eyes made him forget what he was going to say, and he exclaimed, "Why are you looking so happy?"

"Happy?" ejaculated Leslie. "Why should I not be happy?"

"You look too lovely," he blurted out, losing his head altogether—"no wonder every one raves about you! You have made me love you. Oh," he exclaimed wildly, "what right has a beautiful girl to be a governess?"

Leslie stood still, as if stunned with amazement.

"Why do you look at me so coldly? Oh, Beryl, have you no pity? I love you madly, passionately, and yet I can never ask you to be my wife! You know it all! You know why I can never marry you, and yet you look at me so calmly and coldly as if—"

"I don't understand what you are saying," interposed Leslie contemptuously; "but, if it is an offer of marriage you are trying to make me, I beg to decline it with many thanks."

"Oh, Beryl, have some pity! I love you—I shall love you till I die!" "Allow me to suggest a remedy for your broken heart," said Leslie scornfully. "I will ask Mrs. Stanley to engage a fascinating housemaid. Perhaps you may divide your affections between us, and so be saved from the disgrace of marrying either."

Captain Stanley staggered back bewildered, and, as he heard his own words, for once felt heartily ashamed of his miserable pride.

Leslie turned away with a look of contempt; but, before she could reach the door, he seized her hand and fell upon his knees imploring her to listen to him. He declared that he was willing to give up everything for her sake. If she would consent to be his wife he would take her away from England, and they would live abroad where no one would know that he had married beneath him, and where no one could taunt her with having married above her station.

"What a laudable self-sacrifice!" exclaimed Leslie. "I hate and despise you more than I can say! You consider yourself superior to a governess because you have more money,"—witheringly—"but in mind, feelings and manners you are inferior to a stable boy!"

This tirade took Captain Stanley so completely by surprise that he relaxed a little his clasp of her hand; but, as she tried to draw it away, his strong fingers closed more firmly over her's, and the jerk sprained her wrist. She uttered a cry of pain, and he saw her lips quiver; then she became quite still and did not attempt to take away her hand.

"What is it, Beryl, my darling! Have I hurt you?" exclaimed her persecutor, springing to his feet just in time to prevent her from falling; for she had fainted.

He laid her upon the sofa and called for assistance. Most of the ladies had gone to bed; but he saw Miss Nelson going upstairs, and called her back. As her senses returned Leslie heard Claude Stanley explaining that she had sprained her wrist trying to raise a window. She opened her eyes slowly, and saw that a small crowd had collected round the sofa and several pairs of eyes were regarding her with looks of commiseration and curiosity.

Lynn had been unable to get near the sofa, though he had tried hard; but, when Leslie opened her eyes, he determined to take a bold course.

"I think I can be of use here," he said, and elbowing his way past two or three men he put Miss Nelson aside almost roughly, and took poor Leslie's swollen hand in his so gently and reverently that she scarcely felt a

twinge of pain. Having got so far he was at a loss what next to do; for he really knew nothing about sprains or how to treat them. Suddenly he thought of linen bandages. "I must have some bandages," he said firmly—"soft stuff. Here—my handkerchief will do. Now I want some warm water."

"Cold, you mean," corrected Miss Nelson, smiling grimly.

"Warm," persisted Lynn, thinking it best to assert his authority from the first and pretend to know all about it.

While some one went for water, he began tearing his silk handkerchief into strips. Then, turning to the men who stood round, he said indignantly—

"I say, you fellows, suppose any of you were in great pain, and feeling so squeamish that you might faint at any minute, how would you like to have a crowd of gaping idiots round you watching and waiting for what you were going to do next?"

The "gaping idiots" stared at first; then some laughed and sauntered out of the room, while the others admitted that it was rather a shame, and followed them. The room was soon cleared; and Leslie turned to Lynn with a sigh of relief. She said nothing; but she looked her thanks, and he bent down and kissed her hand softly.

In another minute the messenger returned with the water, and Lynn began his task, feeling intensely nervous and anxious as to the success of the operation. Leslie looked on with the greatest interest. Although no one could have been more gentle or careful, the bandaging necessarily caused her great pain; but she endured it heroically.

"There," he said when he finished his task—"that is all we can do at present, I suppose. It is easier now, I hope?"

"I can hardly feel it at all," Leslie answered untruthfully. "Thank you for taking so much trouble, Captain Lynn!"

"You must let me do it for you two or three times a day. I will not trust my patient to any one else. You must have a sling too."

A sling was soon made; and Leslie was escorted upstairs by Miss Nelson, who would not leave her until she was in bed.

Leslie did not get much sleep that night.

Captain Stanley left the house on Christmas Day without a word of apology or explanation to any one. Graham Lynn half guessed the cause of his speedy departure; but he did not mention his suspicions to any one. He strove vainly to obtain an interview with Leslie; but, with strange perversity, she kept out of his way. She hardly dared analyse her feelings or think about him at all.

Leslie went home on New Year's Day without Graham Lynn having declared his love. He was in a most unenviable frame of mind. He felt sure that she loved him; and yet, if she did, why did she so persistently avoid him? He left the Stanleys' house on the day after Leslie had gone, and spent his time chiefly at his club. While he was wondering how he could manage to see her, the opportunity came to him in a most unexpected manner.

Calling at his club one day about a week after Leslie had left London, he found a letter awaiting him from an old school friend from whom he had not heard for some years. This friend had been travelling with no particular aim or object until the news of his father's death had reached him a month before, and he had come home, as he said, "to settle matters." He was the only surviving member of the family, and the home of his father was a melancholy place to him now; so he had decided not to remain long in England. He wished Graham could spare time to run down and see him, as he could not tell when he should be able to come up to town.

The Chase, the rambling old house where Graham Lynn had often spent his holidays as a boy, was in Warwickshire—Miss Capel's county, he remembered, with a thrill of delight. Miss Capel was known all over the county of course; and, for all he knew, the Priory and the Chase might be next door to each other. He might have a chance of meeting Beryl Danvers after all. He wrote at once to his friend, saying he would come to him at once; and within forty-eight hours of the time when he wrote the letter he and his old school chum were shaking hands once more, after a lapse of many years.

Their conversation turned naturally to old times at first; but, after dinner, as they were smoking, one on each side of the fireplace, both became rather silent. Graham was wondering how he could bring Beryl into the conversation. At last, as he could think of no better plan than that of plunging into the subject at once, he asked Dering if he knew Miss Capel.

"Why, yes," replied Dering, rousing himself from a reverie—"every one knows Miss Capel! 'The Pet of the County' she is called. I saw a great deal of her when I was home a few months a year ago. Why? Do you want an introduction? I will introduce you if you like."

"The fact of the matter is," said Lynn, "I'm in love, Dering—madly and hopelessly in love—and I can't get at her to tell her so, you see."

"My dear fellow," returned Dering, looking at his friend in a perplexed manner, "I'm awfully sorry to hear that!"

"Why?" demanded Lynn.

"Why, because I am afraid you are simply throwing your heart away! You see, Miss Capel has dozens of lovers, and she won't have anything to say to any of them. Now you, who are the best fellow in the world except from a pecuniary point of view, come forward, eager to try your luck where so many have failed, and you haven't even been introduced to her. I suppose it is a case of love at first sight. I never believed in it before."

"Love at first sight—nonsense!" retorted Lynn. "It is not Miss Capel I am talking about, but a girl who is staying with her now!"

"Oh, then I am indeed thankful! Well, let us hear all about it. You may be sure of my congratulations and all the help I can give you."

Lynn did as he was requested.