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The Sound of Wedding Bells

— OR —

Won After Great Perseverance!

CHAPTER V.

"It is too late," says Dulcie, as the music ceases, "and besides, I think I have danced enough——"

"Oh, don't say that!"

"I am very tired, I am, indeed! Remember what I have gone through to-day," and she looks at him half mockingly. "I think I will go to aunt like a good, obedient girl, like a Lucy Fairfax, indeed!" and she laughs, but there is a strange chord in the laugh that lessens its merriment.

Sir Archie protests and implores, but she is firm, not to say obstinate, and with much sighing and lamentation, he steers her through the crowded room to Mrs. Fermor.

"It is very late, my dear Dulcie," commences the estimable lady, fully prepared to meet with opposition; but to her surprise her willful ward is sweet and acquiescent.

"It is, aunt; shamefully, wickedly late. I am surprised that you could have stayed so long. If you can tear yourself away——" and so, with the old bewitching smile of mockery on her lips, she goes out, leaving Sir Archie staring after her and sighing from the bottom of his impressionable heart.

"Well, aunt!" exclaims Dulcie, throwing herself on the couch in the little sitting-room, which reckons as an extra in their bill, "do you feel quite strong and well to-night? Do you think you could bear a shock—a heavy, astounding blow?"—and she leans back and rests her head upon her hands—very much as Sir Hugh sat in the little alcove.

"My dear Dulcie, what do you mean?" bleats Mrs. Fermor, apprehensively. "What have you been doing now?"

"Doing!" says Dulcie. "Oh, I have not been committing any fresh social crime—stop, though, perhaps I have! But it is not to make confession of a misdemeanor, aunt. I have"—and her face grows more serious, while her eyes dance—"I have to make an important communication."

"Now, my dear Dulcie, do be serious," pleads Mrs. Fermor."

"I was never more serious in my life, and never with better cause," protests Dulcie. "Aunt, attend to me; I am about to break our agreement, and mention the hated name of the individual whose existence we have mutually consented to ignore. Aunt, I have seen Sir Hugh Falconer!"

Mrs. Fermor starts.

"Dulcie! You have seen him! When?"

"To-night. Aunt, he—the mysterious, the detested individual—is here."

"Here!" exclaims poor Mrs. Fermor, staring round the room, affrightedly. "Where?"

"In this hotel," says Dulcie, impatiently. "In the ball-room; at least he was half an hour ago."

"Impossible! Not really, Dulcie. You are joking."

"Aunt, I never joke," says Dulcie, solemnly and indignantly. "I tell you I have seen him; what is more, I have spoken with him; and what is more, I have settled the question which has been agitating you and the lawyers."

"Dulcie, you have not gone and done anything imprudent?" wails Mrs. Fermor. "What have you said to him? Why didn't you leave him to me?"

Dulcie smiles.

"I had mercy upon him. I don't mean to be rude, dear, but I thought that he had seen quite enough of the family."

Mrs. Fermor almost wrings her hands.

"I don't understand," she says, using her inevitable formula. "Sir Hugh Falconer here, in this hotel, and you say you have spoken to him! What have you said to him?"

Dulcie smiles and flushes as she remembers what and how much she said.

"What did I say? Well, I told him that I was not nearly good enough for him——"

"Dulcie!" with a little gesture of dismay.

"And that if I were, or if I was—which is right, aunt? What a pity they didn't teach grammar at my boarding-school!—that if I were, I declined to consider myself a bundle of goods, or portable property, to be disposed of by an uncle whose name I scarcely knew, and whose face I had never seen."

Mrs. Fermor sinks on a chair and stares with mild, reproachful horror.

"Not really—you didn't really tell him that!"

"I did indeed," she says, unfastening the cheap silver bracelet from her white arm, and playing carelessly with the snap.

"And—and what did he say?"

"He seemed to acquiesce like the sensible man he is—or rather looks. Solomon himself could not have looked more wise, and I don't think more handsome," she adds, with frank candor.

Mrs. Fermor groans.

"Dulcie, you will drive me to distraction!" she says. "Is it possible you do not know how much is at stake? Your uncle's property was immense—simply immense!"

"That's just it," says Dulcie. "We don't any of us know the 'stake,' as you put it; we don't know anything more than the fact that my much-lamented relative bequeathed me, with his fortune, to the unfortunate gentleman with the Victoria Cross and the grim countenance. I know what you are going to say," she goes on, hurriedly. "That it is all my fault, that I wouldn't wait to hear—to have it explained, but that I fled and dragged you with me. Yes, it is my fault, but then"—with a smile that shows the white ivory teeth between the red lips—"it or he was also to have been my husband, and so I had the right to do as I liked. "Now, aunt, dear, if it had been your husband——"

Mrs. Fermor puts her hand to her forehead; when Dulcie is not irritating and harassing she is bewildering.

"Do wait a minute, Dulcie!" she implores. "You talk so fast I cannot think—oh, dear, what is that?"

"That," says Dulcie, coolly, "is a knock at the door. Don't be alarmed, aunt; it is only the waiter come to ask one of the series of unnecessary questions which are being perpetually circulated in this most preposterous of hotels. Come in!"

The door opens, and a smiling, respectful chambermaid enters with a little note which, with an elaborate courtesy, she presents to Dulcie.

"Dear me," she says, holding it up and looking at it with her head on one side, "a **billet-doux,** no doubt. Whom can it be from? From Sir Archie, I expect. Now what should you say if it was a proposal, auntie—a passionate invitation to fly with him and perpetrate a clandestine marriage?"

"Dulcie! Remember the girl!"

Dulcie laughs.

"She can only speak three words of English," she says; "'madame,' 'tea,' and 'seex a'clock.' Really, I shouldn't be surprised if it were. He has been looking unutterable things this evening, and he is just the man to propose a runaway match. Are you waiting for an answer?" this to the smiling, patient servant. "Si means yes, doesn't it? Very well; suppose you open it, dear, and if it is from Sir Archibald you can crush him as he deserves;" and she throws the note over gently, and leans back on the sofa with half-closed eyes.

Mrs. Fermor opens the little three-cornered note, reads it, and utters an exclamation.

"Oh, impossible! It is too late!"

"I thought so," says Dulcie, sleepily. "Certainly it is too late. Write and tell him that if Dulcie Dorrimore should elope it will be in broad daylight with all due honors——"

"My dear Dulcie," implores Mrs. Fermour, agitatedly, "pray—pray be serious and attend. It is not from Sir Archibald Hope, but from Sir Hugh Falconer!"

The head comes up quickly.

"From—Sir Hugh Falconer! What on earth is it about?"

"It—it—he—wants to see us!" says Mrs. Fermor, helplessly.

"So he can—to-morrow; admission sixpense, children half price," says Dulcie, blandly.

"No, no; he wants to see us now. Listen.

"'My Dear Miss Dorrimore,—I trust you will pardon me for disturbing you at such a late hour—'"

"He trusts in vain," interpolates Dulcie.

"'But I have just received important news respecting the matter we were discussing, and I am desirous of communicating it to you and your aunt, without delay. I may add that I shall possibly be compelled to leave Rome to-morrow morning.

"'Yours faithfully,

"'HUGH FALCONER.'"

"To-morrow morning, with all my heart! That is just what we might have expected from such a bear! Rather than postpone his departure for an hour, he would disturb us in the middle of the night. How does he know that we are not in bed? Write in pencil on the back of the note, 'Mrs. Fermor and her niece are in bed and asleep.'"

"Oh, dear, what am I to say? Of course I shall not write anything so rude and—and stupid. Besides, we are not in bed."

"We can be in five minutes, and you can write it then," suggests Dulcie.

"Absurd! Oh, dear! And 'important,' he says. My dear Dulcie, if I could only awaken you to a sense of your responsibility in this matter."

"You can't: I defy you!" says Dulcie, with a laugh. "There! you are determined to give the man an interview, I can see. Let me write to him."

And jumping up she goes to the table and scrawls:

"Miss Dorrimore presents her compliments to Sir Hugh Falconer; Mrs. Fermor will be pleased to see him, if it is imperatively necessary."

"There!" she says, with a little defiant laugh; "I should think that would save us."

And without waiting to submit it to Mrs. Fermor, she folds it, incloses it in an envelope, as a rebuke to him for his unceremonial scrap of folded paper, and gives it to the servant.

It does not "save" them, however, for ten minutes later there comes another knock at the door, and to Mrs. Fermor's timid "come in" enters Sir Hugh Falconer.

He is still in evening-dress, and if he looked tall and distinguished in the large saloon, he looks particularly so in the diminutive little sitting-room. So distinguished, so awe-inspiring in his appearance, that Mrs. Fermor starts and trembles almost visibly; but at a second glance at the handsome face, with its keen gray eyes, her fear vanishes, and she rises with her old-world little manner to receive him.

As for Dulcie, she sits upright, inclines her head slightly, and then leans back and examines the pictured Chinese on her fan, as if neither the visit nor the visitor had the slightest interest for her.

(To be Continued.)

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To-Day's Messages.

10.00 A. M.

KORNILOFF'S ARREST.

PETROGRAD, To-day.

The surrender on Saturday of General Korniloff took place without bloodshed, but only after prolonged negotiations, during which a collision seemed unavoidable. When Governmental army under General Korniloff (?) was marching from Orshon, General Korniloff was negotiating with General Alexieff, Chief of Staff, who had already reached Mohileve, but was unable to effect Korniloff's arrest owing to the fact that part of the local forces was emphatically for Korniloff and was prepared to defend him to the last. Korniloff and Lokomsiky laid down the conditions under which they were willing to surrender their swords, the nature of which has not yet been reported. Both showed considerable obstinacy and the negotiations broke down. General Alexieff telegraphed to Premier Kerensky of the determined opposition of Mohileve, expressing the opinion that the majority of the local troops were siding with Korniloff. Kerensky refused to countenance the delay and gave an order to Alexieff to execute immediately the order of arrest and as Alexieff still hesitated to provoke a conflict, Kerensky telegraphed him that if Korniloff was not surendered within two hours he would conclude that Alexieff was Korniloff's prisoner and would take measures for the expulsion of the counter-revolutionists from Mohilev. In the meantime Government troops were being readily concentrated on Mohilev barring the roads and capturing all fugitives, among these being Korniloff's ordinary officers, Seavoika, who took a prominent part in the revolution, and members of the union of the army and fleet. Korniloff surrendered apparently only when Korotokoff's forces were near Mohilev and after the defection of his supporting troops. The Grand Council of Don Cossacks sitting at Nevo Tcherask had been ordered by the Government to arrest General Kaledines. The Council replied, "It is impossible to obey the order because Kaledines has attended the Military Conferences of the Cossacks in his official capacity."

RUSSIAN REPUBLIC PROCLAIMED.

A Russian republic has been proclaimed. The Provisional Government, under date of Sept. 14th, issued a proclamation declaring that to strengthen the organization of the state of the change to a Republican form of Government was necessary. Danger still threatens Russia the proclamation says, although the rebellion of General Korniloff has failed. The plan of a Russian republic had been one of the chief aims of the radicals and the Councils of Soldiers and Workmen's Delegates and was given approval by the recent Russian Congress at Moscow. A cabinet of five members, including the Premier has been named to take care of all matters of state. The only party men are Premier Kerensky and M. Nikitime, Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, both of whom are social revolutionists. The others, including ministers of war and marine, are members of no party. Although the position of the Kerensky Government appears to be improving the action of the Grand Council of Don Cossacks in refusing the surrender of Kaledines their pet man, is ominous. The leader of the Cossacks is accused of complicity in the Korniloff revolt. The Cossacks promise their loyalty to the Government while ignoring the Government's request for the giving up of General Kaledines. Increased activity is noticeable on various fronts especially near Riga and on the Isinzo. A stubborn battle is in progress near Zogevold Farm on the Riga-Tskoff Road, 30 miles northeast of Riga; whether the action is a German attempt in force or only a feint is uncertain. Petrograd, however, reports that the Russians are valiantly repelling the attacks. It was in this region that the Russians on Thursday made considerable advances and were only driven back again on Friday to their former position. On the Bainsizza Plateau, northeast of Gorizia, and in the region of Monte San Gabrielle, the Italians on Saturday advanced their lines. On the southeast edge in the operation, General Cadorna's men captured 400 prisoners and some machine guns. In the Champagne and Verdun region the German Crown Prince has made ineffectual attacks against the French lines. Northwest of Rheims the French repulsed a strong German attack. In the region of Loivre, northeast of Verdun, on the right bank of the Meuse, the French drove back the Germans, who essayed an attack north of Courieres Wood. British troops in a successful raid into the German lines near Chapisy, southeast of Arras, wrecked dug-outs and defences. Berlin officially