

# One in a Thousand, BUT TRUE TO THE LAST

CHAPTER XXVI.  
"To My Cost!"

I rise from my seat and stand, waiting to be shown the way; but my father delays a moment to pour out a large glass of wine, which he holds to my lips.

"I would rather not," I object.  
"Drink it," he says, imperatively; "you must be almost fainting from exhaustion."

I do his bidding, and then he takes me upstairs to my husband's room. At the door I draw back.

"Has he asked for anyone else?" I say, faintly.

"My dearest, this is not the time to ask such questions," says my father, gravely. "He is asking for you; and, upon my word, Audrey, I think you have been wronging him all along."

"Dear, good father, always ready to make the best of things, to think no ill of anyone! How I wish I had your simple faith, your code of true honor and trusting love! Perhaps our experiences have been very different, for I seem, as if I hardly know what trust is."

We enter the room, which is dimly lighted. It is very large and lofty, and the huge, four-post bedstead is large enough for half a dozen people to sleep in—one might easily pass unnoticed. I go gently up to the side, and take the hand lying on

the coverlet in my own.

"Adrian," I say, gently, "I am here."

As I speak, the nurse and the doctor glide out of the room.

I think he is asleep, for he neither opens his eyes nor moves, nor does the hand return my pressure. I sit down on the edge of the bed and wait. Presently the fire bursts into a flame, and lights up the whole room; then I see him plainly for the first time. Ah, how his charged face smites my heart! Is it really Adrian? Yes; but, oh, how haggard, how wan! As Capt. Langholme wrote "he looks ten years older." Ten—nay, a lifetime! He is aged with the age of great sorrow. And who is the cause? Is it Theo, or is it I? Ah, if I only dared believe it is not Theo!

I take his hand once more into my own, and smooth it softly; apparently, the action soothes him, for he breathes more easily and sighs in his sleep—and it is not a sigh of unhappiness. Then my hand steals up to his hair—the curly, golden hair I have kissed so often. I kiss it now, softly, lest I awaken him, with loving pity and humble tenderness. Is my old "daddy" right, I wonder? Have I all along been wronging him? Perhaps—nay, now I am certain of it—I ought to have read that letter; it might, and probably would, have explained everything!

Once he half awakes, and, seeing me sitting by him in the fire glow, murmurs, "Darling!" presses my fingers feebly, and sinks to sleep again; and so we remain till the dusk grows into night. Once or twice my father and the doctor creep in, and bring me some food, for I dare not take my hand out of his, for fear it should disturb him. I eat what they

bring me just where I am, and "daddy" kisses me, with a whisper that it is all right again now. "And Adrian, poor fellow," he says, with a quiet laugh, "will bless the explosion as the luckiest accident in the world."

I cry quietly, for I am thoroughly upset by all the excitement I have gone through.

"You see, I was quite right," says my father, triumphantly.

"You generally are," I admit; and then Adrian and I are once more left alone.

Toward morning he moves uneasily, and looks at me in some astonishment, but without speaking. I bend over him, forgetting utterly all the past.

"You are not comfortable, darling?" I say, tenderly.

If I had forgotten, I am soon recalled, for he stares at me in horror.

"What do you want here, you wicked woman?" he says, passionately. "Go away this moment."

"Don't you know me, Adrian," I say, making a last effort.

"Know you?" with intense scorn. "To my cost!"

I creep away down to the room where my father is sitting up. I can scarcely grope my way.

"Oh, daddy, daddy!" I moan; "take me away and let me die!"

Then, lying in his arms, which no power can ever turn against me, I tell him all, and how Adrian knew me "to his cost"—the cost of his love!



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CHAPTER XXVII.  
A SELF-WILLED RACE.

My life is now a little more than a hideous dream. The agony of my appointment! After three months weary hopelessness to be suddenly lifted into the seventh heaven of bliss and as suddenly cast forth is almost too much for my small amount of strength to bear; and, after I have rested, my father promises that he will take me home.

Adrian is now fairly out of danger the long sleep, during which I watched him so lovingly and built up such fond dreams of happiness for the future, has proved more beneficial than even the doctors at first seemed inclined to hope. I am quite ready for my homeward journey.

How strange, how unnatural, that my home should be in the Isle of Wight, and my husband and his home should be here! How gladly would I have stayed here forever, have forgiven all and forgotten everything!

Presently my father comes into the room.

"Audrey," he says, kindly, "I have been talking to Adrian, and it seems you are—"

"I will not listen," I answer. Ah, now my pride is making me of those who "would not!" "You promised me that you would never mention him to me again."

"But he wants to see you, to explain," he urges.

"Nothing can explain," I answer. "I was ready to forgive and forget all that has happened in the past—all the pain which has been inflicted upon me, the humiliation, the slights and the insults—I would have forgiven them all! But last night he used words to me that I did not deserve, that I will not bear. You may tell him all this, and that I am sorry I came."

"But—" he begins.

"I will not hear it!" I cry; "if you like all the rest of the world, break your promises, then let me die, for I have no trust in anyone!"

I think he sees that I am not in a fit state to hear any more, for he says, kindly:

(To be Continued.)

## A Millionairess; Countess Westerleigh.

CHAPTER II.  
(Continued.)

The horse picked his way at a steady trot over the moors, through the narrow valley, and up the steep hill, and Vane Tempest let him go.

"Heaven only knows where you'll land us!" he said, aloud; "but, anyhow, we must arrive at somewhere, if we keep on long enough."

The road grew steeper, and suddenly they entered what looked to Vane like a simple rift in the rocks leading to nowhere. He was going to pull the horse up and dismount when he saw just below them a rough wooden bridge across the cleft.

"Bravo!" he said, patting the horse's wet neck. "Here's the bridge, at any rate, and I suppose this is the Calderon. Come up, young 'un; we'll soon reach oats and hay now."

He touched the horse with his heel, and they trotted along the steep path and were almost on the narrow bridge when the horse shied and stopped.

Vane had been looking down into the depths which the bridge spanned and was riding so carelessly that, if the truth must be told, he was nearly off. He recovered himself, however, almost immediately, and looked up to see the cause of the animal's fright.

He had not far to look. On the other end of the bridge stood a young girl. He pulled up with a tight rein and stared at her. Clouds of rainy mist drove down the valley between her and him, so that she

looked weird and phantasmal. She stood quite motionless, and though he could not see her face, for at the moment the moon was obscured, his sophisticated eye took in the grace of the slim figure, and its erect pose.

Suddenly, as he sat and looked after, the moon came out and fell upon her face, and Vane started.

In all his life he had never seen one half so beautiful. Two great eyes, dark and luminous, were fixed upon him; a tress of hair, blown free from the shapely head, floated one moment in the wind and lay like a snake the next across her bosom. Her lips were half parted as if she were speaking but he could hear no words.

He sat spell-bound. If he had met her at a ball in London, he would have been struck by her beauty; but here, in this wild, Heaven-forsaken place, her presence was—well, at most appalling.

He recovered his presence of mind after—perhaps it was only a second or two, though it seemed an age to him—and raising his hat, shouted: "Will you please tell me if this is Garth's Hollow?"

She raised her hand, which had been resting on the bridge, and waved him back.

"No?" he said. "I beg your pardon, but I was told to cross the bridge."

She was motionless a moment, her eyes flashing on to his face; then she repeated the gesture; her lips opened, and in a clear voice, that was at once sweet and stern, she called: "Go back!"

"No, thanks," he said to himself.

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(To be Continued.)



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"There must be a house somewhere near, or you wouldn't be here, and I shall have to ask shelter for the horse, at any rate."

"I can't," he shouted. "This must be Garth's Hollow."

"Go back!" came the cry, thrilling across the chasm; and Vane fancied that there was a tone of warning in it.

He hesitated, the horse's hoofs just on the verge of the bridge.

"Is there another path round?" he said, looking about him.

Either she did not hear him, or did not choose to reply, and Vane sent the horse forward.

The hoofs beat on the wooden planks, raising a weird echo amid the howl of the wind, and the horse had got rather over the centre of the bridge, when Vane, whose eyes had never left the girl's face, saw her spring a few feet up the rock behind her, saw her lift her arm—all gleaming white in the semi-darkness—and the next moment he was conscious that the bridge was giving way beneath him.

He felt himself falling, heard the horse scream in an agony of fright, saw the wall of rock rise, as it were, from the depths right up to heaven and engulfing, swallowing him and the horse in its strong jaws. Then all was blank.

But in that swift space of time that flash of a second before the brain reeled into nothingness, he looked up and saw distinctly the lovely face of the girl—the dark shining eyes—as, clutching the extreme edge of the rock, she bent over and watched him.

(To be Continued.)

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