

THE GREAT TEMPTATION.

By RAYMOND WRIGHT.

PLEASE TELL US.

CHAPTER XI.

Fate does not always decree that man shall be able to follow his own devices. The ideas and plans which men formulate for themselves and attempt to carry through for the furtherance of their own interests are not always allowed by destiny to materialise, and fortune in denying success to men's schemes can sometimes favour mortals with a far greater measure of success than they could ever hope to achieve by the smooth running of their own plans.

Very shortly after Dr. Cyril's cogitations he went again to the bedside of his new patient and regarded her with attentive scrutiny. She was asleep.

Her terrible experience had left its mark upon her but she still retained her charms and the Doctor was somewhat moved at the sight of her lying before him.

She had been restless in her sleep which had caused the bed clothes to become disturbed and her neck and bosom were exposed. Her wealth of hair was spread like a dark stain around the pillow on which her head reclined. Despite her pinched and drawn features, the picture was good to look upon. Her skin was as flawless as palest amber; her eyelashes like darkest velvet rested on the pure curve of the cheeks. Her bosom rose and fell in accordance with her breathing. The Doctor sat down beside the bed and noted her condition.

He had not been by her side for many moments before she again grew restless and after turning from side to side several times she stretched herself on her back and opened her eyes. For a second or so her full gaze was upon the ceiling then she turned and saw the Doctor by her side. A curious expression took possession of her face.

"Dr. Cyril!" she gasped.

"Yes—Yes," he said to her, "but you must be still, you must be quiet, do not excite yourself."

Her eyes were a puzzled expression and she looked around her as if trying to account for things; after a survey of her surroundings her eyes went back once more to the doctor and a look of sudden intelligence seemed to sweep her face.

"Doctor, how is my father?"

The doctor was temporarily robbed of his composure. His mind played him strange tricks. He had not expected this. He had not reckoned with enquiries of this kind. He did not anticipate recognition and further a deep tenderness which he had tried to crush was creeping over him.

The old feelings were coming back to him, and he wished he had let things culminate of themselves. Nevertheless he was able to tenderly admonish his patient.

"Be quiet, everything is alright, you'll be better shortly," and with this he straightened out the bed clothes.

But this was not enough to quieten Rene. Her position was a complex one and she desired to *ferret things out*.

"Where am I and where is James?" she said.

The tone in which she spoke indicated to the doctor that she would shortly be compelled to hold silence. Her voice was thicker and she was partly delirious, besides which she was thoroughly exhausted.

It was an antagonism between brain and body. She moved and spoke once again—"I won't go home—I'd be ashamed to. They would scorn me—Oh God, James, be careful!"

Then for a little while there was quietness and after that her semi-delirious state asserted itself once more.

"I don't care what you say Elsie dear; he is a nice man, he must be. He wants to marry me and I shall marry him, I must do. . . . James! and I did so love you—oh, would to God that I had never been born. . . . No I will not go to my father. He would not take me in after this even if I did."

Then silence.

The doctor looked at his patient. He found it difficult to sum up his real feelings towards her. They formed a motley and heterogeneous admixture, some animosity, some esteem, much fear, some respect, much uneasy curiosity and a very great deal of admiration.

Rene knew that she was in a hospital; she knew that Dr. Cyril was in attendance upon her. She pondered over the strange fate which had directed this strange turn of events.

What had brought Dr. Cyril to the hospital; how was it that he appeared to be a paid servant instead of his own master?

What struck her as being most peculiar was the fact that Dr. Cyril should be the first person to minister to her needs, in her darkest hour of trouble. She remembered one beautiful day in the summer when he had asked her to become engaged to him. She recalled the answer she gave him and the look of disappointment on his face which it had caused.

Had Dr. Cyril been seeking her? Had he found her after a long search, and was this part of his devotion to her?

Perhaps, after all he was not a paid servant; perhaps he had got to know her position and had made it his business to attend her. If this was so, what a glorious act of self-sacrifice on his part to neglect his practice in order to devote his attention to her. But she did not know. She could only guess.

She did not know what had been passing in Dr. Cyril's mind. She did not know she stood between him and a fortune. She had no idea of her father's death.

CHAPTER XII.

Rene was convalescent. She had almost recovered. Dr. Cyril had attended to her personally, and he had looked after her with painstaking devotion.

Under his skilful care she had speedily improved until by now she was able to get out of her bed and walk round the Ward.

The doctor visited her daily and sent her newspapers, books and flowers; sometimes he came to have a chat with her and they spoke of old times.

There is a feeling living in the human breast which conquers will, rides over our desires and overpowers our inclinations. This is the feeling of individual love—man for woman and woman for man, and when the feeling is lasting and permanent its contemplation and realisation forms the most beautiful factor in human existence.

Dr. Cyril felt a return of the old feeling he had for Rene and the feeling was stronger and greatly intensified. He had not expected when first he had recognised Rene in the hospital that

his affections would spring into life like this. When he saw her there lying on the bed, helpless before him—helpless, yet standing between him and a fortune, he did not anticipate that he would soon succumb to the old state of mind with which he had previously regarded Rene Oakleigh.

Of her past life she had told him nothing, whilst he on the other hand had remained silent concerning the way in which he had lived since the time they had last met.

With his numerous visits to her here sprang up a greater sympathy and a better understanding between them, and each thought much of the other.

Sometimes a word dropped here and there by the one or the other would almost lead to a conversation about what had happened to either of them since their estrangement and on these occasions a brief silence would manifest itself only to be broken by a common place remark or a pleasantry.

On one occasion the doctor said something to her which was almost a question asking her how she came to be in the awful position in which he had found her. After the remark was made the doctor saw its effect upon her face and he immediately turned the conversation before she had time to reply. A feeling of soul-consciousness sprang up between them.

Thus did the days pass until Rene had been in the hospital for a fortnight.

The warmth of feeling which the doctor began to experience for Rene caused him to be doubtful as to his conduct towards her. The old love which he had borne for her sprang up anew and not knowing whether her heart was free he had been loth to speak of his love for her.

One day the doctor approached her bedside and he noticed a look of terror on her face. Her features had assumed a deathly pallor and there was a startled look in her eyes as though she had just discovered some horrible truth. Her head was thrown back and in her hand she clutched a newspaper convulsively.

"What is the matter?" he said taking his place by her side.

In reply she pushed the newspaper towards him. "Read that," she said in a shaky and an unusual tone, and with her forefinger she indicated a column which was headed:—

"SAD BOATING CATASTROPHE

Three Men found Drowned." underneath which the doctor read the following words:—

A boating fatality occurred on the Welsh Coast yesterday when the bodies of three men were washed up with the tide. The names of the unfortunate victims were James Wilde, Gerald Mundy and Harold Staden, all of whom were actors, the last two named being employed in the production of "Violet Desford" which is now being played in Llandudno. At the inquest it transpired that the men had been drinking heavily and a bottle which had contained spirits was found in the clothing of James Wilde. The three men stared from Llandudno beach and a storm arose shortly after their departure. Their bodies were picked up on the rugged and isolated coast in the neighbourhood of Rhos, and up to the present the boat in which they set out has not been recovered.

A verdict of "death from misadventure" was returned.

"Well, what of it?" asked the doctor when he had finished reading.

"Mr. James Wilde," she said, with a tremor in her voice—"Mr. James Wilde was—was my husband!"

CHAPTER XIII.

Rene had told the doctor everything. She had explained to him how she came to marry Mr. James Wilde. She told him of the awful life she had led. How her husband had left her alone in the house for so long and so often, and how on one of these occasions she had fled never to return. She told him of her search for work around Manchester, how she had pawned everything she had which was of value, even to the extent of some of her clothing, and how after months of privation and semi-starvation, when she had reached the entire end of her resources and had become weak, emaciated and exhausted, she had been knocked down by a passing vehicle.

She did not remember how the accident had happened but she could recall standing in the path of the approaching vehicle and an overpowering vagueness and soporific stupor stealing over her, and the next thing he knew after that was that she was in the hospital.

All this she told the doctor, keeping nothing back. How she had left her father's home to go upon the stage and how she had met Mr. Wilde there, her fascination and her marriage with him, and afterwards her awakening; how she had heard that her husband had been discharged from his company and how he had not returned home for several days, and how, finally, in a fit of desperation she had left the house, never to return.

She told the doctor of her life since that time; how she had almost been tempted to live on the streets—to sell herself as she saw other women do—in the mixture of all her feelings and temptations, she was driven to despair, a haunted tottering soul in the merciless unsympathetic city of Manchester.

When she had finished her story the doctor felt a great tenderness within him. He took hold of her hand—

"Well," he said, "you are better now, and you are able to walk. Soon you will have to leave this hospital, but I have something to tell you before you go. I will tell you now and I hope you will take bravely that which I have to say. In the first place you know of the esteem and affection which I bore for you in the old days. That feeling is not dead; rather is it a great deal stronger and more deeply rooted. But I have something else to tell you and considering the gravity of the news I have to convey, it is almost irrelevant for me to speak of my affection for you. The news which I have to tell you is this—your father is dead—and—"

He paused to see the effect of his words. The expression on her face was enigmatical. "And what, doctor?" she asked.

"And," continued the doctor, "I don't think you have ever thought of the possibility of his decease—that is to say," he added—"the effect of his death upon yourself. Your father was an eccentric man, but a good man, and a just man above all—before he died he made his will in the presence of his lawyer and he usual witnesses. I was not present although I was under the same roof and attending your father in my medical capacity. Before your father died he told me that his entire fortune was yours, should you come back and claim it within twelve months from the time of his death. If you did not come back within that time it was to fall absolutely and unconditionally to myself. Time passed and you could not be found. You were advertised for; detectives were employed to trace you. Descriptions of you were circulated all over the country and it was said

that you were dead. Your father has now been dead almost eleven months and I have heard from the solicitors with respect to the estate.

He visited them and everything was in order for me to take possession. Had you not appeared so miraculously I would have taken the legacy and would have used the greater portion of my time and wealth in the attempt to find you, and I should not have rested until I had met with satisfaction with regard to your whereabouts or your decease. As things are, I have the pleasure of placing you in your proper position; of restoring to you your rightful possessions, and of putting you in the home that is very rightly your own."

The doctor ceased speaking. There were tears in Rene's eyes. Suddenly as if from an instinctive desire she threw out her arms appealingly, caught his head between them and drew it to her breast and, with her own head upon his shoulders, she gave vent to her pent up feelings in a fit of sobbing.

"My love! My love!" he breathed, "courage! courage!"

No other word was spoken and when he took her head from his shoulder their eyes met and the love light shone from the eyes of each face. The instinctive conscience within them both directed their actions and their lips met.

CHAPTER XIV.

Oakleigh Hall is a pretty place. The building is stately and grand; it is a venerable pile and it has been the home of the Oakleighs for generations. The surrounding district is pregnant of pretty scenery and in the vicinity is the small town of Bakewell.

Standing in its own grounds Oakleigh Hall commands a wide view of the surrounding scenery, and the peaceful river Wye curls and winds itself around the beautiful valley which lies before the front of the Hall.

A mile or so away is Haddon Hall, an ancient Baronial mansion which once was the home of an historic family by the name of Vernon; tradition and legend is responsible for many wonderful and interesting stories concerning Haddon and its Vernons, and certainly it is that the country around, and the beautiful Haddon Hall itself are sufficiently charming and historic to give credence to the stories connected with them.

From Oakleigh Hall one can walk along the riverside, through Millers Dale and on to Buxton, where the houses are all built with stone, and where the healing springs have made the name of the town justly famous.

In the neighbourhood is Castleton, Eyam, Tideswell, and other places of historic interest. In fact, Oakleigh Hall is situated in the most pleasant part of Derbyshire.

And it is upon Oakleigh Hall that we must fix our attention for in that Hall there lives Dr. Cyril and his charming wife.

Since her marriage to Dr. Cyril the life of Rene Oakleigh had been one of constant joy. Everything had been good to look upon and life to her had been one bed of roses.

It was some four years now since their wedding, but right through that time since the day they were made man and wife she had not had one day of unhappiness, not one hour of sorrow or regret or remorse. It was good to be alive, and both she and her husband were supremely happy. And what was more than that she had a charming baby boy—a nice little lad—who was now three years old and his childish prattle and peculiar actions delighted the hearts of his parents. They would sit and watch him and then their eyes would meet.

As Dr. Cyril and his wife were well-known in the neighbourhood for their kindness and benevolence they were respected and esteemed by all who knew them.

Their home was the Temple of Love, and beautiful hallowing days were kept unclouded, free from strife, and they held to them for the precious enchantment which they brought.

Their lives were happier than any words can express, to each other they were sweeter than music, more perfect than any ideal and dearer than anything a poet's imagination can create.

They loved each other and were loved by each other, and the sorrow of the past was lost in the glory of the future. And paradise opened its gates for them and they wandered in the present but dimly conscious of the eventful world around them; for their days were days of love, and they stood on the highest pinnacle of satisfied desire attainable by mankind. . . . Their lives were complete.

And everything connected with the way in which they lived and their feelings towards each other, was serene and harmonious.

THE END.

ARMY SLANG.

There is more slang among soldiers than one would find at all the schools in England. Some amusing examples are given by Corporal P. L. King, of the 2nd Life Guards, in the "Household Brigade Magazine."

"Tom Clarke" is a swab, and it is also a kiss. Hence one may hear a soldier refer to "Tom Clarking his straight missus," which means kissing his prospective bride. Nobody knows who the original Tom Clarke was.

"A touch of the Lawrence" means a fit of laziness.

A pennyworth of bread and cheese is known as a "rimer" for some inscrutable reason, and tea is "dirty 'ot." Meat is "saddle flap."

To "put half a gauge on" anything is to do work for a man for sixpence, which may have some connection with the fact that a half-gallon can is known as "half a gauge."

Tramp: "Can you assist me along the road, mum?"

Lady of the House: "Personally I cannot; but I will unchain my dog, and I know he will be most pleased to do so!"

PERSONAL MENTION.

N. Sister Refoy returned Tuesday from a brief visit in London and declares she had a most enjoyable time.

Farrier Sergt. Kirkpatrick returned on Wednesday evening from Ramsgate, where he had been on escort duty.

Sergt. Foster returned Friday from a trip to Shorncliffe, also on escort duty.

Corpl. Matthews, our genial orderly corporal visited relatives in Wooster during the week.

N. Sisters Manchester and Kirk spent Wednesday afternoon in Manchester.

Sergt. Scott is confined to his bed with throat trouble.

Pte. Worthing is visiting his brother, recently from Canada, in Liverpool.

N. Sisters Hayhurst and Manchester, chaperoned by Mrs. F. Tucker, and accompanied by Major W. Caswell, 1st C.M.R., on leave from France, and Lieut. D. J. Allan, 43rd Cameron Highlanders, spent a few days last week visiting the home of Shakespeare and other places of historical interest at Stratford-on-Avon.

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