

Ruled Destiny!

CHAPTER XXV.
A STREET QUARREL.

It almost seemed to her for the moment as if she had seen him before, and she looked at him with a quick, frightened pulsation of her heart.

He was particularly handsome, with a pair of dark, flashing eyes, and all the manner of a young man, though his hair, cut close to the head, was gray—almost white—and his face close-shaven.

It was a singularly striking face, and it affected Floris strangely; why, she did not know.

He did not see her, and would have walked past with a quick though not hurried step, but the man who followed him sprang forward and seized him by the arm.

The first man turned and faced him coolly enough, but with a glitter in his eyes that made Floris tremble.

"Well!" he said, in Italian, but with an English accent.

"You shall not go! Hear me! I say you shall not go!" said the man who held him, vehemently. "You—You English are all alike, you win our money and then you! You! Come back!"

"Thanks, no!" said the Englishman, with a smile that was more exasperating than any verbal retort.

"You will not?" shouted the other, through his set teeth.

"Certainly not!" replied the Englishman. "Why should I? I have won your money; is that what you complain of? You have won enough of mine, my friend."

The Italian ground his teeth. "You are a cheat!" he hissed. The Englishman laughed.

"You ought to know a brother artist when you see him, certainly," he retorted, quietly. "You are an authority on the subject whom I should not care to dispute."

"You mean—?" snarled the Italian.

"Just this, my friend—that if I had not cheated, as you call it, occasionally, I should have stood little chance against you who cheat always! Good-evening."

And with a simple movement he wrenched the man's hand from its frenzied clutch and turned away.

At the moment, while Floris was thanking her stars that the affair had ended and that she was free to go on her way, the Italian raised his hand, something gleamed brightly in the murky sunlight, the Englishman uttered a sharp cry, and fell and staggered up against the post of the doorway in which she hid.

Crying for help as loudly as she could, Floris knelt down beside him and raised his head.

The street, so silent a minute ago, seemed to start into life as if by magic and a crowd gathered round the two figures—the prone man with his white face, and the kneeling girl with her gentle, pitying one.

In another moment the police came up, and Floris hurried home to tell the terrible story to Mrs. Sinclair.

Floris was slipping her tea half an hour afterward, when the servant announced the clergyman.

He was a very old gentleman, very greatly respected and beloved by the English community in Florence, and a constant visitor at the Violet Villa.

"I am late this evening, dear madam," he said, after exchanging greetings. "But I was detained on my road hither by an accident. I was crossing the road by the hospital when the porter ran across and called me in. A man had been brought in who had been stabbed in the streets."

Floris started and put down her teacup.

"He was an Englishman, and that is why they sent for me, of course. I found the poor fellow in the surgeon's hands, and very much exhausted. It appears that he was stabbed while coming out of a house in one of the streets of the square. I suspect it was a quarrel arising from some gambling transaction. His account of the affair was not very clear; indeed, he seemed anxious to hush the matter up, and was very reticent."

"Is he very badly wounded?" asked Floris in a low voice.

"No, only slightly, not dangerously; at any rate he recovered very quickly

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and, strange to say, has left the hospital. They tried to persuade him to remain, but he resolutely declined and came out with me."

"Is it possible?" breathed Floris. "He is an Englishman!" he said, as if that explained the man's obstinacy. "An Italian, now would have given in and laid there for a month. Poor fellow, I happen to know a great deal about him."

"Yes?" said Floris.

"Yes. He is a well-known man in Florence, and bears, I am sorry to say, too famous a character as a gambler. He came here, why, dear me, a few weeks before your arrival, my dear Miss Wood. A rich man it was reported, at any rate he seemed to be in possession of a large sum of money and, for a time lived in great style. He became a member of one of the fastest clubs here, and soon got himself known as a man who played continually and for large stakes. Then he disappeared for a time, and I heard that he had caught the fever. Perhaps that accounts for the chance which I observed in him this evening; his hair, which was dark, has become almost gray, as is sometimes the case with young men with black hair. His name is Raymond, Oscar Raymond."

Floris turned the name over in her mind for fully a minute, but she could not recollect ever having heard it before.

She went upstairs to her room, and setting her lattice back, looked out on to the city with its countless lights beaming like fireflies in the darkness; but it was not of Florence or the scene she had seen in the streets that she was thinking; strangely unaccountably, her thoughts had traveled backward to Lord Norman, and more clearly than she had seen him for months past his face rose before her mental vision. And yet it did not occur to her that the face of the wounded man, Oscar Raymond, was like that of her lost lover.

Perhaps if Oscar Raymond's hair had been black and he had worn a mustache, the resemblance would

have been too great to escape her notice, but in the six months of despondency Oscar Raymond had altered and aged considerably, and it would have been impossible for him to repeat the comedy which had proved a tragedy for Floris Carlisle!

CHAPTER XXVI.
AN ATTRACTIVE BOTANIST.

THREE weeks passed and the routine of Floris' life went on unbroken like the daily round of a well-made clock, and she had almost "remembered to have forgotten" the incident of the gambling fray. She had so far forgotten it that she had resumed her old solitary wanderings about the city, and one afternoon was seated under the trees in the square with a book in her hand, and her eyes fixed on the emerald hills, when she became conscious that some one was standing beside her.

She awoke from her reverie with a start, and was startled to see the Englishman she had last seen lying on the cold stones, standing quietly at her elbow.

He raised his hat as she looked up, and his dark eyes met her startled gaze with a calm but earnest appeal in them.

"Do not be alarmed, I beg of you," he said, in a soft grave voice. "I fear that I have startled you."

"No—a little, perhaps," said Floris, looking up at him slowly.

She noticed as she did so that his face was more pale and haggard than when she had first seen it, and that his left hand was thrust in the fold of his coat.

"This is the second time I have been unfortunate enough to alarm you," he said, gently, and with a touch of genuine self-reproach and regret in his voice. "I beg you to forgive me."

"There is nothing to forgive," said Floris, calmly.

"Yes, there is a great deal," he said, gravely. "I have not forgotten"—he stopped, as if uncertain how to proceed, then went on after a pause—"I

"You are fond of flowers, study them, madam?"

"Yes," said Floris.

"I judged so from the contents of the book. I also am fond of flowers, I have a collection, a poor one, but there are some rarities among it. Should I be asking too much if I begged you to accept of two specimens, madam?"

He spoke with such gravity and respect that Floris could not find it in her heart to refuse the offer.

"I have a friend who will be very glad to have them," she said, simply. "I am her assistant, and the book was for her use, not mine. Will you send them to the Violet Villa?"

"I will," he said.

Floris went home in a strange condition of mind.

The man's manner—his words, had affected her curiously. She found herself going over them in her mind with a wild sense of having heard them before, or rather having heard the voice before. She said nothing to Mrs. Sinclair of the meeting, but set to work that evening with a strong determination to forget the whole occurrence. In the morning, a messenger from one of the hotels brought a packet and a note addressed to Miss Lillian Wood.

With an unusual tremor, Floris opened it.

It contained in addition to her book, a packet enclosing half-a-dozen dried specimens of what she knew at a glance were rare flowers, and a note. It ran as follows:

"Madam: I send the book which I found, and the flowers. It would afford me a deep satisfaction if you would allow me to offer you the remainder of my collection, which I hold as useless unless it prove of value in your eyes. Yours very truly, Oscar Raymond."

(To be continued.)

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for I must have been the cause of great uneasiness and alarm to you. I wish that my friend had made his rash attempt half an hour sooner or later."

It was said so coolly, with such an utter lack of regret against the man who had attempted his life, that Floris gazed at him with renewed interest.

"I am glad that you are better, that you were not badly hurt. I mean," she added, glancing at his arm, "that you were not killed."

"Oh, it was nothing," he said, quietly; "but it might have been worse but for you, madam."

"For me?" with a quick glance of surprise.

"Yes," he said, in a low voice. "You stanching the wound in time; they said at the hospital that my recovery owed everything to that."

Floris looked down.

"I did very little; I was too frightened. But—with another upward glance—"how did you know it was I?"

"I saw you for a moment as the blow was struck, and at the hospital they gave me this."

And he took from inside the breast of his coat her handkerchief.

"My handkerchief!" she murmured. "I had forgotten it."

And she held out her hand.

He was looking at the handkerchief with a strange, intense expression in his eyes, and it dwelt in them still as he turned them on her and held out the handkerchief with a reluctance which, though not marked, Floris did not fail to notice.

"I would have returned it sooner," he said, "but the police—they are always fond of mystery—desired to give me your name. Perhaps they were right, yes, they were quite right—you had suffered enough anonymity. Not having your name, I was forced to wait and watch for you. I have seen you twice before, but not alone, and I wanted to see you alone and thank you."

Floris inclined her head. It affected her, this knowledge that she had been watched and waited for by this strange man.

He stood beside her silently for a moment, then he said:

"There was something else of yours, madam, which fell into my hands. A book—"

"Yes," said Floris, quietly.

"It was picked up close by the spot where I fell; and they gave it me under the impression that it belonged to me. I will restore it to you if you will tell me where I may bring it."

"Send it to the Violet Villa," said Floris, "if you please."

He bowed. Floris was about to rise and give him good-day when he spoke again.

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(To be continued.)

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On recommendation of the Military Service Board and under the provisions of the War Measures Act, 1914-16, and the Military Service Act, 1918, the following further Regulations have been approved by His Excellency the Governor in Council.

W. W. HALFYARD,
Colonial Secretary,
June 28th, 1918.

14.—After any class or sub-class has been called out, and after the expiration of the time limited by the calling out proclamation for reporting for service or making applications for exemption, any man, who may reasonably be supposed to be a member of the class or sub-class called out, many, at any reasonable time, be accosted by any Magistrate or Justice of the Peace, or by any commissioned or non-commissioned military officer, or by any police officer or constable, and questioned as to all or any of the following matters, to wit:—His name, occupation, place of employment, abode, date and place of birth, and any other matters relevant to show whether or not he is within such class or sub-class, or whether or not he has reported for, or is accepted or exempted from military service; and the man shall, if required, produce his certificate or such evidence as may be in his possession. If he has any, showing that he has reported, or is not at the time liable to report, and it shall be the duty of any such man so questioned to answer truthfully, and to the best of his information, knowledge and belief, all questions so put to him.

15.—If any man so accosted and questioned does not answer, or does not truthfully answer, all questions put to him touching the matters aforesaid, or, if the officer questioning him has reasonable grounds to believe that the answers are untruthful or evasive, he may detain the man and take him before a Justice of the Peace to be dealt with according to law; provided that nothing in this regulation shall affect the application of Section 12 of the Military Service Act, 1918.

16.—It shall be the duty of every person to answer any questions which may be asked of or submitted to him orally or in writing by the registrar or any military or police officer relating to the age, occupation, abode, address or domestic position of any man who may reasonably be supposed to be a member of any class or sub-class called out or to any class which may be of use in determining whether such a man is entitled to exemption or enabling him to be found or identified, and any person who fails to answer any such questions shall be liable, on summary conviction, to a penalty not exceeding one hundred dollars, nor less than twenty-five dollars.

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RAVAGES OF TUBERCULOS