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TALES
OF THE
LINKS OF LOVE.

BY ALEXANDER SOMERVILLE.

LILLYMERE.

CHAPTER X.

WOOED, WON, WEDDED.

A gentle tap, tap at the door. Voice of a small man, shrill, cracked, but subdued in key—"Rosa!"

A little louder the taps and the voice: "Rosa Myther!"

Much louder: "Mistress Myther!"

Rude and boisterous: "Myther, let me in the shanty; want to speak with you."

"Can't come in. It's late, and I'm alone."

"Let me in."

"Can't come in; shan't come in."

"In, I say; in, in."

"Out, I say; out, you villain."

"I'll break the door."

"Dare you break the door? This knife meets you in the way if you do."

"Then I burn the shanty, and you with it. I'm a man of my word, Myther; you and girl Lucy know that."

"Protect me, oh, Goodness! from this man of his word, his wicked word; we indeed know him too well." And the lone woman allowed Lundy in

This followed on the second night after Rosa Myther found the old satin corset in the bale of rags at the Rapids paper mill, with the Lillymere marriage certificate, and Bank of England notes of nearly four thousand pounds sterling, stitched within the satin, as related in Chapter II.

"You sent Lucy away yesterday? A mill hand absent without leave and without notice; where is she?"

"She is away; I can say no more."

"You will say more; you found papers of value and four thousand pounds—twenty thousand dollars—in Bank of England notes in a bale of rags, the bale of old stays. You have stolen the money. Have sent Lucy away with it. Where is that money? Where has she gone?"

"Who said I found such money? or any money?"

"I saw you."

"Ah, yes. Lucy told me she discovered the Buddy in the room above at the secret spy-hole."

"Why call me Buddy? That is not my name"

"Every one calls you the Buddy."

"Well, you and I are to bear the same name; don't call me that any more. My name is—you know my name. And see here; you are to be Mrs. Lundy right away. You have got to marry me to-night, the people are waiting."

"Merciful! What is this I hear?"

"Marry me right away. And bring Lucy back with the money."

"And if I do neither, what happens?"

"Over the Falls. Down in the surge. Down in the gorge, spinning on the torrent like a leaf. Down to the whirlpool, and there whirl round and round, the crows pecking at you; round and round for days and days and nights, till you sink and be eaten by the hungry pike. And none in the world to know, none to ever know where you went."

"Lundy, the foul fiend is in you. Dastard! The Evil One himself is not more a fiend than you."

"Myther, I'm a man of my word. The boat is tied by the shore quite handy. Continue to refuse, you are gagged, bound, put in the boat and sent over the Falls."

"Lowry Lundy, you have had other wives, were they sent over the Falls?"

"Woman, mind thyself. Sign this document authorizing me to get the four thousand pounds sterling, or whatever the amount taken away by the girl. And direct me where to find her. Else—observe the alternative. Here is a warrant for your arrest and imprisonment on charge of stealing goods and money in the paper mill. Also, see here; a warrant for Lucy's arrest. Kingston Penitentiary to both of you for many a year. So choose."

"I'd be afraid to marry you. They say one of your wives is not yet accounted for. Spare me, Lowry! Oh, spare me!"

"Rosa, I've wanted you a long time. Have wooed and tried to win you in a fair way. I was treated with contempt. I am now master in this cross game. Sign the papers authorizing me to get the money; then come right away to Reverend Fullery Bloom. He is waiting; friends are waiting. The license is in my possession."

"Have mercy on me, Mr. Lundy. Why persecute me, a lone woman, thus?"

"Friends await us, Rosa, at Fullery Bloom's. The license is ready; they are ready, you must dress and go. Or, go as you are to the other place. Know what other place?"

"Cannot, shall not be wedded with you."

"The other preparation is made, Rosa. The boat lies in the shallows tied to the big stone. Must decide right away. Go dress, and become my loving, wedded wife, honoured and esteemed by society as Mrs. Lundy, or be at once—in five minutes hence—gagged so you cannot cry, bound so you cannot run, and be carried in my arms and loaded into the old boat. Then down the rapids, over the Falls. To be seen again never more."

"My body may be found with feet tied. People will then be sure I was murdered. Lucy knowing your designs hitherto, may point to the destroyer. Then De Peri, of whom you are always in terror, or some man of his kind will enquire, learn everything, and get you hung Think of that!"

"I'm prepared to risk all that. You can be sent over the Falls without tying your feet. And Lucy is to be effectually silenced as well as you."

"Mercy! Do you intend harm to poor Lucy?"

"If need be. Now, make haste, dress. Hurry up."

"My ghost after death will haunt you. Ever and ever follow you as long as life lasts. And when the Buddy is hanged, dead on the gallows, the torments of ever and forever will avenge my cruel, cruel death."

"Dear, good Rosa, do not weep. Do not drive me to the worst. Be my wedded wife and save the ghosts the bother, and ourselves a power of trouble. Sign the papers now, and give a buss to her own loving Lowry Lundy!"

"Kiss you! Horror! Horror! Off foul fiend!"

"The other place, and the boat, and the Falls, Rosa! Do be a kind girl. I'm by nature tender and loving and true. Yes, look on me with that smile once more. There now, I have hope yet, and the boat will not be untied. And dear Rosa will be bound in another way, and carried in arms to a wedding couch, not to the old leaky boat."

"You villain! You villain!"

"And the four thousand pounds, English money, will get us a paper mill of our own. In a few years it will increase to ten times four thousand. And in a few years more to ten times forty thousand. Ultimately, the paper trade of the Province will be wholly ours and our children's, and children's children's. All this good to the country—good to the country I repeat—and advantage to ourselves, depending on a kindly look, a gentle salute, and loving word from the lips of Rosa, adorable Rosa."

"Oh, Lowry Lundy! false of heart, false of tongue! But I'm in thy power. Give me the papers; I sign, trusting to—to—destiny."

The woman signed the documents, and, retiring to the closet which served as bed-chamber, dressed for the midnight marriage.

The successful wooer remembering two lines seen on a leaf of waste in the mill, repeated aloud:

"Was ever woman in such humour wooed?
Was ever woman in such humour won?"

Overbearing which, the bride said:

"A man who can quote Shakspeare aptly and on the instant, is not, after all, quite a fool; did not know Mr. Lundy read anything, let alone Shakspeare."

"Was that Mistress Shakspeare I quoted? or Master, or whatever they be? Hang me if I knew. Saw the scrap going into the hopper one day to be pulp. Them Shakspeares and authors is all alike to me. A poor set, poor set. My business is pulp for the cylinders; getting wood, straw, waste, old ropes, old rags torn, boiled, bleached for the paper-makers, and they for the printers, and the printers for the books. Them is all I have to think on"

"But these don't make the literature of a country?"

"Hang literature! Paper is the literature of a country. Could they have literature without paper, I'd like to know? Now, pretty Rosa, ar't quite ready? Hurry along!"

They were married. The nice small party and Reverend Fullery Bloom had not wearied over their wine, nor feared the non-arrival of the pair, knowing the woman might require time to settle her affairs, and dress.

Next day, or as much of next day as the man didn't give to the rag department of the mill, was a brief snatch—the merest mite—of honey-moon. All the honey-moon they had. On the second day he said:

"Now, old woman, you have taken me for better for worse, haven't you?"

"For worse, for worse, Lundy. Heaven help me!"

"Yes, Heaven help you. Where did Lucy go with the money—the four thousand pounds in Bank of England bills?"

"She went away. I can tell no more."

"She went away, I know. But I must also know where. If not at once informed, I offer by public advertisement a thousand pounds reward for her arrest on charge of felony."

"I don't choose to tell. There now!"

"You don't choose to tell? See here: this dress you were married in goes with me to the mill to be rags, and pulp. I tear it, tear it, to rags before your eyes."

And, a man of his word, the rags to which he tore the marriage dress went into the hopper. Next day at breakfast:

"So, still you refuse to say where Lucy is with the money? See here:

"This bonnet, and cap, and dress, all your caps, bonnets, shawls, dresses, stays, aprons, —Eve's aprons, you sinful woman! disobeying a lawful husband as you do!—all your dresses, chemisettes, duds of every kind, I tear, I tear, to fragments,—thus—thus—thus! There now! All go to the mill hopper to be pulp."

Next day at dinner hour he brought a roll of white paper;

"See here: Seest thou this white paper? Your wedding dress is in that." And Lowry Lundy capered and danced and squeaked and laughed. Then spoke: "Wilt thou tell now where Lucy went with the money?"

"I will not; will not, you villain. Do your worst. I have no clothes now, but what I stand in."

To which he rejoined: "We shall see, shall see, shall see; when the time comes."

In the night while the woman fitfully slept, the demon stealthily glided to her chamber, carried away the only remaining articles of dress, tore them to shreds, took the shreds to the mill, and threw them in the hopper. Returned, and thus again:

"Where did Lucy go with the money?"

"Villain, I am without a stitch of clothes now; do the worst, if worse may be."

He took the bed clothes, locked them away, leaving the undressed bride-wife only a quilt for a covering. She lay all day planning what to do. He, fearing to return, scared by her threat and at thought of what a woman so cruelly wronged might in anger do, loitered about the mill late; then wandered away by Drummondville and Clifton to the railway depôt.

The victim gathered such of Lundy's clothes as lay about, put some in a trunk, and with them the remains of the old satin corset, with the Lillymere marriage certificate, which Lundy had seen, but failed to comprehend In other of his garments—the man being of slim form and not tall, she attired herself. Then carried the trunk, or occasionally trailed it by one of the end straps, chafing the leather on rough stones, as Lucy expected to see, and did see at the sale of unclaimed luggage long after.

Arrived at the depôt Rosa took a ticket for Hamilton, forty miles distant, and had the trunk checked to that station by the baggage-man. On the train coming along Niagara Suspension Bridge from New York Central, and halting at Clifton platform, the porters threw the trunk with other luggage in the van. And so it went to Hamilton.

Rosa had seen Lundy slinking stealthily about, as a coward with a conscience ill at ease is like to do. She tried to avoid the evil presence, but could not miss facing him on stepping to the cars.

Rudely he seized and dragged her to the waiting room, she screaming and imploring help.

"A mad woman!" he explained to the few men then on duty.

"Be gentle with the creature, even if mad," said one.

"Can you doubt her insanity," he retorted, "dressed as a man?"

"Is it a woman? I'd say mad, if a woman; but it may be a man. Are you man, or woman?"

"She is my wife, sir; that ends the matter with you. She wears my clothes. Mad? Certainly she is."

"Ah, his wife. She admits as much. She is out on a spree in his clothes. It is Mr. Lundy of the Mills, a decent man. Goes to our church. He has been inveigled into marriage with a designing strumpet, heard of it yesterday. This is the woman. Has been robbing him likely, and about to abscond. Go home, woman! Be off home with your unfortunate husband. The greater pity the poor man should have such a wife. Go home!"

And so husband and wife went away. To a home? Oh, the profanation of words and things! Rosa's home was as like a den of the infernal that night as any house on earth may ever be.

"Before taking other methods of compulsion, say? Where did Lucy go with the money?"

"In vain you inquire and threaten, never shall you know."

"Before morning we may have a change of wind The wind and a woman's mind change. Yours altered two nights ago, didn't it?"

"I altered then; the greater my sin; but I change no more."

"Where did Lucy go with the money?"

"Never shall you know from me."

The woman was now stript of clothing, all but a quilt for wrapper. Taking the roll of white printing paper, which was in part made from her marriage dress, he said:

"Bones go to the bleaching of pulp for paper like this. Do you know that?"

"I don't know that."

"Learn it now. Your bones go to the cauldrons to make bleaching powder. They follow the clothes. The acids will first consume the flesh. See here: I drop a little, just a little sulphuric acid on you; feel it?"

The victim screamed in pain. To which the tormenter:

"Say? where did Lucy go with the money?" No reply, eh? See here. This newspaper so nicely printed for family reading with pretty love tales, verses, weddings, births, burials—you'll never be buried!—markets, reports of churches, law courts, and parliament; bits of morals, bits of religion, is printed on paper made from pulp same as your dresses. Next week the paper may be made really of your duds, bleached white by powder of your bones. Where did Lucy go with the money?"

"Miscreant! Do your worst. Poison every sheet of paper in the land till truth is not known from falsehood."

"This is how bones are prepared for bleaching in the cauldron. Another drop of acid; feel it?"

"Demon! Miscreant!"

"Where did Lucy go with the money?"

"Make pulp of me; you may as well; I say no more."

"No, you will never say more. See here: Know what this is? This is a bridle for a woman; a gag for the mouth. I put it on your head. Never speak more; never. You struggle—do you? bite, do you? scratch, eh? bite? aye bite and bite and bite, now the bridle is on.

"Kick, eh? See here: Know what this is? Shackle for the feet. Now that is on; leaves play to walk a little; but not to run.

"And this? Know what this is? Iron cuff for the wrists. A bracelet, pretty Rosa. Not scratch now, nor bite, nor run, nor cry for help. Little more of the sulphuric? Just a small drop!

"Go it! Tumble about; roll over; kick; delate the angry nostrils; shoot lightning from the beautiful eyes. Lovely woman, tumble along! Keep the quilt on, handsome sister of Eve.

"You'd tell now where Lucy went with the money, but no chance to speak. You'd not now call me 'Buddy,' and curl the lip at me in contempt; no choice of words now! One more drop?"

"Roll! Roll around the floor. Bathe in perspiration. Sob and heave the beautiful bosom, or weep the lunatic's tears, till I return. Or, say? Make a nod of the head if inclined to tell where Lucy went with the money and I remove the bridle. Do you nod?"

She made no sign.

"Think of it till I return. I bolt the door. Go for horse and waggon, then take a journey."

He returned in twenty minutes with horse and spring waggon. Offered the victim freedom if she nodded as willing to tell about the money, but she made no sign. Then he raised her, compelling to a shuffling walk. Lifted her in the waggon, laying the quilt above the recumbent body, and two bundles of straw loosened covering the quilt to conceal the body, in case of meeting strollers about the Falls. Not likely, however, at that stillest of the hours—two in the morning, and in a night of thick darkness.

The waggon contained also a loaf of bread and tin cup to dip up water to drink. And a phial of acid. The woman was given to know that such were there. Then the house door being locked, Mr. Lundy ascended to the head-board, and with feet on shaft of the vehicle took the reins and drove away.

Drove along the intricate track on stones and projecting rocks; in pools, in little swamps, by runnels of springs; and nearer and nearer, jolting, jolting, nearer and nearer, to the thundering cataract.

"Will the fiend throw me over the Table Rock?" Such was the silent agony of thought in the woman.

Drove on. Passing the projecting ledge beside the torrent at Horse Shoe Fall. Leaving Table Rock on the right. Barnett's Museum on the left. Drove on, past the hotels and summer gardens; the studios of artists; bazaars of the merchants trading in oddities; all silent and shut now.

Drove on. Past the cliff where the young lady visitor from Massachusetts, in girlish frolic with her party, reached to the brink to snatch a flower, lost balance, fell over, went down, two hundred and fifty feet sheer down. Shattered in death the lady-flower, holding the other flower in her hand.

"Will he throw me over there?" No. He drives on.

Leaving the transverse road, cut in the sand hills on the left, not having occasion to go on the high level to Chippewa south, or Drummondville north, he approaches to about three hundred yards from the Clifton House. Alights. Draws under the trees on brink of the cliff, where bushes may conceal the waggon from the roadway, unless looked for by one knowing it to be there.

The woman, gagged and manacled, is lifted out. The quilt is laid around her naked form, and the shackle at the feet removed that she may walk. Taking the loaf of bread and cup under one arm, the man conducts his victim to the top of a rugged path. This difficult footway, cut in front of the slopes and precipices, leads by devious turns down to the margin of Niagara river.

Here the fallen rocks have made a natural wharf; rugged and wreathed in froth; the foaming waters under the Falls a mile away, subsiding to deep quietude here; the drifting foam lining the shore.