The Lost Will;

OR,

LOVE TRIUMPHS AT LAST!

CHAPTER XVII.

"Oh, that's nothing," she said, with a kind of simple confidence. "It was only a small part; but I feel I can do so much better if I get a chance. I'm dying to see the criticisms to-morrow; perhaps there'll be a line or two for me. I shall be so proud if there is. Oh, dear me, my heart's beating so; it's the excitement. I think I'll take a taxi home, for I feel as if I couldn't walk so far."

Jack—not for the first time in his life—did a foolish thing.

"Of course you can't. I suppose you haven't had anything to eat since—how long?" he said.

"Oh, I had a kind of meat tea at five o'clock," she replied, laughingly.

"And it's now past eleven," said Jack; "you've been without food for more than six hours. Look here, come and have a bit of supper with me; I'm fearfully hungry."

She did not hesitate for a moment, but shot a warm, grateful glance of assent. Jack called a taxi, and told the man to drive to the Carlton. She deserved a good supper, and should have it. She hurried to the cloak-room and came back to him almost in a minute. The supper-room was as crowded as usual, and Jack found some difficulty in getting a table. As they passed to it, curious and not unadmiring glances were directed towards them; for he was a noticeable figure in his evening dress, and Maud, with her reddish-bronze hair, pretty face, and graceful, girlish form, was sure to attract an attention of which, though she showed no signs of consciousness, she was not ignorant. Jack ordered a bottle of champagne, and found a certain kind of pleasure in the girl's evident enjoyment of the good things placed before her.

And, it must be admitted, he himself was sharing the enjoyment; for Maud's prattle was half that of a child, half that of a woman of the world; it was difficult to realise that she was the same girl whom he had first seen stitching away at driving-gloves for dear life. He lit a cigar and leant forward, listening to her with a smile on his face; but presently his attention was diverted by the rising of some persons who had been seated at a table behind them, and were now leaving. As they passed, Jack happened to glance at them and saw that one of the men was Lord Ferndale. He was so astonished at Ferndale's presence in London and at the Carlton, which, so it seemed to Jack, was about the last place in which to expect that grave and sombre nobleman, that he stared for a moment, without any sign of greeting; but Ferndale nodded courteously, though unsmilingly, and Jack returned the nod in exactly the same manner.

The sight of Ferndale acted as a cold douche on Jack; for it recalled Chertson Hall and Nora. What the deuce was he doing here, supping alone, hobnobbing, with this precocious young actress?

"It's getting late; they're closing," he said. "I'm afraid we'll have to go."

"Oh, so soon?" she responded, with upraised brows and a little sigh of regret. "Oh, how happy I've been! Well, I suppose we must; but it's delicious here, isn't it? The music and the gaiety——" She looked about her and drew a long breath.

"Awfully jolly place," assented Jack mechanically; "but we've got to clear out."

She tripped beside him through the crowded room, got her hat and jacket, and Jack called a taxi.

"Good-bye, and good luck," he said, as he put her in. She held his hand with a gentle, clinging pressure, and bent towards him as he stood by the window.

"Good-bye," she murmured, reproachfully. "That sounds as if you were never going to see me again! Oh, well, I suppose it would be too much to ask you to come to the theatre again, or—or to see me? I've had a delicious time to-night. I owe everything to you. No; I mustn't thank you. Good-night, not good-bye—oh, not good-bye, please, Mr. Chalfonte!"

Her voice was low and sad, and her hand trembled in his; her eyes—and how terribly, dangerously eloquent a young girl's eyes can be!—dwelt on his lingeringly. Jack drove off with her, he bit at his lip, frowned, and drew a long breath of relief.

What on earth had taken Ferndale to the Carlton that night, of all nights? Oh, well, it didn't matter! Why shouldn't he, Jack, take a friend to the Carlton? Where was the harm?

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE following morning Jack went down to the Law Courts to fight his first case. It was a dispute between an old gentleman, Mr. Horton's client, and a builder. The old gentleman, disdaining plans and contracts, had himself drawn up a design for his new house; and, as is always the case, he had, during the course of the building, made sundry alterations; and, as is also usually the case, the builder had taken advantage of the old gentleman's wandering fancies and sent in a bill which was so exorbitant that his customer refused to pay it. The issue depended not so much upon figures and prices as upon the statements and instructions which the old gentleman had, or had not, given.

Efficiently coached by Jiggles, who assured him that he had a very good case, and that he ought to win, Jack went down to the court quite well up in his subject and hoping for the best.

Now, it is a recognized axiom with the novelist—and his readers—that your hero always should win; you may drag him through all sorts of difficulties, you may postpone the result until your last chapter, but he should always come out on top in the end. Alas! for Jack's character as hero, he lost his case, and when it was over he walked into Jiggles' chambers with a gloomy countenance appropriate to the vanquished.

"I see you've lost it," said Jiggles, in a matter-of-fact way, which somewhat exasperated the unfortunate Jack.

"Oh, yes, I've lost it," he said, dropping into a chair and gazing moodily at the floor.

"How did it happen?" asked Jiggles, blinking at him with what Jack regarded as a lack of sympathy, forgetting that, if a lawyer broke his heart every time he lost a case, there would be no sound hearts in the profession.

"Oh, the builder chap lied like a trooper—as I told him," replied Jack, growing red.

"Ah, that's just what you shouldn't have done," said Jiggles. "What you have to do is to let your witnesses prove that he lies. My dear Chalfonte, they always lie; and you've got to bowl them out gently. You may safely assert that, when a counsel loses his temper, he loses his case. I can see quite plainly what happened. But there's no reason to be cut up; most men lose their first cases, and most of them get down in the mouth about it; but you'll have better luck next time, and when you're a K.C. you'll look back upon this little accident this morning as something to laugh at; you'll make an anecdote of it when they're giving you a dinner at your Inn."

"I think not," said Jack, quietly, but with decision. "While I have been walking from the Courts here I've come to the conclusion that the Law is not my game. Fact is, although I've always had an idea that I was not a bad-tempered chap, I lose my hair when a man stands up in a witness-box and tells lies, and gets other people to believe him. If you say that's the usual difficulty one has to contend with, your doubtless true, but remarkable, statement makes me more decided than ever that the life of the merry barrister is not one for me. Wild as I was, I couldn't help admiring the coolness of the other man; he never turned a hair while his client was playing the part of Ananias for all it was worth; and, more than that, he succeeded in making my client as mad as a hatter; the poor old gentleman got confused and bewildered."

"And, as you'd lost your temper, you couldn't help him," remarked Jiggles, dryly. "Well, I'm not sure that your decision to cut the Law is not a right one, Jack; the fact is, you won't, or you can't, understand that, when a lawyer goes into court, it's sometimes necessary for him to remember to forget that he's a gentleman; you've got to fight the other side with their own weapons; you've got to send your low cunning against theirs; and I'm afraid I must concede your point that that's just what you can't do. And now remains the question—What can you do?"

Jack got up and paced up and down the room.

"Rather a difficult one, isn't it, Jiggles?" he replied gravely. "Just at present I'm acting as agent and steward for Miss Norton." He had reached the window, and he turned his back on Jiggles and frowned down at the pretty little square below. "But that's not much of a berth, and—and it mayn't last. I mean that—that Miss Norton will probably marry—sure to do so."

"Well, she'll want a steward all the same," observed Jiggles.

"I dare say," muttered Jack; "but I'm afraid that I couldn't carry on in those circumstances."

Jiggles stared at him reflectively, and barked a short laugh.

"Why don't you marry her yourself, Chalfonte?"

Jack crimsoned to the roots of his hair, and turned furiously upon his adviser.

"Why don't I——! Look here, Jiggles, you're a decent sort of chap and a good friend; but sometimes, when you're not talking about the beastly Law, you express yourself like a double-breasted lunatic. You ask me why I don't marry Miss Norton, the millionairess, as if I were a kind of Sultan, who had only to throw his handkerchief. As if she'd pick it up if I did! You blithering idot—oh, well, what's the use of getting angry with you? You don't know her, you've never seen her, or you'd recognise the blatant insanity of your suggestion."

"Not so sure of that," retorted Jiggles, with a grin, and quite unruffled. "You're a 'decent' fellow, as you call it, and a great deal better-looking than is good for you; you've behaved very well to her, and she must be grateful."

(To be Continued.)

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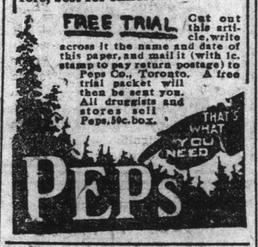

Household Notes

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WAR REVIEW.

Hostilities are proceeding without cessation, and as in days past the forces of the Allies are everywhere defeating the enemy. In Belgian Flanders the British, Belgians and French troops, under King Albert, are sweeping forward for further material gains in the process of driving the invaders from Belgium. On the front in France the British, French and Americans are hard after the Germans, and are making progress, although slowly, notwithstanding the strenuous defence that is being offered. In Albania the Entente troops are well to the north of Durazzo on the Adriatic Sea, and in Serbia a considerable distance beyond Nish, with the enemy falling back toward the frontier of Austria-Hungary. In the Palestine theatre the British cavalry has driven far to the north and northeast of Damascus, having reached Tripoli near the Mediterranean coast, forty-five miles north of Beirut, and Homs 35 miles north of Damascus. In Flanders, Thourout, at the head of the railway leading to Bruges, and numerous villages to the south have been taken, while Coutrai, the junction point of the railway to Ghent, is almost entirely surrounded. Large numbers of prisoners and many additional guns have been captured by the British, Belgian and French troops, who are carrying out the operations. To the south of this region the Germans are continuing to withdraw, closely followed by the British, who are within two and a half miles and three and three-quarter miles of Lille, respectively, southwest and west of the city. In the Champagne region, where the French and Americans are driving their way northward, Rethel, the important junction point for the railways running to Mesieres and other points inside the enemy-held territory are all but captured by the French. Eastward the Americans also have again pressed slightly forward.

GETTING OUT OF BELGIUM.

WITH THE ALLIED ARMIES IN BELGIUM, Oct. 16.—The Germans have started a retreat on a tremendous scale from Northern Belgium. French cavalry is approaching Thielt, seven miles from the banks of the Ghent-Bruges canal. So fast is the enemy r British a in the c lost touc

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