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WHEN LOVE Came Too Late.

CHAPTER XX.

"What!" exclaimed Bartley Bradstone. "You don't mean to say that you are not coming to the wedding? Why, I should fancy you will be the only man in the county who won't be there—won't he, Olivia?"

She made a slight gesture which might mean anything, but did not raise her eyes.

"Then my room will be more acceptable than my company," said Faradeane, with a smile. "You will have no difficulty in getting some one to fill so honorable a post, Bradstone. I am sorry I cannot."

"Oh, but you must manage to come to the wedding and the breakfast—or whatever they call it now; it can't very well be breakfast at half-past three o'clock in the afternoon. You must come, Faradeane—mustn't he, Olivia?"

She looked up for a moment, and past Faradeane, avoiding his eyes.

"Mr. Faradeane says he is engaged," she said, quietly.

"Oh, but—" began Bradstone; but Faradeane stopped him with a certain compression of the lips which Bartley Bradstone remembered seeing on his face when he seized him by the arm outside the terrace.

"It is impossible," he said, almost curtly.

Bartley Bradstone shrugged his shoulders.

"I counted upon you," he said. "But if you can't, you can't, and there's an end of it. I'm awfully disappointed, and so's Olivia, I'm sure."

Olivia said nothing, but, directly lunch was over, rose to leave the room. As she did so Faradeane took a morocco case from his pocket.

"You must be quite tired of presents, Miss Vanley," he said, "but I have ventured to bore you with one, if you will accept it," and he placed the case in her hand, and turned aside to speak to Bradstone.

"Eh?" said the squire, "let us see what it is, my dear," and he put up his eyeglasses.

She opened the case, her hands trembling and her color coming and going, and revealed a superb necklace of gems in an antique setting.

It was no "wedding present" of the commonplace type, but evidently a rare and costly, perhaps priceless, specimen of ancient jewelry.

The squire uttered an exclamation. "Why, Faradeane, this is— isn't this rather too big a present for my little girl?" he said, with a smile, but a grateful and affectionate light in his eyes. "If she had been a princess, instead of the daughter of a country squire, you could not have been more generous."

"Miss Olivia is a princess to all of us, sir," he said in the half-sad and melodious voice which rendered even his commonplace significant. "It is an old relic I have had by me for some time, and I thought that Miss Vanley would forgive its old-fashionedness."

"Which I expect increases its value; and that must be great, apart from the antiquity of the thing. These stones are very large and very lustrous. Look at this, Bradstone!"

"Yes?" said Faradeane, carelessly. "I am no judge of gems. None could be too pure for Miss Vanley."

"Yes, very jolly," said Bartley Bradstone. "Put it on and let Faradeane see how you look in it." She did not offer to comply, but stood with the necklace in her hands; and he took it from her and put it round her neck, and struck an attitude. "What do you think of it, Faradeane?" he exclaimed.

"Faradeane looked at her for a moment and smiled.

"The old gems were never so honored before," he said; and, though he tried to speak lightly, there was a perceptible quiver in his voice.

"They are beautiful," said the squire. "Take care of them, my dear. I am sure they are extremely valuable, although Mr. Faradeane treats them so cavalierly."

Olivia put up her hands to unfasten the necklace, but could not do so.

"Let me try," said Bradstone. "They like you so well that they don't care about parting from you. I can't do it! Where's the spring, Faradeane, do you know? Just come and see, will you?"

Faradeane came slowly forward, and as he did so Olivia put up her hands again.

"I—I think I can do it," she said, with a strange tremor in her voice.

"Don't you try," said Bradstone, with a malicious enjoyment of her embarrassment. "Let Faradeane do it; he knows the trick of the fastening, I dare say."

"It is very simple," said Faradeane; "will you allow me?" and he forced his voice into a tone of ordinary politeness.

She bent her head, and he touched the hidden spring lightly; but, as the necklace parted, his fingers touched her, and her face and neck grew crimson as she raised her eyes to his face.

Then she took the necklace from his hand, and without waiting to put it in its case, left the room.

Bartley Bradstone thrust his hands into his pockets, and looked after her, and then at Faradeane's pale, set face.

"What ingratitude!" he said, half-mockingly and with a loud laugh. "She didn't even say 'Thank you!'"

Olivia went up to her own room, her heart beating, her neck still burning where Faradeane's fingers had touched, and as she opened the door she started and uttered an exclamation. But it was only Bessie who rose to meet her.

"Bessie!" she exclaimed. "How you startled me!" and she sank into a chair, panting.

Bessie looked at her gravely, and brought her a bottle of sal volatile from the dressing-table; but Olivia put it away with a faint laugh.

"No, no; I am not so badly frightened as that," she said; "but I did not expect to see any one, and—with a piteous little smile—"I have grown nervous lately, Bessie."

"I am so sorry, miss," said Bessie,

meekly. "They told me to come upstairs and wait as usual—"

"Yes, yes; quite right," said Olivia, quickly, "and I am very glad to see you. Take your things off and let us have some tea. Have you come to say 'good-by' to me, Bessie?" and she smiled again.

"No, not good-by, miss," replied Bessie; "I've come to ask you to take me with you."

"To take you with me! Why—"

"Yes, miss," she went on, with downcast eyes, "I am going out into service, and I've come to ask you if you'll engage me for your maid."

"Why, Bessie!" exclaimed Olivia, catching at her arm and drawing her toward her. "You are going out to service! I thought your father could not spare you?"

"Yes, he can now, miss," she said, as if she were repeating a well-rehearsed speech. "He has got my cousin Polly to keep house for him, and he wishes me to go out."

"It is wonderful!" said Olivia, more brightly than she had spoken for weeks. "And you came to me, of course! How good of you! Of course I will take you—and how glad!"

"Fancy you being my maid! Why, it is too good to be true! I nearly engaged a girl from Wainford, yesterday—my old one went to-day. How glad I am I didn't do so quite! And you only just made up your mind to go into service! How fortunate I am!"

"It is me that's fortunate, miss."

"And when will you come?" asked Olivia, eagerly.

"Now, miss," said Bessie, quietly. "I presumed so far as to bring my box, for he said I was to stay if you'd let me."

"You dear, thoughtful girl!" exclaimed Olivia, pressing her arm.

"But who is 'he'—your father? How kind—" She stopped short, noticing that Bessie's face had suddenly grown crimson. "What is the matter? Who is 'he'?" she repeated, fixing her lovely eyes on the girl's downcast face.

"Answer me, Bessie! Of whom do you speak?"

"Must I tell?" whispered Bessie. "Certainly you must," replied Olivia. "I don't understand—"

"It was Mr. Faradeane, miss," said Bessie, in a low voice.

Olivia drew her hand from the girl's arm, and sank back into the chair.

"Mr. Faradeane!" she said, almost inaudibly.

Bessie dropped down beside her.

"Yes, miss. It was he who brought me to think of it. He said he'd heard that your maid was going, and he said to me how nice it would be for you to have some one—he said some friend—with you in that big, new house of Mr. Bradstone's, and he put it in my head to come and ask you. He knows how I love you, Miss Olivia! Nothing escapes him—he thinks of everything! Are you angry, miss?" she half-whispered.

Olivia put her hand from her forehead, and turned her face—it was very pale—to the girl.

"Angry? No, Bessie. And so it was Mr. Faradeane who sent you? Yes, it was very thoughtful."

"Yes, miss," said Bessie, with a sigh of relief. "He said that you might feel lonely when you were away on your travels abroad and when you get back to The Maples, and that you'd like to have some one you knew and loved, he said, to be near you, and—and I came at once. We all do whatever Mr. Faradeane says," she added, with a little, suppressed sigh.

"Yes, it was very thoughtful, and I am very much—obliged—to him."

Olivia in a low voice. "And now go and get some tea; bring it up here."

"No, no," said the squire. "You will see him this evening; I have asked him to dine with us."

"Yes, yes, delighted," purred the worthy bishop. "Strange mistake of mine, and yet I felt quite sure I had seen this Mr.—"

"Faradeane," supplied the squire.

"Thanks, yes. I don't remember the name in the least, and, as you may be aware, I pride myself on never forgetting a name. Who and what is this Mr. Faradeane? One of the local magnates?"

"No," replied the squire. "He has purchased a small house here—there it is, you can see the chimneys—and settled among us. I like him extremely."

ECZEMA



Dr. Chase's Ointment

and—keep near me. Yes, it was like him to think of it!"

And long after Bessie had left the room, her mistress sat with her hands tightly clasped, her eyes fixed on the necklace in her lap.

The following day was one of bustle and excitement. Some of the wedding guests, connections of the Vanleys, were coming from a distance, and had been asked to sleep at the Grange; Annie and Mary, who were also to stay the night, arrived soon after breakfast, and at once plunged into the business in hand with infinite gusto and enjoyment. The wedding feast was preparing in the kitchen, and upstairs the dressmaker was working frantically at the finishing of the wedding garments.

In the afternoon the bishop—Aunt Amelia had insisted upon a bishop—arrived, and he and the squire wandered about the place in the aimless, shiftless manner peculiar to males on these occasions.

"I'm sure I don't know whether you'll get any dinner to-night, my lord," said the squire, "the whole place is in such confusion."

"I dare say we shall have something to eat," said his lordship, with bland conviction. "You must remember that I am used to this kind of thing. Let me see! the last time I saw Miss Vanley she was in short frocks. She was very pretty then, she is beautiful now. I think this Mr.—Mr.—What's-his-name?—Bradstone, thanks—is a very lucky young man. He is very rich, is he not?"

"Yes," said the squire.

"Well," said the courtly bishop, "he will not have in all his treasure-house a more precious gem than your sweet child. By the way, I think I have seen him before."

"Indeed!" said the squire.

"Yes; I met him as I was driving in, I think. He was riding a remarkably good horse; a tall and exceedingly handsome young man, with a rather grave and pale face. The kind of man that attracts one's attention. It was a dark chestnut horse."

"No, that was not Bradstone," said the squire; "that was a very great friend of mine—Mr. Faradeane."

The good bishop looked puzzled.

"Dear me! A tall man with a mustache, and a—certain distinguished bearing?" he said.

"Yes, that was Mr. Faradeane," said the squire. "Do you think you have seen him before?"

His lordship stopped and knit his brows.

"I could have been certain of it, if you had not mentioned his name; but I suppose I must be mistaken, for I do not remember it. And it was not your future son-in-law?"

"No, no," said the squire. "You will see him this evening; I have asked him to dine with us."

"Yes, yes, delighted," purred the worthy bishop. "Strange mistake of mine, and yet I felt quite sure I had seen this Mr.—"

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(To be Continued.)

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