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OR,

### TRUE LOVE'S PASSION.

CHAPTER XIV.  
True Love's Passion.

"The earl," he said, "your father, does not like me?"

She was silent, and he sat for a moment looking on the ground.

"He has forbidden you to know me—speak to me?"

"Yes," she said, painfully. "I am—sorry—" Her lips trembled, and she could not continue.

"Why?" he said. "Ah, I know! I had forgotten—forgive me—the difference between us; but he has not forgotten you. You are the daughter of an earl, and I—" He broke off, for she had turned to him at last, a look of entreaty on her face.

CHAPTER XV.  
The Teeth of the Tiger.

"I do not think of that!" she said, almost inaudibly.

He rose and stood beside her, all his soul in his eyes.

"Ah, how can I help loving you?" he exclaimed. "You do not think of that! No! And, if—suppose that some day I could overcome the earl's dislike to me; suppose some day that I could induce him to consent—"

He saw the color rise to her face, saw the light glowing in her eyes, and the restraint he had put upon himself gave way.

"Norah," he said, in a low voice, "it is not for him to dispose of our lives. Give me your answer! Will you let me love you? Will you try and love me in return? Will you be my wife?"

"It is impossible," she faltered, as if the words cost her an almost superhuman effort.

He stood still, his eyes bent on the ground, fighting for self-control, fighting down the passion that threatened to master him; then he sank down on the seat again.

Norah did not dare to look at him, and, with a whispered "Good-by," was turning to leave him, when a brush slipped from the front of the easel. He stooped to pick it up, forgetting his injured arm, but Norah bent and got it, and was placing it on the easel when he caught her hand and looked up at her.

"Ah," he said, "I cannot let you go without some word less hard, less cruel than that!"

She had withstood his pleading voice, though every note of it had found an echo in her heart, but she could not withstand the touch of his hand. As he looked up at her he saw her face change, a wave of passionate tenderness seemed to pass over it, her lips quivered, and, with a gesture as if she were obeying an irresistible impulse, she held out her other hand to him, and, seeing that he could not take both, she let it fall with the simple eloquence of love upon his arm.

"You love me," he murmured.

"Norah?"

She met his ardent gaze with her frank, trustful one, and steadily, though her face crimsoned.

"Yes—I love you!" she whispered.

He put his arm round her, and drew her toward him, passionately, yet reverently.

"My darling, my queen!" his voice seemed to sing. "In spite of all, you love me! Oh, my darling, if you knew how full of love my heart is, how happy—" He broke off, and, raising her hand, kissed it passionately, tenderly; then, as her head fell upon his shoulder, he pressed his lips to hers.

Norah did not shrink, but her face grew pale, for it was the first time a kiss of love such as Cyril's had touched her lips, and she trembled.

"Give me one kiss in return!" he pleaded, and, after a moment's pause, she touched his cheek.

Casper, lying beside them in the bracken, watched them sleepily, the great trees above them turned the gentle breeze into a song of love, the sunlight fell upon them like a benediction, and all nature seemed to be standing by, witnessing and approving the compact of their young and loving hearts. To Norah, as she knelt, with his arm round her, her head upon his shoulder, earth seemed to have become transformed into paradise. She had not loved till this moment, she had not known what love meant—but now!

Cyril was the first to speak, and it was almost like a sacrifice to break the heavenly silence, to snap the spell of enchantment which their happiness had woven round them.

"Do you know what you have done?" he asked her, with mock gravity, as he kissed the red-gold hair that brushed his cheek.

Norah started slightly, as if awakened from a dream, and stroking his hand with a caressing movement, looked up at him with a smile, half shy, half grave.

"What is it that I have done?"

"Plighted your troth—you, the Lady Norah Arrowdale—to a worthless, poverty-stricken artist," he said, but there was the shadow of a smile in his eyes, and the tone of his voice was not so solemn as the words.

"Not worthless," she murmured, her eyes bent on his hand.

"Not altogether, if you have found something worthy, dearest!" he said.

"But a poor and struggling man, anyway. And you are not afraid?"

"Afraid!" she echoed.

"Afraid of what the world—the earl—will say?"

She raised her eyes to his.

"Why should I care what the world says—and my father—" She stopped, but her lovely eyes were full of courage. "He may be angry, but he cannot separate us."

The tone in which the words were spoken thrilled him, and he kissed her reverently.

"My brave darling," he said, in a low voice. "No, no one on earth shall separate us now that you have said

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you love me. No one! As for the earl!"—he paused a moment, as if he were struggling with a desire to say something and were keeping it back—"well, even he may in time give his consent. Listen, dearest; I am a poor and struggling artist now, but I may win the good fight, may win a name which, though it will never be worthy your acceptance, may make me seem less unworthy in your father's eyes."

She listened with an interest, a delightful feeling that his life belonged to her, the feeling which brings so great a joy to the heart of the woman who has just received the avowal of her lover's love. The slightest, most trivial thing in his life would be hers to share with him now!

"Yes, you will be famous," she murmured, with sweet confidence, and again her tone thrilled through him.

"Tell me so often enough," he responded, "and I shall be, Norah, now that I have won your love, now that it is for you I work"—he drew the letter from Jack Wesley from his pocket and gave it to her—"see, dearest, here is the beginning. I cared very little about it before to-day, but now I welcome it. It is an earnest of the success that your love will bring me."

Norah read the short note, and he told her something of the man who had written it.

"The best friend a man ever had," he said, warmly; "and he will rejoice in my joy."

"Your friend," she murmured. "He shall be mine, too, if he will. I shall love him for your sake, Cyril."

He heard the name from her lips for the first time, though she had called him by it in her thoughts often enough.

"Dear old Jack," he said. "Yes, he will be glad. And, Norah, you have no regrets; you will not mind when your great friends tell you that you have thrown yourself away? That you, a peer's daughter, have acted unwisely in loving an artist?"

He looked into her eyes with a strange earnestness, and with the same shadow of a smile upon his handsome face.

Norah touched his hand with her lips as she thought how great, how noble, how altogether perfect he was to her.

"No one will say that who knows you," she said, simply. "And those who do not—ah, why do you ask me? You know, you know!"

"Yes, I know," he echoed, with a long breath of delight and joy; "and the knowledge makes my happiness all the greater. I have won you without the aid of a title, or wealth, or fame. Norah, you cannot guess, not even you, how sweet the knowledge is to me!" and he threw back his head as if he found some mysterious satisfaction in the thought. Some day, when you and I are together in the world, and you are surrounded by men of title, your equals in rank, I shall say to myself: 'She might have chosen from among these, but she chose me, untitled, poor, unknown!'

Norah gazed at him thoughtfully.

"I have never thought of these things," she said. "I care nothing for rank. Why, it is only a short time ago that I knew I was the daughter of an earl, and"—she smiled—"the knowledge has not made me any the happier. It would have made no difference to me if you had been noble—I mean, titled, if—if I had not loved you." She breathed the last words almost inaudibly.

"Then you would leave the Court and be my wife, and live with me in some little cottage and be content?" he asked, fervently, holding her face in his hands with a tender caress.

"Content!" she echoed, softly. "Is that the word?"

"I may try you some day, dearest; and yet—" He paused, and she regarded him, waiting for him to finish. But he did not; instead, he seemed to thrust the thought from him, whatever it was. "No," he said, "let me enjoy the delight of feeling that you love me for myself alone; that your love is strong enough to make a sacrifice for me."

"What sacrifice can I make for you?" she said, slowly, as if she would have liked to have it in her power to do so.

He was silent for a moment, as if thinking deeply; then he said:

"Norah!"

She turned her eyes upon him with that rapt devotion which is love's sign.

"Will you think it strange if I ask you to keep our engagement a secret for the present?"

She did not remove her eyes from his face.

"I will do everything you wish," she said, simply. "Whatever you wish will be good to me, Cyril! Why should we tell any one?" She stopped as she remembered her father.

"See, dearest," he said, "I ought to go to the earl this evening and tell him all, but I know what would follow. He would refuse to give you to me—and little wonder!—and would forbid me to see you."

Her face went pale, and her hand closed upon his as if to protest against the mere suggestion of such a terrible calamity.

"He would say that I had taken advantage of your ignorance of the world, and won your heart before you had a chance of seeing other men more worthy than I am. And what could I say? Dearest, it is so true! Now, let me tell you all that is in my mind."

"Tell me everything," she said, in a low voice, pressing his hand.

Cyril returned the pressure lovingly.

"You have read what my good friend says, dearest," he went on; "the little picture is a success. But there are others ready, and those—well, I am hoping great things for them. I should like to go to the earl and say: 'I am all unworthy of your daughter; I claim to be no more than an artist, but I have made good that claim, and—'

"Yes, we will wait," she broke in, softly. "How clearly you see things, Cyril," and she beamed upon him proudly. "My father will consent then."

Cyril's face did not reflect her confidence.

"Well, dearest," he said, "if he should not?"

With downcast eyes she slid her arm round his neck and rested her head on his shoulder.

"Nothing shall separate us!" she murmured.

Surely if the gentle wind among the leaves echoed their former love vows, it echoed this tender, resolute declaration of hers; but it found no echo in the heart of Gullford Berton, who, cowering behind a huge oak, listened to every word. He stood close up against the tree, one hand thrust behind him, the other stretched up and grasping a branch with a convulsive, painful clutch. His face was white, and his lips so tightly compressed that he seemed scarcely to breathe.

(To be continued.)

## Everyday Etiquette.

"I was introduced to a very nice young man last winter and he has asked permission to walk home with me from the office several times. What should I do," inquired Edith.

"Give him an invitation to call at your home but if he does not, I should be very careful about carrying the acquaintance any further," replied her sister.

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And of whom a Poet has sung: "The world was gettin' dreary, there was too much sigh an' frown In this vale o' moral strivin', so God sent Jim Riley down."

An' he said: "Go there an' cheer 'em In your good old fashioned way With your songs of tender sweetness, but don't make your plans to stay Coz you're needed up in Heaven, I am leavin' you to men."

Just to help 'em with your music, but I'll want you back again."

An' Riley came, an' mortals heard the music of his voice An' they caught his songs o' beauty an' they started to rejoice; An' they leaned on him in sorrow, an' they shared with him their joys An' they walked with him the pathways that they knew when they were boys. But they heavenly angel missed him, missed his tender, gentle knock Or making people happy, an' they wanted Riley back.

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