

Eustace, the Outcast.

CHAPTER II.
LOVE, TRUTH AND SCHEMING AMBITION.

Of course, the most natural thing for Eustace to do was to return on the following day to the cottage of the Somervilles to enquire if Lilia had suffered or had effects from her fright and immersion. It was equally natural that Lilia should manifest pleasure at his appearance, and be very frank and cordial towards him. The peculiar circumstances which had thrown them together necessarily did away with that barrier of distant reserve which exists more or less at a first acquaintance, and caused them at once to associate together on a footing of friendly familiarity such as would have been impossible had they met in an ordinary or casual way.

Indeed, when the difference in their station is taken into account, it is difficult to conceive that in a casual way an intimacy could ever have been established between them, for Lilia would have been very shy indeed of meeting the advances of the heir to the estate on which their cottage stood. But the service he had rendered her bound her to him by a tie of the deepest gratitude, and drew out at his approach freely and fully the sweetness of her nature, and the various elements of her womanly character.

Could she possibly do other than admire the brave, generous youth, who had risked his own life to save hers? Had he been a character of the opposite of amiable, this feeling would still have arisen in her bosom, but then, as it turned out, he was a handsome, noble, and generous youth, endowed with every quality calculated to inspire esteem, confidence and the strongest regard.

Therefore she did admire him, and that most cordially. In his presence she forgot all about his rank, and was conscious only of his great and noble nature, the genuine truth and sincerity of his soul, and his wide warm heart, full of all human sympathy and manly feeling. When she was by his side she felt a strange thrilling pleasure run through all her being—she felt so safe and satisfied and happy in his society that she longed for his coming, and sighed with regret when he left her.

And Eustace? What was his state of thought and feeling? Ah, he had entered what seemed to him a very paradise. The unveiling before his special eyes of a heart and soul so pure, so sweet, truthful and lovely, was as if his spirit had quaffed an intoxicating draught, and he had been lifted to some celestial region, where he was enjoying the most exquisite delight. He had met hundreds of young girls in society, but never one in any respect equal to Lilia. Perhaps if he had the same opportunity of seeing into their nature, some of them might have obtained more favor in his eyes, but he had seen them only in the midst of conventional surroundings, and found them more or less heartless, selfish, cold and repellent, and not once had his fancy been caught, or his heart attracted.

Little wonder therefore, that a close and familiar approach to a girl so pure, artless, and true as Lilia Somerville, should charm him into rapture, and take his heart and mind entirely captive. He was drawn to the cottage almost daily, and for hours they would ramble through the woods or sit in some secluded nook by the water-side, enjoying sweet, sacred and happy communion of soul.

Lilia was quite capable of bearing her part in such communion, for her uncle, the minister, had given her a good education, and her mind was not only well-stored, but cultivated and refined. She was able, therefore, to exchange thoughts with Eustace on most subjects, and utter sentiments to which his heart and mind thrillingly responded.

Only one result could follow from all this, and if prudence had been shown on any side the intercourse would have terminated almost as soon as it had commenced. But who could expect prudence from young, warm hearted, inexperienced folks like Eustace and Lilia? Willy might have known better than to permit it, for though he was absent all day patiently pursuing his salmon fishing, he knew quite well that Eustace had been with Lilia, for the latter, in her guileless truthful simplicity, never once thought of concealing the youth's visits.

But Willy was young likewise, and had no very exalted notions of mere rank or station. He admired Eustace exceedingly, not because he was the laird's son, but because he had the qualities we have indicated, and these with Willy were not only the highest and best things in any man, but they were what the lowest born might have as well as the highest, and the possession of which produced an equality which neither title nor wealth could destroy. So that holding ideas such as these, Willy thought there was no harm in the world in his sister associating frequently with Eustace Grahame. And thus, no other party having a right to interfere being cognizant of what was going on, the interviews continued, till Eustace and

Lilia were so deeply in love as ever were two true loving hearts in this world.

When we said that no party, having the right to interfere was cognizant of what was going on, we ought to have added that a certain party, deeply interested in the matter, was kept fully informed of the whole affair, and kept a silent, anxious watch on the lovers, frequently hoping that Eustace would not only cherish a deep affection for Lilia, but get so involved as to make it impossible for him to give her up.

This was his step-mother, his father's second wife, a selfish, calculating, and designing woman, whose secret ambition was to see her son Randolph made heir to the estate. The first Mrs. Grahame, the mother of Eustace, died more than twenty years before the opening of our story, leaving two children, a boy and a girl. The boy grew into the strong manly Eustace, the girl died at the age of six, but not before her governess managed to entangle Mr. Grahame in her meshes, and draw from him the offer of his hand—an offer which it is needless to say was very promptly accepted. The fruit of this marriage was one son, born when Eustace was four years of age.

In due time his second wife also made him the father of a boy, and he had some thoughts of calling him by his own plain name of John; but this proposition the vain designing mother would in no wise listen to, and suggested the noble Scotch name of Randolph, which name was accordingly bestowed on him at the baptismal font.

The upbringing of Randolph was left solely to his mother, but Mr. Grahame more especially systematized the rearing of Eustace, who was to be educated for his important and exalted position. At the age of twelve he was put under the charge of the minister of a parish, some twelve miles distant from Bengarry, with instructions from his father to train and discipline him for the station he was to fill, an injunction which the good old minister interpreted in a very Christian end, and inculcated in the heart and mind of his young charge lofty and generous principles, true thoughts and feelings and views of life more in accordance with the reality of things than with the proud conventional notions of aristocratic society.

It thus happened that Eustace was separated from his family, an arrangement with which Mrs. Grahame was well pleased, for she hoped that the father's affection would thereby be alienated from this eldest born and concentrated on her own son, thus promoting her secret views and rendering far after operations the more easy.

She found, however, that Mr. Grahame was a man who was to be little influenced by affection, and that one of his ideas connected with the establishment of family greatness was hereditary right. The eldest son was the proper heir to the property, and nothing but the most atrocious behavior on his part would, he well knew, cause him to divert it to Randolph.

The training of Randolph being left to herself, was of most pernicious character, for she taught him to dislike, if not absolutely to hate, his absent brother, and to look at him as one who would deprive him of a substantial inheritance that he had the same right to, and yet would not receive, just because he chanced to be born a few years later.

At the same time his mother never ceased to instill into his mind the idea that he might possibly after all be the heir of Bengarry. Eustace might die, or he might in some way offend his father so far as to forfeit the inheritance, in which latter case Randolph would be made heir by a settlement.

The latter eagerly listened to these evil suggestions. He partook largely of his mother's nature, and was in addition proud, haughty, insolent and revengeful. His soul was of the meanest, his his passions were debased, and to those whom he counted his inferiors, or over whom he had power, his behavior was most tyrannical.

When he grew up it was considered necessary by his father that he, being the younger son, should choose a profession, and at his own wish he entered the navy, and was at the time our story opens a junior officer on board a man-of-war.

Eustace, having finished his education, was directed by his father to come to Bengarry, and there take up his permanent residence. Mr. Grahame and his eldest son had seen very little of each other, but the father took it for granted that the youth had been brought up in a manner suitable to his exalted station and was imbued with notions becoming a country gentleman and the heir to such a noble estate as Bengarry. He was of an age now when his long-cherished plans and expectations respecting him were to be carried out, and he was impatient to see him for this special and all-important purpose.

Of course the marriage of Eustace held an essential place in his father's plans, and he had settled it in his own mind that he must form an alliance with one of the good families in the neighborhood—may, he had even selected the girl who was to be his son's wife.

Not far from Bengarry was the estate of Kinmuir, whose owner had a large family of daughters, and it was his design that Eustace should marry one of these. There were four of them, and though he had himself a preference for Mary, the second in point of age, he was resolved to allow Eustace to make his choice out of the quaterion.

The youth had come to reside thus permanently at Bengarry only a few weeks before the incident recorded in the last chapter, through which he formed an acquaintance with Lilia Somerville. Mrs. Grahame had treated him with a parent's kindness, but in secret she was intensely chagrined, and bitterly hated him. His robust, healthy frame, his manly disposition, his frank, generous, upright nature, increased this hatred still more, for she saw that they gave her but a faint prospect for her son Randolph.

But she was not to be deterred from cherishing her secret ambition, and her subtle mind to work with a view to accomplish the ruin and disgrace of herself. She narrowly watched him in the house and in society, and had also the means—through the agency of another—of receiving information as to his movements out of doors.

It was not long, therefore, till she was made aware of his intercourse with Lilia Somerville, and the hope sprung at once into her heart that the intercourse would land him in disgrace, or better still that Lilia would do, what she herself had done with Mr. Grahame, and inveigle him into a marriage, in which case her ambitious wish would most certainly be crowned with success.

Most careful, therefore, was she to prevent Mr. Grahame from hearing in what manner Eustace spent the most of his days, and she did everything she possibly could to promote a free and uninterrupted intercourse between Eustace and Lilia.

And thus the lovers had every opportunity of meeting together and indulging in that sweet and rapturous communion of soul which had now become to them so precious. As yet Eustace had not expressed his love in formal words, but Lilia was in no doubt as to its existence. She knew that the affection of his great and noble heart was centered in her and that he was altogether given to her in turn, and therefore she was very trusting and very happy. Poor, simple, loving girl, she had no cloud of doubt and fear to trouble her. She was too guileless to anticipate and dread future consequences. Knowing Eustace to be so good and tender and great, she cherished no forbodings, but suffered her heart day by day to twine more closely and confidently round his, and repose upon his love with fullest trust and satisfaction.

But during this sweet and happy period Eustace was not without his thoughts of the future. Often during the hours he spent apart from Lilia he reflected on the state of matters which his intercourse with her had produced. Of their mutual love he likewise entertained no doubt, and had settled it in his own mind as a matter of course that Lilia must be his wife. But would his father be pleased with the choice he had made was a question he sometimes asked of himself. He well knew that it was his father's wish that he should marry Mary Maxwell, the daughter of the laird of Kinmuir, and he might therefore feel disappointed when he learned that it was not on whom he had set his heart, but on an humble, virtuous cottage girl.

That evening, as the sun, shining in a cloudless sky, was dipping down towards the western mountains, he emerged from the wood just behind the cottage of the Somervilles, and passed where, at a little distance stood Willy in his boat, which floated in the shadow of the precipitous bank. The youth was too intently engaged watching the water to observe his friend, and Eustace, after gazing a moment or two across the desert, the golden sunshine lighting up his many face, which glowed at the moment with a lover's ardent animation.

Lilia sat sewing in a little room, the window of which looked westward, and here, too, the summer radiance streamed in, making her fair countenance bright and beaming, and revealing the quiet depth of happiness which dwelt in her heart.

She started when she heard the well-known footstep on the gravel path without, and her face flushed with pleasure, and her eyes beamed still more brightly as she caught a glimpse of the loved face passing on towards the open door.

In another moment Eustace had crossed the threshold and she rose to meet him. She manifested neither confusion nor bashfulness at the meeting, nor did she seek to disguise her gladness at his coming.

"How can you sit inside?" he gently exclaimed, "while such a glorious evening passing without?"

"Because Willy has not returned," she answered simply.

"But the evening meal is prepared, and waiting his arrival," remarked Eustace, glancing at the dishes on the table, and the teapot simmering by the side of the fire.

"Then come and let us have a stroll, and see the grandeur of the sunset."

Lilia, with undivided happiness put on her bonnet, and they left the cottage. Eustace drew her arm within his, and led her silently to the eminence at the edge of the wood in which he was reclining when he saw her fall into the water.

Here they sat down on the thick grass, with the dark wood just behind them, and so near that the branches of the outmost tree hung above their heads.

"I have brought you here tonight for a special purpose," he said. "I wish to have declared in words that mutual love which I am sure we cherish. I think, Lilia, our hearts are given away to each other, though no confession of the sweet remembrance has escaped our lips. But why should we longer keep silent, and rob ourselves of the sweetest endearments by which avowed love is so exquisitely enhanced? The fault has been mine, I confess. I should ere this have shaped into words the warm affection that you must have seen and felt existing in my heart. Let me do so now. Let me say how at the very first I was struck by your beauty and charmed by your goodness, how I was drawn irresistibly to seek your society, and how day by day your rare qualities of heart and mind revealed themselves to me, causing me to rejoice in the blessing of your companionship. As you I found those thoughts, feelings and sentiments, which responded to my own, and with a thrilling gladness the conviction seized me that my heart had discovered an object to love with all the strength and ardor of which it is capable. Willingly, joyfully, I gave myself up to the blessed influence of your companionship, and have dreamed that to you I am not indifferent. Tell me, Lilia, have I dreamed aright? May I hear you say that my love is returned? Will you be my wife?"

How well Lilia knew all that he was going to say even before he uttered it. He had already and often said the same thing in many silent, nameless, but unmistakable ways, and she was confident that at the time which seemed to him right he would speak as he had spoken now; yet, oh! it was rapturous to re-define thus upon his bosom, to feel his arm drawing her towards him, and his lips uttering the love which she was certain lived in his soul. She heard with a delicious, swooning kind of delight, every syllable that fell from him, and when he ceased to speak, she slowly raised her head, and turned upon him eyes swimming with a soft, lustrous rapture.

"Yes," she nobly answered, "yes, Eustace, I love you, and it will be the greatest earthly joy I can experience to be your wife."

He opened wide his arms, and she throwing herself again upon his bosom, was folded in a close and fond embrace. For some moments neither spoke, their hearts being too full for words; but by-and-by he bent down, drew her face to his own and pressed a warm kiss on her trembling lips—trembling with the very excess of maidenly joy.

"My own dear, darling Lilia," he whispered.

"Dear Eustace," she murmured, and again there followed some moments of speechless rapture.

"What unrepeatable rapture is ours, were the next words of Eustace.

"It is almost too great for endurance," returned Lilia. "I dare not fully indulge in it. I fear that a cloud may come upon our joy. Your father—he will not approve of your choice? You are rich and high born. I am poor and humble. Oh, Eustace, he may separate us."

"Never," cried Eustace, pressing her again to his bosom. "What are wealth and rank compared with love and happiness? These are higher far than the other, and are not love and happiness ours, my darling?"

"Oh, yes," she answered, "but others may not think and feel as we do. Oh that you were poor, Eustace—ay, a poor working man like Willy. I would then know that no one would try to part us."

"Dismiss such fears, my darling," he soothingly murmured. "I do not anticipate that my father will try to part us when he knows how good you are, and how entirely I love you. But should he ever feel so unjust as to desire such a thing, you do not think so meanly of me to imagine that I would forsake you at his bidding? I swear to you, Lilia, that no power on earth shall separate us. I am now yours, and you are mine forever. See, the sun is about to set behind the purple hills—let him carry with him the record of our betrothal. Shall we not declare in the sight of this glorious earth and radiant heaven, that our hearts are eternally united, and that our love and constancy shall never be destroyed?"

With a low murmur of joy the happy Lilia threw herself upon his throbbing bosom, and they breathed in each other ears vows of eternal devotion, while the last rays of the setting sun shone upon their heads, as if heaven was witnessing with an approving smile their sacred and solemn betrothal.

Long they sat in that hallowed spot till the shadows of twilight stole silently over the scene, and the silvery stars came forth in the soft night sky, and the great hush of the even-distant noontide

hills stood silent sentinels at the western gates of heaven.

Then they rose, and the fond arm of Eustace twined round the lovely form of Lilia, they left the grassy bank, and full of measureless happiness sought the cottage below.

Scarcely had their dim figures vanished down the slope when a rustic was heard in a hazel bush close behind where they had sat, and the head and shoulders of a man were lifted up from the ground to gaze after them.

This man, whoever he was, had been an eye and ear witness of all that had taken place; and as he rose from his lair and entered the wood a hush, discordant chuckle came from his husky throat, and mingled strangely with the lingering echoes of the vows of love that had just been breathed like music through the fragrant air.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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A Gentleman. "What is meant by these familiar expressions, 'He is a gentleman'?" "He is no gentleman?" They do not mean that the man has or has not a grandfather who is a somebody; or that he is dressed or not dressed by an artistic tailor; that he is wealthy or poor, or that he is in the use of a certain conventional phrase. What do they mean? Here is an excellent definition:

A gentleman is just a gentle man; no more, no less; a diamond polished that was first a diamond in the rough. A gentleman is gentle. A gentleman is modest. A gentleman is courteous. A gentleman is slow to take offence, as being one who never gives it. A gentleman is slow to surmise evil, as being one who never thinks it. A gentleman subjects his appetites. A gentleman refines his taste. A gentleman controls his speech. A gentleman deems every other better than himself.

The following description of a gentleman was written about eighteen hundred years ago, in a letter to certain persons at Philippi, and, in our judgment, is as accurate now as it was then: "Whatever things are true, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things."

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