

Grand Alliance;

Love That Knew No Bounds.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

During their absence Mrs. Alwyn took up residence in a tiny London house on the skirts of a fashionable square, and with perseverance worthy of a better cause began sweeping the matrimonial seas once more for Leonora's behoof.

The labor was shortened unexpectedly. Mr. Rupert Villiers came dutifully to pay his respects to his aunt, his compliments to his cousin. About Leonora's broken engagement the major had withheld all particulars. He was not the man to gossip even with his son over a woman's disappointment. The ladies soon found to their relief that nothing of the pseudo Mr. Morecombe-Wood's history was known to any one likely to retail it.

"The man was unworthy of my Leonora! never name him to me. Only help her to forget him," Mrs. Alwyn begged, and Mr. Rupert obeyed very literally.

He found the cultivation of cynicism slow for a lengthened period. Mrs. Alwyn's "straightened means" (she kept Sydney's supplementing hundreds strictly to herself) were not contemptible, taken in conjunction with a stock of valuable furniture. What was hers was Leonora's. Leonora was handsome still, especially by candle-light. Presently the young lady took to wearing a certain sapphire ring given her on a memorable occasion. Upon that hint, Mr. Villiers spoke, with the result that before another season began he was inducted as ostensible master of "Number twenty-three, Gladys Crescent."

They suit in their new positions excellently. After his and her own self each admires the other to the top of their bent. But they never trouble each other with too much of confidences; so when one day Mr. Villiers read aloud from his paper the tragic end, in a San Francisco gambling saloon, of a swindler of European reputation whose description he well recognized, he felt under no necessity to confess that he had had many dealings with this questionable character, nor did he dream that the rascal put an end to by a Californian knife was at one time near standing in the marital shoes he now wore so easily.

Major Villiers took his son's settlement with moderate satisfaction.

"It wasn't the one I wanted, more's the pity for you, Rupert," he said; and though fairly reconciled to life and his lot, Mr. Rupert once allowed himself to echo that regret.

It was at a big gathering the year after he had married, to which, after much toadying of a society magnate, he had got himself and Leonora invited, and where, among a throng of name and rank, they had found themselves nobodies. A good-tempered fellow seeing him forlorn (it was Tuffin, by the way), spent five minutes in pointing out to him the notabilities of the evening—among them,

"That tall fellow with the brown beard. He's blind, though you'd never guess it. He's written a book on Upper Egypt that's all the rage among the blues just now. Some society got him up to lecture this afternoon, and my lord president nabbed him for tonight. That dark-eyed woman every one is looking at, leaning against

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him, is his wife. Eh, do you see her, Villiers?"

Villiers did see her as she stood, one hand on the arm of her companion, who talked to a group of celebrities. Soon he was elbowing his way toward her.

"Mrs. Hurst," he said, accosting her with an air of delicate melancholy, "this is indeed a tri—pleasure. How little I guessed I was to meet you to-night."

"We stayed unexpectedly," she answered, a momentary shyness—for she remembered their last interview—enhancing all her charms.

"Is it too late," he said, in lowered key, "or may I dare to ask if you hold me excused for—two years ago?"

Now she was self-possessed again; looked through him, down upon him, from the royalty of her beautiful young matronhood.

"I hold you fully excused," she said, "and am myself immeasurably grateful to you."

She turned to her husband with the perfection of contentment. Mr. Villiers, very sorry indeed for himself, went and found Leonora in a remote corner, told her morosely she had powdered too freely, and took her off home without vouchsafing the information that her step-sister was one of the brightest stars in the brilliant throng they were leaving.

But the Hursts are rarely in London, though preference of society and science is ready enough for them there if they cared to take it. "Stuart's" was in the market when they came back to England, and now, cleared to the last payable farthing of the debt poor John Alwyn died under, "Stuart's" is their home.

Their old friends and new come about them, Major Villiers often, the Comynghams once, Miss Ambler when she wills. Thence go forth other works by Gilbert Hurst and that co-laborer whom only few know of, which earn him wide publicity and praise, and bring in revenue which now he little needs.

For under Richard Drayton's prudent management Granfylde sends a steady stream of riches on them, and Sydney declares if he had not Gilbert to tell her what channels to turn it into she should be perplexed out of all enjoyment of this troublesome, ever-expanding wealth.

Troublesome indeed! Why, what is it Mrs. Gilbert Hurst likes better?

This: She came silently the other day upon her husband and their five-year-

FREE TO ALL SUFFERERS

old daughter in deep convalescence under one of the bee-haunted blossoming limes in their garden. The sun shone through the leaves. The sky above was intensely blue. To life's beginner the world looked very fair. Said the little one, frowning a thought aloud,

"But it doesn't matter for that." "And what does not matter for what, sweetheart?" her father asked. "Your being blind, father, for just the things that are pretty. But oh, I wish you were not blind for something else!"

"What is it?" "To see mother. She is such a beautiful mother." Gilbert stretched his arm over the grass and gathered the child to him. "I know that, little one, without my seeing. And shall I tell you something more wonderful? That dear mother of yours grows more and more beautiful to me every single day of our lives."

"Flatterers!" she said, happy tears in her eyes, her hand on her child's brown hair, her head on her husband's shoulder.

And there was Sydney Hurst's best cherished wealth!

THE END.

The Earl's Son;

TWO HEARTS UNITED.

CHAPTER I.

She moved her hand in a gesture so like his that the old lawyer was struck by it.

"Thank you; I will decide now," she said. "I have a good memory, Mr. Bolton." She turned to him with a smile. "I know what poverty means. Poverty is a crime. I saw my father die." Her eyes filled with tears, her lips quivered. "I know what wealth means. After all, I need never marry."

Her voice died away, her eyes grew meditative. "Decide!" said the earl, almost sharply.

She turned her eyes on him and drew her slim, graceful form erect. "I have decided, my lord," she said. "I will abide by the conditions."

"Good!" exclaimed the earl, gently. "We will not trouble you any further, Veronica."

Mr. Bolton moved towards the door, but the earl was before him and opened it for her, and, with a slight inclination of her shapely head, she passed out. And, even to the old and blase lawyer, something of the sunlight seemed to have passed out with her.

His lordship got back to his chair and sank into it.

"I knew I could count upon her," he said, with the cynical twist of his thin lips. "Draw up the will, Bolton. I'll sign it to-morrow."

CHAPTER II.

Veronica went up the great staircase to her room; rooms, it should be written, for she had been given a suite in the best position, facing south and looking over the Italian garden and the park and meadow which stretched beyond. They were palatial rooms, furnished in the latest mode "according to Waring," with all the luxury which practically, unlimited wealth could supply. This luxury, this wealth had at first confused and bewildered her—she had been summoned to it from a "first-floor-front" in Camden town; but there is nothing to which one so soon gets accustomed as luxury, and Veronica had grown so used to it that, if she had not quite forgotten the old days of semi-gentility—what a hateful combination of words it is!—the splendour of her surroundings had ceased to impress—and oppress her. Now, as she looked round at all the evidences of wealth and position, innumerable in detail and large in the gross, she could not help feeling that they were not transient but perpetual.

Waynford, which she had seen and which had seemed to her a rural palace, and enormous wealth were to be hers on one, and the simplest condition. She was to marry a man of rank. Well, why not?

No woman was more free from small vanities than Veronica, but even she could imagine it as possible that she would be able to comply with the condition. In the circle, the county circle, that revolved round Lord Lynborough, its acknowledged centre, there were many men of title—some of them of historical title—and most of them had expressed an admiration for Miss Veronica Gresham, the niece of the Earl of Lynborough. It seemed such an easy condition; she had, so to speak, but to choose.

At the thought, the straight brows, the Denby brows, came together, and she made a little moue of distaste. Girls are supposed to be always thinking of marriage; Veronica thought of it but seldom; no man of the many she had met since she came to the Court, had made any impression on her. They called her cold.

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and perhaps she was; most girls are until their hearts are warmed by the glance of the man for whom they have been waiting since time began. Then the snow melts and reveals the flower-gemmed plains beneath, smiling in radiance for his delight. After all, she need not marry; it would be grand to be the mistress of Waynford, to be rich, to be a kind virgin queen, a modern Elizabeth.

She laughed softly and stretched out her shapely arms. She need no longer dread the future—and how she had dreaded it!—she was secure against the buffets of Fortune! Mistress of Waynford!

Her maid knocked and entered. "Your horse is waiting, miss; shall I send it back?"

"No, no. Goodwin!" replied Veronica. "Get me quickly into my habit—quickly! I am longing for a gallop!"

In a few minutes she was downstairs and mounted, and with a light but firm touch was holding the high-spirited mare in hand. As she passed up the avenue she heard the sound of wheels, and, looking round, saw the great landau driving up to the entrance: Lord Lynborough was going for his daily drive.

Half way down the avenue she put her mare at the low railing and got onto the grass of the park; the groom thundered after her, but presently she heard him pull up and saw him dismount and examine his horse's shoes.

"What is the matter, Brown?" she called back.

(To be Continued.)

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